

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**Monday, 20 June 2022****ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A****Chair:**

Hon. A. Piccolo

Members:

Hon. L.W.K. Bignell

Ms C.L. Hutchesson

Mr A.S. Pederick

Mr S.J. Telfer

Mr T.J. Whetstone

Ms D.J. Wortley

*The committee met at 09:00**Estimates Vote***DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND REGIONS, \$105,030,000****ADMINISTERED ITEMS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND REGIONS,
\$4,393,000****Minister:**

Hon. C.M. Scriven, Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, Minister for Forest Industries.

Departmental Advisers:

Prof. M. Doroudi, Chief Executive, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.

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

Mr N. Rhodes, Executive Director, Biosecurity SA, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.

Ms M. Spencer, Chief of Staff, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.

Ms A. Barclay, General Manager, Office of the Chief Executive, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.

The CHAIR: Good morning and welcome to Estimates Committee A. The estimates committees are a relatively informal procedure and, as such, there is no need to stand to ask or answer questions. I understand that the minister and the lead speaker for the opposition have agreed an approximate time for the consideration of proposed payments, which will facilitate a change of departmental advisers. Can the minister and lead speaker confirm that is the case?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Yes.

Mr WHETSTONE: Yes.

The CHAIR: Changes to committee membership will be notified as they occur. Members should ensure the Chair is provided with a completed request to be discharged form. If the minister undertakes to supply information at a later date, it must be submitted to the Clerk Assistant via the Answers to Questions mailbox no later than Friday 2 September 2022.

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 to do so, but there is no requirement to do so. There will be a flexible approach to giving the call to asking questions. A member who is not on the committee may ask a question at the discretion of the Chair.

All questions are to be directed to the minister, not the minister's advisers. The minister may refer questions to advisers for a response. Questions must be based on lines of expenditure in the budget papers and must be identifiable or referenced. Members unable to complete their questions during the proceedings may submit them as questions on notice for inclusion in the assembly *Notice Paper*.

I remind members that the rules of debate in the house apply in committee. Consistent with the rules of the house, photography by members on the chamber floor is not permitted while the committee is sitting. 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, it is purely statistical and limited to one page in length.

The committee's examinations will be broadcast in the same manner as sittings of the house are broadcast—so I would ask members to be civil if we can—through the IPTV system within Parliament House, via the webstream link to the internet and the Parliament of South Australia video-on-demand broadcast system.

I now proceed to open the following lines for examination: the portfolio is the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development. The minister appearing is the Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development. I declare the proposed payments open for examination. I call on the minister to make a statement if she wishes and to introduce her advisers, then I will call on the lead speaker to make a statement if he wishes to do so. Minister, the floor is yours.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Thank you, Mr Chair. It is my pleasure to provide a brief statement about the programs and work conducted by the Department of Primary Industries and Regions in relation to the 2022-23 state budget. Firstly, I will introduce members of the department with me today. At my side are the chief executive, Professor Mehdi Doroudi, and the chief financial officer, Will Kent. Behind me are General Manager, Office of the Chief Executive, Ann Barclay; the Executive Director of Biosecurity SA, Nathan Rhodes; and my Chief of Staff, Meagan Spencer.

South Australia's food, wine and agri businesses are the backbone of the state's economy. This importance of course has been highlighted over the past year as we traversed the COVID-19 pandemic. From our vast pastoral areas to the horticulture, cropping and wine districts and seafood ports that drive many of our regional communities, South Australia has a global reputation for premium produce.

Despite challenges, including supply chain disruption and workforce shortages, crops have been sown, wine produced, food packaged and meat, dairy, seafood and horticultural produce continues to be exported across Australia and overseas. In 2021, South Australia's primary industries generated revenue of \$15.4 billion, with 74,000 jobs in total direct employment, and they also account for 47 per cent of the state's merchandise exports. The state government, through PIRSA, remains on hand to respond to industry issues and maintain open communication channels.

In addition to COVID-19, our primary producers and regional communities in the past year have faced other adverse impacts. These include storms and floods, the recent outbreak of Japanese encephalitis and the ongoing response to fruit fly. Our industries are also seeing profitability impacts of the China tariffs, particularly major impacts on wine. The state government, through PIRSA, has provided support and response activities to these events. Support services also continue to be offered to regional communities affected by the 2019-20 bushfires and drought as part of the longer term recovery process.

The South Australian government remains committed to eradicating fruit fly from the state in order to protect our valuable horticultural industries and also to ensure that all South Australians can continue to grow backyard fruit and vegetables that are clean, green and free of this significant pest. In addition to Japanese encephalitis, the department remains on high alert to other emergency animal disease risks, with a particular focus on the recent confirmation of cases in Indonesia of lumpy skin disease and foot-and-mouth disease. PIRSA is in continual liaison with the commonwealth government, interstate colleagues and the local livestock industry, remaining alert to any developments with these diseases.

While there have been recent significant challenges for our primary producers and our regional communities, their longstanding strength and resilience are such that they continue to look at how to turn challenges into opportunities and growth. I would like to thank the staff of the department for the work they have done over the 2021-22 year to support our regional communities and primary producers and to assist them in overcoming challenges and harnessing opportunities. I look forward to questions.

The CHAIR: Member for Chaffey, you are the lead speaker?

Mr WHETSTONE: Yes. Straight into questions. Welcome to the department, minister. On Budget Paper 5, page 103, the budget cut to PIRSA, minister, can you confirm that there has in actual fact been the \$15.9 million cut to the PIRSA budget over forward estimates?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Thank you for the question. PIRSA is consistently seeking to introduce productivity improvements and efficiencies across the agency in order to support the growth of primary industries and drive regional development. There have been a number of steps taken to strengthen the budget position over 2021-22.

While program savings requirements arising from previous budgets have been allocated to specific programs and services in the budget papers, savings from the current budget have been notionally allocated across subprograms for presentation purposes. PIRSA will undertake a review of these savings initiatives in early 2022-23 and then allocate them to specific programs and services across the agency as necessary.

We went to the election with modest savings as part of our election commitments. Our frontline services of course will be exempt from government savings in departments such as health and education, and some state government departments will be required to deliver modest efficiencies to help the government deliver on its priorities for the 2022-23 state budget. As I mentioned, this is in line with Labor's pre-election commitment. Of course, the state government is also saving \$662 million by not proceeding with the Adelaide CBD basketball stadium.

We are investing \$1.49 billion in new measures focusing on health, safety, skills training, and housing across regional South Australia. Large-scale regional investment will improve the health, safety and environment of our regional communities, which is home to 30 per cent of our population. This includes a \$305.7 million spend in regional health, which will see investment in hospitals and health infrastructure, more doctors, improvement in health services and community drug and alcohol rehabilitation.

Mr WHETSTONE: Excuse me, Chair. We are talking health now. This is the Primary Industries portfolio.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Yes, which also includes regional development. On PIRSA operations, I can advise there are no savings measures indicated for the operational matters related to biosecurity, and the government stands ready to tackle any potential future outbreaks.

Mr TELFER: Mr Chair, the question was about forward estimates.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: PIRSA operations and savings measures are about—

The CHAIR: If you have a point of order, I ask members first of all to point out the standing order that has been breached—particularly the member for Chaffey, who has been around a bit longer, perhaps the member for Flinders not so much. Secondly, as in the house, the minister can answer the question in the way they deem fit. At this point in time, I think the minister is actually referring to the regions and that was the basis of the question. Minister, continue, please.

Mr WHETSTONE: A point of clarification, sir: we are talking about health in Adelaide; that is not the regions. We are talking about a basketball stadium; that is not the regions.

The CHAIR: The answer I heard from the minister, and perhaps the member should hear the whole of the minister's answer, was that she referred to the additional health spending in regions to make sure that people in the regions get their health cut. I understand that the minister alluded to a portion of the money which has been saved from the basketball stadium to be spent in the regions for health. That is what I heard.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: If I can continue—

Mr WHETSTONE: PIRSA, health—where is the overlap, sir?

The CHAIR: It is regional.

Mr Whetstone interjecting:

The CHAIR: The minister can continue her answer.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I can advise that there are no savings measures indicated for the operational matters related to biosecurity, which is Primary Industries, and the government stands ready to tackle any future outbreaks in terms of biosecurity. There are also no savings measures indicated or overall decreases in state appropriation to SARDI. The chief executive will determine how to implement any savings measures across the department.

