

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Friday, 30 July 2021

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

Chair:

Mr P.A. Treloar

Members:

Hon. L.W.K. Bignell

Mr D.R. Cregan

Mr S. Murray

Mr L.K. Odenwalder

Mr A.S. Pederick

Ms J.M. Stinson

The committee met at 09:00

Estimates Vote

SOUTH AUSTRALIA POLICE, \$956,986,000

ADMINISTERED ITEMS FOR SOUTH AUSTRALIA POLICE, \$65,000

DEPARTMENT FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORT, \$1,071,420,000

**ADMINISTERED ITEMS FOR DEPARTMENT FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORT,
\$4,045,000**

Minister:

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

Departmental Advisers:

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

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

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

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

Mr L. Pineda, Manager, Budgeting and Reporting, People and Corporate Services, Department for Infrastructure and Transport.

The CHAIR: Welcome back, everybody, to Estimates Committee A. We are dealing this morning with the Minister for Police, Emergency Services and Correctional Services in regard to road safety.

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 to an approximate time for the consideration of proposed payments, which will facilitate a change of departmental officers. Can the minister and lead speaker for the opposition confirm that the timetable for today's proceedings as has been previously distributed is accurate?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Yes, Mr Chair.

Mr ODENWALDER: Yes, Chair.

The CHAIR: Changes to committee membership will be notified as they occur. 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 is a flexible approach to giving the call for asking questions. A member who is not on the committee may also 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 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. One final addition to my comments is that I would suggest that members wear masks while they are in the committee unless they are asking or answering questions.

I now proceed to open the following lines for examination. The portfolio is road safety and the minister appearing is the Minister for Police, Emergency Services and Correctional Services. I declare the proposed payments open for examination. I call on the minister now to introduce his advisers and make a statement, if he wishes.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Good morning, members. I will begin by introducing those who are with me this morning. To my left, we have Ms Emma Kokar, Executive Director of Road and Marine Services, Department for Infrastructure and Transport. In the second row, we have Linda Williams, the Deputy Commissioner of Police; and Steve Johnke, Director, Business Service, South Australia Police. In the third row, we have Luis Pineda, Manager, Budgeting and Reporting, People and Corporate Services, Department for Infrastructure and Transport, and also Sarah Clark, Director, Road Safety, Policy and Research, Department for Infrastructure and Transport.

I will begin by making a very brief opening statement, if I may. The Marshall Liberal government is committed to improving road safety in South Australia. As we know, in the 2020 calendar year South Australia recorded 93 lives lost, 18 per cent lower than the 114 lives lost recorded in 2019 and three fewer lives lost than the previous five-year average of 96.

Improving road safety requires a multifaceted approach, encompassing the safety of the road environment, vehicles in which people travel and the behaviour of everybody on the road. South Australia's road safety activities are shared between two agencies: the Department for Infrastructure and Transport and South Australia Police. DIT is currently leading the development of a new road safety strategy for the state to 2031.

The strategy will set the direction for reducing lives lost and serious injuries in our state over the next decade. The strategy will guide decisions and investment, with a focus on the safe movement of people throughout the state. Extensive consultation with stakeholders and the community commenced in August 2020, with a series of 10 webinars with road safety stakeholders. A statewide survey on YourSAy, a government community engagement platform, was undertaken in October and November, with over 1,300 submissions received.

A series of focus sessions and subject-based workshops were held in addition to three regional community workshops in areas associated with high levels of road trauma throughout the state. Two workshops were also held with metropolitan and regional council reps to discuss local government road safety issues more broadly. The draft strategy was released for community consultation on the YourSAy website, and that will close later this year.

DIT has also administered the Road Safety Partnerships Program since July 19, introducing and building awareness of the Think! Road Safety initiative and associated campaigns. That program remains a critical component in building and maintaining a strong road safety culture and driving behavioural change in our state. Our focus is on influencing and improving driver behaviour through tailored peer-to-peer road safety campaign messages that are tailored to a partner's identified key audience and road safety issues of focus.

In 2021-22, DIT will deliver incremental improvements to motorcycle training, as well as a suite of reforms to raise the standards of the driver training industry. There is also obviously a record infrastructure spend on our roads. Works underway include installation of shoulder sealing, audio tactile line marking, median wire rope safety barriers, lighting improvements at rural junctions, roadside safety barriers, and variable speed limit signs to improve the safety around schools in rural and regional towns.

DIT is also progressing the installation of mobile phone detection cameras, a joint initiative with SAPOL announced as part of last year's budget, and that measure will target mobile phone use while driving. I open it to questions.

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

Mr ODENWALDER: Very briefly, sir. I welcome the minister and his advisers. It is going to be a long day. Notwithstanding what the minister said, I still have some concerns about the level of deaths and road trauma on our roads. Despite lockdowns and despite significantly decreased traffic movements, we still see an unacceptably high number of deaths on our roads. I am sure the minister will agree.

Since the axing of the Motor Accident Commission and the refusal of the minister to meet properly with the motorcycle reference group, we continue to see deaths on our roads, particularly among motorcyclists. We will obviously have some questions about the motorcycle reforms that have already taken place and are promised in the future.

I will start with the road safety strategy, since the minister mentioned it in his opening statement, and I will go to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 114. I do not have a problem at all with the road safety strategy. It is good that after nearly four years the government is turning its mind to developing a road safety strategy, but the paper does not give us any real assurance of what is to come. It lists off some very good aspirations, particularly the safer systems stuff. I appreciate that the government is finally looking at that as a policy.

Just very briefly on the strategy, and apparently a lot of consultation has already taken place to inform the strategy consultation paper, have you, minister, asked for any work to be done regarding the increased use of cycling in the CBD? In cities like Paris and London, particularly during their extended lockdowns—which thanks largely to SAPOL and SA Health we have avoided—we have seen an increased use of cycling.

The landscape in those cities has changed and the environment in those cities has changed. Certainly from the last time I saw footage of Paris, and certainly since the last time I was there, it has changed almost beyond recognition. I wonder what the strategy is for commuter cycling particularly around the CBD and the suburbs?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I thank the member for the question, and I appreciate the opposition's interest in doing whatever we can to reduce lives lost and serious injuries on our roads, and I will come to cycling. By way of background, the Road Safety Strategy to 2031 is being developed and it is being developed to guide decisions and actions over the next decade to reduce lives lost and serious injuries on our roads. The strategy is being informed by stakeholder and community feedback, road trauma statistics and other evidence. During 2020 and 2021, extensive community and stakeholder engagement has been undertaken.

To recap some of that, there were webinars for road safety stakeholders, including local government, and community consultation via the YourSAy website, with over 1,300 online surveys and written submissions received. There were community workshops in Tintinara, Yorketown and all across the state, and I attended one of the sessions in the Riverland. There were workshops not only in regional areas but there was also much engagement in the city, including stakeholder workshops and focus groups on specific issues informed by road safety stats and market research.

Obviously, that draft strategy is out for consultation, and I would implore anybody who is interested to have their say and make sure they get involved and contribute to the strategy. It has been looked at across the entire state.

In terms of walking, cycling and also public transport, improving safety for people who walk or cycle is extremely important. We do appreciate that in urban areas safer, lower speed environments may provide environmental health and also access benefits, by making road users feel safe and choose more active transport. This is actually touched on in the draft strategy.

I ask the member, if he is interested, to look at page 52 of that where it does talk about this sort of thing. It talks about how public transport is often a safer mode of transport than any form of road travel, based on crash exposure risk, and that efforts will need to be continued to be made to encourage greater use of shared transport where possible as well. Improved safety for pedestrians and improved public transport can also assist older road users to maintain mobility and also access to services without the need to drive their private motor vehicle. Young people also benefit from this freedom to travel safely before they are old enough to drive.

I do not want to monopolise too much time here, but the paper does refer to the specific issues around walking and cyclists. There are a number of key strategies that are spoken of in the overall strategy to improve roads for all road users. If the member wants to have a look at that, I would encourage him to do so and please circulate it far and wide. I encourage people in the city to have their say on what they think.

Mr ODENWALDER: It is interesting you should say that because on both my phone and my PC I am unable to access the YourSAy survey, and I have been unable to for the last two days. Can you explain that, or is it simply an IT problem I have encountered on both my phone and my PC?

Mr Pederick interjecting:

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I thank the member for the question. I see the member for Hammond is laughing. I am not sure why. I am sure he has accessed it.

The CHAIR: He is a keen cyclist, minister.

Mr PEDERICK: I was just saying, minister, that it would be operator error if I tried it.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: It could be operator error, but I do not believe it is operator error. But what I can say is that—

Members interjecting:

The CHAIR: Order! The minister has the call.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: —honestly, when I tried to access the link it was working. I have to say the member for Elizabeth's is the first time that I have been aware of any purported issues with it. But we will certainly take that on board and endeavour to come back to the member with that. I was certainly not aware and the department is not aware of any issues of access to the survey.

Mr ODENWALDER: I will have to have a look at your copy when I make my submission. The minister talks about lower speed limits, and I think everyone would agree that in general the slower a car is going, the less damage it can do in a collision; I think that is beyond dispute. What work has the government done already in consulting with local government and other groups regarding lower speed limits in the suburbs and the CBD?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I thank the member for the question. The government does work extensively with local councils, the Department for Transport and also South Australia Police in regard to speeding issues. If a local council wanted to reduce a speed limit in a local government area, that would be within the remit of a local council. They certainly will work with DIT in that regard.

The strategy does talk about movement and how the government can provide for, if you like, better infrastructure to provide more safety and security for certain areas. Obviously, it is very high level and it has a specific focus on things like, for example, safe system treatments such as roadside barriers, hazard removal, sealed shoulders, median treatments, audio tactile line markings, things like that, to do things like reduce run-off-road crashes and to reduce the likelihood and severity of intersection crashes. But again, if anyone does have any specific feedback, I implore them to make that submission as part of the consultation.

Mr ODENWALDER: Have you had any discussions with or any requests from the City of Playford to look at any speed limit reductions across the city?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: The City of Playford is a very good council with very good councillors who represent their local area very well. I do not have that information in front of me, but from time to time there will be local representatives who do advocate for certain treatments. I do not have those furnished in front of me but I will be happy to take that on notice.

Mr ODENWALDER: I will go to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 144, which is a program about road safety. The targets include progressing improvements to motorcycle training through enhancements to the Rider Safe program. Of course, we ultimately passed legislation that enhanced the motorcycle licensing regime. In general, I think that was a very good thing to do and, ultimately, there was bipartisan support for those measures.

Some years ago, the previous minister commissioned a report from KPMG into motorcycle safety training, in particular, the Rider Safe program. You may be aware that the opposition acquired a copy of this report, and the report states that the department would like to explore the potential of outsourcing the Rider Safe motorcycle training regime to a private operator.

The document goes on to offer a number of options for privatising the program. Perhaps most alarming is the proposal to increase fees by up to 74 per cent. That would mean that a basic course would increase from \$385 to \$638, while the additional cost on that advanced course would increase from \$342 to \$595. Minister, when was this report completed and provided to government?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I thank the member for the question. I am advised the date was late in 2020.

Mr ODENWALDER: Can you explain then why the previous minister advised, in a question on notice in fact, that it was before cabinet in early 2020 and that was why it could not be discussed?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I thank the member for the question. I came into cabinet on 29 July 2020, which is one year and one day ago.

Mr ODENWALDER: Congratulations.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Thank you. I am not trying to be a smart Alec here, but obviously I cannot speak for the former minister and what was deliberated on in cabinet before I came in as a minister. I will try to be helpful with any other dates I can provide, but what the former minister did is not a matter for me.

Mr ODENWALDER: So you did not see the KPMG report between the date you were appointed minister and the November date that you just gave?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: No, I do not think I did.

Mr ODENWALDER: Is it your intention to expand the Rider Safe program?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I thank the member for the question. In terms of what the government is doing to rider training, the government obviously has an aspiration to improve rider training, which is very important. New motorbikes are being purchased I believe this year as part of a series of improvements to Rider Safe to improve safety outcomes and also service delivery. I am advised a process is being initiated to update Rider Safe's training material to reflect evidence-based best practice, and that will include examination of the models that apply in other jurisdictions and consideration of what adaptations are needed for South Australian conditions, road rules and also delivery constraints.

I am advised that in recent years Victoria and Tasmania have introduced an on-road testing component as part of their rider training courses. Other Australian jurisdictions, including South Australia, currently have courses conducted in an off-road environment, so options are being explored to increase the number of people in regional and remote areas who complete formal Rider Safe training. Currently, people located more than 100 kilometres from a testing centre are not required to complete the course.

Our government is looking at how customer experiences around booking and accessing Rider Safe can be improved as well as whether any motorbike-specific online testing should be introduced as part of the process for getting a motorbike licence. Consultation on the proposed changes will occur with key stakeholders, with updated information on course and other service improvements intended to be delivered to novice riders from the second half of 2022.

Mr ODENWALDER: Will you increase fees for novice riders undertaking the Rider Safe program? If so, by how much?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: There is no proposal to outsource and no proposal to increase fees.

Mr ODENWALDER: Those proposals are within the KPMG report. I did see a proposal to keep everything exactly the same; is that the government's position then, that it is going to keep things as they are? I do not know how you intend to expand the Rider Safe program, as you have just outlined, without either increasing fees or perhaps outsourcing all or part of it.

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

Mr ODENWALDER: So you will not increase fees and you will not privatise Rider Safe?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: As I have said twice now, there is no proposal to outsource and there is no proposal to increase fees.

Mr ODENWALDER: Will you close the St Agnes Rider Safe centre?

The CHAIR: With all due respect, member for Elizabeth, you are asking the minister what he may or may not do—

Mr ODENWALDER: Yes.

The CHAIR: —at some point in the future, rather than questioning specific budget lines. However, I will leave it with the minister as to how he handles it.

Mr ODENWALDER: Perhaps I could clarify it then: the target for 2021-22 is to progress improvements for motorcycle training through enhancements to the Rider Safe program.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Sorry; we are just moving around a bit here. There was a question and then an interruption. Could I have the question again?

Mr ODENWALDER: Will you close St Agnes?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: No.

Mr ODENWALDER: No? Excellent. Will you release the KPMG report in full, and when?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I am advised it is not proposed to release the KPMG report because it also touches on a range of other matters unrelated to road safety.

Mr ODENWALDER: What would those matters be?

Mr Cregan interjecting:

Mr ODENWALDER: It is worth asking, member for Kavel.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Member for Elizabeth, I am advised that a range of other matters are contained in that report. Some may be commercial-in-confidence and things like that, and that is why it has been decided at this stage that there are no plans to release the KPMG report.

Mr ODENWALDER: As one last question, I will go back to targets on Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 144. Where will the mobile phone detection towers be placed, what will be the criteria for choosing the sites and how many will there be?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I can advise the member that the exact number of mobile phone detection cameras is yet to be determined. Mobile phone detection cameras will be installed at high-risk metropolitan sites. The exact locations at the moment are still to be decided. The proposed locations will be carefully worked through in consultation, of course, with South Australia Police, taking into consideration relevant offence data and also the available infrastructure.

It goes without saying that the government is committed to reducing dangerous and high-risk driving behaviours on our roads, such as distraction. We know that distraction is one of the leading causes of fatalities and serious injury collisions on our roads. The government will be investing \$19.4 million into fixed mobile phone detection cameras at high-risk sites across metro Adelaide, and the high-definition cameras will target drivers illegally using mobile phones. This was announced as part of last year's budget.

The CHAIR: Having reached the allotted time, I declare the examination of the portfolio program road safety complete. Consideration of the proposed payments for SA Police will resume at 10.45am, following our morning break. Consideration of the proposed payments for the Department for Infrastructure and Transport will resume on Tuesday 3 August.

**ADMINISTERED ITEMS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF TREASURY AND FINANCE,
\$2,666,366,000**

Minister:

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

Departmental Advisers:

Ms M. Healy, Interim Chief Executive, South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission.

Ms J. Best, Manager, Financial Services, South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission.

Ms G. Cornish, Acting Chief Officer, Country Fire Service.

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

Mr D. Carman, Acting Deputy Chief Officer, State Emergency Service.

The CHAIR: We now come to the portfolios of SAFECOM, SA Country Fire Service, SA Metropolitan Fire Service and the State Emergency Service. The minister appearing is the Minister for Police, Emergency Services and Correctional Services. I declare the proposed payments referred from Estimates Committee B open for examination.

I call on the minister to make a short statement and introduce his advisers, as there has been a change of advisers. With the concurrence of the minister and the member for Elizabeth, I have on my list, in order, SAFECOM, SA Country Fire Service, SA Metropolitan Fire Service and State Emergency Service, so it could be that we work our way through item by item. That will facilitate a better use of—

Mr ODENWALDER: I will try to work through item by item, but I would like to start with the Country Fire Service, if I could.

The CHAIR: Yes, it will just be much easier in relation to the advisers present, I think. Minister, would you like to introduce your advisers and make a short statement, please.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Certainly, Mr Chair, thank you. I will begin by introducing to my left Ms Mary-Anne Healy, Interim Chief Executive of SAFECOM. On the second table we have Julie Best, Manager of Financial Services at SAFECOM, and Georgie Cornish, Acting Chief Officer of the CFS. In the third row, we have Mr Michael Morgan, the Chief Officer of the Metropolitan Fire Service, and David Carman, the Acting Deputy Chief Officer of the SES.

I will begin with just a very brief opening statement, if I may. Firstly, I would like to acknowledge our brave volunteers and staff in our emergency services organisations, including the CFS, SES, MFS and SAFECOM. I thank them for their contributions in responding to all manner of emergency situations, often going above and beyond in life-threatening situations to keep their communities safe.

As members are aware, following the 2019-20 fires, former AFP Commissioner Mick Keelty AO led an independent review to look back at what we did well, what could be improved and how we could better prepare for future bushfire seasons. In response, the Marshall Liberal government committed \$97.5 million to create a safer and more bushfire resilient South Australia, including by implementing the review's recommendations. All 27 immediate actions arising out of that review are complete in time for this bushfire season, with good progress being made on the longer term actions as well.

There are significant opportunities this year for emergency services, including the commencement of the Fire and Emergency Services (Governance) Amendment Act 2021, which provides independent decision-making, reporting requirements from the State Bushfire Coordination Committee to the parliament, a requirement for plans to ensure the most effective use of public funds and assets and also appointment of an independent chair to the SAFECOM Board to give it a greater level of independence and make sure the sector's governance structures work to ensure a greater level of transparency and accountability of decision-making.

In addition, there is the rolling out of AVL technology to provide intelligence on the fireground, enhanced safety via location data and planning data to support future capacity planning, a review of the State Emergency Management Plan and delivery, of course, of the new emergency services headquarters at Keswick, which will bring together the emergency services sector into one central location.

Again I would like to thank our hardworking emergency services volunteers and staff for their work over the past year, and I look forward to continuing to achieve positive results with them over the next 12 months.

Mr ODENWALDER: I do not have an opening statement, except to echo the minister's comments about the quality of our emergency services. One of the great pleasures of being the shadow minister is that I have been able to meet so many staff and volunteers of these emergency services over the last three or so years. Can I start with a general question. We have agreed to start with Country Fire Service, and I will try to stick to a rough demarcation of services.

The CHAIR: It was just a suggestion.

Mr ODENWALDER: It is a good suggestion. I have a general question related to the minister's opening statement. Can I ask the minister what sort of bushfire season we are predicting this year? What is our best guess of how the bushfire season will look this year in terms of the terrain?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I am not sure what budget line that refers to, but I will take it in good faith.

Mr ODENWALDER: I am referring to your opening statement.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Unfortunately, as we know there is a degree of inevitability when it comes to bushfires in South Australia. What we can do as legislators and as policymakers is make sure that we continue to make our state as bushfire resilient as possible. I look to the members to the left of me, and we have the member for Hammond, who unfortunately has had bushfires in his neck of the woods recently, and also the members for Kavel and Davenport, who all unfortunately know too well the devastating effects of bushfires this year and in other years, and so we do have a—

The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL: Hello? Kangaroo Island.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I was getting to you, member for Mawson.

The CHAIR: And the Chair.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Yes. Member for Mawson, nobody should have to go through what the people of Kangaroo Island went through. I acknowledge the member for Mawson and what his community have gone through and, of course, you, sir, having been to Port Lincoln recently and met so many of the CFS volunteers over there. Unfortunately, bushfires have attacked all corners of our state.

Coming back to the season, I am informed—and of course we do provide seasonal updates in about October each and every year, member for Elizabeth—and the advice I have just received is that we are expecting a later season and also a grass season.

Mr ODENWALDER: A grass season?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: A grass season, as in very high growth, which will contribute to somewhat of a grass season and also a later season. There are extensive fuel loads out there at the moment, I know certainly on the West Coast, sir.

Mr ODENWALDER: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 70, which references the response to the Keelty review. I want to talk a little bit about the community consultation associated with the Keelty review and whether the minister would care also to comment on the royal commission, which was run concurrently. How did the Keelty review approach community consultation on Kangaroo Island given the restrictions of COVID?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I thank the member for Elizabeth for the question. I do remember seeing it actually referred to in the Keelty review, if I am not mistaken, and other reporting on that Keelty review. Obviously, wherever it was able to be done, face-to-face consultation was enabled. However, that said, obviously there were a whole range of interruptions, but I do know that people were able to contribute their consultation via other means. If I am not mistaken, some of that was also provided online. Yes, there were obviously interruptions, and that was taken into consideration and actually referred to in the Keelty review. I do not have it here, but I am happy to get that.

Mr ODENWALDER: So you are satisfied that all members of the Kangaroo Island community were adequately consulted and able to have their voices heard during the course of this review?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Again, no-one should have to go through what the people of Kangaroo Island went through on the island. I have certainly visited the island on a number of occasions, and I do believe that there certainly was a fair opportunity for people to provide feedback in regard to the review. I might have some further information.

I can advise that community members were invited to have their say about the bushfires via the government's YourSAY website, and submissions to the review were sought by 22 March 2020. The review set about planning for interviews and town hall style meetings across the fire-affected areas. As I did allude to, obviously, the review was affected by social distancing requirements, and these were imposed by all governments during the COVID-19 global pandemic during March 2020.

The former minister issued a media release advising that a different approach was needed in the circumstances. Submissions were extended until 17 April. It also became more of a desktop review supported by video, as I was alluding to. There were therefore provisions for videoconferencing, telephone conferencing and also targeted interviews and targeted surveys, as well as online community engagement.

The CHAIR: Has the minister completed? The member for Mawson.

The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL: I have a follow-up question relating to the same budget line. What do you say to those brave men and women who went out and put their lives on the line to defend their community, defend their neighbours' properties and their own properties that you could not delay the review so that you could get them all in a room and have a discussion about them after the COVID social distancing had happened?

To say that you did a desktop review and that you had invited these people to go onto the YourSAy app and type out what they said is a real kick in the guts for these people who are now suffering PTSD, not just from what they saw and the actions they had to undertake during the fire but from the fact that no-one from the government has turned up to listen to their concerns?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: As I reminded the member for Elizabeth, matters strictly within my remit as minister would have begun from 29 July 2020, but what I would say is that we know that we have had the Keelty review. We were the first jurisdiction in all of Australia to commission an independent review. There were extensive action items, many of which are being implemented in relation to Kangaroo Island. For the first time ever, for example, there is a full-time position dedicated in the CFS towards Kangaroo Island. We do appreciate that much grief and much loss were experienced by the people of Kangaroo Island.

All I can say to the member is that if he does have any specific feedback about specific people, I would certainly encourage him to provide that to me. As I said, there has been the Keelty review. Many of those recommendations do touch specifically on Kangaroo Island. There has obviously also been a specific operational review if you like. In the past that has not been published; it has been published this time.

The CFS is certainly dedicating what it can to make sure that they can do what they can to continue to provide more resilience for the island. No-one is certainly being ignored, but if the member does have any specific individual feedback I would be more than happy for him to provide that to me.