Mr WHETSTONE: Minister, can you confirm the services delivered by PIRSA that will not be negatively impacted over the forward estimates?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Can you be more specific with your question?

Mr WHETSTONE: Budget Paper 5 and page 103 are the reference points.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I was asking for more specificity around the question, but what I can answer is that programs in regard to biosecurity, fisheries and research and development will not be impacted.

Mr WHETSTONE: They will all be affected?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: They will not be impacted.

Mr WHETSTONE: We have fisheries, biosecurity that will not be affected. Will every other agency in PIRSA have a budget cut?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: As indicated, I have left it to the chief executive to identify savings measures, and they will come from sections such as executive, corporate finance and so on.

Mr WHETSTONE: So you can confirm that there will be a reduction in the 2022-23 budget of \$15.3 million compared with the 2021-22 budget?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: No.

Mr WHETSTONE: I beg your pardon?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: No, that is not correct.

Mr WHETSTONE: Well, can you please correct it then?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Cumulative savings are \$4.6 million by the 2025-26 financial year.

Mr WHETSTONE: Can you please expand on how those savings will be achieved?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I think I have just answered that question.

Mr TELFER: As a supplementary on that, for clarification, this is by the 2024-25 budget period, you said?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: No, I said 2025-26.

Mr TELFER: Can you give me a breakdown by financial year on those savings measures—the 4.3 over the four years?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I refer the members to Budget Paper 5, page 103, where it has each of the years' budget, under operating expenses, broken down by financial year.

Mr TELFER: On Budget Paper 5, page 103, looking at the PIRSA operating efficiencies of 3.8 per annum increasing to 4.6 from 2025-26, in the detail of how they will be achieved, how many FTE do you envisage being cut?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Figures will be worked out in terms of FTEs. FTEs are one savings measure. As I have mentioned, the chief executive will be determining how to implement savings measures and those will become available over the coming period of time.

Mr TELFER: So you have no insight into how many FTEs will be cut?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: No.

Mr TELFER: How about how many executive positions will be cut?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised that there will be a reduction in executive positions—up to four positions; that includes the deputy CE position, which is vacant and will not be filled—as well as directors. It is important to also be aware that there are other savings measures that may be achievable. The chief executive will be looking at issues such as leasing arrangements and rental arrangements to see if there are savings that can be made there.

Mr TELFER: Of those three additional executive positions, can you specify what they are, what positions are going to be cut—up to three more?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: That is a work in progress for the department. Those specific positions are not able to be shared at this time.

Mr TELFER: So the only one you know that will be cut will be the deputy CEO?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: In terms of a specific position. The others are a work in progress by the chief executive at present.

The CHAIR: I just remind members that questions are through the Chair; it is not a direct dialogue between members and the minister. Member for Mawson, do you have a question?

The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL: I refer the committee to the 2022-23 Budget Statement, Chapter 8: Regional South Australia, page 110. Will the minister provide an update on the licence fee relief for the rock lobster fishery?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I thank the honourable member for his question. It is an important question. The northern zone and the southern zone rock lobster fisheries in our state are of course world-famous for the produce that they proudly export to other parts of the world. They have a fantastic reputation for not only their amazing products but also the way in which they operate.

The industry themselves created the Clean Green Program, a world-recognised, independently certified and audited best practice environmental management system for the southern zone rock lobster fishery that has been adopted across southern Australia. But, of course, even a well-run, high-quality industry, such as the rock lobster fishery in our state, has not been immune from the challenges that have been presented by not only the pandemic but also the deterioration in our trade relationship with China, which had previously been a booming market for their produce.

The rock lobster fishery in our state has been significantly impacted by COVID-19 and changes to export requirements for Australian rock lobster entering China. They took effect from 30 October 2020. Prior to these disruptions, 95 per cent of southern Australia's commercially caught rock lobster was exported to China. The premium prices that fishers were receiving for their produce prior to COVID and the Chinese trade tensions reduced that from \$75 to \$80 to \$40 to \$45 per kilogram as they sought other markets and worked to broaden the domestic market. This is, of course, a very heavy impact on the industry and the events leading up to it.

The industry highlighted the significant decline in the gross value of production, with the northern zone of the fishery declining from \$19 million in 2019-20 to \$11.6 million in 2020-21, and the southern zones declining from \$106.4 million in 2019-20 to \$71.3 million in 2020-21. With all this mind, and having talked to people in the industry, Labor took to the last election a commitment to reduce licence fees for the rock lobster fishery by 50 per cent for 2022-23 as a practical and fast way that our government could assist those who had been adversely affected by the pandemic and the disruption to the Chinese market, which were of course events well beyond their control.

I was very happy to see that our first budget has delivered on our commitment for this \$2.6 million, 50 per cent, reduction in licence fees. When rock lobster fishers get their licence fee notices very shortly, if they have not already, they will see these savings for themselves, which I am sure will be a welcome relief.

I am glad to say that this honoured commitment has been well received. It was not just me who was happy to see this commitment honoured in our first budget. The SANZRLFA executive officer, Mr Kyri Toumazos, stated in a press release:

This support by the recently-elected Malinauskas government is the help the industry needs following the collapse of exports to Chinese markets. Actioning its commitment in the recent budget has created a positive response amongst the sector and has provided a collaborative operating environment between industry and the government.

The government certainly feels the same way. While this \$2.6 million, 50 per cent reduction, in fees is welcomed across the industry, there are further practical measures we can take to assist the industry as it recovers. The main one is looking at the ongoing cost-recovery model, and that is another commitment that was made by our government.

We also want to work with the industry on things like potentially earlier commencement of fishing seasons or quota periods, later completions of seasons, and with important measures, such as the provisions to carry over uncaught quota between quota periods, which increases flexibility for businesses in the fishery. These measures to reduce the financial impacts imposed by market disruptions will all be worked through in consultation with PIRSA and industry.

I look forward to seeing the rock lobster fishery in our state continue to produce their world-renowned, environmentally friendly, sustainably harvested product and seeing the industry rebound and recover from what have been a very tough few years.

Mr WHETSTONE: Minister, are you referring to both southern and northern rock lobster licence holders?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Yes, that is right.

Mr WHETSTONE: How is the \$2.6 million going to be allocated to the licence holders?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: It is a 50 per cent reduction in their licence fees. The cost-recovery model is worked out each year. That modelling had been done, and then 50 per cent was taken from each of the licence holder's fees.

Mr WHETSTONE: So there will be no application fee? It will just be a straight wipe-out 50 per cent licence fee?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Does the member mean an application fee for a reduction?

Mr WHETSTONE: Well, an application to have licence fee reduction.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: No, it will be automatic. It will be included in the notices that are going out pretty much as we speak.

Mr WHETSTONE: How many rock lobster licences are there currently in South Australia?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised there are roughly 125 licences in the southern zone and 65 in the northern zone. However, that is a rough figure. We are happy to take that on notice and bring back more precise information.

Mr WHETSTONE: Minister, you are putting \$2.6 million into licence fee relief. What is the adverse impact of the cost recovery to the department or to the industry?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: There is a cost of \$2.6 million, that is obviously to the budget, that has been budgeted for in this 2022-23 budget that we are discussing today.

Mr WHETSTONE: So there will be no immediate adverse impact, with a \$2.6 million reduction in licence fees, on the industry?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am guessing that the member is asking whether there will be a reduction in services. If that is his question, the answer is no.

Mr WHETSTONE: Where is the \$2.6 million absorbed?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: It is stated in the budget papers that that is coming from the Regional Growth Fund.

Mr TELFER: As another supplementary question, what is the cost of a rock lobster fishing licence?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: We can take that on notice, but we will endeavour to get the information back to you during this session.

Mr TELFER: I appreciate the divergence away from important budget matters to look at rock lobster, but can I get the minister's attention back to Budget Paper 5, page 103—

The CHAIR: Hold on, the minister has some additional information.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Sorry, I have just been given some additional information in regard to rock lobster. The specific figures are 180 licences in the southern zone and 63 in the northern zone.

Mr TELFER: I refer to Budget Paper 5, page 103, looking at operating efficiencies once again. Can the minister inform us what grant programs available in 2021-22 will cease or be reduced because of these cuts?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised that there are no grant programs that have been cut.

Mr TELFER: Or reduced?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Nor reduced.

Mr WHETSTONE: You were saying that there would be no programs cut or reduced.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: No grant programs, that is right.

Mr WHETSTONE: You did say that the offset for the rock lobster industry of \$2.6 million was funded by the Regional Growth Fund.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: That is correct.

Mr WHETSTONE: Who applied to the Regional Growth Fund for that licence reduction?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: It is the fulfilment of an election commitment.

Mr WHETSTONE: Is there an application process or any form of scrutiny from any applicant for the Regional Growth Fund or to access the Regional Growth Fund?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Sorry, can you repeat the question?

Mr WHETSTONE: The Regional Growth Fund is \$15 million and there is an application and approval process, a formal application and approval process, for access to that Regional Growth Fund?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: So your question is what?

Mr WHETSTONE: The question is: is there a formal application and approval process to access the Regional Growth Fund?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Applications for the Regional Growth Fund are currently closed, as I want to review the funding guidelines and the purposes of the Regional Growth Fund. Once I have done that, there will be new rounds of the Regional Growth Fund open for applications.

Mr WHETSTONE: Was the formal process of application for the Regional Growth Fund bypassed by your election commitment to the industry? This is Budget Paper 5, page 103.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised that, even under the previous government's guidelines, \$10 million of the fund was a discretionary part of the fund and \$2.6 million has been allocated from the strategic part of that fund.

Mr WHETSTONE: No, my question was: did you bypass the official application and approval process to appoint \$2.6 million to the lobster industry?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: The \$2.6 million for the lobster industry has gone through budget processes.

Mr WHETSTONE: Did you bypass the formal process of application and approval process to appoint the \$2.6 million?

The CHAIR: Member for Chaffey—

Mr WHETSTONE: It is a very simple question.

The CHAIR: I am sorry, member for Chaffey. Member for Chaffey, you have asked your question now three times. The minister has given two answers. You may not like the answers; that is fine. Move on to the next question, please.

Mr TELFER: For clarification, would the minister suggest that a better way to approach such an allocation would have been to have a reduction within the Regional Growth Fund and a separate allocation, rather than using a \$2.6 million non-applied for election commitment out of a regional growth fund, so that other applicants could have more clarity around the process?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: First of all, the use of the Regional Growth Fund to support an important regional industry is entirely valid. Members also need to be aware that the \$10 million, I am advised, was never subject to a competitive round. Under the previous government, I am advised, that was not part of the competitive round and therefore there are no changes in that sense.

Mr TELFER: For more clarification on the budget cuts that have been put through, and I refer to Budget Paper 5, page 103, what programs or services will have their budget reduced or be cut altogether?

The CHAIR: I think that question has been asked, but I will allow it again.

Mr TELFER: It has not. The minister specified around grants programs. This is a broader question around what programs or services will have their budget reduced or be cut altogether.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I answered this question earlier when I said that no grants programs would be cut and, similarly, no services—for example, in biosecurity and so on—would be cut, so I think I have already answered this question.

Mr TELFER: For clarification, I was not asking about grants programs; I was talking about what programs or services in general. I was talking about other programs and initiatives through PIRSA, not necessarily grants programs.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am not ending any programs or services.

Mr TELFER: There has been an obvious strategic change, with the responsibility of pastoral lands being moved from PIRSA to the environment department. For clarity, and I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, pages 53 and 54, how many FTEs were allocated to the pastoral unit in 2021-22?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised there were nine.

Mr TELFER: How many of those FTEs will shift from the pastoral unit in PIRSA to the environment department?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised there are nine.

Mr TELFER: Finally on that subject matter, what was the total budget for the pastoral unit in 2021-22?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: We can take that on notice.

Mr WHETSTONE: I refer you to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 49. How many PIRSA public servants have either been seconded to the minister's office or are providing direct services to you as the minister?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised that four staff have been seconded.

Mr WHETSTONE: Have been seconded?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Yes.

Mr WHETSTONE: How many staff does that make it in the minister's office?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Ten.

Mr WHETSTONE: Can you explain the title and classification of each of those 10?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: We will take that on notice.

Mr WHETSTONE: Minister, I refer you to Budget Paper 5, page 103. Do you consider—

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Sorry, Mr Chair, for interrupting the member for Chaffey. I have just been advised of some more information in regard to pastoral lands, if members would like that information?

Mr TELFER: Indeed.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: The budget transfer, in regard to pastoral lands, was \$1.704 million, which was the 2021-22 budget.

Mr TELFER: There has been no change from the 2021-22 to the 2022-23?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: That is correct; that is my advice.

Mr WHETSTONE: Minister, I refer you to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, pages 50 and 51. How many job vacancies does PIRSA currently have?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised that we do not have that information to hand at present.

Mr WHETSTONE: Can you tell me how many positions are currently being advertised?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: We do not have that information to hand at present either.

Mr WHETSTONE: Can you take it on notice?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Certainly.

Mr WHETSTONE: How many staff in PIRSA are currently working from home?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised that during COVID between 30 and 40 per cent of staff were working from home. Following the recent policy change, I am advised that staff have been encouraged to return to the office wherever possible, and the estimates, I am advised, are between 15 and 20 per cent currently working from home under strict arrangements with their managers.

Mr WHETSTONE: Is that something that is recorded on a daily basis or a weekly basis?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised that we have recording on a weekly basis.

Mr WHETSTONE: Moving on to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, pages 53 to 54, agtech, will the agtech adoption program continue to be funded?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Adoption of agtech in South Australia can increase the state's agricultural GDP by up to \$2.6 billion per annum and, to enhance the development of fit-for-purpose

agtech solutions, the state government has funded agtech startup hubs to support agtech. The agtech startup hubs have been established in the South-East, Eyre Peninsula, Riverland and Kangaroo Island, and are part of the \$2.4 million Agtech Solutions program. The agtech hub on Kangaroo Island has been funded \$1 million as part of the federal government's funding for Regional Recovery Partnerships, with funding available until December 2023.

Three companies were engaged by the Department of Primary Industries and Regions to provide expert advice and support to agtech startup companies, access to relevant entrepreneurial programs and networking opportunities with primary producers and other agtech startups until June 2023. All companies have been assessed for their suitability into the agtech startup hub program through an expression of interest program. A total of 31 companies are currently engaged in the agtech startup hub.

Mr WHETSTONE: Minister, how much of that agtech adoption program, the \$1.3 million, will be made available in the 2022-23 forward estimates?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: The amount of \$1.3 million is in the budget. The AgTech Growth Fund attracted 17 applications, and a total of nine were recommended for funding and approval, which has now occurred. The remainder is still sitting there in the budget.

Mr WHETSTONE: And how much is remaining in the fund?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Approximately \$600,000.

Mr WHETSTONE: That is pretty much half of it. Will that \$600,000 be reallocated, will it be parked, or will it be put back into general revenue?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: At present, that is sitting there as part of the AgTech Growth Fund.

Mr WHETSTONE: I beg your pardon?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised that the funding can be carried over into the coming financial year. The AgTech Growth Fund applications under the previous government came in quite late. A number of those who applied did expect that it would have been announced and funded before the former government went into caretaker mode. That definitely did not happen, and therefore that is why only that amount has been funded in this financial year. Far be it from me to reflect adversely on the slowness of the previous government, but the remaining amounts are there and I am advised they can be rolled over.

Mr WHETSTONE: We are talking about two different things: there is the agtech adoption program and there is the AgTech Growth Fund. Where is the AgTech Growth Fund in the budget?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised that previously the funding was in SARDI. In the last financial year, under the previous government that was transferred to agricultural services and that is where it currently sits.

Mr WHETSTONE: How much is sitting in that fund within SARDI?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: It is not within SARDI. As I mentioned, the previous government transferred that to agricultural services under PIRSA.

Mr WHETSTONE: Are you saying that that growth fund has been cut?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: No, I am saying that the funding is sitting there where the previous Liberal government left that funding.