The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL: Yes, I am pleased to do so. First of all, Terry and Cheryl May, two outstanding leaders on Kangaroo Island, not just in the CFS but in general, were stood down without any reason for why they were stood down. That has divided the community over there. You state that the state government was the first in Australia to instigate a review into the bushfires. I would say it is not about who does things first, it is about who does things well. To give Mick Keelty a cut-off date of 30 June, given that COVID social distancing happened, denied the people of Kangaroo Island the opportunity.

I am out in the community of Kangaroo Island and I speak to these people. I see the anxiety, the stress and the mental health problems that they are still having because they have not been asked and they have not been listened to about the concerns with the way those devastating bushfires on Kangaroo Island over the summer of 2019-20 were conducted. They have very real concerns about the CFS. People within the CFS and people outside the CFS have very serious concerns about the way the CFS went about fighting that fire and they have not been listened to.

The CHAIR: So—

The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL: Sorry, the minister asked me for feedback from my people and I am providing it to him.

The CHAIR: Alright, and I will make a comment when you are done.

The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL: They want to be listened to because they are about to face their second bushfire season post the really bad fire season that we had in 2019-20, and they are absolutely petrified that mistakes that were made in 2019-20 will be repeated. What do you say to those people? When are you going to turn up and listen to them properly?

I heard from people who have said that they felt intimidated at the meetings the Country Fire Service had around the review that they came over to talk about with people within the CFS, one that was invitation only. People felt that they were not invited along. Others felt that when they were there they were stared down by CFS management and they felt intimidated.

The CHAIR: Member for Mawson, I am going to take that entirely as commentary, which is fine. You have spoken about this particular situation many times in this place, and we all understand it. Many of us sitting on this committee have been through similar experiences. In fact, the member for Mawson, before he was the member for Mawson, visited Lower Eyre Peninsula in a similar situation—

The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL: I spent six weeks there on the ground.

The CHAIR: —all those years ago. After each and every incident, we all try to learn and do better. Minister, you have had some commentary from the member for Mawson; you can respond if you wish.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I know that the member for Mawson is passionate about this area and I am happy to reply. Firstly, I would respectfully refute that nobody has turned up to listen to concerns. I know that a number of people have visited. I have been to the island personally a number of times and I certainly intend to go back there soon in the not too distant future.

The member did make several comments. There was quite broad commentary, so, sir, what I would ask is your discretion in also responding in a broad manner, if I may. Firstly, I do want to talk about mental health and wellbeing for our CFS volunteers. We appreciate the need for mental health support services for all our South Australian emergency services workers and volunteers following recent bushfire events. Of course, in addition to that, there is also the impact of COVID-19, and we know that the need to respond to those mental health impacts will continue to be important.

SAFECOM has two dedicated resources: a health and wellbeing consultant and an officer who administers the emergency services Sector Wellbeing Intervention Program, the Employment Assistance Program (EAP), and the Stress Prevention and Management Program (SPAM). There is also a SPAM 24/7 helpline designed to help and develop wellbeing programs and training for a target group. In 2020-21, they provided a wellbeing operational presence in the CFS state command centre during the fire season and in the SA Health COVID command centre.

I am advised that there were also follow-up welfare checks of volunteers post the Kangaroo Island, Cudlee Creek, Lucindale and Cherry Gardens fires. There were mental health and wellbeing visits made to brigades and units and the delivery of 10 stress, trauma and suicide prevention awareness sessions. There is also the administration of SPAM and EAP services to staff and volunteers. There is also the development of the SA Mentally Healthy Workplaces framework. There is also an HQ working group to discuss wellbeing strategies for staff because obviously staff can also be affected by this trauma as well. There is also coordination and monitoring of the Phoenix Australia free online training for volunteers and staff of the CFS.

That said, there are also a number of targets left for 2021-22. There is the implementation of the SA Mentally Healthy Workplaces framework with action plans and the delivery of six mental health first-aid two-day workshops for CFS and SES volunteers, which is important. There is also a pilot for a youth mental health program in consultation with the CFS Youth Advisory Council, volunteer peer support officer recruitment, development of a new EAP reporting system and a review of the stress, trauma and suicide prevention training session.

In terms of lessons learned from the island, I think we are talking about Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 34. As you alluded to, sir, the CFS's core business, what they do, is to ensure a continuing of processes and functions to robustly apply lessons learnt and pursue operational improvements in all facets of its operation. I am not sure if the 2007 review was released publicly, but the most recent review was.

In addition to the above and the Keilty review, there is the CFS commissioner's independent review into its response to the bushfires on the island during 2019-20. That full report was placed in the public realm on Monday 22 March this year and it is found on the CFS website. It is comprehensive and it is of an independent nature. It is evidenced through observations and there were surveys. There were face-to-face engagements. Of course, there were challenges with that, member for Mawson. I am not discrediting that for a second, but they did front up. There was face-to-face engagement. There were group sessions and consideration of the lessons from the 2007 island fires and the Keilty review.

The inherent arms-length nature of this report and the Keilty review continue to underscore the recognition deserving of volunteers, staff, farm firefighter units—we could not do it without them—and so many other crucial entities in responding to fires—and/or involved in recovery management on Kangaroo Island and other parts of the state.

I know that the human and emotional elements of this fire are enormous on volunteers and on the community and that has been front of mind. It has been front of mind for the CFS and they

have engaged with volunteers and the community over a number of days on the island to create further openness to the review and also garner insights and concerns. As I said, for the first time ever there is a dedicated CFS resource on the island.

The report describes the fire chronology and it provides critical analysis of nine different pillars of the operations and nine comprehensive recommendations. I am paraphrasing these here, but if I can just elaborate a little bit. One recommendation is to review the doctrinal environment that governs level three incidents, for example. Another is to look at government policy to formally recognise the CFS as the lead agency—

Mr ODENWALDER: A matter of clarification, sir: I understand the member for Mawson's commentary was broad, but now the minister is ranging far beyond even the member for Mawson's commentary and I ask him to either conclude his remarks or make them pertinent to the member for Mawson's comments.

Mr CREGAN: Point of order, sir: the opposition cannot have it both ways. They either stick to the standing orders, which do not allow for argument or opinion and expansive commentary, or they allow—

The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL: We keep listening to this—

Mr PEDERICK: Tell your mate.

Mr CREGAN: That is right. Inform your colleague not to object then.

The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL: I just did.

Mr CREGAN: Well, is he maintaining his objection, in which case if he is not I will withdraw mine.

Mr PEDERICK: If you do not want to hear about the good stuff, do not—

The CHAIR: Order! We will come back to the task at hand.

Mr CREGAN: Do you maintain your objection?

Mr ODENWALDER: Yes, I do.

Mr PEDERICK: You cannot have it both ways. We speak as one, like Jack and Tom.

Mr ODENWALDER: I maintain that the minister should be brought back to addressing the member for Mawson's comments, if that is what he is doing.

Mr CREGAN: I think the member for Mawson needs to raise that point. In any case, you are hopelessly conflicted. What are we going to do—

Mr ODENWALDER: Any member of the committee can speak, member for Kavel. You might not be here next year to experience this.

The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL: The reason why I am not objecting is that I am going to show this video of 10 minutes of gobbledygook from the minister.

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL: There is no reality with what is actually happening on Kangaroo Island.

The CHAIR: Order! Member for Mawson, you can stop there.

The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL: And the people of Kangaroo Island deserve better than gobbledygook.

The CHAIR: Member for Mawson, you can stop there. I understand your passion for this particular issue. Believe me, I understand it. You have spoken about the Kangaroo Island fires on many occasions in this place. Today, you took another opportunity to put your point of view across and that has been heard. The minister is responding. I am also aware, minister, that we are 25 minutes into an hour session, so I would ask you to come back and conclude your answer.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Thank you for your wisdom, Mr Chair. There is a report that describes the fire chronology and provides critical analysis. There are nine different areas of CFS operations, with nine comprehensive recommendations: things like the CFS increasing its safety footprint; things like the CFS using the learnings from the review, along with those lessons identified in 2007 to develop a state KI operations management plan; looking at non-vocational training opportunities; looking at things like ICs, DICs, and operations and planning officers being invited to an annual aviation preparation exercise day; things like all level 2 and 3 logistics officers being provided training and a statement of expectations annually.

The CFS accepts all recommendations and they will be addressed in some form. I also note the ongoing continuous improvement program and the Keely review, which has seen significant improvement advances in a number of areas—better interactions between command levels within CFS with notable improvement outcomes. Safety has to be a non-negotiable aspect of CFS business and the implementation of AVL.

AVL has been out since 2012 and did this government spend a single cent on AVL for the CFS? Not one drop, not one iota, not one cent. We are getting on with the job. It is about continuous improvement, achieving greater community outcomes and collaboration with respect to groups like the farm firefighter units and there are a number of improvement measures already commencing.

The CHAIR: That probably is a good point to wrap up on, minister. I just make one further comment to the committee members. Interjections and chatter across the chamber are out of order, as you well know. If you are looking to partake in that, you are really just eating into the committee's time. Thank you, minister. Are there further questions? We are still on CFS. Member for Elizabeth?

The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL: I am not going to ask any more questions after answers like that.

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

Mr ODENWALDER: I would like to move on to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, highlights. The reason for my haste, member for Kavel, is that I want to talk about your area a little bit. In the highlights, it references programs to address key findings of the royal commission.

The royal commission, as you know, identified a clear need for Australia to establish its own sovereign aerial firefighter fleet. It goes on to make several recommendations about large aerial tankers and very large aerial tankers being owned and used by the Australian government and coordinated by the Australian government. The Liberal government in Canberra has refused to accept this recommendation. I wonder if the state government has put any pressure on their federal counterparts to adopt this recommendation, given how important aerial firefighting is in South Australia.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I thank the member for the question. I am advised that NAFC is considering a live tender as we speak, so I will proceed with caution around some aspects of this subject, as the member for Elizabeth can appreciate. In terms of aerial firefighting and an overview of 2021, if I look at the past and at the various members around the chamber and the areas they represent, we have certainly been served very well by an aerial firefighting capability capacity. We could not—

Mr Odenwalder interjecting:

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: We just could not do it without this capability. Firefighting aircraft were procured through NAFC, the National Aerial Firefighting Centre, for the 2020-21 fire danger season. This was the final year of a three-year plus one-plus-one contract. The CFS sought and received from government forward funding for a revised aircraft fleet from 2018-19 to 2022-23 and that enabled the establishment of various aspects right across the state.

Planning and training for reaccreditation of staff and volunteer aerial firefighting crew and airbase aircraft loading crew are now underway. In the past, there were 26 aircraft that were contracted. We had fixed single engine air tankers. There was a high-volume helicopter, three fixed-wing surveillance aircraft and also eight rotary-wing air attack observation platforms. That service

period for a number of aircraft was extended due to residual bushfire risk. Aircraft also remained available beyond the exclusive use period through the contracts 'call when needed' arrangements.

In the past, this has been like a contractual condition whereby the CFS is able to engage fixed-wing bombing and surveillance aircraft within 12 hours' notice outside of what is usually the contracted 84-day period when we have late seasons. But during 2020-21, during that fire danger season, firefighting aircraft flew a total of—

Mr ODENWALDER: Sir, while the minister is conferring, can I ask that you bring him back to the question itself, which was: has the government put any pressure on the federal government to adopt this recommendation of the royal commission?

The CHAIR: Thank you, member for Elizabeth. I am sure the minister is getting to that.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: The firefighting aircraft flew a total of just over 850 hours—660 operational, 112 relocation, 77 training—and they completed over 700 bombing missions and delivered two million litres of suppressants and retardants. They continue to be a valuable firefighting resource but, of course, they do not replace firefighters on the ground. They obviously complement them.

In terms of working with the federal government, we work collaboratively with the federal government. We work in a cooperative manner with the federal government. We were involved in a number of meetings this year—they have been by phone because of the COVID situation—whereby ministers from right around the country of all political colours, red and blue, worked together in a collaborative manner, not a combative manner. We continue to look at those findings.

I am quite satisfied that at the moment we are served well by our Country Fire Service, and the great work they do, and well represented at NAFC. I think our contribution is just over \$10 million. In the past, we have chipped in over \$10 million in those recent seasons and we are served very well, and our aerial capability has served the state very well in the past. That said, it is always about continuous improvement, and we will continue to work with other states and territories on this subject.

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

Mr CREGAN: Thank you, sir. Minister, can I take you to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 71. Can the minister provide an update on the progress of actions taken against the recommendations made in the 2019-20 independent bushfire review?

Mr ODENWALDER: Point of order, sir: the minister has been traversing for the last 25 minutes the response to the recommendations of the Keelty review.

Mr CREGAN: Well, I am asking a specific question in relation to the actions taken in an orderly way.

The CHAIR: Yes, and thank you—

Mr CREGAN: I am entitled to ask that question. It is important to my community—

The CHAIR: Member for Kavel—

Mr CREGAN: —and I will not be lectured by you or any other member on whether it is important or not.

The CHAIR: The member for Kavel is called to order. The member for Elizabeth has called a point of order, and I am ruling that out of order. I am allowing the member for Kavel's question because it is an important question, and he, like others, has experienced a bushfire disaster in the electorates he represents. However, I am going to suggest to the member for Kavel that he just be conscious of not engaging in interjections across the chamber because all it is doing is eating into the committee's time and not allowing the minister appropriate time to answer your very important question.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Thank you, Chair, and I thank the member for Kavel for his very important question. Recently, I was able to deliver a new fire truck to the Mount Barker MFS station. That was a fantastic morning. Following the devastation of the 2019-20 bushfire season, the South Australian government did commission an independent review into the state's response to the fires.

It was commissioned by Australian former Federal Police Commissioner Mr Mick Keelty. There were 68 findings and 15 recommendations, and in response to the review we announced a \$97.5 million package that included 69 action items to implement the recommendations of the review.

In carefully considering the recommendations of the review and developing the action items, we identified 27 measures to prioritise, with the remaining 42 measures to be implemented over the longer term. I am very pleased to inform the house that all 27 action items from our immediate response have been delivered. That is 27 action items that deliver new appliances, new equipment for our emergency services personnel, improved protection for critical assets, a boost in communications and technology for our emergency services and improved information available to South Australians before and during bushfires.

We committed to delivering 25 new trucks to CFS units across the state for the 2020-21 bushfire season. I am pleased to say that we delivered on that promise, just as we delivered on our commitment to retrofit many CFS appliances with turnover protection systems ahead of the last bushfire season. That was an important action to improve the safety of our dedicated volunteer firefighters on the ground.

We also delivered \$11½ million to deliver new state-of-the-art appliances to MFS stations right across the state. Earlier this month, new appliances were delivered to the Mount Barker MFS and also Seaford MFS stations, as I just pointed out. We are expecting the next pair of appliances to be delivered in the coming weeks, which is very exciting.

We have committed more than \$68 million in additional new funding to the MFS since coming to government to ensure that MFS personnel have not just the capability they need to keep the state safe but also the protection they need to stay safe themselves. So good progress has been made on the longer term action items, with nine having been already completed. We will continue to work hard and deliver the remaining items.

I thank staff and volunteers right across our emergency services agencies for their hard work. I also want to thank the member for Kavel for being the wonderful advocate he is for local community.

The CHAIR: Member for Elizabeth, I am conscious of the time—

Mr ODENWALDER: Indeed. I would like to talk to the SES if I could.

The CHAIR: Go to the SES?

Mr ODENWALDER: Yes, and if there is time I want to ask a question about the member for Kavel's electorate, his soon to be abandoned electorate.

The CHAIR: Well, it is not being abandoned.

Mr CREGAN: It is not being abandoned. You can withdraw that. I take offence.

The CHAIR: Yes, I concur. That was inappropriate.

Mr CREGAN: It has never been abandoned since I have been a member—

The CHAIR: Thank you, member for Kavel.

Mr CREGAN: —or before I have been a member, and it will not be afterwards.

The CHAIR: Thank you, member for Kavel. I will deal with this.

Mr ODENWALDER: Before? Are you sure?

The CHAIR: I will deal with this. The member for Elizabeth insinuated that the electorate of Kavel was soon to be abandoned.

Mr ODENWALDER: By the member for Kavel.

The CHAIR: No, you did not say that.

Mr ODENWALDER: I beg your pardon. I am happy to—

The CHAIR: Member for Elizabeth, listen to me.

Mr CREGAN: Are you withdrawing, or just—

The CHAIR: Member for Kavel, I am dealing with this. The member for Kavel has taken offence to the comment from the member for Elizabeth, and I am going to ask him to withdraw.

Mr ODENWALDER: I withdraw, sir.

The CHAIR: Thank you. That didn't take long.

Mr ODENWALDER: I would like to go to Budget Paper 5, Budget Measures Statement, page 32, regarding the SES and regarding the volunteer recruitment and retention program. Minister, is there a particular problem with retention and recruitment within the SES that does not exist within other emergency services organisations like the CFS and Surf Life Saving SA? Can you quantify that in any way?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: The SES serve in a wide range of roles, and they have certainly been tested this year—they have even been helping South Australia Police with COVID-related duties—and they do an absolutely amazing job. They are a multifunctional organisation that performs a range of activities. When they are not helping with floods, they could be helping with car accidents, with sandbagging, with all manner of volunteering roles.

Volunteering has some challenges right across the board in a whole range of volunteer organisations. There are a number of challenges in trying to recruit, engage and retain volunteers, so I would say it would be consistent. That is why it is important we as a government continue to invest in our SES, to make sure we do what we can to retain existing volunteers, keep them engaged but also recruit more volunteers.

I would not necessarily say it would be specific to the SES, but if the member is getting to why we are giving the money to the SES and not to other organisations, the answer to that is that it is an excellent budget program, and I understand this particular budget bid was knocked back time and time again. We are supporting our SES to continue to build their capability for what will ultimately result in a stronger and safer South Australia, but we have to continue to support our emergency services volunteers right across the spectrum.

Mr ODENWALDER: There was a media announcement of this program on 26 June, before the budget. Who organised the media announcement: your office or the SES?

Mr CREGAN: How is that possibly relevant? Which budget item does that relate to?

Mr ODENWALDER: It is relevant. There was an announcement about the spending of nearly a million dollars.

The CHAIR: I will accept the question. Whether the minister is able to answer or not is up to him.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I will take that on notice. I do not think I have taken any on notice.

Mr ODENWALDER: You do not know who organised it?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: The offices continually work together, but I will take that on notice. I do not have the information furnished in front of me.

The CHAIR: The minister has said he will take it on notice, so we will go the next question.

Mr ODENWALDER: Did the minister approve the invitation of Mr Graham Reynolds, the Liberal candidate for the seat of Wright, to the announcement?

Mr CREGAN: Point of order: which budget item does this relate to?

Mr ODENWALDER: It relates directly to the Budget Measures Statement. It relates to the announcement of the New Pathways: Volunteering Recruitment and Retention program, which costs a million dollars a year.

Mr Cregan interjecting:

Mr ODENWALDER: We are both such reserved people.

The CHAIR: That is right; it is the quiet ones you have to watch. Just before you answer, minister, I am going to ask the member for Elizabeth to articulate the budget line slowly and clearly for my country ear.

Mr ODENWALDER: Budget Measures Statement on page 32. It is a budget measure.

The Hon. L.W.K. Bignell interjecting:

The CHAIR: The nice thing about having to wear masks in the committee is that interjections are muffled.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Sometimes the questions are muffled without the masks, sir.

Mr ODENWALDER: I am asking if the minister approved the invitation of Graham Reynolds, who is the Liberal candidate for the seat of Wright.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I have just checked what I can at my end and it is not something that I was actually involved in. I was not involved in the guest list of that particular event.

Mr ODENWALDER: Who invited Mr Graham Reynolds, the Liberal candidate for the seat of Wright?

The CHAIR: I think it is a very tenuous link to the budget. You are asking very specific questions about an invitation list.

Mr ODENWALDER: We are talking about \$4.4 million in taxpayer money being announced before the budget. A candidate who is not even—

The CHAIR: I understand that, member for Elizabeth, but you have asked a very specific question about an invitation to an individual, who I am sure was one of many at this particular event.

Mr ODENWALDER: Indeed, and I will get to that; that is right. Can I continue with my questioning on that line?

The CHAIR: Let's see how we go.

Mr ODENWALDER: Because we understand the Chief Officer of the SES was there.

The CHAIR: That is a good thing.

Mr ODENWALDER: Do you think it is acceptable, minister, that non-elected political candidates, not MPs—I do not have a problem with other MPs being there, although I do note the member for Wright himself was not invited—stand behind heads of government departments to announce budget measures?

Mr CREGAN: Point of order: this clearly does not relate to any immediate budget line.

The CHAIR: I uphold that point of order. In fact, you are straying from the intent of the committee, in my view. Member for Elizabeth, let's go back to the budget and forget about invitation lists.

Mr ODENWALDER: I will go to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 88, which is ministerial responsibilities. How often do you meet with the Chief Officer of the SES?

Mr CREGAN: Point of order: again, Mr Chair, this does not relate specifically to a budget line. It might be a good question for question time, but it does not relate—

Mr ODENWALDER: Presumably the minister does have some responsibilities.

The CHAIR: In fact, I am going to allow that question because similar questions have been asked in this committee previously of other ministers. It is reasonable.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Volume 2, page 88?

Mr ODENWALDER: Ministerial responsibilities, yes. It is a simple line. It just says you are responsible for the SES.

The CHAIR: Member for Elizabeth, you have asked the question and I have allowed it. We will cease the commentary.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: How often do I meet with the chief officer is the question?

Mr ODENWALDER: Yes.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I meet with all the chief officers on a regular basis. We obviously have a structured process, but we meet regularly every fortnight at a minimum but often more often if the need arises.

Mr ODENWALDER: Does your Chief of Staff attend these meetings with all these chief officers?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Usually the Chief of Staff would attend—usually.

Mr ODENWALDER: Are you aware if the previous minister had similarly regularly scheduled meetings with chiefs of staff, and if his Chief of Staff also attended?

Mr CREGAN: Point of order.

The CHAIR: Bearing in mind, of course, that the current minister is not responsible at all for the actions of the previous minister.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Absolutely not responsible.

Mr CREGAN: And that is the point of order I maintain, sir.

Mr ODENWALDER: I am just asking if the minister is aware of the situation.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: With all respect, I am not responsible for the former minister.

The CHAIR: Your question was still in relation to a previous minister, so we will move on.

Mr ODENWALDER: Minister, when you took over the emergency services portfolio, which was a year yesterday I understand, were any allegations or complaints raised with you about bullying or intimidation by the former minister and/or his staff?

Mr CREGAN: Point of order: which budget line item does this relate to?

Mr ODENWALDER: It is about your responsibilities to your staff.

Mr CREGAN: I have not finished addressing the Chair.

The CHAIR: You have a point of order, member for Kavel.

Mr CREGAN: I do, sir, and that is that this does not relate specifically to a budget line item. Once again, it might be a good question for question time, if there are ever any good questions from this particular member in question time. I will leave that to other members to judge, but can I say that I maintain my point of order.

The CHAIR: I do uphold the point of order. Member for Elizabeth, you are asking questions of the current minister about a previous minister and their office. I understand where you are going with this. We are all aware of the media reports of the last couple of days—I understand that—and you are trying to build on that story, I guess. As I said earlier, I do not believe this minister is responsible in any way for the operation or actions of the previous minister in this portfolio.

Mr ODENWALDER: No, but my question was about any allegations or complaints raised with the current minister about any treatment of his staff or departmental staff by the former minister and his staff, whether any allegations were brought to him as minister.

Mr CREGAN: I maintain my point of order.

The CHAIR: Which is, member for Kavel?

Mr CREGAN: That this does not relate in any real way—

Mr ODENWALDER: To his ministerial responsibilities?

Mr CREGAN: —to a present budget line item on which this minister can be examined. To my earlier point, there might be a question in question time, perhaps not from this member, but there might be, and it could be put in that forum.

The CHAIR: Let me ask again of the member for Elizabeth: which specific budget reference?