Mr WHETSTONE: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, pages 53 and 54, drought support. The 2021-22 budget included funding over the forward estimates for drought support measures, \$737,000 in 2022-23 and \$741,000 in the 2023-24 years. How much funding will be provided in 2022-23 and over the forward estimates for drought support measures?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: The South Australian government is partnering with the commonwealth government to delivery Future Drought Fund programs, which build resilience and assist farmers to actively plan for and manage drought risks. The commonwealth government's

Future Drought Fund is a \$5 billion fund, with \$100 million available from the fund each year to support farmers, farming sectors and regional and rural communities for them to build resilience, prepare for future droughts and a changing climate.

The commonwealth investment of \$2.2 million for farm business resilience is connecting farm businesses with industry-led training and family and business support mentors to work on their farm business skills. They are led by industry one-on-one business support to give farmers the flexibility to develop a farm business plan that meets the needs of their farm. There are a number of investments that were made in various regional areas, and the hub includes a number of industry partners, university and the state government.

The commonwealth government has committed ongoing funding for both the Farm Business Resilience Program and the Regional Drought Resilience Planning program for the next two financial years to June 2024. PIRSA is currently working to identify cash and in-kind contributions to match required commonwealth funding.

Mr WHETSTONE: If I could take a step back to the pastoral unit, there was a land transfer out of PIRSA into DEW of \$69.8 million.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: And your question?

Mr WHETSTONE: Is that correct?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: We can take that on notice.

Mr WHETSTONE: The Budget Statement says there was a land transfer to DEW with an increased value of \$15.1 million. Can you tell me where the \$15.1 million is absorbed or who is the recipient of that increased land value?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Could you provide the line reference, please?

Mr WHETSTONE: Certainly. It is Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 71, statement of financial position, explanation of significant movements.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: This is a transfer of land to the Department for Environment and Water?

Mr WHETSTONE: Land was transferred, yes, under the Pastoral Land Management and Conservation Act. Then there was a \$15.1 million increase in total assets.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised that this was a transfer of land to DEW, so it was not a sale of land and therefore there is no increase in cash.

Mr WHETSTONE: I understand that is an internal transfer.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: As part of machinery of government.

Mr WHETSTONE: Okay, but there was an increase in value of \$15.1 million. Is that \$15.1 million now on DEW's books, or does that have some spin-off into the Department of Primary Industries?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised it is an increase in valuation of the land, as it states on page 71, so that is land that is now held by DEW due to that transfer and so it would be sitting with them as an asset.

Mr TELFER: On Budget Paper 3, page 103, the AgTech Growth Fund, the minister gave an explanation as to where the fund—

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Budget Paper 5 perhaps the honourable member means? He said Budget Paper 3.

Mr TELFER: I have Budget Paper 3 in my note, but it could well be Budget Paper 5—it is, yes, thank you. The AgTech Growth Fund: you talked about the fact that those funds are now held in agricultural services—they were previously in SARDI. Can you give me a dollar figure on the size of that fund?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I will see if we can gain that, but I will reiterate again that that was a change made under the former Liberal government in terms of where those funds sit.

Mr TELFER: I have no issue with where the fund sits; it is the size of the fund that I am interested in.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Just clarifying, the question was in regard to the AgTech Growth Fund; is that correct?

Mr TELFER: Yes, as opposed to the agtech adoption program.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Again, I think this was answered earlier, but for clarification I am happy to respond again. The AgTech Growth Fund was a total of \$1.3 million, and roughly \$717,000 to \$718,000 has been allocated. I am sure the honourable member has calculated to work out the difference of that. That is where we came up with, just in a round figure, \$600,000-odd.

Mr TELFER: For further clarification, what is the dollar figure for the agtech adoption program?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised that the adoption program was a \$2.4 million fund over three years. I think the honourable member's question was how much is remaining. I am advised we do not have that figure to hand, but I am happy to take it on notice.

Mr TELFER: I appreciate that.

Mr PEDERICK: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, pages 53 and 54. Has any funding been set aside for primary producer engagement in the 2022-23 budget?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: It is a very broad question about primary producer engagement. I think primary producer engagement is part of what PIRSA does on a daily basis. It is very important that we have open lines of communication. Certainly, with the many, many stakeholders I have met with in the three months since I became a minister, they have talked very favourably about open communication with PIRSA and being able to have that level of consultation.

Obviously there is always room to improve, and I am sure both the CE and I are keen to see any improvements made that are needed. In terms of engagement with primary producers across our state, that is something that we are very committed to and will continue to engage in.

Mr TELFER: For clarification, the previous budget had an allocated amount for engagement—half a million dollars, from memory—so is there not a primary producer engagement budget allocation specifically set aside.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: What I am guessing the member may be referring to is funding for the association, Primary Producers SA; is that correct, what the question is about?

Mr TELFER: Yes, in the previous budget.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Right. It is probably good to be a little bit more specific in the questions, then, if you are asking about a specific amount. Yes, that was funded for two years and has one year left, and that remains in the budget. Of course, I would not be surprised if PPSA over the next 12 months approaches the department or the minister (myself) for further funding, and that will be considered in due course.

Mr PEDERICK: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 53 again. The minister states that a target of 2022-23 is to 'finalise the Red Meat and Wool Growth Program including reporting on all monitoring and evaluation outcomes'. When will these reports be publicly available?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: The \$7.5 million three-year Red Meat and Wool Growth Program focuses on supporting our livestock producers to enhance their productivity and profitability through strategic skill development, agtech adoption and utilisation of data to make decisions and adopt best practice management strategies. There has been significant engagement with producers across South Australia, I am advised, with over 1,500 producers benefiting from the program to date, along with 600 other industry service providers and representatives from across the supply chain.

I am advised that more than 285 businesses, representing 418 producers, have participated in the Livestock Enterprise Planning workshops to enhance their business skills and develop a farm agtech adoption plan. Two hundred and seventy-six businesses have applied to the Livestock AgTech Adoption Rebate, totalling more than \$2.2 million worth of applications, which has generated close to \$6 million worth of investment in agtech, further training and business advisory support to drive productivity gains in their businesses.

Over 550 producers have attended technology expos and field days, with over 70 per cent of producers intending to make changes to their business as a result of attending these events. Over 270 farmers are currently exploring the opportunities provided by the adoption of technology, data driven decision-making and best practice management through their involvement in the producer technology groups. The Red Meat and Wool Growth Program commenced in July 2019, with \$7½ million secured through the Economic and Business Growth Fund. Further reports will be available later in the year.

Mr PEDERICK: So you do not have a date for when those reports will be available?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised that the expectation is that it will probably take two to three months after the end of the financial year to ensure that there is appropriate collation of information, data and discussion with the stakeholders.

Mr PEDERICK: This was a very good initiative under our Marshall Liberal government. What exact amount of funding has been set aside to finalise the Red Meat and Wool Growth Program, and within what line of the budget is that funding situated?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised that there is \$1.2 million for the 2022-23 financial year. PIRSA will continue to work with Meat & Livestock Australia, Livestock SA and the University of Adelaide on this program, which was initially established as a three-year program.

Mr PEDERICK: Do you have a specific budget line that that money is allocated under?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: It sits under agricultural services.

Mr TELFER: For some clarification on the previous discussion on drought support, I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 53. I was looking for specific numbers from the minister as to what level of state government funds will be provided for drought support in 2022-23. Over the forward estimates, she gave a speech about the value of it and the federal government involvement, but I am specifically looking for the level of state government funds that are going to be put into this program.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: It is very disappointing to hear that the member does not think that talking about the value of the drought support program is a useful time.

Mr TELFER: That is not what I said.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I think—

Mr TELFER: I dispute the words from you, minister. It is insulting.

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I think it is a highly valuable program.

The CHAIR: The member has asked his question. The minister will be given the chance to respond to the question uninterrupted.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I think it has proved to be of a great deal of value. I think it is important that some of those positive outcomes are placed on the record, as I did earlier in this session. As I mentioned to members, through you, Mr Chair, the amounts are currently being negotiated, in terms of both cash and in-kind amounts, in order to provide the required matched funding to the commonwealth for the drought support programs.

Mr TELFER: For clarification, does that mean that currently there is not any dollar figure allocated from state funds towards this?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: As I mentioned, PIRSA is currently working to identify what those contributions will be. These amounts were not finalised before the state government went into caretaker mode—that is, the former Liberal state government—and therefore we are currently negotiating with the new commonwealth government on this matter.

Mr TELFER: So no state funds.

Mr WHETSTONE: As a supplementary, minister, are you—

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Point of order, Mr Chairman: I think that the member just made an incorrect statement, that there are no state funds; whereas I have just said that we are currently identifying the funds, both cash and in-kind.

The CHAIR: I have been fairly lenient. I would just remind members that this is—

Mr Telfer interjecting:

The CHAIR: Member for Flinders, I have the floor. I remind members that this is an opportunity to ask questions about the budget. Not all questions can actually be fitted in; if they cannot, you can use question time. I have been fairly lenient with some of the commentary made by members on my left. I would ask that the minister be given a chance to provide her response. Was there a question from the member for Chaffey?

Mr WHETSTONE: Thank you for your protection, Mr Chair.

The CHAIR: I do not think you need my protection, member for Chaffey.

Mr WHETSTONE: Minister, the ongoing drought support was always given a level of support by PIRSA with a round table with industry, as well as a round table with the banking institutions. Are you able to tell me whether that initiative is still continuing?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised that the drought innovation hub steering committee is continuing to be the mechanism by which the innovation hub, the University of Adelaide and industry representatives are working together on these matters.

Mr WHETSTONE: Minister, when was the last time you met with that round table?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: The chief executive of my department has met with the steering committee, and he then provided me with a briefing about that meeting.

Mr WHETSTONE: When was the last time you met with the banks?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I have not met with the banks.

Mr WHETSTONE: Not at all?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Not since becoming minister.

The CHAIR: Does the member for Mawson have a question?

The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL: I refer you to the 2022-23 Budget Statement, Chapter 8: Regional South Australia. With the minister inform the committee about the positive impact of the 2022-23 state budget for regional South Australia?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I thank the member for his question and his ongoing interest in all the vibrant matters in regional South Australia, particularly in his area of Mawson. Realising the potential of regions is not going to be achieved by hashtag, nor by inserting the word 'regional' before the titles of a number of shadow ministers. It is going to be achieved by actual investment and putting in the hard work in regional and rural communities.

The 2023 budget seeks to address some of the issues in crucial areas that will assist with keeping people in our regions and investing in the services that will help see those regions grow sustainably. This budget injects \$1.49 billion into our regional communities, which of course stands in contrast to the former Liberal government, who in their 2018-19 budget invested \$773 million and in their last budget invested \$875 million.

The \$1.49 billion for regions from the first Malinauskas Labor government budget will go to a wide range of projects and critical services. In Health alone, there is \$305.7 million in new healthcare spending and \$58.6 million in new Ambulance Service funds. There are hospital upgrades for Gawler, Kingscote, Mount Gambier, Port Pirie, Naracoorte and Port Augusta, as well as providing additional funding certainty to Keith hospital and of course to build a new hospital in Mount Barker.

I have spoken extensively, both in opposition and since becoming a minister, about the housing crisis, which is especially felt in our regions, and our government is investing \$177.5 million over four years to build 400 new houses, 150 of which will be new houses in regional areas. We will also refurbish 350 untenanted homes, with around 100 of those in regions, to bring them back online.

There are significant investments in regional transport. I was pleased to see funding allocated to sustainability payments for country bus services, \$416,000 over four years to investigate how to better integrate public transport opportunities in regional centres and \$1.4 million over four years to subsidise the *Overland* rail service, which was inexplicably cut by the former government and of course left people in areas such as Murray Bridge and Bordertown without a train service. We were also pleased to reinstate—

Members interjecting:

The CHAIR: Order! Unless it is a point of order—

Mr WHETSTONE: Point of order: standing order 98, relevance. The minister is misleading the committee. There was no such cut by a former government on trains.

The CHAIR: There is no point of order. If the member wants to bring a substantive motion before the house, he can do that at the appropriate time. The minister can continue, and I understand the minister is responding to the question, which relates to Budget Paper 3 commencing at page 97. The minister has the floor uninterrupted.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I think we were also pleased to reinstate the Outer Areas Registration Concession, which was also cut by the former government.

An honourable member interjecting:

The CHAIR: Member on the right, please!

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Prior to the election, we made a commitment to implement a cross-border commissioner, and I am pleased to advise that this process is now underway. This will make life much easier for the many people who cross state borders on a daily basis to access medical assistance, school and work opportunities in the regions along our borders. This is a practical example of how we can make life easier for people in regional areas simply by listening to what it is they need and then acting.

Another election commitment fulfilled in this budget is \$1 million over four years, indexed, to the Pastoral Lands Unit to assist with the completion of land condition assessments, giving more certainty to pastoral leaseholders in a move that has been welcomed by key stakeholders such as Primary Producers SA.

Before the election, I spoke about the unquestionable importance of agriculture in our regions and also the importance of housing, workforce, health, education and training in growing our regions and enabling the industries in those regions to thrive. I would imagine any reasonable person would understand the concept of the need to have all those interlocking services so that regional areas can develop.

For every industry that operates in our regions, which are the backbone of our state's economy, you need a community around them that is well serviced, healthy and able to access in fact many of the services that in Adelaide people might take for granted. This budget goes a long way to addressing some of the critical areas of need, and we can do that without a hashtag in sight.

The CHAIR: Members on my left, do you have any questions?

Mr WHETSTONE: Yes, I do, sir. On a point of clarification, you have just given the minister leeway to continue her remarks with Budget Paper 3. It does not include primary industries.

The CHAIR: This budget line is for the Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development. The answers the minister referred to are detailed throughout pages 97 and following.

Mr PEDERICK: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 53. What funds have been allocated to deliver the final year of the bushfire recovery program?

Members interjecting:

The CHAIR: If the two members wish to continue, they can do that outside. I would remind the committee that it is primary industries and regional development—regions. We are looking at both areas at the moment.

Mr WHETSTONE: We asked a specific question on drought support.

The CHAIR: And you got an answer. There is certainly no drought in answers.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I think the question that was just asked was in regard to bushfire recovery.

Mr PEDERICK: Yes. How much funding has been allocated in the final year?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: For members, as minister I am happy to take questions in regard to any part of the portfolio of primary industries and regional development. I know that former Minister Whetstone liked to divide them up and then say that we should have asked those questions in another part. I do not have any desire to play those sorts of games, which is why I am happy to take any questions in regard to primary industries and regional development in this session.

Mr WHETSTONE: Point of order, sir.

The CHAIR: Your point of order is what?

Mr WHETSTONE: It is 98, relevance and debate. It is an incompetent minister not giving the answer she has been asked for.

The CHAIR: You will withdraw that comment. It is a reflection on a member. You will withdraw the remark. You have the choice of withdrawing the remark or removing yourself from the room.

An honourable member interjecting:

The CHAIR: Order! The member on my left has the opportunity to withdraw that remark or withdraw from the chamber.

Mr WHETSTONE: I withdraw.

The CHAIR: The minister will continue. The minister was explaining—

An honourable member interjecting:

The CHAIR: Member for Flinders, I have the floor.

Mr TELFER: Point of order.

The CHAIR: Yes, in a second. The minister was explaining that she is quite happy to answer questions right across the portfolio in terms of regional development. What she was saying was that you can go to the other minister, if you like. In my view, she was trying to assist this committee by saying you could go somewhere else.

Mr TELFER: Point of order: 127, personal reflections. If you are going to pull up one member, I urge you to consider the personal reflections the minister just made in her diatribe.

The CHAIR: What was the personal reflection? It was not brought to my attention. This one I heard specifically myself; the other one I did not hear. If there is a personal reflection, you need to bring it to my attention.

Mr TELFER: It is 127. It was personal reflections from her perspective on previous acts of a previous minister. It was not a statement of fact; it was a personal reflection on it.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I think the *Hansard* will show differently.

The CHAIR: I remind members—

Mr Pederick interjecting:

The CHAIR: Member for Hammond!

Mr Whetstone interjecting:

The CHAIR: Member for Chaffey, calm down. To this point, we have been fairly civil. Let's keep it that way. I would ask members not to make personal reflections on other members. You may disagree with the answer; that is fine. You may disagree with the policy. That is not a problem. Let's not get personal about it. Who has the question now?

Mr PEDERICK: My question was: what funds have been allocated to deliver the final year of the bushfire recovery programs?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: The 2019-20 bushfires had a \$187 million direct impact on South Australia's primary production. Bushfire recovery projects, totalling \$64.4 million, are being delivered by the Department of Primary Industries and Regions and partners to support industries and communities recover from these devastating fires.