Mr ODENWALDER: It is in reference to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 88, ministerial responsibilities. The minister is responsible for the overall oversight of the SES, and I am asking him, when he took over the portfolio, were any allegations raised with him about the previous minister and his staff's conduct toward his staff or departmental staff?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: No.

The CHAIR: There we go.

Mr ODENWALDER: I will go to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 68, which is about the SAFECOM workforce. Last year, we passed some important legislation, as the minister has alluded to, which effectively separated the role of the SAFECOM chief executive from the chair of the SAFECOM Board, which we supported. Subsequently, Mr Dominic Lane terminated his contract as the chief executive, and we saw the appointment of Julia Waddington-Powell, but I understand there is still an acting CE. When does Ms Waddington-Powell take up the position?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I thank the member for the question. I am advised Ms Waddington-Powell starts on Monday 2 August.

Mr ODENWALDER: Why did Mr Lane terminate his contract?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I will begin by saying that Dominic Lane served in an excellent manner. He is a proven person in the emergency services sector. He was originally from New South Wales and he relocated to South Australia, and he did an exceptional job steering the organisation through a period of a number of challenges.

I am advised that Mr Lane resigned in April to take up a new executive position in the New South Wales government. He now leads the Operational Management and Partnerships Division of Resilience, New South Wales. To be honest, he will be sadly missed because he was absolutely exceptional. However, we understand that he wanted to relocate back to New South Wales with his family, and I have no doubt that he will continue to serve in the emergency services sector with distinction.

Mr ODENWALDER: Did Mr Lane ever express any misgivings or opposition to the new structure as outlined in the legislation passed here?

Mr CREGAN: I object to this question on the basis that it calls for a reflection on a vote of the house—the legislation—not even by the member present but by somebody else who now does not even work for the government in South Australia.

Mr ODENWALDER: The minister referred to legislation throughout his opening statement and has referred to it constantly.

The CHAIR: I do not agree, member for Kavel, that it does reflect—

Mr ODENWALDER: And the vote has been done. The bill has been passed?

The CHAIR: It is not before the house.

Mr ODENWALDER: That is right.

The CHAIR: It has been passed. I do not believe that the question did reflect on the vote of the house: it was in relation to the former chief executive.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Did he have any opposition? No.

Mr ODENWALDER: Did any of the chiefs of agencies ever express any misgivings or opposition to the new structure?

Mr CREGAN: Which chiefs of agencies?

Mr ODENWALDER: The emergency services agencies, presumably. No?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Not that I call, no.

Mr ODENWALDER: Not that you recall—no misgivings, no problems with the new structure?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: No.

Mr CREGAN: Objection: 128, repetition. He has already answered the question.

Mr ODENWALDER: You can see why he is going back to the law, sir.

The CHAIR: I think that we will let that one go through to the keeper. The minister has answered no to two previous questions; am I correct minister?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I do not count, sir. I just focus on the one in front of me here. You are no doubt diligently counting them, but I am happy to take another question, sir.

The CHAIR: Excellent, I am glad you are.

Mr ODENWALDER: Suits us all. Did any of the chiefs of emergency services agencies ever express any misgivings about the leadership style of the previous chief executive either in his role as chief executive or as chair of the SAFECOM Board?

Mr CREGAN: I object, sir, I just cannot see which budget line item this relates to.

Mr ODENWALDER: He was a member of the SAFECOM workforce.

Mr CREGAN: That is very remote and tenuous. Which budget line item?

The CHAIR: It is very tenuous. In fact, the question as it was posed was to the minister, but in fact it could be taken far more generally, that is: was there any complaint or concern to anybody? I do not think it was very specific at all. Member for Elizabeth, we have time for one last probing question on the budget.

Mr ODENWALDER: I like to stick firmly to the budget, sir. One question, it is so hard to choose which question. I refer to the Budget Measures Statement, page 33, the Willaston SES unit. Was the minister aware of the advocacy of the member for Light for an SES unit based at Willaston, and was this a factor in the decision for the government to announce this new facility in Willaston?

Mr CREGAN: Perhaps the member can assist me with a budget line item here?

Mr ODENWALDER: Page 33 of the Budget Measures Statement.

The CHAIR: Certainly, on page 33 there is quite specific mention of the Willaston SES unit. Minister, the question is: were you aware of the member for Light's advocacy? Correct?

Mr ODENWALDER: Yes, that is right, and did the member for Light's advocacy prompt this announcement.

The CHAIR: Prompt?

Mr ODENWALDER: Prompt, or did it play any role in the announcement? Would the government have announced a Willaston SES station independent of the knowledge that the member for Light had been advocating for it for at least two years?

Mr CREGAN: I think that is your third attempt at putting that question.

Mr ODENWALDER: It is a clarification.

The CHAIR: Any—

Members interjecting:

The CHAIR: Order! We have soaked up far too much time in this committee on argy-bargy and probably, member for Elizabeth, you have not got through all the questions you wanted to as a result. My comment to that would be that the role of any MP—

Mr Cregan interjecting:

The CHAIR: Member for Kavel! If I have to call you all to order again I am going to warn you. My comment in relation to that question is that any good member of parliament will advocate for their electorate to the government.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: All I will say is that funding has been provided to the SES and CFS for the development of a concept plan for a joint facility at Willaston. A total of \$100,000 has been allocated, with \$80,000 provided to the CFS and \$20,000 to the SES. I would say that Willaston is a beautiful part of the world, and I would say that it would have the bipartisan support of all parties for improvements in the emergency services in that part of the world.

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

Sitting suspended from 10:31 to 10:45.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr G. Stevens, Commissioner of Police.

Mr B. Cagialis, Head of Finance and Procurement, South Australia Police.

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

Mr S. Watkins, Governance and Capability Service, South Australia Police.

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

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Thank you, Mr Chair, and good morning, members. Of course, I acknowledge a man who needs no introduction to my left, Commissioner Grant Stevens, the Commissioner of Police. On the second table is Mr Steve Johninke, Director, Business Service, South Australia Police, and also Bill Cagialis, Head of Finance and Procurement at SAPOL. In the third row, we also have Superintendent Simon Watkins, Governance and Capability Service at SAPOL.

Consistent with my earlier approach, I have a brief opening statement. I would like to take the opportunity to thank everyone at SAPOL from the commissioner down for their extraordinary work over the last 12 months and indeed since March 2020. Not only have they had up to 600 officers dedicated to COVID-19 operations each day but they have continued to work around the clock to protect our community as much as possible from COVID-19, and non-COVID duties have also continued. I think we can all agree that the results SAPOL have achieved have been outstanding.

This budget takes our government's commitment to \$98.9 million over the forward estimates towards managing the state's response to COVID-19, including costs related to border patrols, medi-hotel security, cross-border travel authorisations and also compliance activities. This includes funding for 72 extra police officers and 168 additional protective security officers to work in our medi-hotels. The funding also supports the employment of SES volunteers for broader COVID-related activities.

Importantly, as pressing as the pandemic has been, as a government we are also ensuring that we have invested in initiatives to bolster SAPOL's traditional policing capabilities, investing \$21.1 million over three years to complete the implementation of stages 3 and 4 of the Shield project, the primary SAPOL information, data and records management system linking directly with other justice sector agencies, to improve collaboration and also data sharing capabilities. This investment also builds on the \$34.9 million we announced last year for the mobile workforce transformation project, which will deliver SAPOL personnel with the tools and resources they need to police in the modern world.

I will not take up any more time with my opening statement, but I would also like to place on the record again my sincere thanks to all our SAPOL personnel, in particular the commissioner for his stellar leadership of SAPOL during what has been a very challenging time.

The CHAIR: Does the member for Elizabeth wish to make an opening statement?

Mr ODENWALDER: Very briefly, and I want to echo the minister's comments about the commissioner and SAPOL during the COVID response. I am sure you are sick of platitudes by now, but it is true that we are very lucky in this state to be served by SAPOL and with you as the head. I do not think you would want to be anywhere else.

My office, as you probably know, is a sort of lightning rod for people who from time to time complain about the police or police activities, but I can safely say that I do not think I have heard any complaints through my office about the COVID response particularly or about anyone affected by the COVID response in terms of the way the police have behaved, so I do want to commend both SAPOL and the commissioner for their work.

I will start with COVID and refer to Budget Paper 5, Budget Measures Statement, page 69. This is funding essentially to extend the employment of 54 PSOs and an additional 114 PSOs specifically to deal with COVID. How long is the training period for these recruits and how long are their individual contracts?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I thank the member for the question. As the member points out, a number of extra recruits have been enabled. I am informed that training goes for nine weeks, contracts go for 12 months and then in addition to that there is nine-week training.

Mr ODENWALDER: What is the timetable for recruitment? When will the first of this 114 begin actual work and when will the last of the 114 finish their 12-month contract?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: The supplementary resourcing plan had included temporary replacement of 28 protective security officers within government establishments. That measure has concluded. PSOs have resumed their former responsibilities. So, in terms of the 54, the additional 54 PSOs were also to be recruited to support COVID operations and maintain the protective security capability of SAPOL.

The last of the additional 54 PSOs completed their training and graduated on 28 May 2021. A further commitment to recruit an additional 72 sworn recruits was also undertaken and now that has also been fulfilled. A course of 24 sworn recruits commenced on 25 March 2021, and that accounts for the finalisation of that additional 72 sworn officers.

Mr ODENWALDER: There are 114 PSOs in the pipeline. When will the last one of those finish their contract, assuming they all serve a 12-month contract?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: We have two courses to finish to complete that commitment and, that will depend on timing and resources, but September and November are when those contracts will start.

Mr ODENWALDER: Of the first courses? I am wondering at what point will this PSO complement end, assuming it is all 12-month contracts.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: All of those, after their nine-week courses, will be out by Christmas, trained by Christmas.

Mr ODENWALDER: This year. So the complement will end at Christmas next year, seeing they only serve a 12-month contract. Presumably, that is the completion.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: All subject to timing, resources and I suppose the dynamic environment that we are in. Obviously, as a government, we will continue to work closely with SAPOL and provide whatever support we need to.

Mr ODENWALDER: Will these new PSOs have any duties beyond medi-hotels?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I thank the member for Elizabeth for the question. They could potentially be used in a whole variety of different roles. They are obviously trained in a multidiscipline capacity. They are trained as PSOs, so they could also be utilised for other jobs as well.

Mr ODENWALDER: Will they be used, for instance, at border security or be involved in any compliance, whether it is business compliance or patrolling?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Although SA Health took over compliance duties from 1 July, obviously SAPOL continues to support with operational requirements. We have committed those 168 PSOs to COVID duties. They could also be involved in assisting at medi-hotels and also borders as operational requirements determine.

Mr ODENWALDER: The current PSOs, including the recently graduated PSOs, are they all fully vaccinated against COVID-19?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I thank the member for the question. Although I do not think there is a budget reference, I will answer it in good faith. In terms of vaccinations and the status of COVID vaccinations for SAPOL, in the week commencing 12 April SAPOL commenced a COVID-19 vaccination program in conjunction with SA Health. SAPOL's COVID-19 vaccination program has evolved to accommodate the changes implemented by SA Health.

SAPOL members have been offered vaccinations through the online booking systems with local health networks—northern, southern and central—and the Wayville showgrounds and the newly established clinics (north and south). These options have been in addition to members attending their own private medical practitioners. Rural and remote SAPOL members have also been provided with various options for attending regional local health network clinics. In accordance with the Office of the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment recommendations, members are permitted to attend vaccination locations during work time.

Although COVID-19 vaccination is not mandatory, regular reminders are scheduled to prompt members to also book in. SAPOL employees working in medi-hotels are required to be vaccinated with at least the first dose. If they decline to undertake vaccination, they are replaced. SAPOL employees have also been offered the influenza vaccine, which must be administered 14 days before/after the COVID-19 vaccine. The potential impact of this has also been factored into logistics and workplace planning.

Members are probably interested in some numbers. SAPOL is collaborating with SA Health regarding access to employee vaccination information and stats. Preliminary reporting as at 30 June indicates thus far that at that time 23 per cent of SAPOL staff are now fully vaccinated, having received two doses. Also, a certain number had received their first dose. Of course, it is much better than the broader community but obviously we continue to encourage people to get their vaccinations.

Mr ODENWALDER: Will the 114 PSOs provided for by this budget measure be required to be vaccinated against COVID?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I thank the member for Elizabeth for the question. I am advised that members will only be deployed to sterile corridors or medi-hotels if they are vaccinated.

Mr ODENWALDER: It will not be a condition of employment for the new PSO recruits to be fully vaccinated at the time of their appointment as recruits or by the time they leave the academy?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: It is a condition of their employment.

Mr ODENWALDER: It is a condition of employment?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Yes.

Mr ODENWALDER: So if they apply for a PSO position and they refuse to be vaccinated they will be discarded as a potential recruit?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I am advised that they would not come into that process unless they were prepared to be vaccinated because they know the sort of work that they will be undertaking.

Mr ODENWALDER: Will future intakes of sworn police recruits be required to vaccinate or is it the same conditions as you previously outlined for current police?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I thank the member for Elizabeth for the question. I am advised there has been no change to the overall recruiting requirements.

Mr ODENWALDER: Minister, are you satisfied that everything is being done to prevent the transmission to police officers or PSOs posted to quarantine hotels?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: What page—

Mr ODENWALDER: Is there more that you think could be done?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: What budget line are we talking about?

Mr ODENWALDER: I am talking about COVID-19 resources; I am talking about the Budget Measures Statement, page 69.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: In response to the question, am I satisfied, yes, I am satisfied that all that can be done is being done. Obviously, it goes without saying that South Australia Police is an acclaimed world-leading law enforcement agency. There are very strict processes in place. There are often refresher courses. PPE is specific and targeted and some of the best. There continues to be wide supervision, continuing improvements—and, yes, I am certainly satisfied. That said, we will continue as a government to work with SAPOL and provide whatever resources need to be provided if they are requested in relation to better protection.

Mr ODENWALDER: Is it your advice from your agency that the current hotel quarantine system is the best and safest quarantine available?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I think that is more of an SA Health question, but what I will say is that I am certainly satisfied it is being strictly managed. I think it is the best option available in South Australia at the moment, and it is doing so well because of the fundamentally important role that SAPOL is playing in this regard.

Mr ODENWALDER: Have you received any advice that that system could be improved, that there are better and safer quarantine options possible?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: With all respect, I have not, but that is a matter for SA Health.

Mr ODENWALDER: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 204, Program 3, Sub-program 2.1: Activity Indicators, talking about detections of drug driving, detections of drink-driving, number of expiation notices and so on. Minister, how many letters do you receive from MPs about traffic issues in their electorates that you are asked to investigate? I appreciate you may have to take that particular one on notice.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: What I can say is that I went from being the one who wrote a lot of letters to having to respond to a lot of letters. I will just see if I have any figures on that. Would you like to clarify a time period at all, like last year or—

Mr ODENWALDER: Yes, last financial year. I am happy if you want to take that one on notice; I am not asking for a specific number.

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

Mr ODENWALDER: Can you expand on the process that goes on when you receive those letters? Do you always pass those letters on to SAPOL on every occasion?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I would say it would be consistent with the practice when former ministers have been in this role in terms of the actual logistics, the chain of command and the process. Again, I can take that question on notice and come back to the member with specifics as to exactly who touches the letter, when, who receives it, all of that. I can give you specifics on that, but I am advised that my office's process is to refer it to SAPOL, and there is a process from there.

Mr ODENWALDER: Who in SAPOL are these letters referred to in the first instance? You do not need to name them.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: We would refer them to the commissioner's office.

Mr ODENWALDER: What is your understanding of what SAPOL does with those letters?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: It would depend on the nature of them, but I would say they are diligently managed, referred to a relevant manager and, depending on the detail, a response would be formulated.

Mr ODENWALDER: So your understanding is that they are passed on through a sort of management line to the relevant section, presumably mostly Traffic. Is that your understanding?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: That is what I am advised. Obviously it depends on the nature, but initially we would send something to the commissioner's office and, depending on its nature, it would be delegated to the relevant manager, detail would be provided, and then a suitable response would be formulated from there.

Mr ODENWALDER: Would a letter from an MP go anywhere else other than SAPOL from your office?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Are you asking if a letter was sent to my office?

Mr ODENWALDER: Yes. If a letter is sent to your office, is there a process by which it would go anywhere else other than to SAPOL, to the commissioner's office, from your office? I am referring particularly to traffic matters.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: It would just depend on the nature of the letter. It just depends on what was contained in it. Could you be a bit more specific?

Mr ODENWALDER: Well, I will try. I am asking you—

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: The process would be consistent with what has been done in the past. There has been no deviation from any other policy.

Mr ODENWALDER: I have never been lucky enough to be the Minister for Police, so bear with me. You say that a letter regarding a local traffic matter from an MP would go to SAPOL, and I understand that. Would there be an occasion when it would go anywhere else other than to SAPOL from your office?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Again, what I would be happy to do is take on notice the process by which the letters are responded to. I think that would go a long way to answering all these hypothetical questions, which I think they are. The process would be consistent with former undertakings. My office's process is to refer a matter like that to SAPOL. Of course, it would depend on the nature of the allegation and that sort of thing, but usually they would send it, I am informed, to the relevant manager, details would be obtained and a response would be formulated.

The CHAIR: Member for Elizabeth, do you have a specific example in mind?

Mr ODENWALDER: I do not, but there are some questions from the member for Badcoe, I believe.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I try to hand sign them, too, because I do try to give members that respect. I look at the final letters and I try to hand sign them, especially the member for Elizabeth's.

Ms STINSON: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 204, following on from my colleague's same budget line. As the member for Badcoe, I sent you a letter, dated 28 June 2021, on behalf of a North Plympton constituent about that person's concerns that local traffic laws in his street were not being complied with. I will now hand up a copy for your information.

The CHAIR: These can be circulated, I understand.

Ms STINSON: Yes, I understand that they are not tabled as such but can be provided. I might provide you a second for the commissioner. I might just note that I understand that these are not tabled and therefore do not become part of the official record, but if for some reason they do I would appreciate if the personal details of the constituent were removed before being released to the public at all. I have included them to aid the minister in tracking down the letter. My question, minister, is: can you tell me what you did with this letter?

The CHAIR: Just for clarification, member for Badcoe, this particular paper will not be circulated beyond the committee today.

Ms STINSON: That is my understanding of the process of this committee; however, if it were to be circulated further, I would ask that the private details are not disclosed.

The CHAIR: I understand that.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I can confirm for the member for Badcoe that I have the letter in front of me whereby the member for Badcoe has written on behalf of a constituent about a traffic matter in a suburb that I believe is in her electorate. This certainly has been written to the relevant address and is in my portfolio area.

Obviously, the member for Badcoe could have furnished me with this letter, say, yesterday, the day before or the day before that and I would have been able to prepare an answer. Since it is a question without notice, what I would say is that it depends on the type of information contained in the letter. What would happen is that would be referred to South Australia Police, who would usually refer that sort of letter to a relevant manager.

Detail would be obtained in regard to it, and I may or may not have already responded to that. But I am sure that, given the time, if a response has not been prepared back to the member for Badcoe, it is imminent. I have been subsequently informed that I signed by hand a response earlier this morning on this exact matter.

Ms STINSON: Thank you, I appreciate that. I have no complaint with the speed of your office, I have to say. You always respond to my letters quite promptly.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: We do try.

Ms STINSON: For the sake of completeness, I can confirm that you sent me an acknowledgment letter on 5 July, but thus far I have not received a substantive response. Could you possibly run me through who in your office would have handled the letter or any further detail about the handling in your office of this letter?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Again, I would say that a response to this letter, broadly speaking, would be entirely consistent with other letters that are written in regard to traffic. It would depend on the nature of the letter, but we would send these letters to SAPOL for their consideration. They would then send it off to a relevant manager, depending on the type of concern that was raised, and then detail would have to be obtained in relation to that letter.

For example, it has just been brought to my attention in relation to the letter at hand that SAPOL would usually obtain some detail, and this would be operational detail. In this particular case, I am advised that a senior member of SAPOL actually contacted the gentleman to discuss their concerns. I will not mention names to respect the anonymity of the constituent, but I am informed that the resident at that stage did appear pleased with that contact that was made by police.

I am also advised that in the first week of July members of the road policing section actually attended at this location on multiple occasions—I think six occasions. As a result, 64 expiations were issued for disobeying the no left turn sign, and of those 12 were actually heavy vehicles. I am also informed that the road policing section will continue to monitor and police that location to prevent and detect any unlawful driving behaviour.

So it seems to have been quite a thorough response by the road policing section. From all accounts that I have, I would have subsequently signed a reply, I would have done it by hand and the member for Badcoe will be able to receive that correspondence and send it to her constituent.

Ms STINSON: I do appreciate the information you have just provided, but the question I asked was around who in your office—and I do not need their name obviously—would have handled this letter and what they would have done with it. I would appreciate if you could provide any information about what advice or recommendations might have gone from your office to the police about actions in relations to this letter.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: What I will do with all these specific questions is answer them in the way I have been consistently answering them by saying that with any sort of MP to MP contact regarding, say, traffic infringements like this one here, it would depend on the nature of the comments, but it would be sent to SAPOL, who would then send it to a relevant manager. They would obtain operational detail, as they have in this particular situation here, a response would be

formulated, I would sign that response if I was satisfied with it and it would be sent to the MP. When I answer the other question for the member for Elizabeth, hopefully that will shed light on the question the member for Badcoe has.

Ms STINSON: To be a little bit more specific, do you recall or are you aware of any conversations that you or any of your staff have had with police about action that should be taken in relation to the letter?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: As I said, obviously actions arising from this letter would be highly operational in terms of day-to-day policing duty. I would be a very brave minister to tell the commissioner what to do operationally—because he needs no help from me, let me tell you.

From an operational point of view, police would handle that response. In terms of an MP writing to me, my aim is to provide an extensive and thorough response that action is seen to and that the member of parliament—whichever member of parliament of whatever persuasion—get the information they can use to then respond to their constituent, and I would do that in a bipartisan way.

Ms STINSON: Minister, can you explain how this letter ended up in the hands of at least one police officer, was photocopied numerous times and handed out to members of the public on the streets of North Plympton, in my electorate, on up to six separate occasions on 7, 8 and 9 July?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I am not sure how this actually relates to a budget line now. I have no information in front of me to suggest how that may or may not have occurred. What I would say is that if what is stemming from this is some sort of complaint, then I would say that SAPOL does have formal complaint processes and mechanisms in place to make sure that there would be an unbiased and objective view of the complaint. However, I have no information in front of me about that matter.

The CHAIR: Member for Badcoe, I might just say that it has been a little bit like drawing teeth.

Ms STINSON: I am getting quite directly to the point now, sir.

The CHAIR: I gather that.

Ms STINSON: My next question is: is it usual that a police officer would tell motorists, when pulling them over and getting them out of their cars and fining them, that if they have a problem with their fine they can 'blame this MP' and hand them a copy of a private constituent letter that I wrote to you with my details and image on it? Is that a usual practice?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Again, I am not sure how that relates to any—

The CHAIR: Minister, in your previous answer you referred to the Police Complaints Authority. Far be it from me to tell you how to respond to this letter, but—

Ms STINSON: Come on!

The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL: This is a letter from a member of parliament under parliamentary privilege to a minister. This is a very serious allegation, a very serious matter, and it should be answered here today.

Ms STINSON: This is quite consistent with the budget line.

The CHAIR: The minister has been answering questions. As I said, it has been a bit like drawing teeth. I understand that both the member for Elizabeth and the member for Badcoe have been building a case—

Ms STINSON: Well, we are trying to get information.

The CHAIR: —and we have ultimately got to the point where the primary question has been asked.

Ms STINSON: With respect, sir, I do have some other rather pertinent questions to ask. I think it is entirely consistent with the budget line, and I would appreciate the opportunity to continue the question. I will do it as briefly as possible, sir.