I am advised that COVID-19 has compromised delivery of all these projects and that an extension of project delivery time has been provided by the National Recovery and Resilience Agency. I am advised that all projects will now be complete by 30 June 2023. The combined impact of the fires across all industries and communities activated the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements. The Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements provides \$45.1 million in funding, with the remaining \$19.4 million funded via the Local Economic Recovery program. Both programs are jointly funded by the state and federal governments.

To support program delivery, manage emerging issues and enhance industry and community collaboration and information sharing, PIRSA established two recovery program reference groups, one for Kangaroo Island and the other for Cudlee Creek. The projects include:

- \$28.3 million in bushfire recovery grants to 399 primary production businesses;
- the \$7.72 million Kangaroo Island biosecurity measures project, where, since June 2020, more than 24,000 vehicles had been inspected, engaging more than 95,000 passengers;
- more than \$3.84 million for the Kangaroo Island feral pig project, with 839 pigs having been eradicated from the island since September 2020;
- \$6 million allocated for the apple growers rejuvenation and replanting grant project, of which \$1.04 million has been committed;
- \$8.93 million towards supporting rural landholders and primary producers to recover and build back better, including funding to support farmers build capacity and resilience and for pest, plant and animal control, soil, pasture, dam and riparian restoration initiatives;
- \$5.93 million to support grape, cherry and olive growers rebuild and recover, including rejuvenation and replanting grants, a business resilience project and research relating to vineyard recovery post fire;
- \$0.68 million to the apiary industry to create a more sustainable, viable and resilient industry;
- \$1.28 million to support removal of Tasmanian blue gum plantations and restore areas to agriculture on Kangaroo Island;
- \$0.85 million to support landholders in Cudlee Creek remove plantations and restore areas to agriculture;
- \$0.51 million to control Tasmanian blue gum wildlings on Kangaroo Island; and
- \$0.37 million for primary producers impacted by the Yorketown fire.

Mr PEDERICK: In regard to the funding, you said it was mix of commonwealth and state funding. Do you have the specific number of state funding that is going into that program to finalise it?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised we do not have that to hand. We will take that on notice.

Mr PEDERICK: I refer you to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 53. A 2022-23 target is to deliver recovery support services to regions affected by adverse events, including hailstorm and flood recovery programs. What funds have been allocated to the delivery of recovery support services?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: South Australia was impacted by two significant storm events during spring 2021 and summer 2022. The cumulative financial and wellbeing impact of the storms, on top of bushfires and drought, is substantial for the communities and the industries that are affecting the state's economy.

In response to the spring 2021 hailstorm, the South Australian government is delivering a \$7.45 million statewide recovery program to assist primary producers address the agricultural impacts of this adverse event. The program is cost shared with the commonwealth government under disaster recovery funding arrangements. This recovery program includes \$10,000 primary producer recovery grants for eligible farmers and a significant storm waste removal program on the Northern Adelaide Plains. Immediate response and support were provided, including technical and wellbeing assistance to primary producers affected by the flooding and an emergency maintenance abating program for the dog fence.

In terms of the spring 2021 hailstorm, the \$10,000 primary producer recovery grants closed on 31 March 2022 and attracted 862 applications. The former Liberal government significantly underestimated the number of applications so that the program is oversubscribed from the initial estimate of 500. That was a very large discrepancy, with 500 the initial estimate when there were actually 862 applications. This will result in a potential \$3.151 million overspend.

Additional resources have been engaged by PIRSA to expedite the approval process. As at 13 May 2022, 672 grants have been approved for a value of \$6.55 million. I am advised that, as at that time, 161 grants are in different stages of the PIRSA assessment process and 29 had been either withdrawn or declined.

A waste removal program is also being coordinated by PIRSA. It was estimated that 200 businesses would require waste removal assistance at the inception of the program. They were the estimates under the previous Liberal government, but in fact over 650 businesses have registered for the support. Additional services have been engaged by the program to expedite delivery of services. As at 16 May, 298 businesses had received removal services, and some businesses will require more than one round of assistance.

In terms of the January 2022 flooding, immediate technical and wellbeing support was provided to primary producers affected by flooding and soil erosion. An emergency maintenance program was implemented to close damaged sections of the dog fence and undertake targeted wild dog baiting to prevent incursions of wild dogs into the pastoral zone.

The proposed recovery package, in regard to \$10.644 million for an agricultural recovery program that will be administered by the Department of Primary Industries and Regions, is, I think, through the commonwealth government Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements. The three-year agricultural recovery program includes \$0.6 million for temporary and permanent repairs to the dog fence as well as complementary dog baiting, \$1.414 million for repairs to the public access routes in the pastoral zone, \$5.63 million dollars for the \$10,000 primary producer recovery grants, and \$3 million for weed and pest animal control.

Mr PEDERICK: As a supplementary, do you have the exact state funding that has gone into that program?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: To clarify, the figures I just referred to are an application to activate category C of the commonwealth government Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements, and the proposed recovery package includes \$10.644 million. I am advised that requires state

funding on a one-to-one basis. If we are successful with that amount, we would be providing that amount in matched funding.

Mr WHETSTONE: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 53. I would like to touch on family and business support, a great Liberal initiative. Regarding the 2022-23 target to provide support services to regions affected by those adverse events and hardship through the business financial counselling service, what funds have been allocated to the Family and Business Support Program and what state funds and what commonwealth government funds, as a breakdown please?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: The state government funds a range of support services to regional communities affected by hardship and adverse events such as bushfires, drought, severe floods and storms, biosecurity outbreaks, industry downturns and COVID-19. One key support service is the Family and Business Support (FaBS) Program, administered by the Department of Primary Industries and Regions.

This program is a confidential, triage-style service delivered by a team of professional FaBS mentors that is designed to connect individuals, families and businesses to vital services at times of need. The state government also works closely with Rural Business Support to ensure that the Rural Financial Counselling Service is available to primary producers and rural-related businesses across the state. These two programs work collaboratively to complement each other's offering and promote the myriad other support services that are available. Since the service was initiated in 2016, over 700 people have accessed the service.

The FaBS program is currently funded through a combination of state and commonwealth programs, bushfire, storm and drought. \$500,000 has been allocated to this program across several adverse events in 2021-22, and the state government has committed funding to the program to 30 June 2024. Rural Business Support has been selected by the Australian government as the provider of the Rural Financial Counselling Service in South Australia, and the state government has granted RBS \$1.137 million for management and delivery of the Rural Financial Counselling Service in South Australia from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2024.

Mr WHETSTONE: On the same reference point, I refer to the 2023-23 target to operationalise PIRSA's emergency management plan, including development of recovery doctrine and recovery training standards. What funds have been allocated to operationalise PIRSA's emergency management plan?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Could you repeat the line reference, please?

Mr WHETSTONE: Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 53.

The CHAIR: It is the last dot point.

Mr WHETSTONE: I did say the same reference point.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Yes, sorry, I just had not heard that. I accept that. The risk of biosecurity emergencies that will affect the state's primary production capacity and associated communities is increasing because of climate change and increased global trade and tourism. Biosecurity risks, such as lumpy skin disease and foot-and-mouth disease of animals, and xylella, which will have consequences for the state's grape and citrus industries, are on Australia's doorstep. Similarly, this sector is also facing an elevated risk from natural disasters, especially bushfires and adverse weather events.

As the agency responsible for managing incidents caused by animal, plant or marine pests and diseases, PIRSA is currently responding to 12 fruit fly outbreaks in the Riverland and several pest incidents that have market implications for grain, and it is also collaborating with the Department for Health and Wellbeing on managing the risks to the public and the state's pig industry from Japanese encephalitis. PIRSA is also coordinating recovery programs associated with the last drought, the 2019-20 bushfires and the severe weather that impacted the state as a result of the spring and summer events mentioned in the previous answer.

Delivery of the suite of response and recovery activities is utilising the time of about 120 people, half of whom have been recruited from the Riverland to support the fruit fly program. To ensure that PIRSA can continue to meet its response and recovery obligations, the agency is

undertaking a review of its preparedness arrangements. This commenced with an updating of the agency emergency management plan in 2021, I am advised. Support arrangements under the plan, which includes addressing capability and capacity needs, will be reviewed and updated to make sure the agency can meet its emergency response responsibilities.

Mr WHETSTONE: What is the commonwealth's component of funding for that emergency management plan?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I think the question was specifically in regard to commonwealth funding for the plan. I am advised there is no funding for the plan. Of course, there are cost-sharing arrangements in terms of eradication of any pests or diseases which are made with the commonwealth, but I am happy to have further clarification from the member if he was not referring to funding for development of the plan.

Mr WHETSTONE: A breakdown between state and commonwealth responsibilities and funding and, if it is a coming together of the bureaucracy, is there a cost involved.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: In terms of the cost-sharing arrangements, there are nationally agreed arrangements in relation to that. Successful management of any emergency outbreaks rely on investment in surveillance for early detection of disease and pre-outbreak preparedness to underpin effective response activities. We do that in conjunction with both the commonwealth and, where relevant, other state jurisdictions. Funding is accessed on an as required basis from the biosecurity fund, which is state government administered, in accordance with the protocols or agreements that are made between the commonwealth, ourselves and other jurisdictions.

Ms HUTCHESSON: I refer the committee to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 55. Will the minister please tell us how SARDI, the state's principal primary industries research and development institute, ensures that it can continue to deliver initiative and practical scientific outcomes that benefit primary industries in South Australia?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I thank the honourable member for her question and her ongoing interest in SARDI. SARDI is indeed the state's principal primary industries research and development institute and has been delivering beneficial outcomes for primary industries for almost 30 years. More recently, there have been a wide range of programs and projects that SARDI undertakes on behalf of our state.

These include a number of different areas, such as snapper fingerlings, where close to 100,000 baby snapper (known as fingerlings) are released into Spencer Gulf, on beaches that are close to seagrass habitats, where they will settle naturally in line with their usual breeding cycle. Snapper is an issue that many people would be aware has been quite difficult in terms of the management of stock numbers, which have led to a point where snapper fishing was banned. It is currently banned until January 2023. SARDI will also complete the scientific work needed to determine whether snapper fishing can reopen after January 2023.

The rapidly emerging seaweed farming industry that is helping to diversify and grow the aquaculture sector is another area of SARDI. Research is happening locally at SARDI's West Beach facility, in partnership with CH4 Global. This industry has enormous potential and, as was noted in PIRSA's 'Zoning in: South Australian aquaculture' report, it outlined its capacity to create 3,000 jobs in our state alone and up to 9,000 nationally by the year 2040.

SARDI is also participating in two new federally funded cooperative research centres: the One Basin CRC and the CRC for solving antimicrobial resistance in agribusiness, food and environments. They are currently working on incredibly important issues, such as reducing exposure to climate, water and environmental threats in the Murray-Darling Basin and the antimicrobial resistance response for the Australian agribusiness, food, organic waste and environmental management sectors.

One of the underlying strengths of SARDI's continued success is regular and considered planning because it balances the needs between primary industries, new and emerging science and technology, and the priorities of the state government. SARDI is currently reviewing and refreshing its strategic plan to prioritise its research and development from 2023 onwards.

Consultation is currently underway with major stakeholders and partners to identify opportunities for the future, and also a series of internal workshops are planned to formulate the plan and identify strategic actions for 2023-28. This includes consideration of succession planning for critical scientific skills. That new strategic plan will build on the approach implemented by the current plan, which is due to finish in 2023.

Mr WHETSTONE: I have a supplementary in relation to SARDI. Which division or business units are responsible for undertaking the research and development in respect of fisheries and aquaculture?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: It is the Aquatic Sciences group of SARDI, which is at West Beach.

Mr WHETSTONE: What is the budget for each division or each business unit?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: We will take that on notice.

Mr WHETSTONE: Will there be any budget cuts subject to the 1.7 per cent efficiency dividend?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: There will not be such cuts to SARDI.

Mr WHETSTONE: No cuts?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I have just answered that—correct.

The CHAIR: The minister did indicate in an earlier question that there would be no cuts to SARDI.

Mr WHETSTONE: On the same reference point, Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 55, minister, you talked about stocking, particularly snapper, due to your previous government not being able to close the snapper season.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: A point of order: I did not make that reference. You have just said that I spoke about that. I did not make that reference.

Mr WHETSTONE: I have just given you that: Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 55. What is the progress on the biomass with the science on snapper?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Just repeat the question, as I could not quite hear—the final bit of the question itself.

The CHAIR: Can I have that budget reference for me as well. I missed that one, sorry.

Mr WHETSTONE: It is Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 55, the biomass science. Are you able to give the committee an update on the last stock assessment and the progress on the snapper fingerling release?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Thank you for the question. The statewide snapper stock assessment is currently being undertaken by SARDI. It is scheduled for completion at 31 October this year. The assessment uses multiple lines of evidence to assign stock status. For the two gulf stocks, that includes a fishery independent estimate of spawning biomass using the daily egg production method, analysis of population size and age structures and outputs from the snapper stock assessment model. Snapper stock assessments have been delivered in 2018-19 and 2020-21. As I mentioned, the next assessment is expected to be delivered by 31 October this year, and that is what will inform the future management of the fishery.

Mr WHETSTONE: Minister, I guess the question is: are we seeing an increase in the biomass of snapper in South Australian gulfs?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Given that the stock assessment is currently underway, that will provide the type of data the member is asking about.

Mr WHETSTONE: But the data is received annually. Is there an increase in the biomass of snapper stocks since the closure?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised that the annual data to which the member refers relates only to the South-East fishery, which of course is not subject to the same closures as the fisheries in the rest of the state. I am advised that for the two gulf fisheries we need to rely on independent surveys and so on, and that forms part of the data that is in the stock assessment that is currently underway.

Mr WHETSTONE: When was the last independent survey done on snapper stocks?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised that was in 2020-21.

Mr WHETSTONE: Are you able to give the committee any understanding of what those results were?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I think the honourable member might have been the minister at the time, so I am sure he would have had access to those results then, or perhaps it was Minister Basham. I am advised that the 2020-21 stock assessment did not show an increase in biomass; that is the advice I have been given. Of course, that is why we need to wait for the next stock assessment before we can make decisions about the fisheries going forward.

Mr TELFER: On Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, pages 53 and 54, the Crop and Pasture Report, what is the cost to produce the quarterly Crop and Pasture Report?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: The Crop and Pasture Report has been in place to provide a range of data to inform both policy developments and operations. That includes responses to adverse events. The data collected, analysed and reported through the Crop and Pasture Report represents one of a number of data sets.

The department is currently undertaking a revision of the crop and pasture data process, with the aim of the review to improve the focus and utilise contemporary reporting channels. As part of the review, the department will consider the purpose of the report and, therefore, the current and future data requirements and also the frequency and method of data collection and analysis and the format in which the data will be reported.

It is timely to review the purpose and, therefore, the delivery of the relevant data and reporting. I am advised this includes an option to move to an online scorecard data-type reporting process so that that data can then be available for stakeholder use and the department can undertake the relevant analysis to meet its operational and reporting requirements.

Mr TELFER: For clarification, the question was: what is the cost to produce the quarterly?

The CHAIR: I am having difficulty finding the reference point. Could the member repeat the reference point?

Mr TELFER: Yes, it is page 54, basically. A lot of these programs under agricultural services, as has been explained by the minister already, are not specified, so these are programs that fit under the agricultural services budget line, which is on pages 53 and 54.

The CHAIR: Yes, I am looking there.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Even if it is a bit tenuous, I am happy to answer the question; it is data that I have been provided with. I am advised that the report in recent years has been at a cost of around \$60,000, which incorporates PIRSA staff, resources and, on occasions, external consultants for data collection and report preparation.

Mr TELFER: Further to that, has there been funding allocated in the budget and over the forward estimates to continue to produce the Crop and Pasture Report?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: It is part of the general operational costs. My understanding is that it has not previously been separated out in a budget, and that has not changed this year.

Mr TELFER: I am curious: when will the latest data you referred to be published?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: As I mentioned, the department is reviewing the crop and data report to make sure that it is collecting the most appropriate data in the most appropriate ways so that it can be useful both for responses to adverse events as well as to other stakeholders.

Mr TELFER: I appreciate that commentary. Can you inform me, minister, when the latest data will be published?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: We can take that question on notice.