The CHAIR: Just for the committee's reference, I am assuming that we are still on page 204 of Volume 3, targets 2020-21: 'Continue to target dangerous driving behaviours such as speeding, distraction, drink and drug driving.'

Ms STINSON: Yes, sir.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Thank you, sir. I thank the member for Badcoe for the question. If the member for Badcoe does have any complaint, and it sounds like this is of a complaint-type nature, then obviously there is a process in place to make any such complaints about police. I will take that as a complaint.

Ms STINSON: I am complaining about your activities. I wrote to you.

The CHAIR: Order, member for Badcoe! I missed your interjection, and the minister was halfway through answering your original question.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Quite clearly this is a complaint, and it will be treated as a complaint accordingly. There is a process in place. If there is a complaint to be made, then the member for Badcoe should make it in accordance with the process that is set out about this matter or any other matter. If it is a matter of a complaint against police, then it should be dealt with in that fashion.

The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL: Point of order, sir. This is not a complaint against the police as much as it is a complaint against the minister and how a letter, under parliamentary privilege from a member of parliament on behalf of her constituent, goes to a minister of the Crown and then is dispersed. The minister has responsibility and he has responsibility to this house and to the people of South Australia to answer those questions in here today, and to do anything else just smells like rotten fish.

The CHAIR: I think the minister has answered each and every question in relation to this to the best of his ability. The assertion is that this letter was publicised in a public place and handed around. How that came about is unknown.

Ms STINSON: That is why I am asking about it.

The CHAIR: It is probably unknown to the minister—

Ms STINSON: He can take questions on notice.

The CHAIR: —and he is suggesting ways by which we can achieve answers to that. He may not have that answer today.

Ms STINSON: I understand that, sir.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: There is nothing before me to suggest that there is absolutely anything that is out of the ordinary about this particular matter. It is entirely a matter for SAPOL. If the member for Badcoe does have a complaint, I would encourage her to abide by that complaints process. If she has any other information, I am more than happy to refer it to the commissioner's office for appropriate investigation, but I have nothing else in front of me about that particular issue. To my knowledge, there has been nothing but standard practice that has been applied in this instance. I do not have any other information in front of me about that matter.

Mr PEDERICK: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 199. Can the minister advise how the government is supporting SAPOL's Crime and Criminal Justice Services program and how successful the program has been in the past 12 months?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I appreciate the member for Hammond's interest in law and order. It has been a real privilege to be able to attend several police stations in his particular electorate. As all of us here would know, over the past nearly 18 months there has been much focus on the outstanding work that SAPOL is doing in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the apprehension of nearly 90 alleged offenders in early June as part of Operation Ironside may have come as a surprise to some.

However, throughout the pandemic the commissioner and his team have worked extremely hard to ensure that the more traditional policing activities and operations continue, and continue they have. On 7 June 2021, or Resolution Day as it was known, Operation Ironside culminated in SAPOL

seizing 600 mobile phones, 80 of which have been identified as ANOM devices; 90 kilos of methylamphetamine; 354 kilos of cannabis; 45 litres of fantasy; 10,000 ecstasy pills; and 30 illegal firearms. Assets valued at over \$11 million, including cars, boats and bank accounts, have also been seized.

Operation Ironside was initially launched in October 2018 by the Australian Federal Police, with SAPOL becoming involved in early 2020, focusing heavily on outlaw motorcycle gangs. I raise the successes of Operation Ironside not only to congratulate all the SAPOL personnel involved in the operation, particularly Assistant Commissioner Peter Harvey and Chief Superintendent Steve Taylor, but also to highlight the stellar results that a well-resourced police force can achieve.

Since coming to government, we have invested more than \$270 million in additional funding for SAPOL, including \$8½ million for new custom-made, state-of-the-art bullet and stab-resistant vests. There is a lot of excitement out there. Some of the SAPOL officers I have spoken to are looking forward to getting these because it is important that officers on the frontline, who execute operations like Ironside, can be as safe as possible.

Of course, we are the first ever South Australian government to invest directly in Crime Stoppers, with more than \$800,000 in funding announced last year. Taking an average of over 2,000 calls per month in 2021, Crime Stoppers is a valuable partner of SAPOL and the information Crime Stoppers receives assists SAPOL to achieve some very impressive results. For example, in December 2020, information obtained by Crime Stoppers helped to locate a large-scale greenhouse cannabis crop, which contained 7,300 cannabis plants and also 330 kilos of dried cannabis.

Investments are targeted and they support SAPOL to deliver what are very tangible results. Indeed, offences against property have decreased during 2021 by 17.4 per cent, or just under 16½ thousand offences, compared with 2019-20. We will continue to build on these successes and invest in the tools and resources that SAPOL need to keep South Australia safe and strong.

The CHAIR: Before I call the member for Badcoe, I might speak to the matter of privilege. Ultimately, I would defer to the Speaker of course, but my understanding is that correspondence between MPs, in the broad, has privilege over it, and if there was a concern that privilege had been breached then that is a matter for the house itself to decide. It is all a matter of precedent and it has not, in this jurisdiction at least, been common for privilege to be raised over correspondence, but it has been so in other jurisdictions. I would remind members that privilege can be determined by the house as a whole if it deems necessary.

Mr ODENWALDER: I refer back to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 204, the activity indicators. Given the minister's previous assurances that he will look into this matter and provide some sort of response to some of the questions raised already, does he acknowledge that a police officer issuing this type of letter to a constituent is completely inappropriate?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I refer to my earlier statements. We have traversed this matter comprehensively and I said that if there is a complaint—

Mr ODENWALDER: Do you think it is inappropriate? It is a simple question. You are the police minister.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: If there is a complaint, then it will be dealt with appropriately. Let's call it a complaint. If it is made, there will be an objective and impartial investigation into what, if anything, occurred.

Mr ODENWALDER: Into your office? Into what happened once the letter landed in your office?

The CHAIR: No, member for Elizabeth.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: This is now a hypothetical matter that has no relevance to any budget line.

Mr ODENWALDER: It is not a hypothetical matter; it is a letter that was sent to you.

Mr Pederick interjecting:

The CHAIR: Order! If I can speak now, member for Hammond. We have been on this particular topic for some time now. I think we have gone as far as we are going to go with it today. The minister is suggesting that there is an appropriate complaints process—I might be paraphrasing you here, minister—that can be used on this occasion; is that correct?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Certainly. I have no additional information before me to speak to the matter, but we will certainly look into it, as we have pointed out.

Mr ODENWALDER: With respect, sir, may I speak to your ruling?

The CHAIR: Yes.

Mr ODENWALDER: You rightly point out that there are avenues to complain about actions of police officers. What we are questioning here is the minister and his handling of the letter. This letter was sent to him. It was not sent directly to the commissioner. It was sent to him, and the member for Badcoe is clearly trying to establish what happened once it left her office and arrived at his office and then what happened in the interim before it reached the police officer on the street. There are three stages to this, not just SAPOL.

The CHAIR: You have asked questions about all those stages today in this committee. You have asked about them. The minister has given some indication as to the process in his office and he has taken on notice that he will get back and clarify that process within his office; am I right?

The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL: Point of order: it is not up to the Chair to determine what questions we ask. I have sat in the ministerial chair and I have been subjected to lots of questions during estimates and you cop them and you answer them. Here we have something pointing to something very, very fishy indeed, and the people who have these accusations should be allowed to raise them and the minister should answer them honestly.

The CHAIR: I do not disagree with your assertion that it is not for the Chair to decide what questions are asked; in fact, I have never done that. I have always tried to be as fair and as broad as I can with my chairing of these committees. It seems to me that questions have been asked about the process within the minister's office—that is the primary point of your questioning—and some 10 minutes ago the minister addressed that. If you would like to reiterate a response in relation to the processes in his office—because that is what it is about now in this chamber rather than the process once it moved on from the minister's office to SAPOL. Am I summarising this correctly?

Mr ODENWALDER: With respect, sir, you have summarised things correctly thus far, but you cannot predict what the member for Badcoe's questions will be. If she asks questions on the same budget line, you cannot presume that the minister has already answered those questions until you hear the questions.

The CHAIR: That is a fair point, member for Elizabeth. The minister is taking advice now and looks to me like he is getting ready to respond.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: If a letter was referred to SAPOL from our office, it would have been done as a standard process. What happens beyond that is up to SAPOL. I will certainly ask SAPOL to make inquiries but, as I said, no-one can also predict the outcome of a complaint—it is clearly a complaint—and I think that this matter has been traversed comprehensively now. I think there is really no more to say on this issue.

Mr ODENWALDER: That is up to the committee.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: There is nothing but standard procedure, to my knowledge, that has been followed.

The CHAIR: I am happy to take another question.

Mr ODENWALDER: On that, SAPOL set aside, can the minister guarantee that no-one in his office, including himself, supplied this letter to any third party other than SAPOL?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I think that is an absolutely ridiculous allegation to make.

Mr ODENWALDER: Can you guarantee it? Will you guarantee it? I am not making an allegation, I am asking a question.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I have absolutely nothing in front of me to suggest that. It is absolutely appalling.

Mr ODENWALDER: I am asking a question. Is it a no or yes?

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

Mr ODENWALDER: Can you guarantee it?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: A letter was referred to SAPOL—

Mr ODENWALDER: Yes, I understand that point.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: —from our office in standard process—

Mr ODENWALDER: We are asking about before that.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: What happens beyond that—

Mr PEDERICK: This is not a debate.

Mr ODENWALDER: It is a debate.

The CHAIR: It is a debate and debates occur in this place without interjection. Member for Elizabeth, you have asked your question.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: As I said, sir, I refer to my earlier statements.

Ms STINSON: I refer you to the response that you provided before the member for Hammond's question in which you stated that in relation to this matter nothing was inconsistent with previous practice. If the handling of this matter is consistent with your usual practice, then my question is: has any other private communication that I have sent to you on behalf of my constituents been distributed to the public in the way that this letter has been?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Not that I am aware of, but the commissioner has since informed me that he considers the nature of this issue to constitute a complaint. It will be formally registered and dealt with as a complaint. I hope that goes some way to allay the member's concern. This will be looked at by the commissioner.

The CHAIR: So that I am clear, is that complaint registered today from this committee?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: It will be recorded as a complaint against police and dealt with accordingly.

The CHAIR: Thank you.

Ms STINSON: I would like to take issue with that. I am not making a complaint against the police and neither are my constituents. My constituents who have raised this matter with me and I are concerned about how a letter that I wrote on behalf of my constituents to the minister has ended up being distributed on the streets of North Plympton, photocopied many, many times and handed out to motorists. Those motorists were handed the letter and told that if they had a problem with getting a fine that they should contact 'this lady', 'this woman', 'this girl' and should complain to me as the local member of parliament.

In addition to that, my constituents have raised with me that they understood that the operation itself was conducted purely on the say-so of me as the member of parliament. They are very concerned about that, that a member of parliament would have the ability to direct the police in such a way and that that is how things were presented to them on the day when they got the fine. They were told words to the effect that 'This operation is happening because of your local MP. Here is the letter that she wrote. If you have a problem with it, go and call your local MP.'

It was not described to them that this was a matter of law enforcement and that people had broken the law and, therefore, were being fined. They were handed letters upon being pulled over, told that the reason why they were being pulled over was that I, as the member for Badcoe, had instructed the police to conduct an operation. They were given a letter with my details on it raising the traffic matters in that district as proof that the operation was happening at the direction of the local MP. I can understand why people would be concerned—

The CHAIR: Of course, we all know that is not correct.

Ms STINSON: —that their local MP was able to direct police operations.

The CHAIR: We all know that is not correct.

Ms STINSON: And I am trying to find out why on earth that would happen, indeed if it has happened before. This is, I think, the third time I have written to the minister over 3½ years about this particular area, and naturally I am concerned about what has happened on those previous occasions. Have my private letters been distributed on those previous occasions to people in North Plympton or on many other occasions when I have rightly raised road safety issues with the minister's office?

I am almost speechless about the fact that this has occurred, and I think this is the correct forum for me to be able to ask questions of the minister, to ask the questions that I am seeking answers to and also that my constituents are seeking answers to about why on earth they would be pulled over, given a fine and be told that it is their local MP's fault and, if they have a problem with their fine, it is not to be taken up with police, it is to be taken up with their local politician who is exercising her right to advocate on behalf of constituents about road safety.

So that is the nature of my complaint. It is not about the police per se. It is about what happens when I raise an issue with the minister about policing matters and how a letter that I have written privately on behalf of my constituent could be distributed through the streets. Naturally, there are consequences as well for my constituent. It would not take too much for people to figure out who my constituent was considering that a letter on his behalf was distributed to complete strangers. Obviously, we have learned today there are 64 of them—maybe more—who received this letter.

I think this situation is bizarre, entirely unethical, completely offensive and is not in keeping with the proper discharge of police operations that are entirely separate from political activities.

The CHAIR: So you have given what I will take as commentary and background to your line of questioning.

Ms STINSON: Indeed, sir. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Are you able to tell the committee, and you may have already touched on this, who handed the letters out in the first instance?

Ms STINSON: I do not have the name of an officer, sir. I have not sought that information.

The CHAIR: No—when it was circulated publicly.

Ms STINSON: The information that has been provided to me from my constituents, and others who are not my constituents, is that they were pulled over on those three occasions, six operations, morning and night of those three dates in early July. Some of them were asked to leave their vehicles. They were handed a letter of mine, which I have distributed, and they were told that they were getting a fine of many hundreds of dollars and that the reason they were getting it was that the local MP had directed the police to conduct an operation.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: That does sound like a complaint about police actions. As I have said respectfully on a number of occasions, there is a process by which that can be registered. The commissioner did consider the nature of this matter to constitute a complaint. It will be formally registered and dealt with as a complaint. It is clearly a complaint about an operational aspect.

The member would appreciate that I have no role in day-to-day SAPOL operational matters as minister. A letter may have been referred to SAPOL from our office in what would be nothing but the standard process, and it is entirely consistent sometimes for a minister's office to send a letter out to an agency for their attention. It is nothing but an entirely consistent approach here. I do not have specifics. I understand what the member is saying, and I understand the allegations that are being made, but certainly nothing is due to the conduct of my office in this regard.

Ms STINSON: Minister, can you guarantee that neither you nor your staff in your office handled my correspondence inappropriately or provided inappropriate direction to the police about how to respond to this letter?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Yes.

Ms STINSON: Will the commissioner investigate your office in relation to this matter?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I think I have referred to and reflected on this enough. As you pointed out, the commissioner has considered the nature of this issue to constitute a complaint. It will be formally registered and dealt with as a complaint. If there are any other complaints about any other correspondence or the way it has been handled, there are other ways that those complaints can also be made, but I have nothing before me to suggest that anything has been inappropriate.

The member also has a number of reporting obligations and, if she has any information before her, she might want to consider what those obligations are and she might want to report those accordingly.

Ms STINSON: I am aware of those obligations, thank you, minister. Will you ask the commissioner as part of this matter to investigate your office and what happened with this letter in your office?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: As I said, I think we have dealt with this enough. To be honest with you, as I said, if I have signed the response to the member this morning—

Ms STINSON: You have not answered that question.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: —I would have thought that nothing but standard procedure has been followed. I have no other information to suggest otherwise.

Ms STINSON: So it is standard procedure to hand out private correspondence and tell people that they should blame their local MP if they get a traffic infringement notice; is that your assertion?

The CHAIR: Member for Badcoe, I am not going to stop the line of questioning if you are not ready to move on, but we have canvassed this issue broadly now and I think we have everything on the record.

Ms STINSON: I have some further questions, sir—

The CHAIR: You have further questions?

Ms STINSON: —including the question I just asked; that is, the minister just reflected that nothing has happened with this matter that is not standard procedure. Therefore, is it standard procedure for police to hand out letters written by MPs to ministers to people as part of traffic operations?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: It is the member's prerogative to pursue what I think is a very aggressive line of questioning. That is entirely reasonable for her to do but, with respect, I think I have answered a number of questions to the best of my knowledge and ability. We have highlighted that the commissioner does consider the nature of this to constitute a complaint. It will be formally registered and dealt with as a complaint, and I do not think I, respectfully, have anything else to add on this particular topic. This whole subject came as a surprise to me. I have only learnt about it from the member in this place today.

The CHAIR: We have spent nearly an hour on this particular issue. Once again, not that I am going to stop the committee from pursuing it but, member for Badcoe, you still have some questions to go?

Ms STINSON: I do, sir. Minister, will you and your office fully cooperate with an investigation into this matter?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: If there is any need to cooperate in relation to this matter, then I would expect nothing but cooperation from myself and also members of my office.

Ms STINSON: How many officers or staff in your office deal with police and would handle this kind of matter in your office?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Could the member just clarify. When she says 'deal with', what does she mean?

Ms STINSON: How many staff in your office would have the role of dealing with a matter such as this?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Just like any other bit of correspondence, it could have been dealt with by multiple people in the office. Again, I have nothing to suggest that anything but standard process and procedure would be followed here. If there is a complaint—and it sounds like one will be made—I am sure all those facts will come out in an objective and impartial manner. However, I have nothing before me to suggest it would be anything out of the ordinary.

Ms STINSON: Is the minister aware of this ever happening before? Is this something you have ever heard of before, that an MP's private correspondence to you would be distributed by officers on a public street to members of the public?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I have certainly not heard of anything such in my time, no.

Ms STINSON: As a result of this, I received abusive phone calls due to the incident; however, I am concerned for the welfare of the constituent who wrote to me. I would say he is identifiable within that letter. Was any permission sought from him to distribute the letter raising his personal concerns, and have police done any follow-up about his welfare, considering that people in his neighbourhood know he raised this matter, and several people I am aware of were quite angry about it?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I would say all these matters would be part of the SAPOL investigation. The commissioner has articulated to me today that he does consider the nature of this subject matter to constitute a complaint, and it will be formally registered and dealt with as a complaint. I am sure any complaint will be dealt with in accordance with the PCDA, like any other complaint would be made.

Ms STINSON: The minister gave the information earlier today that police had been in communication with this gentleman. I ask again: has any, I suppose, welfare check been done for this constituent, considering that I am certainly aware of some quite abusive phone calls and communications as result of this?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Obviously, this is the first I have been made aware of this issue. If the member wanted a qualified answer, she may have been able to refer this issue to me before estimates. What I would have done is communicate that to SAPOL and perhaps that could have been considered. Instead, what she has done is bring it into this place and therefore I am taking it without any notice.

I do not have extensive facts in front of me in relation to this matter, but I am sure that if a welfare check needed to be made, whether it was or was not made, will be deliberated on. I encourage the member to raise issues like this as soon as she becomes aware of them so that the welfare of any constituent concerned can be attended to.

If that is her concern, if that is her aim, then I encourage her to do that—just as other members of parliament, on both sides of the spectrum, have done in the past, Labor and Liberal. It is not uncommon for them to pick up the phone and call me. That was not done in this particular instance.

What has happened here is I have been made aware of this situation in this chamber today. I do not have extensive facts in front of me but I am sure those matters will be considered. If there are allegations like threats, the person should also consider, if it is an emergency, calling 000 or, if it is not as urgent, calling 131 444.

I have to say that there would have been ways to go about this so I could have obtained more information to better answer this question. Instead, it has been brought in here without notice. As we have pointed out, it will be considered as a constituent complaint and it will be formally registered and dealt with as that complaint.

Ms STINSON: Thank you. Minister, can you understand how actions like this might deter citizens from coming forward to their local MP in future and raising legitimate issues about policing and road safety?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Other than to refer to my earlier comments about what might or might not happen—these are hypothetical assertions now. I am not sure how these quite relate to a budget line. I think you are being very generous in your deliberation.

The CHAIR: You have been very generous in your answers.

Mr ODENWALDER: I have one last question on this line, sir.

The CHAIR: One last question. Before you ask that question—I appreciate that it is your last question—again I am going to say that we have canvassed this extensively. It is not for me to direct the line of questioning, but the estimate of payments in this portfolio is a billion dollars' worth of payments. I am sure the member for Elizabeth's question is in relation to the budget.

Mr ODENWALDER: We want to make sure it is being spent correctly. I just want to seek some clarification or base my question on the minister's previous answer. One of the reasons this was brought to this place and is being canvassed in this forum is that, as the minister has confirmed, this letter could have potentially gone through multiple hands within his own office before it reached SAPOL. I ask the minister what measures he will take within his own office to get to the bottom of who handled it and where it went from their hands, and will he report that back to the house?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I have nothing to suggest that anything other than standard procedure from my office was followed. If the member has any facts to the contrary, I would encourage the member—

Mr ODENWALDER: No, I am asking you what measures you will take, minister. What measures will you take within your own office to establish who handled the letter?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I have nothing before me to suggest anything but proper practice was followed. If the member for Badcoe, Elizabeth or anyone else has any facts or evidence to the contrary, then I would be willing to acknowledge that and to accept that. From the actions of police, we have deliberated and answered that matter. It will be considered as a complaint and formally registered and dealt with accordingly, just like any other complaint.

Mr ODENWALDER: I refer to Budget Paper 5, Budget Measures Statement, page 69. We will get back to COVID-19 resources. I will refer specifically to the seven-day lockdown we just endured. How many fines were issued during the lockdown period for noncompliance? Was anyone arrested, or were there any other actions taken against people for noncompliance? To clarify, that is compliance with the lockdown restrictions.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I thank the member for the question. As of Wednesday 28 July, I have been informed that 559 cautions were given and 316 fines—those two together. There were also a number of arrests. We do not have the details in front of us on the number of arrests. As the member would appreciate, some of those matters may still be being finalised. The lockdown only ended a matter of days ago, so I am happy to take that particular information on notice as it still may be going through the system.

The vast majority of South Australians obviously did the right thing and I want to thank them for that. Unfortunately, there were some out there who did ignore the warnings, but I would say that South Australia Police did a sterling job policing the state, not only over the seven-day lockdown but over the period that COVID has challenged the state.

Mr ODENWALDER: I agree. Are COVID tests routine for prisoners entering police custody?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I am advised no, but South Australia Police do of course have very strict protocols in place to ensure the safety of police and also in the management of prisoners in terms of not only COVID but also other communicable diseases.

Mr ODENWALDER: Has there been any discussion with your agency, either between you and the agency or within the agency, about such a measure? It seems to me that in a pandemic, particularly during an outbreak such as we have seen in the last seven days, it might be reasonable to assume that someone who is willingly breaching a COVID order may be more of a risk to those around him or her than others.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Certainly, member for Elizabeth, we could probably talk about what the corrections department is doing from a prisoner point of view. But in terms of a SAPOL point of view, has there been any discussion? No, COVID testing is done by SA Health at COVID testing stations.

Mr ODENWALDER: I apologise if you answered this question earlier about the PSOs, but what percentage of current serving police are fully vaccinated?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: At 30 June, it was 23 per cent, but I have no doubt that it will be much higher now. That is the most up-to-date information that I formally have, but it will be much higher than that.

Mr ODENWALDER: How many police officers are currently isolating following a COVID test or an exposure to known cases or clusters?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Obviously that number does fluctuate. My information is 98 at the moment, but I understand that about 60 are due to be released on the weekend.

Mr ODENWALDER: How does the commissioner inform you and the Premier of the decisions the commissioner has made following either a Transition Committee meeting or a directions committee meeting?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I thank the member for the question. I would point out that the relevant act is committed to the Premier, not to me; therefore, the commissioner would provide communication to the Premier directly. Of course, it would depend on the nature and severity of that information. Some of it would be quite procedural in nature, but it is safe to say that the commissioner would provide regular updates to the Premier insofar as decisions may have a policing impact. The commissioner certainly keeps me regularly updated as well.

Mr ODENWALDER: Is there currently an investigation underway into the circumstances of the 81 year old who arrived from Argentina who is suspected to have led to the Modbury cluster, including border approvals by SAPOL; if so, who is leading that investigation?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I thank the member for Elizabeth for the question. That is probably a better question for Health, but I am advised that there is certainly no suggestion of wrongdoing the part of any person in relation to the origins of the Modbury outbreak. The matter was examined by SA Health, and my understanding is that there is no basis for any further investigation, but again it is a matter for SA Health.

Mr ODENWALDER: Did SAPOL provide him with permission to enter South Australia on 8 July without the need for quarantine?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Can you say that again?

Mr ODENWALDER: Did SAPOL provide this man with permission to enter South Australia on 8 July without the need for quarantine? By way of background, on 8 July, level 4 border restrictions were in place with New South Wales.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I am advised that on 8 July that particular person had completed 14 days of quarantine in Sydney, and at that time SA Health managed the exemptions for people who had returned to SA and who had completed quarantine.

Mr ODENWALDER: Just to clarify, he was treated as an exemption and was not subject to any testing requirements in South Australia?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I am happy to provide further detail on notice only because I do not have that information, other than to say, 'Refer to my former answer.' I will check and come back to the member with that specific information.

Mr ODENWALDER: The public information is that, as part of that 14-day period you are talking about, this man spent 10 days in a Sydney hospital. Who determined—was it SAPOL or was it SA Health—that four days in hotel quarantine and 10 days in hospital were equivalent to 14 days' supervised quarantine?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: We are talking about a health-based process here, so what I will do is take the specifics on notice and come back to the member.

Mr ODENWALDER: I will go to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 195. My questions relate to the description/objective, which states: 'Provides visible and available police services, working in partnership with the community and other agencies.' I will ask a little bit about the APY lands policing model if you need some clarification. After announcing in the 2019-20 budget cuts of \$1 million a year for APY policing, do you expect that the new APY policing model will still constitute a saving, how will that saving be achieved and what is the quantum of the saving?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: That model is still being worked through, and it has been out for consultation, so final savings are not yet clear. Overall, I think it will certainly result in much better service delivery, from a SAPOL perspective but also for people on the lands, with more consistent staff levels and overall better outcomes on the APY lands.

Mr ODENWALDER: What was the quantum of the savings? What is it expected to save?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Originally, \$1 million was the savings amount but, as I said, that model is still being worked through. It is still out for consultation and those savings are not yet clear. It is still being worked through.

Mr ODENWALDER: I had a briefing—an excellent briefing—with the shadow attorney-general where we were given a figure of between \$350,000 and \$400,000. Would that be about right? Is that the sort of ballpark you are looking at?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I thank the member for Elizabeth for the question. That number could change. It is still being worked through and there could be further discussions that occur between police and the government if that number does change.

Mr ODENWALDER: As I said, the opposition has been briefed by police, and it was an excellent briefing. Can the minister confirm to this house that the new model will see individual police officers spending less time in particular communities?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: No, I think the new model will certainly provide continual rotation of police and certainly more enhanced community engagement.

Mr ODENWALDER: But will individual officers spend less time in those communities than they currently do now over any given period?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I might get the commissioner to elaborate on this particular model.

Cmmr STEVENS: The model that is currently being finalised sees a dedicated group of police officers selected to provide a policing service to the APY. They will spend eight days in community and two weeks back in the metropolitan area, which will incorporate their rostered days off plus training time and metropolitan deployments.

The model sees the same police officers on rotation being deployed to specific communities, so the communities will deal with approximately six individual police who are continually rotating through. It is arguable that this will be a dramatically enhanced level of community engagement, compared with the current model that sees us struggling to maintain establishment positions on the APY lands and having to rely on short-term relievers going up to perform that role.

Mr ODENWALDER: Thank you, commissioner. You answered about five of my questions at once, so I appreciate that. As to the metropolitan deployments, you talk about eight days on the lands. Presumably, is it one or two rostered days off in that period?

Cmmr STEVENS: Whilst they are deployed to the APY, they will not have rostered days off.

Mr ODENWALDER: So there are eight days in the lands working?

Cmmr STEVENS: Yes.

Mr ODENWALDER: In a three-week period, you have one rostered day off?

Cmmr STEVENS: I do not know the specifics of the roster, but over a three-week period eight continuous days are spent operational on the APY. Their rostered days off will be taken back

in the metropolitan area, and there will be opportunities for training, administration and metropolitan deployments in the remaining period of that 14 days they are back in the metro area.

Mr ODENWALDER: Is there any intention about what the nature of those metropolitan deployments will be, or will it just be on an operational needs basis?

Cmmr STEVENS: Basically, on an operational needs basis to ensure that the broad range of skills required for policing are kept alive and current so they do not become entirely focused on remote policing in APY communities.

Mr ODENWALDER: Is the intention that they bring back some of the skills or knowledge or experience of working in the APY lands to the metropolitan area and perhaps be engaged in metropolitan deployments that involve Aboriginal people in the metropolitan community?

Cmmr STEVENS: It may be the case that police officers who have experience on the APY are tasked to incidents or jobs that involve Aboriginal people from the APY who happen to be in the metropolitan area, but we do have community constables who are also responsible for engagement with Indigenous communities and people from those communities who happen to be in the metropolitan area at any given time.

Mr ODENWALDER: Thank you, commissioner. Minister, when you visited the APY lands in April this year exactly which community councils did you meet with?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: The purpose of the visit was to understand more about the day-to-day challenges and roles that SAPOL play on the APY lands and to get firsthand experience of those. It was a real privilege to be able to speak to a range of officers and community constables on the lands to appreciate the challenges from a resourcing point of view.

Whilst it was a short visit, I would encourage all ministers who have relevant roles on the APY lands to go up to what is a very beautiful but also challenging part of the state. It is certainly my intention to go back and attend again, and on my second visit it will be a privilege to meet with APY Executive and council, but I did not meet them on the first occasion.

Mr ODENWALDER: Which Anangu elders or Aboriginal leaders at all did the minister meet with while in the APY lands?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: The purpose of the first visit was to inspect the facilities and have a firsthand experience and appreciation of SAPOL's resourcing concerns on the lands. Whilst I do not have the names, I did speak to a range of Aboriginal community constables, and it was a real pleasure to do that. I also spoke to a number of people in the communities of Ernabella, Fregon and Amata, but I do not have their names in front of me.

It was also a real privilege to see, for example, the great engagement that a number of artists have with some of the communities up there. As I pointed out, whilst it was a privilege to attend the first time, on my second visit I do intend to meet and discuss matters with the APY Executive and council. I did not have the time to do it on the first occasion.

Mr ODENWALDER: Do you have any idea what the views of the Aboriginal people are on the lands, including the community councils and the elders? If there is overwhelming community resistance to the change, will you revisit the model?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I think it is safe to say that there has been extensive consultation on the model. As the commissioner has highlighted, looking forward the new model will certainly result in a much better continual application of worthwhile policing on the lands. In terms of what the other feedback is in the community, whilst the first visit did not result in my visiting the council or the executive, I am certainly happy to discuss that with them on my second visit. I am also advised, member for Elizabeth, that the commissioner also attended on a further occasion on the lands and spoke to a range of people up on the lands, and there seemed to be broad support as well.

Mr ODENWALDER: Is it the case that in communities just across the border—for example, Blackstone in WA, some communities in the NT, or closer to home in Marla, which is just across the highway from the APY lands in South Australia—there is a permanent police presence with the same officers posted all year round, with the obvious exception of standard leave?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Obviously, any issue for police in Western Australia would be a matter for Western Australian police. Marla, I am advised, is not for SAPOL's purposes—well, I will have to check whether it actually is in the APY. It is just outside the APY lands.

Mr ODENWALDER: That is what I said, yes. It is outside the APY lands.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: So SAPOL on the APY certainly have a different set of conditions, if you like.

Mr ODENWALDER: Why would that be? I am not trying to be tricky. I am just trying to establish why you would need a different type of policing model across the highway from Marla. Why can you have a permanent and consistent police model there but not on the APY lands?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Marla is not on the APY and the—

Mr ODENWALDER: That is my point.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: It is a very unique and different part of the state that does require a nuanced policing method and model. The award is also treated differently. It is a unique part of the world, and it is a challenging part of the world with some quite unique circumstances. Therefore, that is what distinguishes it.

Mr ODENWALDER: Are you aware of anywhere else in Australia that has a similar model to the one you are proposing for the APY lands, this what we will call fly-in fly-out model?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I am happy to take that on notice, but I am sure the project team considered a whole range of factors and models that may have been considered from interstate as well. But I am happy to take that on notice.

Mr ODENWALDER: I will go to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 193, to the workforce summary. You spoke in your opening statement about 72 additional police. I think that is the figure you gave. Is that what you said? Can you clarify that?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Yes.

Mr ODENWALDER: Is it not true, though, that these are simply recruitments brought forward so that over a longer period after attrition we will arrive at the same number? So in that sense they are not additional police. They are police who have been prematurely recruited.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: In terms of the PSOs, the 168 are additional. In terms of the police roles that create additional capacity, they have been brought forward. Whilst they may be absorbed through attrition at 30 June, I am sure there will certainly be a conversation between the commissioner and me—or whoever is minister at that time—about also extending those, should it be required operationally.

Mr ODENWALDER: As at 30 June, how many sworn police officer FTEs were employed by SAPOL?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Total police as at 30 June 2021, including community constables, is 4,657.8.

Mr ODENWALDER: What is the expectation of—

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: There are 50 cadets.

Mr ODENWALDER: And 50 cadets?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Yes.

Mr ODENWALDER: There is no suggestion that any PSOs will be included in those numbers going forward, is there?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I believe the EB sees certain PSOs transition to come under the Police Act, but that information is still being worked through. How that will be funded is still being worked through as well.

Mr ODENWALDER: I go to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 192, which covers ministerial responsibilities. How often do you meet with the Commissioner of Police? I will not count today.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I thank the member for the question. We do have a regular meeting scheduled in, but we also meet on a needs basis and we are happy to communicate as we need to. Consistent with all the other chiefs, we do have a regular fortnightly meeting scheduled in.

Mr ODENWALDER: Does your Chief of Staff attend these regularly scheduled meetings?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Yes, usually he does.

Mr ODENWALDER: Did the previous minister have similar regularly scheduled meetings with the commissioner, and are you aware if the previous minister's Chief of Staff also attended those meetings?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Consistent with the theme today, I am not really responsible for what the former minister did. I am not sure about those arrangements, but I would say that a fortnightly meeting would have been the normal course for the minister to meet with the commissioner. I do not have the facts in front of me as to exactly who was at those meetings, but my Chief of Staff certainly attends meetings with me fortnightly.

Mr ODENWALDER: So your expectation would be that that would have been the case under the previous minister? Is that a reasonable expectation?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I just cannot speak for the former minister and the way he structured his office or his regular meetings. I certainly do, and my Chief of Staff attends fortnightly.

Mr ODENWALDER: When you took over the police portfolio, were any allegations or complaints raised with you about bullying or intimidation by the former minister and his staff?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: No.

Mr ODENWALDER: Were any concerns raised by anyone within SAPOL about how the previous minister or his staff managed the portfolio?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: No.

The CHAIR: Member for Elizabeth, are you planning to do the omnibus questions?

Mr ODENWALDER: I will read them now. Can I do that?

The CHAIR: You have time; read them now. I have a brief statement I would like to make at the end.

Mr ODENWALDER: They are:

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 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;
- 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 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?

19. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, what initiatives or programs have been approved and funded as at 1 July 2021 but not publicly announced or disclosed in the budget papers?

The CHAIR: Thank you; well read. I am just going to make a brief statement in relation to the document circulated by the member for Badcoe.

I am going to remind members that there is no provision for the tabling of documents before the committee, so the document was circulated rather than tabled. The document circulated by the member for Badcoe was provided to assist the committee in its deliberation only and should not be

distributed outside the committee. Members may hand the document back to the committee clerk for disposal if they wish.

There is probably time for one more question, member for Elizabeth, if you wish. You do not have to; do not feel obliged.

Mr ODENWALDER: I will go to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 199, crime and illegal drugs. I hope the minister has read the Minister for Education's comments in committee B yesterday about the sniffer dog policy, which was the signature drug policy brought by the Liberals to the last election. The Minister for Education stated that there are four searches in train and that there have been two searches of schools since the inception of the protocol. Can the minister confirm that on both those occasions, the only two occasions that this protocol has been used, no drugs were found at the school?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: My advice is that to date SAPOL and the Department for Education have undertaken two operations: Birdwood High School in November 2019 and Roma Mitchell Secondary College, Northfield, in June 2021. Whilst indications of the presence of drug odour were provided at both schools, there were no detections of any illicit substances on either occasion.

Mr ODENWALDER: How much notice were students given of the pending search? Was it a surprise to them?

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

The CHAIR: I would like to thank the minister, his advisers, the police commissioner, of course, and the committee. Having reached the allotted time, I declare the examination of the proposed payments for South Australia Police and the Administered Items for South Australia Police to be complete.

Sitting suspended from 12:45 to 13:45.

DEPARTMENT FOR CORRECTIONAL SERVICES, \$412,822,000

Membership:

Ms Wortley substituted for Ms Stinson.

Minister:

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

Departmental Advisers:

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

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

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

The CHAIR: Welcome back to Estimates Committee A for the afternoon session. The portfolio for this session is the Department for Correctional Services. The minister appearing is the Minister for Police, Emergency Services and Correctional Services. I declare the proposed payments open for examination. Minister, would you like to introduce your advisers, please, and make a short statement if you wish.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Thank you, Mr Chair. I have only a brief statement again if I may, please. I will begin by introducing those who are with me today, and good afternoon, members. We have to my left Mr David Brown, Chief Executive, Department for Correctional Services. Behind him,

we have Mr Chris Sexton, Executive Director People and Business Services, Department for Correctional Services; and also Megan Deer, Manager Executive Services, Department for Correctional Services.

I might take the opportunity to say thank you and to speak to the efforts of the Department for Correctional Services in keeping the South Australian community safe and strong. This effort is especially recognised as a result of the continued hard work and professionalism shown by all staff during this COVID-19 emergency, including during what has been a recent escalation.

As you can appreciate, a health emergency within an environment as complex as a prison system carries a unique risk, and since the start of the pandemic the department has been working to a COVID-19 mission statement of 'Hold and be ready'. This approach is aimed at preventing, preparing and responding to an outbreak and is inclusive of clear procedures for contact tracing and taking a highly cautious, precautionary approach to operations.

You may recall that just prior to our last estimates hearing a Yatala Labour Prison staff member had returned a positive test to COVID-19 but, due to the diligence of all staff and the rapid response undertaken, by working side by side with SA Health, there were no further positive cases and no spread to the custodial setting. I am pleased that this has also been the case with regard to the recent Modbury cluster. DCS staff have again gone above and beyond to keep the prison system COVID-19 free, and I extend my most sincere thanks to all for their efforts during this difficult time.

I would also like to place on the record my great appreciation to those DCS staff who have rolled up their sleeves and received their COVID-19 vaccinations. As they are working in frontline services, DCS staff have been encouraged to get vaccinated against COVID-19 to protect themselves, their loved ones and the South Australian community more broadly.

While the number of people vaccinated increases daily, the latest data reflects that close to 60 per cent of frontline DCS sites across all sites have received their first vaccination and that 35 per cent have received their second dose. These figures do not include those from the prison officer count who may have elected to receive their vaccine in the community, and there are, of course, other departmental staff who have been vaccinated out in the community.

With regard to the prison population, as at 23 July 2021 more than 1,308 prisoners have had their first vaccination and over 847 have had their second dose. Vaccination, as we know, is our pathway out of this emergency, and I thank those individuals for helping to keep us all safe.

I am confident that, with the support of our government, the Department for Correctional Services remains firmly committed to the safety of the South Australian community.

The CHAIR: Thank you, minister. Member for Elizabeth, would you like to make a short statement?

Mr ODENWALDER: Yes, a very short one, really just to echo the minister's respect for the management team and the executive team at DCS. I can only imagine what a difficult thing it is to manage a prison system in the face of a virus, particularly in the case of lockdowns. Of course, we will probably get to some questions about that.

I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 105, which deals with rehabilitation and reparation and refers to the 10by20 strategy. We have spoken many times about the 10by20 strategy in this place. I think that there has largely been a bipartisan approach to it, or at least I hope that will continue. Minister, are you on track to achieving a 10 per cent reduction in recidivism by the relevant time of the 2020 figures?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I thank the member for the question. As we know, repeat offenders, unfortunately, are responsible for a large proportion of crime in the state, and by focusing on reducing reoffending and improving rehabilitation, and also reintegration outcomes, our community will be safer overall with fewer victims and less crime.

As the member alluded to, in August 2016 the former government set a bipartisan target to reduce the rate of reoffending by 10 per cent by 2020. To progress the initiative a Strategic Policy Panel was appointed, which was tasked with investigating best practice in correctional services policy

to identify strategies that reduce rates of reoffending and also promote rehabilitation and reintegration outcomes.

In December 2016, the panel's report was endorsed by the then cabinet and released publicly. It set out a number of overarching strategies underpinned by a number of individual recommendations. In 2017 a plan was released, and following the election our government confirmed our bipartisan commitment to the strategy.

In terms of where it is at the moment, a 2014-15 Report into Government Services (RoGS) reported that 46 per cent of offenders in SA returned to corrective services either through community corrections or prison within two years. This was used as a baseline measure for the 10by20 strategy. The 10by20 Strategic Policy Panel Report then set a reoffending rate target of 41.4 per cent.

The most recent published RoGS data for the financial year 2019-20 identified a decrease of 46 per cent to 42.3 per cent. By the way, that is the lowest rate of return to corrective services in Australia, which is obviously something to be proud of, but note that that rate pertains to those released two years prior and returning to corrective services within 2019-20.

As mentioned, though, offenders are also tracked for a two-year period, and therefore the reoffending rate for prisoners released in the financial year 2019-20 will not be known until the beginning of 2023. To answer the member's question, it seems to be on track and doing well, but obviously we will not fully know for some time to come. It is progressing well and I think it is an excellent bipartisan commitment.

Mr ODENWALDER: So you are expecting the figure to be 36 per cent, according to the January 2023 RoGS report? That is your expectation, if I am following this correctly?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Both measures are trending down over the longer term. The member is referring to a return to prison whereas I was talking about a return to Correctional Services. That was the 42.3 per cent figure, which is the lowest in the nation. We are trending well on both measures, but the member is referring to a return to prison versus a return to Correctional Services. They are two slightly different measures. A return to Correctional Services was the measure that was used in the 10by20 strategy, but of course we take an interest in both and we are doing very well in both.

Mr ODENWALDER: So you will achieve a 10 per cent reduction in the return to Correctional Services rate, and it will be reported in January 2023 that that has been the case?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: It is trending that way. That is our goal and our target. We will not know for a little while, but we hope so and it is trending well.

Mr ODENWALDER: That moment in time has passed, has it not? That is 30 June that has just passed?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Offenders are tracked for a two-year period. Therefore, the reoffending rate for prisoners released in the financial year 2019-20 will not be known until the beginning of 2023, upon release of the RoGS data. That result will be the final reportable rate of return to corrective services for the strategy. The final report on 10by20 will be released in 2023 and DCS anticipates very positive results in the reoffending rate by that year.

Mr ODENWALDER: I should clarify this: so it refers to prisoners who have been released by 30 June just passed and then they are tracked as to whether they come back or not; that is right, is it not?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Correct.

Mr ODENWALDER: One highlight mentions 'expanded rehabilitation initiatives including criminogenic programs'. Can you outline what they are and how they are going to contribute to this project so late in the piece?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Whilst rehabilitation programs are essential to the 10by20 strategy, obviously there is always an ongoing focus on rehabilitation. That goes without saying. The department's commitment to, for example, Closing the Gap and addressing over-representation of

Aboriginal people is extremely important. A number of programs are currently delivered across a whole range of sites not only in prisons but also in Community Corrections.

In terms of the highlights, there has certainly been improved access to culturally appropriate alcohol and other drugs support for Aboriginal prisoners or offenders by formalising partnerships with groups like the Aboriginal Sobriety Group, the Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council (SA), as well as a specialist substance addiction counselling service for people in prison to access during the pandemic, which resulted in limitations on traditional service partners being able to access prisons. There was increased access to drug and alcohol counselling services for individuals imprisoned within the prison system through partnerships with the NGO sector.

In partnership with Carey Training, Workskil, through the Work Ready, Release Ready program, delivered the first pilot of the Road to Redemption program, which was a specialist employment training program for Aboriginal people supervised in community. That pilot resulted in over 80 per cent of participants securing jobs within the first three weeks of graduation, which is excellent.

In partnership with TAFE SA, a pilot program was implemented for prisoners at Mobilong Prison, who were trained in meat processing techniques to provide a post-release pathway for employment in the meat processing industry. I visited Mobilong with the member for Hammond. I was certainly grateful to have the member for Hammond with me when I was walking through that yard. There were no issues, but it is in his electorate.

The revised Domestic and Family Violence Intervention Program was implemented, resulting in a 100 per cent more intensive program for men in prison and community. In partnership with Women's Safety Services South Australia, a specialist support program was implemented for women in prison who had been victimised by domestic and family violence. There is also of course the High Intensity Treatment (HIT) program, which is an excellent program. This is a new holistic rehabilitation and case management service for high-risk offenders subject to ongoing monitoring under the ESO (extended supervision orders) scheme, and it goes on. So there is much done and much to be done, but many of those programs are there.

Mr ODENWALDER: I think we all agree that part of the rehabilitation project for many prisoners is providing them with housing to go to. You will remember—or you may not remember—that in the 2018 budget funding was cut for the trial of a program called New Foundations. It was intended to link offenders to appropriate housing upon their release from prison in an effort to reduce reoffending. At the time, the government said they intended to return to market to conduct another trial. Has this trial taken place and what were the results? I guess my real question is: has it resulted in more options for housing for former prisoners?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Member for Elizabeth, I will take the question on notice because it does relate to past statements that were made, but I will also pass to Mr Brown from the department to provide maybe more of a general response as well.

Mr BROWN: In respect to running a further specific trial in the market, that did not proceed on the basis of, from my recollection, the position of the market at the time and the ability to garner interest in that concept. What we have done, though, throughout the last financial year is to employ some rapid initiatives, which internally we have referred to as our Boost program for 10by20.

One of our Boost initiatives was to engage intensive housing support officers within the department to work directly with housing providers, including Housing SA and the community housing sector. At a recent executive meeting, we were very pleased to note that those housing officers have just passed 200 people who they have supported into accommodation, both in the private rental market and in the community housing sector. So that internal initiative, alongside programs like our home detention program, has had a positive impact on housing.

Mr ODENWALDER: This may be a complex question, but how do you assess if a prisoner needs housing as part of their rehabilitation? What is the process they go through and are there any groups who are particularly favoured in such a process?

Mr BROWN: It is quite a technical question, depending on what housing market you are tapping into, but our intensive housing officers, in particular, have focused on people on a pathway

to parole or home detention. Often, the housing need is identified by the assessment staff preparing the report for the relevant authority that is making the decision about suitability for release to those programs.

We also have a housing coordination officer who, in particular, supports the Integrated Housing Exit Program, which is delivered in partnership with the Department of Human Services and which specifically targets short-term offenders who are quite often homeless when they come into custody and are often on remand and in custody for less than 12 months. They are two very different cohorts, if you like, that we target.

The third area is that we continue through Anglicare to support the Bail Accommodation Support Program, another very successful program under 10by20. Anglicare not only run the Bail Accommodation Support Program but work with participants in that program to find stable, ongoing accommodation in the community so that they can transition out of the bail facility.

Mr ODENWALDER: Minister, are you able to tell the committee if, in simple terms, we are housing more prisoners now in the last financial year than we did in, say, 2017-18? Has there been an improvement in the housing immediately of prisoners?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: From an anecdotal point of view, I would say, yes, we have, but I do not have that data in front of me.

Mr ODENWALDER: Would you take that on notice and get some data back to the committee?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: We will take that on notice to the extent that we are able to provide answers, yes.

Mr ODENWALDER: I appreciate that, thank you. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 108, COVID responses, and the agency response to the coronavirus. Are incoming prisoners routinely tested for COVID-19?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Obviously, the health and safety of all DCS staff, prisoners, offenders and visitors are of paramount importance. DCS also acknowledge that the threat of any infectious disease within a workplace can cause potential anxiety and in particular in an environment with operational complexities, as is the case in a custodial setting. I am informed, yes, they are. I also have some COVID-specific data if the member is interested.

Mr ODENWALDER: Yes.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: As at 29 July 2021, 6,779 prisoners have been surveillance tested for COVID-19, all of which have produced a negative result, which is excellent. With regard to vaccinations—obviously that is another matter—that number is growing daily. However, the most recent data from SAPHS, obtained as at 23 July, indicates that a number of staff, prisoners and health staff have been vaccinated as part of the prison vaccination program as well. It is going very well and I am happy to provide those numbers to the member.

Mr ODENWALDER: What was the figure of the number of guards vaccinated currently?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: So prisoners currently vaccinated?

Mr ODENWALDER: No, guards. I will get to prisoners. I thought you just mentioned a number.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Obviously this does not count if officers have gone out privately and got their own treatments. In terms of officers, doses of AZ and Pfizer, first dose, 877, second dose, 517. When talking about officers, as a percentage, for the first dose that is 59 per cent and the second shot for officers, we are talking about 35 per cent. That is definitely higher than—

Mr ODENWALDER: Slightly higher than the population.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Yes, certainly. Of course, the officer count does not include officers who may have elected to receive their vaccine in the community. Prisoners captured in the data may have also been discharged later. There are some things that need to be pointed out. Of course, Community Corrections, Intensive Compliance Unit and Central Office staff are vaccinated off site.

Whilst DCS may not have access to some of that data, self reporting is located on the department's intranet site as well. It is going well and is certainly higher than the rest of the community, for sure.

Mr ODENWALDER: Are you aware of any significant delays in prison officers who want to be vaccinated who cannot be vaccinated through that program?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: It is a credit to Mr Brown and his team that it has been very good. I am certainly not aware of any delays.

Mr ODENWALDER: Back to COVID tests for prisoners, you said that it was mandatory or that you routinely tested for COVID. Has any prisoner refused and, if so, what happens with them?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I am advised, member for Elizabeth, that prisoners are surveillance tested, unless they are symptomatic, in which case they can be tested at the time that they are symptomatic. The numbers of refusals remain very low.

Mr ODENWALDER: What is the penalty for refusal? If it is a routine test that you conduct on incoming prisoners—we are talking about incoming prisoners.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I think then community health standards apply. I might get Mr Brown to elaborate.

Mr BROWN: Generally speaking, we apply the community standard in terms of people who elect not to get tested. At the moment, as the community as a whole responds to the Modbury cluster, all new admissions are in protective quarantine. So they are separated in a cell and they are surveillance tested on admission. They are follow-up tested on day 5 and then they are follow-up tested on day 13.

In this current state of the emergency, if those people refuse to be tested, then they will not come out of protective quarantine. But I have not had any reports of that occurring at this stage. We have had surveillance testing in place now since April-May 2020. I could get the specific dates. The proportion of offenders who elect not to be tested is extremely low and they are always followed up by staffing in the subsequent days to encourage them to get a test. But we do collect that data, so if the minister would like to take that part on notice, I would be happy to provide it.

Mr ODENWALDER: I would appreciate that, thank you.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Yes, I am happy to take that part on notice.

Mr ODENWALDER: I will go to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 108, custodial services. The minister will be aware that the Office of the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption conducted an examination of the Department for Correctional Services and made some findings—pretty disturbing findings. I will quote from the report. These are the deputy commissioner's words:

I was concerned by the many examples of bullying and harassment I received during the course of the evaluation. Of course I acknowledge that in some cases, perceptions of bullying and harassment may closely align with attempts to appropriately and fairly address the poor performance of a staff member. That might be amplified during periods where staff are required to transition to a new ways of discharging their duties.

He goes on to say:

An alarming 86.0% of staff in operations roles who responded to the evaluation survey indicated that they had witnessed bullying or harassment of staff over the last two years. The proportion was even higher for respondents working in operations manager/supervisor roles (90.2%).

And it goes on. My first question, minister, is: have you read the report?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Yes.

Mr ODENWALDER: What steps have you taken to address the issues raised in the report?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: It is an important issue, so I might take members through the background of the evaluation. In 2020, the CE of DCS met with the ICAC commissioner and then deputy ICAC commissioner. It was a meeting to discuss the commissioner's intention to conduct an evaluation of the department's practices, policies and procedures. The evaluation of DCS sought to identify any areas of improvement while highlighting systems and practices we have in place that

already safeguard against such risks. We also acknowledge the challenging and complex nature of the custodial environment.

Whilst ICAC has a responsibility to assess and, where appropriate, investigate allegations of corruption or misconduct in public administration, it also has a separate responsibility to evaluate the practices, policies and procedures of an agency to identify risks and make recommendations as to where and how an agency can improve. Of course, ICAC has conducted similar evaluations across a number of areas of public administration—for example, the City of Playford, SafeWork SA, the Public Trustee and the Police Ombudsman. The evaluation process included:

- collection of relevant documents relating to DCS practices, policies and procedures;
- a staff survey and also an opportunity for written submissions;
- staff interviews;
- key stakeholder interviews; and
- opportunities for the public and interested stakeholders to make written submissions.

This was an evaluation, not necessarily an investigation into any specific allegations. I am advised that DCS did cooperate with aspects of the evaluation. The draft report was received by DCS in May. DCS was also invited to make a submission. From there, DCS provided a submission that included a cover letter, a response plan and issues log—DCS requested this document be included—and a response with regard to the publication of documents. The submission highlighted four overarching themes identified by the department as being worthy of consideration. They were:

- the uniqueness of the Corrections environment, as I was alluding to, which by its nature attracts a higher level of complaint than other areas of the Public Service, as it does, but probably consistent with other jurisdictions;
- the point in time factors that would in part be reflected in the observations made by some staff, noting that the period in which the evaluation was conducted was a time of significant reform directly related to prison operations, which it did;
- certain difficulties presented when implementing change within a highly industrialised environment—of course, not everybody has always agreed with some of those aspects; and
- efforts to build cultural, gendered and professional diversity, especially in leadership positions. When you look at the workforce as a whole, that is not always welcomed by all.

For some, the renewed focus on merit has been perceived to be at their expense. There have obviously been some who have been challenged by that. This change has challenged their status quo. It could be perceived by some as a demonstration of perception of favouritism, but of course it would not.

The final report was tabled in parliament on 24 June. It is pleasing to note that in the final report some of the key things from the DCS submission, in addition to the reform to practices and processes, were highlighted. The report highlights include references to:

- the excellent suite of policies and procedures already in the department;
- Shaping Corrections, as the staff-led continuous improvement initiative;
- the establishment of the Office for Correctional Services Review as the primary investigative, complaint, audit and review unit;
- the positive impact of the Better Prisons initiatives; and
- ongoing efforts that have been made by current executives to increase transparency, staff engagement and to build a flexible and diverse workforce.

The evaluation included staff survey responses, a majority of which relate to the custodial environment.

The survey sample was only reflective of a small percentage of the department's overall workforce, or approximately 2,000 people. It is acknowledged, however, that whilst there are perceptions and observations made by some that are cause for concern, particularly those responses that pointed to bullying, harassment, misuse of sick leave and overtime and other examples of unethical practices, the observed behaviours are certainly not acceptable.

They can place the safety and security of the prison system at risk of being compromised. It is also a reasonable expectation that all DCS staff should feel that such activity is properly dealt with at a management level. DCS accepted all 24 recommendations, and this was confirmed to the commissioner in a letter from the DCS chief executive dated 29 July. All 24 recommendations have been accepted.

In addition to the response plan, DCS has also engaged key stakeholders to assist in navigating an effective outcome that supports both the department and the broader government. Those strategies include that in June 2021 the DCS CE wrote to the Commissioner for Equal Opportunity, the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment, the Chief Executive of the Department of Treasury and Finance, the Chief Executive of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, and the General Secretary of the Public Sector Association with regard to the evaluation and the DCS response. The correspondence welcomed the opportunity to further discuss evaluation with these key stakeholders.

DCS has also established the ICAC Response Executive Oversight Committee. This provides an oversight of the management and implementation of the response plan. The terms of reference, if members are interested, are still being finalised, but the membership will include external representation. This will ensure accountability and transparency, as well as much-valued expertise and critical advice.

The membership will include Ms Jodeen Carney, Commissioner for Equal Opportunity; Ms Erma Ranieri, Commissioner for Public Sector Employment; Mr Martyn Campbell, Executive Director SafeWork SA; and Ms Jan Shuard PSM, former Victorian Corrections Commissioner and also a member of the DCS Risk and Performance Committee. So there are some very heavy hitters on that committee.

In addition to acting upon the 24 recommendations, DCS has used the ICAC evaluation as a mechanism to capture some linked perceptions and observations highlighted in the recent Commissioner for Public Sector Employment 'I Work For SA: Your Voice' survey. It goes without saying that the majority of DCS staff are absolutely committed to transparency, professionalism and quality service. The ICAC evaluation will certainly be used to drive further positive organisational change.

Mr ODENWALDER: That is the survey part of the ICAC report. There is a lot in there, but I take it on face value that the department is addressing that in those ways, and that is a good thing. The report goes on to talk about complaints and reports received by the OPI from September 2013. In that initial year, and given that it started later in the financial year, there were 14, and in 2014-15 there was a total of 49 reports and complaints about the department. That rose to 110 in 2019-20 and 113 in 2020-21. Can you explain that rise?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: That is something we are happy to take on notice. The ICAC commissioner receives the complaints, but just because you have received a complaint does not necessarily mean there is a proven case. However, I do not have any plausible or confident explanation for why those complaints have gone up, given that I personally do not receive the complaints.

Mr ODENWALDER: If it is possible, could you take that on notice and bring a report back to the committee?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: To the extent we are able, we will take that on notice, but I am not sure how much information we will get back. We can certainly take it on notice.

Mr ODENWALDER: Of these complaints, nearly 20 per cent raised a potential issue of corruption, according to the report. What you have said notwithstanding, could you advise if any of those reached the DPP or prosecution stage and what the outcomes of those investigations were—apart from the recently publicised one late last year? How many of those other reports about corruption—nearly 20 per cent, or some 540 over the last eight years—have been substantiated or are still being investigated?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I thank the member for the question. Obviously, we would only investigate matters that are referred to us in the department. What I might say is that, in terms of staff who are facing criminal charges, it goes without saying that the government is absolutely committed to ensuring the integrity of our correctional system and DCS certainly sets the highest standards for employee conduct.

Depending on the individual circumstances, an employee may be permitted to continue working or be directed out of the workplace, or be suspended with pay or suspended without pay depending on the outcome of a criminal matter. The member would be aware that there was recent legislative reform, which is a good thing, that is part of the now-enacted Correctional Services (Accountability and Other Measures) Act. We believe that will certainly further enhance staff accountability and also integrity measures already in place.

To the member's earlier question, as at 28 July 2021, seven current DCS employees are facing criminal charges. The government is absolutely committed to ensuring the integrity of our correctional system. DCS certainly sets the highest standards for employee conduct. As I said, depending on the individual circumstances, an employee may be permitted to continue working or be directed out of the workplace, or be suspended with pay or suspended without pay pending the outcome of a criminal matter.

Mr ODENWALDER: I refer to Budget Paper 5, Budget Measures Statement, page 16, critical security upgrades at the ARC. Minister, can you outline first of all the need for the security upgrades and the nature of these security upgrades?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: So \$1.9 million of investment funding has been allocated in the 2021-22 budget for what are targeted critical security upgrades at the ARC. This investment in the perimeter security and electronic security upgrade involves upgrades to thermal cameras, increasing the overall number of cameras, upgrading existing perimeter cameras and the ARC Latitude video management system, and providing microwave detection at a higher level along Phillip Street.

There has obviously been an investment in the ARC kitchen remediation works, which includes the replacement of the entire kitchen ceiling. An additional level of security to the ceiling will be added in the form of Spac Deckform, which is an interlocking metal panel system that will be affixed to the new ceiling. That system is in use at correctional facilities in other jurisdictions. Early detection technologies in the ceiling space are also included as part of the electronic security upgrade.

The scope of works also includes installation of an anti-climb mesh screen on the Phillip Street facade, which are the glass bricks at the rear of the prison. In terms of perimeter security and electronic security upgrades, specialist advice was engaged by DCS to undertake a review of the ARC perimeter security system. The ARC perimeter security review and electronic security systems report presented several key findings and recommendations.

Works completed to date include the cleaning and calibration of all cameras and commencing a full review of the current camera and operating systems to ensure security at the site is maintained. The roof safety systems have also been enhanced to enable ongoing testing and cleaning. Serco engaged specialist advice, including architects and structural engineers for the kitchen ceiling and void areas to conduct a site inspection and provide options to address any vulnerabilities.

There were a number of options presented in the ARC kitchen remediation works report and Serco presented their preferred option to DCS to achieve structural security detection systems. These works include the installation of an anti-climb mesh screen on the Phillip Street facade at the rear of the prison, and works continue.

Mr ODENWALDER: Did the need for this security upgrade grow out of the report on the escape of Jason Burdon, which was prepared for you?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Yes.

Mr ODENWALDER: Do you plan to release any of that report?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: No.

Mr ODENWALDER: Did the report identify any issue related to staffing levels or staff-to-prisoner ratios at the ARC which might have contributed to the escape of Jason Burdon?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: The department's performance and risk committee has maintained oversight of the cure plan, and the deputy chair of the committee, Ms Jan Shuard, is also a member of the EOC. DCS continues a risk-based assurance program measuring Serco's compliance against what are standing operating procedures. I can certainly advise that DCS compliance staff have attended the site regularly to ensure adherence to departmental standards.

Mr ODENWALDER: My question was: did the report identify any issue related to staffing levels or staff-to-prisoner ratios at the ARC which might have contributed to the escape of Jason Burdon?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: No.

Mr ODENWALDER: It did not?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: No.

Mr ODENWALDER: That brings me to the latest escape, and I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 108, custodial services. How exactly did the prisoner Kurtley Doolan escape from custody in Port Augusta on 11 July?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Obviously any escape in any custodial setting is completely unacceptable. I do recall seeing that the Labor Party had 60 in 16 years. In terms of this most recent one, whilst the matter at hand is subject to an internal and also a criminal investigation, can I say I am very grateful to South Australia Police for their very prompt work. In fact, I had a press conference today with SAPOL and I did mention to them that we had estimates and I did congratulate one of the officers there on being able to catch this particular person and apprehend him as quickly as possible.

What I can say is that DCS worked closely with SAPOL to assist with efforts to locate Mr Doolan. He was arrested on 13 July. I also acknowledge the former correctional services minister who has just entered. Mr Doolan has been charged with escape from custody, cause harm with intent worker/other/unknown, recklessly cause harm worker/other/unknown, and damage building or motor vehicle not graffiti or unknown, and he is due before the court on 20 October 2021 in relation to the new charges.

I also understand that the G4S officer received medical treatment following the incident and was discharged from Port Augusta Hospital the same day. The incident is now a criminal matter, and it is subject to internal investigation by the department and G4S. I reiterate to the member for Elizabeth and to the committee that any escape from custody is unacceptable, and I will continue to receive regular updates from the department. Obviously, it is a criminal matter and subject to internal investigation.

Mr ODENWALDER: Will G4S be fined for failing to keep Doolan in custody?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Any sanction would obviously occur following the completion of those investigations. Whilst I do not have the contract in front of me, if there is a sanction then that would be applied in the case that it is able to be applied, but we are waiting for that investigation to come forward.

Mr ODENWALDER: What is the maximum sanction?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Again, that would be a contractual matter. I do not have that in front of me. I am happy to take that on notice for the member.

Mr ODENWALDER: How many guards were guarding Doolan at the time of his escape?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Again, I appreciate the member's question and concern in this matter, but it has always been the case that those sorts of operational staffing details would not be disclosed at this point in time because obviously investigations are underway on that matter, just like I do not think they were disclosed when 60 people escaped during Labor's 16 years in office.

Mr ODENWALDER: Given that you will not tell us how many people were guarding Doolan, at any point did the guard or guards not have effective sight of the prisoner?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: The content that the member raises is certainly valid and important, but that will be deliberated and considered in the investigations that are underway at the moment.

Mr ODENWALDER: When do you expect the internal investigation to be completed?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I think that the investigations are certainly happening much quicker these days than they have happened in the past. From our point of view, we certainly want them to be done expeditiously. I do not have that information in front of me. I am advised, hopefully within six weeks.

Mr ODENWALDER: Is that contingent at all on the criminal investigation, or are the two things entirely separate?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Not that I am aware of at the moment. That is the most recent information I have at the moment.

Mr ODENWALDER: Do you expect a report to be provided to you with recommendations on how this might be avoided in the future?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Obviously there will be operational data that is captured in that report. I would expect the head of DCS, Mr Brown, to be well briefed on that report and then, of course, in turn he will come to me as minister if, for example, there may be a place for government to look at working with DCS in terms of legislative reform, policies or funding moving forward. Mr Brown will certainly be briefed and then in turn he will have discussions with me as minister.

Mr ODENWALDER: In the 2018 budget, the government announced a \$28 million efficiency cut over four years, which included 161 FTE job losses plus an increase in casualisation and part-time work in prison. Is it the minister's position that these cuts have not contributed at all to lapses in security and therefore increased risk to the public?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I do not necessarily accept the premise of the question. What I will say is that the state government announced on 4 September 2018 the Better Prisons program as part of the 2018-19 budget, and Better Prisons is a major reform initiative aimed at reducing reoffending by improving the quality, safety and efficiency of our prison system. It includes four overarching strategies, including increasing capacity, improving competition, improving accountability and improving workforce flexibility.

We have seen a number of aspects that talk to increasing capacity, including extra beds being built. In terms of improving competition, we know about the transfer of certain operations in the past. In the past, DCS had increased private sector involvement in service delivery by transferring the operations of the ARC to a private provider through what was a competitive procurement process. In terms of benchmarking reform, the Better Prisons benchmarking reform involves the development of a benchmark budget and post model, the implementation of key performance indicators and the development of prison performance agreements for all SA public prisons.

Reduction in FTEs has been managed at an individual site level, dependent upon operational needs. In terms of key performance indicators, as part of the benchmarking initiative DCS has established 12 KPIs for public prisons. Each prison will be measured against the same KPIs with differing targets based upon the role and the function of each site. Implementing the KPIs will enable the department to measure how each prison is performing across a range of areas, and they are well publicised.

One of the good things about this area of reform is improving workplace flexibility. DCS continues to progress the introduction of workforce flexibility, including the introduction of part-time and casual correctional officers, giving more people the opportunity to work in our system; the

procurement and implementation of a new rostering system, introducing an IT rostering solution that allows for controlled labour costs, compliance, increased operational efficiencies—I could keep going; this is all good stuff.

Mr ODENWALDER: Will the results of the benchmarking be released publicly periodically? Can we see whether those KPIs are being met?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I will get an update on those in early 2022. At the moment, we are internally testing and measuring those KPIs.

Ms WORTLEY: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 108, and Budget Paper 5, page 17. With regard to the construction of the 270 new beds at Yatala, what is the expected increase in prison officers generated by this? While you are looking that up, minister, will these be new positions or will it also include transfers in from the outer regions?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I am advised that those decisions are not yet made, but those funding decisions will be made as part of a future budget bid.

Ms WORTLEY: As a follow-up on that, what is the number of prison officers transferred in 2019, 2020 and 2021 from Mobilong, Port Augusta, Port Lincoln and Mount Gambier prisons to Yatala prison?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: That is certainly a question I will have to take on notice for the member. I am happy to do that. I do not have those details in front of me.

Ms WORTLEY: That would be appreciated.

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

Sitting suspended from 14:45 to 15:00.

DEPARTMENT FOR ENERGY AND MINING, \$54,776,000

Membership:

Mr Gee substituted for Mr Bignell.

Hon. A. Koutsantonis substituted for Mr Odenwalder.

Minister:

Hon. D.C. van Holst Pellekaan, Minister for Energy and Mining.

Departmental Advisers:

Dr P. Heithersay, Chief Executive, Department for Energy and Mining.

Ms M. Hammond, Principal Accountant, Department for Energy and Mining.

Ms A. Blood, Executive Director, Mineral Resources, Department for Energy and Mining.

Mr V. Duffy, Executive Director, Energy and Technical Regulation, Department for Energy and Mining.

Mr N. Smith, Executive Director, Growth State and Low Carbon Transition, Department for Energy and Mining.

Mr N. Panagopoulos, Deputy Executive Director, Energy Resources, Department for Energy and Mining.

Mr S. Oster, Director, Growth State and Low Carbon Transition, Department for Energy and Mining.

The CHAIR: Welcome back to Estimates Committee A for the final session of the day and the week. The estimates committee is 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 of the opposition have agreed to an approximate time for the consideration of proposed payments, which will facilitate a change of departmental advisers, but possibly not in this case. Can the minister and the lead speaker for the opposition confirm that today's timetable as previously distributed is accurate?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: Yes, sir.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes.

The CHAIR: Changes to the committee membership will be notified as they occur, and I have done so already. 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 refer members to my opening statement at the beginning of today regarding the rules of debate, and that is that the rules of the house apply generally to when the house is in committee. One further comment I will make is that I encourage members to wear masks, other than when they are asking or answering a question or speaking.

I now proceed to open the following lines for examination. The portfolio is the Department for Energy and Mining. The minister appearing is the Minister for Energy and Mining. I declare the proposed payments open for examination and invite the minister to introduce his advisers and make a short statement, should he wish.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: On my left, I have Dr Paul Heithersay, Chief Executive of the Department for Energy and Mining. Behind him is Mayra Hammond, Principal Accountant. Next to Ms Hammond is Mr Nick Smith, Executive Director, Growth State and Low Carbon Transition. Behind him is Ms Alexandra Blood, Executive Director, Mineral Resources. Next to her is Mr Vince Duffy, Executive Director, Energy and Technical Regulation. In the Speaker's gallery, for obvious reasons, are Mr Nick Panagopoulos, Deputy Executive Director, Energy Resources, and Mr Scott Oster, Director, Growth State and Low Carbon Transition.

I have a very brief opening statement. Let me say at the outset that, given this is the fourth estimates committee I have participated in as a minister, I would like to thank my chief executive and all the DEM staff for the outstanding work they have done with our government over the last few years since the last election and also my ministerial staff.

I would also like to thank the broader energy and mining sector. COVID has had a massive impact on our economy and our lives and our homes, as we all know, but I think that the energy and mining sector, including the services components, has probably done a job at least as good as any other sector with regard to getting on, continuing their business and doing it responsibly throughout COVID. Great thanks to them as well because, while that has been beneficial to every one of those companies, and it has been beneficial to every one of those employees, it has also been extremely beneficial to our economy across the board, and that is extremely important.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: First of all, I would like to thank the minister for his cooperation during the COVID lockdown and his commitment to the opposition to allow us to have estimates as quickly as possible after COVID. I think it was a sincere and genuine offer and I want to thank him for that. I would also like to thank the department for all the work they have had to do to prepare the minister to answer the opposition's questions. I also thank the department for the work they have done during COVID.

I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 102, objective. Minister, in the government's budget papers the stated objective is to deliver the government's commitment to reduce energy costs. If I go back to the last election, that commitment was to 'see an average South Australian household's power bill fall by \$302 compared to the latest (2016-17) prices'. That is on page 9 of your Liberal Energy Solution document you published at the last election—I can see you nodding—and that is what was said.

ESCOSA helpfully publish annual figures. Every year they do a comparison of offers and they give us an average, and it is very useful information. In the period that the Liberal Party made its commitment, their base of 2016-17, the market offer was \$1,976. The last full year average that ESCOSA did was \$2,086, an increase from that period—that is to June 2020. Then the minister either instructed ESCOSA or ESCOSA of their own initiative did another piece of work, which was, surprisingly, to calculate the average power price from 30 June 2020 to 31 October 2020. That measure was \$1,976.

On the best case example, power prices have decreased by a dollar on the government's measure of their \$302; at worst, it has increased by \$111. Can the minister explain to the committee how he intends to get that \$302 power decrease from his stated base line in his policy document that he released in 2017 before the election saying that he would reduce power prices by \$302 compared with the 2016-17 average price?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: I do not want to debate with the member the merits of different reports and different numbers that come from different places or the same place, but the advice I have is that, based on ESCOSA's numbers, the average annual residential electricity price has gone down \$269.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: From when?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: Since coming into government.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: That was not your election commitment. Your election commitment was that you would reduce power prices by \$302 compared with the latest 2016-17 prices. Power prices now are more expensive than they were in 2017 when you made that promise. The problem is that we have a commitment in writing from the government that they would lower these power prices. My question is: from your commitment, when will you lower power prices by \$302 per annum?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: I do not accept the premise of that statement, that power prices are going up.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Well, it is here. It is your document; it is not mine.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: Our prices are actually going down.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I can table it, if you like.

The CHAIR: No, we do not table documents in committee.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: It is your document, sir. It says here—

The CHAIR: Yes, I know. Member for West Torrens, you can circulate the document, if you wish, but we do not table documents in committee. You have asked your question, made your point and the minister is answering.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: I do not accept the premise of the question that power prices are going up. Power prices are actually going down. In fact, there is an enormous amount of information that supports that. Wholesale energy costs are currently the primary driver of retail price changes. South Australian wholesale electricity prices continue to fall with the decline of \$62.04 in 2019-20 compared to an average of \$109.80 in 2018-19. The Australian Energy Market Operator's data indicates that wholesale prices averaged \$44.83 per megawatt hour for 2020-21.

A report from the Australian Energy Regulator has shown that South Australia recorded the lowest average spot electricity prices in the National Electricity Market for quarter 4 2020 at \$35 per megawatt hour. This was the first time since quarter 1 in 2012, which I think is about the time the member became the energy minister himself, that South Australia had the lowest quarterly prices in the National Electricity Market. So they have been going up since then until we came into government.

As of 12 July 2021, South Australian futures were priced at \$61.25 per megawatt hour in the third quarter of 2021. These declining wholesale costs should translate to lower retail costs in the future. The Essential Services Commission of South Australia reported that in June 2018 the average

all retailers' market offers for residential electricity customers consuming 5,000 kilowatts per year was \$2,244. This figure had decreased by \$269 by October 2020.

So there is a lot more information that supports the benefits to households of our energy policies. We are getting electricity prices down and I stand by that \$302 commitment.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Given the objective statements on page 102, can the minister confirm that his commitment was to reduce power prices by \$302 compared to the latest 2016-17 prices when he published his policy?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: Let me go back and refresh myself on that, but let me be very clear—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: That you do not know your election commitment?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: Let me be very clear: the commitment that we made, I stand by.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: So you stand by—this is a copy of the 'Liberal Energy Solution: a real energy solution for South Australians'. On page 9, your document states:

This fall in wholesale prices would see an average South Australian household's power bill fall by \$302, compared to the latest (2016-17) prices.

That is accurate?

The CHAIR: Well, you have read the document, member for West Torrens.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I just do not understand why the minister will not repeat his own election commitment.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: Ask a question.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I am. Is that accurate?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: You are reading from a document there. Let me get to the heart of it. I stand by the commitment that we made—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Was your commitment—

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: —and I will also—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Okay, was your commitment—

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: I will also easily happily compare the record of the last 3½ years under our government—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Sure.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: —to any time under the previous government, particularly the time that the member opposite was the minister.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Let's actually then get to brass tacks. Did you make a commitment to the people of South Australia that you would lower power prices by \$302 from a base of 2016-17 average pricing?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: I told you. I will go back to that document.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I have to say, this is not a matter of debate. It was an election commitment the minister made. You wrote this policy. Is your evidence to the committee you do not remember—

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: No.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: —or you do not know or you are just not going to say?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: My evidence to the committee is that I stick by the commitment.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Well, the commitment was 2016-17, and on your very best independent advice you had from ESCOSA you have reduced power prices by \$1.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: And, Mr Chair, the member's description of the commitment is for the member to make. What I say very, very clearly is that I stick by the commitments that we have made.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I just again point out to the Chairman.

The CHAIR: Yes.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Sir, I cannot make inaccurate statements in the parliament because that would be a contempt of the parliament. I am saying that the Liberal Party document says that you would reduce power prices by \$302 by 2016-17. I have asked the minister four times. He was the Liberal Party spokesperson on this matter and the minister. Page 108 of his Agency Statement says the objective is 'to deliver the government's commitment to reduce energy costs'. That commitment is in this document. This document says 2016-17. ESCOSA, which is an independent regulatory agency for the state, publishes these figures annually.

In 2016-17, the average price was \$1,976. Even with the one-off June to October figure that the minister commissioned, the very best the government can say they have reduced power prices by all reporting is by a dollar off the base and metric they set. I go on to ask the minister: who instructed ESCOSA to publish this 30 June to 31 October report? Was that something ESCOSA did on their initiative, or did you instruct them to do so?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: Just to be very clear, rather than leave the people who are listening to this debate hanging on the words of the shadow minister, I stick by the commitments that we have made with regard to that. I stand by those commitments.

The CHAIR: You are repeating your answer to the original question. Thank you, minister.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: With regard to the commissioning of that report, I will take that on notice and get back to the house.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: The only people who can commission reports from ESCOSA are the Treasurer or, I think, the water minister, or you. So either you signed a document to ESCOSA asking them to do this work, or you instructed your staff to ask them to do this work, or they did it of their own motion. Do you not remember asking them to do this work?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: I ask ESCOSA to do a lot of work. One of the things that we want to be able to do for the people of South Australia, and for this chamber and many others, is to provide as much accurate independent advice on these things as possible.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Why would ESCOSA for the first time in its history publish a report on the basis of 30 June 2020 to 31 October 2020? Was anyone attempting to try to get a number out there that showed that power prices actually decreased, or were they worried about something else? The next report is out in August, next month, and without this report—this subsequent report that ESCOSA were asked to do is to 31 October 2020—the public record will show a power price increase from your base of 2016-17 of \$111. Is that why they were asked to do this report?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: I told you, I will come back with regard to the commissioning of the report. But let's just maybe save everybody in the chamber a lot of time: we have an election commitment, I stand by it, and let's see—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: You just cannot remember it.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: —where we end up when we get to the next election.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: What is the use of standing by an election commitment if you cannot remember it? I asked you a pretty simple question. It is on page 9 of your document.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: Again, I do not accept the premise of the questions or the statements.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Does that mean that the document on page 9 does not reference 2016-17 prices?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: Mr Chairman, I think I have been as clear as I can be.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I think you are absolutely being very, very evasive, and I think that raises more questions. It is not like you either I have to say, so I think we will move on.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: Mr Chair, I am not being evasive; I am sharing as much as I can. I have offered to bring information back and I could not be clearer—about five or six times—with regard to our commitments.

The CHAIR: Yes, and you will get back to us on ESCOSA.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: There are many references to this project in the budget papers, so I will just choose one. It is Project EnergyConnect, just for the benefit of the minister, and it is in Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 111, highlights. I will ask a series of questions about that if I can. If you want more specific references, I can get them for you.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: Sure.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Have you received any advice that Project EnergyConnect's completion is delayed or if there have been any further cost escalations since the latest public announcements by ElectraNet or the Australian Energy Regulator?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: No.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: What is the total cost of capital infrastructure for EnergyConnect in South Australia in dollar terms—maybe you can take this on notice if you do not have the answer—and what would that make up as a percentage of the total capital of the entire bill?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: I have these figures handy and I am happy to get them for you, but the reality is that none of them are a cost to the South Australian taxpayer through this budget. Those are costs that have been met by the private sector in building the interconnector, so they are not part of this budget. As we both know, there is a cost-recovery mechanism that works its way through and I can give you those numbers if you want.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes, please.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: They are a matter of public record.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Thank you.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: On 31 May 2021, the Australian Energy Regulator published details of its final decisions on costs for ElectraNet and TransGrid to build Project EnergyConnect. The regulator determined that the total cost for Project EnergyConnect is \$2,275.3 million, comprising capital expenditure of \$457.4 million for ElectraNet and \$1,817.9 million for TransGrid. I do not have the percentages here, but they would be pretty straightforward.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: In what financial year will a South Australian energy consumer receive their first discount as a result of EnergyConnect becoming operational?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: I will get that from an adviser, but let me go to where the shadow is perhaps heading. I am advised construction will start this year and I am advised that commissioning will start in 2023. I am also advised there is no specific date, to answer that question, but in general terms the answer is that as soon as the electricity starts to flow it has a positive downward impact on wholesale prices, and that works its way through to retail prices.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Last year's average spot price for wholesale prices was \$40 in South Australia, or thereabouts. Project EnergyConnect will lower that by how much?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: I do not have that with me, but the latest numbers with regard to residential costs are \$100 per year to South Australian residential consumers.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: That is based on the ACIL Allen report, is it not?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: That is based on the numbers that the Australian Energy Regulator has signed off on.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: That is based on the ACIL Allen report. I understand that the Australian Energy Regulator did not do their own modelling; ElectraNet and TransGrid did the modelling and supplied them with consultants' reports. That is where your number is coming from, the ACIL Allen report, is it not?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: It is the number that the AER accepted.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes, I understand.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: The two proponents provided them, where they came from and the backgrounds.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: That is based on a wholesale power price dropping from \$120 down to \$60, that power price reduction you have just quoted, that \$100 per year. The average wholesale power price in South Australia last financial year was \$40. This report has already factored in the decrease, so what will the interconnector do to those South Australian wholesale power prices? Do you have any modelling or advice on that?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: I am sure it exists, but I do not have it with me. The reality is that the best information available, which was approved by the AER fairly recently, says \$100 per year on average per household in savings on electricity bills.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: What is the average cost to the 860,000 or so households connected to the NEM in South Australia in terms of their recovery of capital costs for Project EnergyConnect?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: The Australian Energy Regulator indicated that passing through the cost of the project will increase annual bills in the short term by \$6 for households in the financial year 2022-23 and \$17 per year per household each year during 2023 to 2028. That is the pass-through cost. Then the benefit from lower prices is approximately \$100 above that.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Immediately?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: It is not in that first year. There is modelling available and I will bring the answer back to the house.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I am glad you say there is modelling available. Who conducted that modelling you are referencing?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: I will find out for you. What I am saying quite consistently is that we are working from the numbers the AER accepted. Some of them they worked on themselves, some of them they brought in consultants to help them with, some of them they received from TransGrid and ElectraNet when they produced them themselves and some of them TransGrid and ElectraNet brought in consultants for. There are a lot of sources of this information. The most important thing is that the Australian Energy Regulator, whose job it is overwhelmingly to approve proposals if they think they are in the best interest of consumers, have said that this project is good for consumers.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Was Project EnergyConnect referred to the South Australian Productivity Commission for analysis?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: No, it was not referred through the normal process, and there is a good reason for that: there is no state government money in the project save for underwriting, which is not going to be a cost to the taxpayer at all, but it is a private project. While it was not referred, they took interest in it and a favourable comment or two or more made about it, saying this would be very good. The reality is that it was not something that would be referred to them.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I suppose where I am going with this, minister, is that I have not seen any government modelling—New South Wales government, South Australian government or commonwealth government modelling—on the benefits of this, as you call it, 'private' piece of infrastructure.

This private piece of infrastructure has been given a legislative basis to recoup that money, and you gave evidence to the committee just now—that they can charge every household in South Australia \$6 a year for the first financial year 2022-23, going up to \$18 out to 2028 and then ongoing. This is a \$2.2 billion piece of infrastructure that proponents have compelled South Australians and New South Wales residents to purchase whether they like it or not. It is a monopoly asset, a regulated asset. They can pass through their costs.

The question I have for you is: what have you done as a government, as a sovereign government, to do your own modelling, your own research, to verify and check the ACIL Allen report, which was commissioned by ElectraNet, the beneficiaries of this project, and the modelling done by TransGrid and their consultants, which is designed obviously to prove up their project? What independent work have you done to verify these numbers?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: First of all, while the shadow minister focuses on the cost to consumers, let me just say again that it has been independently verified that the benefits to consumers swamp the costs. It is a net saving to consumers. That is the important thing about this project.

With regard to what I have done specifically, what I have done is work very closely, as has my office and as has our department, with the Australian Energy Regulator. It is not at all uncommon when a national independent regulator is overseeing a project for the relevant states not to feel compelled to do their own work in parallel.

If the shadow minister is saying that he is uncomfortable with the AER work or the AER staff or the AER results or the AER way of going about things, he can hold that view, if that is his view. That is not my view. My view is that they have been extraordinarily thorough with regard to this project. This project has been turned upside down and sideways and inside out for quite a few years now.

The AER has done work on behalf of the South Australian government, on behalf of South Australian consumers and on behalf of customers in general. The Australian Energy Regulator, as an arms-length independent regulator, does that work on behalf of Australians, and in this case South Australians and of course people in New South Wales.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: The AER is not an independent statutory body. It is part of the Department of Treasury and Finance in Canberra.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: I did not say statutory. I said independent.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: ESCOSA, however, are.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: If you are suggesting that the AER does not work independently then I will leave that suggestion with you.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: No.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: However, as far as I am concerned, they do their work independently of governments.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I have the ACIL Allen report here in front of me. Have you read the Acil Allen report?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: I have read the ACIL Allen reports. I do not know which one you have in front of you.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: This is the one on Project EnergyConnect.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: As I said earlier on, I am not going to be drawn into a situation where the shadow minister reads something to himself and to the chamber and then asks me if it is all true or if I have read it. If the shadow minister is asking me as minister whether I have read every single piece of information that was produced by anybody involved in the AER's determination that this is a good project, the answer is no. Have I read some of it? Yes. Have I read a lot of it? Yes. But I am not going to get into the silliness of saying, 'Have I read the one that the shadow minister has in front of him?'

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I think that is a fair statement. This is the one piece of work ElectraNet did for ACIL Allen. It was reported to ElectraNet on 24 September 2020 and submitted to the AER as the definitive modelling by ElectraNet on the case for the interconnector. Have you read that ACIL Allen report?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: I am not going to get into that.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I will take that as a—

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: I cannot remember which report I read and which report I did not read and, as you said, that is actually very fair.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: This is the report that the AER relied on. In this report, they have given us a load-weighted wholesale spot price with Project EnergyConnect and one without. They say in 2019 the wholesale power price on average in South Australia was just over \$120, and then it drops in 2020 to \$60, and it would have had a trajectory a lot higher had it not been for Project EnergyConnect. It bounces around between \$60 and \$75 and then goes off up over a longer period of time.

Given that the Australian Energy Regulator and AEMO publish annual reports about the average spot price, South Australia's average spot price last year was in the 40s, and the New South Wales spot price was a lot higher. You have committed South Australians to building an interconnector to a jurisdiction that is facing shortages in power. The spot price this financial year is well above a hundred dollars in Queensland and New South Wales, while we are enjoying relatively low spot prices in the wholesale market, although it is increasing.

The base case shows benefits when the price drops to \$60. Given the price was at \$40 on average last financial year, how do we get savings from the interconnector? Where do they come from?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: Well, that is a big question with a big answer.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I would love to hear it.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: That is completely contained in the AER's determination so, if the shadow minister really wants to, he can just focus on the AER's determination. The assertion I have committed South Australians to this is inaccurate. I support the building of this interconnector. The two proponents applied to the AER and others for permission to build it. The Australian Energy Regulator on behalf of consumers gave them that permission. Do I support that? Yes, absolutely, but the words used by the shadow minister are incorrect. This is a very good project. All the information the shadow minister is seeking is available in the AER's determination, and I refer him to that.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I point out again that the Liberal Energy Solution plan was all about an interconnector, including a \$200 million fund that was never established to bring about its creation. I read from that:

Our solution will also increase South Australia's connection with the rest of the national market and make renewables much more reliable by:

- creating a \$200 million Interconnection Fund to provide South Australians with access to cheap baseload power...

That cheap base load power you are talking about currently is more expensive in New South Wales than it is here, so my very obvious question is: if you are connecting us to a jurisdiction that has base load power of over a hundred dollars on average a megawatt hour, where are the price reductions coming from?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: Well, Mr Chair, he wanted the answer, so here is the answer, and please let me finish it. What the shadow minister has just said betrays his misunderstanding of the entire energy system. It might well be the reason that before we came into government we had more and more blackouts, higher and higher prices, and that since coming into government we have reversed that: prices are going down and we have reduced the number of blackouts.

To say that our energy policy was all about the interconnector is entirely wrong: it was a key component. Our energy policy included our Home Battery Scheme, it included the Grid Scale Storage Fund, it included demand management and demand response trials, it included a wide range of things and, yes, it included the interconnector.

It is true to say that the interconnector will benefit South Australians because we will have access to cheaper base load power, but for the shadow minister then to try to twist that into assuming that every drop of electricity that is going to be consumed in South Australia is going to come from interstate where power prices are on average higher—and I do appreciate his acknowledgment that power prices in South Australia are cheaper than in New South Wales—and to try to assume that we would be paying the average available in New South Wales instead of the average available in South Australia is either ill-informed or deliberate misrepresentation.

There will be times when the power prices in South Australia at a point in time might go higher for an hour, they might go for a day, they might go for a week. There will be times when power prices in South Australia are higher than they are in New South Wales. At those points in time, we will be able to access cheaper base load power from New South Wales. That is a fact. But power will be cheaper on average across the year in South Australia than it will be in New South Wales, but that does not mean we do not need the interconnector.

What that means is that we have the opportunity to use the interconnector in many ways. We have the opportunity to use the interconnector, as is already happening, as a way of attracting far more investment and thousands of jobs and billions of dollars into new renewable energy generation, which we actually cannot absorb in South Australia at the moment. However, that renewable energy, because it is going to be cheaper in South Australia and more expensive in New South Wales, can be exported into New South Wales.

The interconnector is not just about importing electricity into South Australia: it is a two-way tool. We will export far more renewable energy from South Australia into New South Wales than we will ever import of their base load power. Why is that important? Because we want to use this tool to its greatest effectiveness. There are plenty of examples with regard to points in time when, yes, we will import cheaper power, but across the average of the year we will be exporting our cheaper power.

Interconnectors are also very important with regard to being tools to manage frequency and voltage. It is naive to think of an interconnector only with regard to flows of electricity on a volume basis: whose got more, whose got less, where is it more expensive, or cheaper and who needs it.

Interconnectors are incredibly important as tools to be able to ramp up or ramp down, to push electricity one way or suck it the other to help with voltage control and frequency control in a way which if you do not have enough interconnection capacity you cannot do. If you get your frequency or your voltage out of whack, you actually have deliberate self-tripping blackouts, so an interconnector can be very useful for those things as well.

An interconnector can be incredibly useful with regard to islanding. Those in this chamber might remember a couple of Januarys ago—about 2½ years ago, I think it was—when a storm in Western Victoria knocked out some of their transmission lines, and so our interconnector to Western Victoria was not useful. We were effectively islanded. This interconnector would mean that instead of having one large and one small one—but essentially interconnection with Victoria, as we have at the moment—we would have large interconnection into two states instead of one. If one of those interconnectors became unviable for some reason, like storm damage or an islanding, we would have another one to fall back on. This would be incredibly important for security of supply in South Australia.

Another thing that is important about interconnection is that, in a world where we have more and more renewable energy penetration, weather not only goes to the demand of electricity, as it has for decades—even back in caveman days; when it was cold they burnt more wood—but now it goes to the supply of electricity as well. Weather goes to demand and to supply.

New South Wales has much more different weather from South Australia than Victoria does, so to make full use of an interconnector you need to be able to swap and share and move your electricity back and forth for a wide range of reasons with a jurisdiction that is not in the same situation

as you at the same time and with a jurisdiction that actually does not have the same demand highs and lows at the same time or the same supply highs and lows at the same time.

We are very lucky to have interconnection with Victoria and it is very beneficial to us, but interconnection with New South Wales will be more beneficial because we will have more offsetting opportunities to share that electricity back and forth, the opportunity to use it as a tool for voltage and frequency, the opportunity to access additional electricity when we need it, the opportunity to export surplus renewable electricity when we have it and, by the way, to support the decarbonisation of New South Wales as their coal-fired generators are retired, as is going to happen. They can then use our surplus renewable energy.

We will have the opportunity to engage with a jurisdiction that has different supply and demand peaks and troughs, and certainly more different than we currently have with Victoria, which is important. There are many, many more things that are good about this interconnector. Let me finish with the fact that it is going to make electricity prices cheaper for South Australian households and businesses.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: If I can move you to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 111, performance indicators, another one of your election commitments was the successful uptake and installation of 40,000 batteries as part of the Home Battery Scheme. When will you complete having 40,000 batteries installed on South Australian homes? What year?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: We are working to do that and I will get some specific information in just a minute from my advisers. This is a fantastic program. We went to the last election with a commitment for a home battery scheme and the Labor Party went to the last election with a commitment for a virtual power plant, in partnership with Tesla, to be rolled out on Housing SA properties.

Most people thought that whoever was successful at the election would run their own home battery scheme and ditch the other one. On coming into government, we actually looked at the Labor scheme and said, 'Do you know what? We can run both. We will do ours and we can run theirs.' Why is the installation of home batteries so important and why is it such a key feature of our energy solution? They help the house that has them, of course.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Point of order: standing 98. I am not asking about the benefits of the Home Battery Scheme; I am asking about when the 40,000 will be—

The CHAIR: You asked when they would be established or finalised.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes. He is debating the answer, so if I could just have an answer to that.

The CHAIR: You are well aware, and we have been through this before: you have asked a question, a very specific question, and ministers can answer in the way they see fit. As I see it at the moment, the minister is giving background to the answer, which he will get to.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: The reason I am going through this is that the benefits of the batteries are actually quite important, and the fact that we have merged two programs together is quite important. For the shadow minister to focus on one program or the other only would be a fairly narrow-minded approach with regard to the benefits of these two programs. I will come to the timing—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I did not ask about the benefits of the programs, I just asked when they will be installed.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: —of the rollout, but let me say as briefly as I can that there are benefits to the scheme for households and there are benefits to the scheme for the grid. The benefits to the scheme for the household is about the household having a battery, and we want to get out tens of thousands of those, including the targets for each distinct group.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: But you have not.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: The benefits for the grid are actually about the aggregated total capacity of the battery. Keep in mind that, when we provide a subsidy, we are using

taxpayers' money to provide a subsidy to individual homes. I would not do that if there were not benefits for all the other taxpayers across the grid. So the aggregated total of the batteries' capacity is one of the most important things.

We have already achieved what we intended to achieve in the Home Battery Scheme with regard to the aggregated capacity of the batteries, so we are already achieving the benefits to the 95-plus per cent of South Australians who do not have a home battery. We are way ahead of schedule.

With regard to the benefits to the 40,000 people who will get their home batteries—I do not know, but somebody could tell me it is 1 or 2 per cent of the population or probably less or whatever it is—that will occur in September 2025. We already have about 25,000 home batteries either installed or committed to be installed across South Australia. That is 25,000 of the 40,000 that we committed at the election out of both of the programs that we have chosen to essentially merge together. It is 25,000 out of 40,000, and the 40,000 for that one program alone will be September 2025.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Performance indicators show that the government set a target in 2021 of 7,000 installations. It achieved 5,500. You subsequently lowered the subsidy again to \$2,000, as I understand from the email you sent out either just before lockdown or during lockdown informing MPs of the step down to 2,000. Your target remains at 7,000 for this coming financial year. Can you explain to me your logic where you think that by lowering the subsidy you will still meet the same target as when there was a higher subsidy and you still did not meet that target?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: Well, yes, I can. The initial modelling that we used was on a seven-kilowatt hour capacity battery. What we have found is that the take-up of batteries on average has been a 12-kilowatt hour capacity battery. So we are achieving our total aggregated grouped up storage, which is actually the thing that benefits every household that does not have a battery. The overwhelming majority of people in South Australia are getting that benefit.

With regard to the very small share of people I also want to help, and who seem to be the key focus for the shadow minister, those 40,000 people have the opportunity to access a battery with a subsidy. They also have the opportunity to access not only a new battery but also new solar panels on their house if they do not have them through support from the Clean Energy Finance Corporation with \$100 million of money for low interest loans.

To the point about the subsidy, we said very early on that we would offer a more generous subsidy at the start of the program and a less generous subsidy at the end of the program because one of the things that our program would do was bring down the cost of the batteries. The average cost of these batteries since we started this program has come down \$4,700 on average.

The initial maximum subsidy was \$6,000. It is currently \$3,000. It will go down to \$2,000. So in the time that we have reduced the subsidy by \$4,000, from \$6,000 to \$2,000, our policy, as we said it would, has actually brought down the cost of the batteries by nearly \$5,000. So a household that chooses to buy a battery today or tomorrow, or down the track when the subsidy is reduced again after another 1,200 or 1,300 batteries have gone out, will actually still be nearly \$1,000 better off than they would have been if they had bought the battery at the beginning of the program and got the bigger subsidy.

That is how we are going to keep rolling out the batteries with lower subsidies because there are many benefits from this program, one of which is bringing down the cost of the batteries. We said that would happen and it is happening. So while we are reducing the subsidy, the net cost of the batteries is actually going down even faster.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 102, ministerial office resources and the workforce summary on page 103. Do you have any ministerial advisers who were seconded from another department?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: Yes, one.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Who is that?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: Scott Cawrse.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Do you have two senior advisers?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: Correct.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: How many advisers in total do you have in your office?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: I have a budget for one Chief of Staff and three advisers and I actually have one Chief of Staff and two advisers.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Are both those advisers senior advisers?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: Yes.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Of the 13 FTEs in your ministerial office, how many have been seconded from outside the Department for Energy and Mining?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: Just to be clear, there are chiefs of staff and advisers and then there are essentially departmental ministerial staff. To the best of my knowledge and to the best of my CE's knowledge, none of those people in what would normally be the departmental category have come from outside the department. But we will take that on notice and let you know if it is different.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: If I could refer you now to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 111, growth and low carbon, highlights, dot point 4 relating to the hydrogen export study and the South Australian hydrogen export plan, what is the total budget allocation for 2021-22 for the hydrogen export plan?

The CHAIR: Member for West Torrens, I think you said page 111; it is actually page 110.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Thank you very much, sir. You have the wisdom of Solomon.

The CHAIR: I am just letting you know that I am onto it.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: To date, the South Australian government has committed more than \$40 million in grants and loans to the development of renewable hydrogen, including Australian Gas Networks (AGN), Hydrogen Park South Australia, part of the Australian Gas Infrastructure Group, and recently launched its \$14.5 million demonstration project.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I am not interested in the Renewable Technology Fund. I am asking what the budget is for the hydrogen export plan. The government did a hydrogen export study and has an SA hydrogen export plan. It is referred to on numerous occasions in the budget. You can come back to it. You can take it on notice; it is no problem.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: Just to clarify, are you sure you are not thinking about the Hydrogen Action Plan?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: No, the hydrogen export plan.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: We will take that on notice.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: What was the total cost of the hydrogen export study?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: Approximately \$1.25 million.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Who was the external consultant who conducted that?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: I am advised KPMG and WSP.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: What does the WSP stand for?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: We will come back to you on that.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: On how many occasions have you met with representatives of H2U? Numerous?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: I would need to check my diary, but I suspect it might be four times perhaps.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Did you ever inform anyone from H2U that land at Port Bonython would be available for sale or lease before it was publicly announced by the government?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: No.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I have a letter here dated 4 May from the Treasurer addressed to Mr Attilio Pigneri, and I quote:

As you know, the parcels of land in which you have expressed an interest are proposed to be included in an upcoming open-market Expression of Interest (EOI) process.

So H2U, on 4 May 2021, before this letter was sent, had advance knowledge that land at Port Bonython was to go out to tender. Your evidence to the committee is that you or your office never told H2U that that process was underway?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: I have already answered that question. But let me be very clear. If I remember what you read correctly, the letter from the Treasurer says to H2U, 'The land that you,' being H2U, 'have expressed interest in'. It does not suggest that anybody has commented on that in any way to H2U.

It is not at all uncommon for a company to approach the government and say, 'We are expressing our interest,' and then if it is deemed appropriate for the Treasurer, if he or she sees fit, to write back and say, 'The land that you have expressed interest in, actually, we are going to do something with it.' It seems pretty straightforward.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes, that explanation is straightforward, but the letter, unfortunately for someone, says, 'As you know, the parcels of land—

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: —that you have expressed interest in.'

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: —which you have expressed an interest in—

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: There you go.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: —are proposed to be included in an upcoming open market expression of interest.' How could H2U know about an expression of interest before everyone else?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: You will have to talk to the Treasurer about this if you want some more details, but—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: So this is the Treasurer's doing?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: —let me just say again: the letter says very clearly 'from the Treasurer to H2U'. It makes it clear that H2U has expressed interest in the land. It does not say that anybody from anywhere in government offered land or talked to them about it or gave them any inside information or anything like that. It is not at all uncommon for companies to approach the government for land. In fact, I would be surprised if other companies had not approached the government and said, 'We have interest in the land at Port Bonython.'

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: That is a perfectly reasonable thing to say. There is only one problem and that is they knew about an EOI.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: That letter does not say that.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: It does. It says, 'As you know, the proposed parcels of land in which you have expressed an interest are proposed to be included in an upcoming open market expression of interest.' This letter predates the government's public announcement.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: But it does not say that anybody talked to—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I did not say. I am asking you if you had.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: I did not. If you want more information, you can talk to the Treasurer.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Had H2U asked you to lobby the Treasurer on their behalf to give them access to this land through a direct approach?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: No, they did not.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Did they make an unsolicited bid to you for this land?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: No, and let me just try to help you here.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Thank you.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: We have been through this in question time. I did not meet with H2U any time around this point in time—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I believe you. Minister, I am not accusing you of lying. I am just asking.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: —that you are talking about. The letter that you are reading from, I think, is the same one that we have discussed in question time. There was a suggestion from the opposition in question time that something inappropriate had happened. It was very clear from all the information that came out in question time that that was clearly not the case, that the Treasurer wrote a letter to H2U.

The Treasurer actually also informed every other organisation that had expressed any interest in acquiring this land or expressed interest through the expression of interest process of the existence of a commitment to H2U. Also, from memory, it makes it very clear that H2U still has to fully participate in the expression of interest/tender process that H2U still would have to pay a market price. All of this information was actually proactively shared by the Treasurer through seeking the expression of interest process.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: On that, minister, these documents were an addendum to the initial EOI. They were not included. When the initial EOI was released, the information was not included that H2U—it became apparent after you went on radio and said that—

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: It was provided to all the people or organisations who expressed an interest, who said that they wanted to participate—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Subsequently, yes. But not the original expression of interest.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: If the shadow minister wants to split hairs—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: It is not splitting hairs.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: Let me just be really clear: it was provided to the people who said they wanted to participate, not to the people who did not want to participate.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Just so the committee is clear, if a company has prior knowledge of an expression of interest, has made an unsolicited approach to the government for land and is granted that land and that is not made apparent to everyone in the initial expression of interest and is done subsequently, that is not the same as everyone being informed. This was a process that has been amended because it has been found out that H2U knew in advance that there was going to be an EOI.

What I am trying to get at—and I am not accusing you, minister; I am just asking you—is that someone has told them. Someone has told H2U that this land is going out to the market, and it just happens to coincide with their unsolicited bid for the land. They had been granted I think over a hundred hectares of this land adjacent to the land that is going out for an expression of interest, so there are probity questions here that need to be answered.

No-one is suggesting you have done anything wrong; I am just asking. How could H2U possibly know about this? You say you do not know; we will take our inquiry somewhere else. But it is not right to say that this was an open and transparent process in the beginning because when the expression of interest was released it was not part, unless you have other information—

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: Let me just address that. If the member has concerns about the probity of the process—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I do.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: —the Treasurer and his department have gone through, he has avenues to pursue that if he wants to.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I will.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: I am confident that the Treasurer and his department will have dealt with this appropriately. Like many of the things that the shadow minister raises, he tries to create a spectre about when we get down the track something is going to be terrible: 'When we get down the track this will be bad, this will be bad, this will be bad.' This is the normal way that this member chooses to try to make things look bad when actually they are not.

The CHAIR: On that note, we might go to the member for Frome who has a question.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Thank you, Mr Chairman. Minister, on Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 110, I want to go back and look at the targets for 2020-21. Can you give me an update on who are the new members of the TLAP Committee? They have not been announced at this stage. I assume they have been picked, but I have no indication or information whatsoever about where it is.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: I will just come directly to that after helping the shadow minister—WSP is Williams Sale Partnership Limited. My outstanding advisers have been able to get that straightaway. Member for Frome, the membership of that committee has not been formally established.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I have another question, Mr Chairman. At the last estimates, we were informed that the review was done by Mr Lew Owens. Are you indicating to me at this committee that the final report from Mr Lew Owens has not been finalised; is that what you are saying?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: No, your question was about the membership of the new TLAP Committee, and what I said was that it has not been formally established.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Why not? First up, why has it not been—

The Hon. D.C. van Holst Pellekaan interjecting:

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: No, this was already on my list here, minister. I will rephrase it: does anyone who was not a member of the previous committee have access to any information or had any discussions with the old, the current or the new members of the proposed TLAP Committee?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: Just bear with me. Just to be sure I understand the question, it is: does anyone who was not on the previous committee have anything to do—any engagement, any involvement—with anybody who was on the previous committee or might be on the next one?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Or are having discussions with any new meetings of the new membership of the new TLAP?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: So does anybody who was not on the previous committee have any meetings with any members of the new committee, which has not been established?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Well, I understand there are members of our community who may have discussions with members of the new direction going forward who were not part of the old committee.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: There is one person I can think of, and that is Mr Peter Dolan. Mr Peter Dolan is a member of your community. Mr Peter Dolan has been appointed as the Executive Director of TLAP. I think he would fit into that category of people you are describing who were not on the previous committee but who do have engagement with people who might be on the future—

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: That has been announced publicly and I endorse that, and congratulate Mr Dolan on taking on that role. There is no-one better to understand the history of the lead issue in Port Pirie and the constraints we had with the previous TLAP Committee than Peter Dolan. I certainly welcome that. So you are indicating that, other than Mr Peter Dolan, no-one should be having meetings who were not members of the previous TLAP Committee?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: I think Mr Peter Dolan would fit into that category of people who were not on the committee before who do have access to information now. He is an outstanding appointment. I am glad that the member for Frome supports the changes we are making to the TLAP Committee that he and his cabinet colleagues at the time, back in 2014, established. I am pleased he recognises that what our government is doing is improving what happened there.

Mr Peter Dolan has been appointed as executive director of what has been called the TLAP Committee, which will be restructured. It has not been formed yet in any technical capacity. He would be speaking with a whole range of people who have an interest in this area at the moment.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Can I just go back. At the last estimates, the review had already been started from February. At that stage, you indicated that, as the local member, I would be advised as soon as possible. Here we are, nearly 10 months down the track, and we still have not finalised the new TLAP Committee, their obligations and how they going to work with not only the local council but also the local member and the community. It has not been made public; is that what you are saying?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: I will help you as much as I can. If you are asking whether the report has been made public, the answer is no. If you are asking why the report has not been made public, the answer is because of the key, most important first step to significantly improve this area of work, significantly improve the results achieved through the process—that you as the local member and you as a cabinet minister helped create.

I do not say for a second that you did not do it with all the best will. I know you would have done it with all the best will but, to be blunt, it was not good enough. That is not only your responsibility. You did not do it on your own, but you were part of it. I am grateful that you acknowledge it needs to be improved, and that is what we are doing.

The first step was appointing the right person—a super high-calibre person, the former 2IC of the EPA, somebody who has been deeply involved in this work and lots of other work over the last few decades that will be incredibly beneficial to this, somebody who has actually moved from Adelaide and bought a house in Port Pirie to live in Port Pirie to do this work. Getting that right person, that person who is so right for so many reasons, was the first step.

He started work on 12 July this year. I decided that it was worth waiting on moving forward with the other things we were prepared to do for the people of Port Pirie and the surrounding districts until we got the right person in place. That person started on 12 July and today is 30 July. We are not sitting around on our hands on this work, but I made the decision that it was worth waiting until we got him—and I am glad you agree he is the right person.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I have a further question. What I am concerned about is that I have had no communication or involvement with the new direction. The new direction of the new TLAP has not been made clear and the community itself is not aware of anything, other than of Mr Dolan, who has been in the paper—that is fantastic and is really terrific news.

What is the new composition of the new TLAP Committee? How will the new TLAP Committee differentiate itself from the previous operation and be more open and transparent and get the results that we need for our children and the community of Port Pirie with greening, lead reduction in the atmosphere and so forth?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: With regard to the composition of the committee, I have already said it has not been formally constituted. I think that is the third time I have made that very clear. With regard to other things that have been announced, we have certainly announced the new executive director. We have certainly announced that there will be greater transparency. We have made it clear that people locally who want it can have Peter Dolan's mobile number and can talk to him.

We have engaged with the local media, who said that under the previous system, which the member for Frome helped create, there was no transparency. That is something that local Port Pirie media professionals said: that the member for Frome's TLAP Committee was completely non-transparent. We have committed to change that and, in fact, the work has already started to change that. They can call up Peter Dolan any day of the week, as the member for Frome can do. He can talk to him and ask questions.

With regard to other aspects of the question, we have made it very clear also that local council will be involved in a way that they have not been involved before. We made it very clear that is going to happen and I believe deeply in that. Local council, as we all know, is the level of government that is closest to the people who we all want to represent and do the very best for.

We have made it very clear that is going to happen. We have made it very clear that there is going to be a change in the structure. We have made it clear there is going to be a community reference group. We have made it very clear that a lot of things are going to happen, but the specifics that the member for Frome would like to have right now I am not able to give him right now, but as soon as I can, I will.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Minister, when will that time come, when the local member and Port Pirie Regional Council, the mayor in particular, can have an open discussion and know exactly in which direction the new TLAP Committee will be going?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: That will happen as soon as possible. Certainly nobody in this chamber, including the member for Frome, should assume that nothing happens until they have the information. Things are already happening and things are already working. The people of Port Pirie are already starting to get benefits. We will be able to share the formal structure of how that works as soon as possible. The member for Frome will get this information, as I have publicly committed to him several times before, but the fact that he does not have it does not mean that good work has not started already, because it has.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I beg to differ. Last year, in this very forum, the minister told me in an answer to a question he did not know who was on the TLAP Committee. Here we are, later, with the same answer again that it has not been constituted. Then I asked him how the money, the \$3.5 million that Nyrstar has allocated, for the Targeted Lead Abatement Program is spent. His evidence to this committee was that that money was allocated by the TLAP Committee. So is your evidence now that that \$3.5 million has not been spent over the last 10 months since the last estimates committee on lead abatement programs in Port Pirie? Has there been expenditure?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: No, that is not my evidence.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Could you take on notice exactly what lead abatement programs have been put in place as a result of the TLAP Committee approving that expenditure?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: Shadow minister, I will certainly come back with more information if I can. For now, let me say that community programs to reduce children's blood lead levels have operated in Port Pirie for nearly 40 years through SA Health's Environmental Health Centre. TLAP is a 10-year program between Nyrstar and the government under the Targeted Lead Abatement Program agreement made in May 2014 when, no doubt, you, the member for Frome and some of your then cabinet colleagues developed this program.

The Department for Energy and Mining does not provide funding for TLAP. Nyrstar contributes up to \$3 million a year and the government's contribution is SA Health's Port Pirie Environmental Health Centre operating budget funding. About \$4.7 million annually is spent in four areas to reduce lead exposure, cleaning up legacy lead in the environment, reducing children's lead exposure at the household level, reducing community dust exposure and improving community understanding of lead exposure risks.

An independently chaired committee was formed in 2014, comprising representatives of Nyrstar, SA Health, the Department for Energy and Mining, and the Department for Education to implement, manage and monitor the program with observers from the Environment Protection Authority and the Port Pirie Regional Council. That is the summary of the program. The answer is very clear, that money in the last 10 months has been spent.

With regard to the specifics of how the TLAP Committee has allocated that, let me come back to you with whatever information I can share with you. Let me also just say that I do not doubt for a second that the member for Frome and the previous government wanted to do good work on this. I do not doubt that for one second. But I have to say really bluntly that the results they have achieved have not been good enough. They have not been good enough for the people of Pirie.

We were very respectful with regard to this issue when we came into government. A program had been set up. Lead in blood is a short, medium and long-term issue. We came into government and we changed some things quickly. This was one that I said, 'We've got to give it a chance to work. We've got to give this program a chance to work.' We have given it a chance to work and it is not working well enough. It is not working well enough for the people of Port Pirie, and so we are making changes. We are not turning it upside down, we are not throwing the baby out with the bathwater, but we are making changes that will help reduce lead in blood of people, and particularly of the infants who we all care about in Port Pirie.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I need to move on because we are running out of time. There are a few topics I want to cover so I will give advance warning to your advisers: land tax for mineral tenements and the White Rock Quarry. I have some questions about that coming up in a moment. I refer to the Budget Statement, Budget Paper 3, page 159, table C.2, estimate of payments from the Consolidated Account to the department. As you heard the Chair say earlier, this line was \$54.7 million. The previous allocations were substantially higher. Could you explain what is the reason for the major variation? Is it a dividend process through the sale of the generators?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: Can you just repeat the line again?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: It is the Budget Statement, Budget Paper 3, page 159, table C.2, estimate of payments from the Consolidated Account, from the Appropriation Act to the department—your budget basically.

The CHAIR: While the minister is seeking advice, do you have omnibus questions?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes, I do.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: I have just been provided with some information. The Department for Energy and Mining net cost of services reduces from \$97.6 million in 2020-21 to \$63.1 million in 2021-22. This reduction in net cost of services largely relates to the winding down of funding for the government's election commitments, including grant payments made to Project EnergyConnect. I am advised that this reduction in net cost of services does not reflect cuts to the department's programs or the implementation of savings measures.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Were there any FTE reductions as a result of that?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: No.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: In terms of land tax, I would not mind you taking this on notice if you could, please, minister. The government's land tax changes now apply to mineral tenements and petroleum geothermal leases. How much land tax are people who hold tenements in South Australia under both acts, the Mining Act and the Petroleum and Geothermal Energy Act, paying to Treasury per year, and do you administer that, or is that done by RevenueSA?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: I will take that on notice.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I take you to White Rock Quarry, and I think the best reference I have, Mr Chairman, is Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 113, objective:

Manage the state's mineral resources through responsible, sustainable, effective and efficient policy and regulation...

I have attended a series of public meetings about the Hanson White Rock Quarry. I understand that the government has rejected the MOP that Hanson's has submitted. The residents who are on the boundaries of this quarry and who own private properties claim to me that they feel they are being treated as second-class citizens, and they are asking: is the government considering a change to the private mines regime to allow the same distance differential between the Mining Act and private mines? Are you considering that change?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: To say that we rejected the MOP, I think, is an unfair characterisation on the company.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Okay, sure.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: It is the normal process that information is provided—people ask for more and it goes back and forth, as you would know. To say that it was rejected I think is harsh and unfair on the company, but, yes, we are in that back and forth process, as the shadow minister knows, because actually we have been very generous sharing information with him about exactly where that process is at the moment.

With regard to this issue more broadly, everybody understands that there are almost always some differences of opinion about developments of this type. This particular private mine has been operating since the 1940s. It has been there for a very long time, and in that time people have bought land and built and bought houses. They have changed hands on and on, and over those decades people have moved closer and closer to the mine, and that has been their right to do that.

The mine did not ever say, 'Don't tell those people they can't come up to our boundary,' but the people now would like to know whether they can have the boundary extended the other way. Guess what? It is a fair request. It is a fair thing to ask. If you live in a home and you prefer the quarry to be further away, or you prefer an expansion of a quarry not to come as close to you as it legally could, it is a very fair thing to ask.

Our department's job is to work through those requests to see what we can do that is fair for everybody concerned: what is fair for the tenement holder who has existing legal rights; what is fair for the people who want to change those rights.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I accept that. I want to get through some of these questions, minister, if I could, please, because—

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: Many quarries in Adelaide predate—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes, they do.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: Separation distances are determined on a case-by-case basis reflecting a focus on safe, fit for purpose management of potential impacts in each circumstance rather than applying a standard one size fits all.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Are you satisfied with the separation between households and the proposed expansion of the quarry?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: I am satisfied that they are legally appropriate, and we are working through what is practically appropriate in a very responsible way. We are engaging with local residents, we are engaging with the company. As you would understand as a former minister, we are doing everything that we can to try to get the best result for everybody, understanding that it will not be a perfect result for everybody.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Has the department or your office instructed or asked White Rock Quarry to establish resident liaison groups or a community consultation process? Has the department thought of doing one itself?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: It has certainly been recommended.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: When did you recommend them to them?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: It has been part of ongoing discussions between the department and the company.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Did the EPA determine that White Rock Quarry is in breach of its current MOP? The allegation is unacceptable polluting of Third Creek, a key water source for the Torrens.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: I am advised that there are concerns regarding silt-laden stormwater run-off from the quarry into a nearby creek that is part of the Third Creek catchment. Surface water quality is an incredibly important matter in South Australia, and at this site

it is being actively regulated by both the DEM and the EPA. Hanson has been required to invest in sediment management at the quarry site and has invested \$2.5 million in the past 18 months with reconstruction of a further sediment detention basin to be completed in early 2022.

I am aware that some people are concerned that the water seen in some creeks may contain waste from concrete operations, and I want to assure them that this is not the case. What is being seen in the creeks after large rain events is water run-off muddied by open areas and roads from both the quarry and nearby non-quarry sites. It needs to be improved and the regulators are ensuring that happens more broadly.

The community has expressed a range of concerns about the existing quarry operations, and I can confirm that all potential impacts on the quarry from Hanson's operation of the quarry are being actively reviewed and regular inspections are being undertaken at the site.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Minister, do you support an expansion of that quarry?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: I have no doubt that I will support the final determination about what expansion of the quarry can go ahead. As I said, there is a lot of back and forth. I am positive that the department will come to what is the best solution all things considered and, when they do that, I will support that solution.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: The residents are very keen to know what the value of the mine is to the government, and I think what they mean is what royalties are paid. Could you take on notice, if possible, what royalties are paid from that quarry in terms of royalties to the government, what land tax they pay and what regulatory fees and charges they provide to the government on an annual basis.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: I will take that on notice, but I will very quickly add to that. The value of the mine is not only in the fees it pays to the government. The value of the mine is extraordinarily high with regard to the value of the material into projects that South Australians benefit from.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: With your forbearance, I will go through 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 since 1 July 2020?

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;
- 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 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?

19. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, what initiatives or programs have been approved and funded as of 1 July 2021 but not publicly announced or disclosed in the budget papers?

20. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, how many complaints have been made regarding bullying, harassment, sexual harassment or any other form of discrimination or assault to human resources, the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment or any other government agency or statutory office?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: Can I add one piece of information for clarification. When asked about ministerial advisers, there is actually an additional adviser who supports me as part of my role as Manager of Government Business in the house I did not think of when I was thinking about ministerial office advisers.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Are they funded from the department, or does parliament fund that?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: Adviser.

The CHAIR: Thank you, minister, thank you advisers, thank you committee members. Given that we have reached the allotted time, I declare the examination of the Department for Energy and Mining complete and refer the proposed payments to committee B for examination.

At 16:33 the committee adjourned to Monday 2 August 2021 at 13:00.