Mr TELFER: In a similar vein, in Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, pages 53 and 54, which again fit under the broad heading of agricultural services, the seeding intentions report: what is the cost to produce the seeding intentions report?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: We are unable to find a specific reference to that in the reference that you have provided. Is the member referring to seed services?

Mr TELFER: No, the seeding intentions report.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: We will take that on notice.

Mr TELFER: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 54. Does the budget provide funding for the National Water Grid projects that were previously approved under the former Marshall Liberal government?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Access to secure climate-independent affordable water sources will underpin economic growth in our regions' primary industry sectors. Several projects are investigating or delivering new water infrastructure, with funding secured from the commonwealth government's National Water Grid Fund. Detailed or preliminary business cases are being developed for the Barossa and Eden Valley, McLaren Vale irrigators and Clare Valley. Also, \$4 million of water research science projects are underway, including researching irrigated agriculture along the Northern Adelaide Plains corridor, water qualities in the Barossa region and adaptation of the South-Eastern drainage system under a changing climate.

Projects that are being constructed or are in development include the Northern Adelaide Irrigation Scheme worth \$155.6 million, with \$110 million from the state government through SA Water, and 10 small water infrastructure projects across the state worth a total of \$75 million with \$55 million from the project proponents.

Mr TELFER: Further to that, what is the level of state funding that has gone into those projects under the National Water Grid scheme?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised that there are a number of different water projects. The refunding arrangements can be different for each one because there are variations in terms of the funds leveraged, so we can take that on notice.

Mr TELFER: Continuing on in that vein with Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 54, with respect to the changes in departmental responsibilities, will PIRSA continue to be the lead agency on the National Water Grid program here in South Australia?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: South Australia is a signatory to the federal funding agreement in infrastructure. As the Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, I am responsible for South Australian projects as the state signatory to the bilateral schedule to the agreement. We have not discussed any changes to that.

Mr TELFER: Further, is there a strategy or a plan to attract more National Water Grid program funding?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: There are a number of business cases that are currently in development or under consideration.

Mr TELFER: But not an overall strategic plan? It is case by case?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: We are continuing to use the same approach as the former Liberal government used in this regard?

Mr TELFER: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, pages 50 and 51. How is the South Australian government protecting market access for South Australian farmers in the face of border tariffs for agricultural imports as proposed by the European Union?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised—as indeed I thought—that we are in frequent discussion with our federal counterparts, and our federal counterparts are involved in terms of a number of those issues. There are monthly meetings of the Australian agriculture senior officials group where this is raised and discussed in terms of providing options for moving forward on this very important process. I can also provide members with a little further information in regard to the former question about the seed—

Mr TELFER: The seeding intentions report.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Yes, the seeding intentions report. I am advised that the seeding intentions report is part of the Crop and Pasture Report process, so it is incorporated within that, which is why it was not clear from a particular separate report the member was referring to.

Mr WHETSTONE: In Budget Paper 5, page 103, the national eradication programs, there was \$706,000 committed in 2021-22 with only a very small portion of that funding allocated to 2022-23 and 2023-24. What programs are funded under the national eradication arrangements, particularly in the 2022-23 and 2023-24 years?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised, under the line I think the member is referring to, that there are nationally agreed cost-sharing arrangements. The National Management Group decides what needs to be cross shared between industry and all jurisdictions based on a specific formula for each incident, so therefore it will depend on what the particular pest or diseases are that are being addressed and, therefore, what contribution South Australia will need to make.

Mr WHETSTONE: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 50. The sponsored program agreement provides young rural people opportunities, encourages enthusiastic skills and industry to become involved in their local community. In January 2022, the former Liberal government signed a sponsorship program for 2022-23 for the Rural Ambassador Award, the South Australian Young Rural Ambassador, and the Young Judges Incorporated. Is this program funded under your government?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: We have made no changes to that program.

Mr WHETSTONE: What is the funding that has been allocated and in what line is it in the budget?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised it is under agricultural services.

Mr WHETSTONE: Minister, I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, pages 53 and 54, under funding for the horticulture netting infrastructure scheme. Will you continue to be the lead agency for that scheme and how much is unspent in the current program?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: The \$14.6 million South Australian Horticulture Infrastructure Program provides funding to producers for the purchase and installation of new netting or the replacement of damaged netting over land that is used to grow horticultural crops. The grants available under the program provide for up to 50 per cent of the costs to purchase and install permanent netting and throw-over netting, with grants being capped at \$300,000 exclusive of GST per business. Up to \$7.3 million in grants is available for primary producers in the Adelaide Hills and Greater Adelaide regions and, similarly, \$7.3 million is available for primary producers in the Riverland region.

As at 6 May 2022, a total of 108 grants have been approved, totalling \$9.283858 million with the total costs of projects worth over \$20 million; 104 grant deeds have been executed; and 47 projects have been completed. I am advised that the availability of netting and also contractors has impacted the uptake of the program. The average grant value is around about \$85,000 approximately and the program is leveraging \$1 to every \$2.18, which is above the minimum 1:1 ratio of grants to private sector contribution.

Grants made so far total \$4.884 million and there are 435 hectares which will be covered by permanent netting structures and 248 hectares which will be covered by throw-over netting. If I can just add some information there, there is still money contained within that, which I am advised we have had approval to roll over for future horticultural netting programs, or the continuation of the existing program.

Mr WHETSTONE: Have you sought confirmation from the incoming federal government for the ongoing support with their contribution to that program?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised that the deed has already been signed.

Mr WHETSTONE: For this 2022-23 year?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised that it does not need to be approved for each financial year. The deed has already been signed and therefore the funds have been transferred to South Australia.

Sitting suspended from 11:00 to 11:15.

Mr WHETSTONE: Minister, going back to the emergency management plan, Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 53, what money has been set aside in this year's budget for matched funding by the commonwealth should we have to deal with any natural disasters?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: In my earlier answers, I referred to the application for category C funding to the federal government in terms of the programs we have discussed in regard to flood events and also bushfires. Those programs are ongoing. In the event of further natural disasters, which is what the member asked about, when they occur there are national arrangements that are invoked and so we would respond accordingly.

Mr WHETSTONE: I understand, minister, but the question was: have you set any money aside for the matched funding to the commonwealth for any natural disaster?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: My understanding, and my advice, is that until a natural disaster occurs we cannot access commonwealth funding for that natural disaster.

Mr WHETSTONE: Until it happens, you cannot put money aside?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: My advice is we cannot access money under matched agreements until that natural disaster occurs.

Mr WHETSTONE: I understand that, but what I am asking you is: have you budgeted for a natural disaster to be eligible for matched funding from the commonwealth?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Which natural disaster are you referring to?

Mr WHETSTONE: Hail, flood, fire, drought.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I have already responded in regard to funds for hail and flood events, as well as fire and drought programs that are in existence.

Mr WHETSTONE: The question was: have you put any money in the budget specifically for matched funding with the commonwealth.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I have already outlined the matched funding arrangements that we have made.

Mr WHETSTONE: That is no. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Next question, member for Chaffey.

Mr WHETSTONE: I will move on to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, pages 60 and 61. Minister, of the \$680,000 in the budget for the network extension devices program, can you tell the committee a little bit about the \$680,000? Have you approached the commonwealth for the commonwealth's connectivity program?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: The state's \$10 million mobile phone blackspot fund was established in 2018 in recognition that digital connectivity is a key enabler in developing sustainable, healthy regional communities and economies. The fund has been provided just over \$8.28 million, exclusive of GST, directly to address 45 mobile phone blackspot locations in regional South Australia, \$1 million dollars to the Wudinna Switch Up project and \$680,000 to the Mobile Network Extension Devices Pilot Program to provide solutions to mobile phone reception patchiness across the Adelaide Hills.

To date, 32 mobile blackspot solutions have been completed, which leaves 13 sites to be delivered. I am advised that workforce issues, supply chain interruptions and border restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic have impacted the delivery over the last two years. Of the total commitment of \$9.96 million from the state's mobile phone blackspot fund, just over \$4.342 million has been paid to fund recipients, in line with meeting project milestones.

Mr WHETSTONE: Minister, the question was about the budget of \$680,000 for the network extension devices program. It does say that it will be delivered by Telstra. Was there any competitive evaluation of all the telcos? It tells me that this program will be delivered across the Adelaide Hills.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised that the Mobile Network Extension Devices Pilot Program will be delivered by Telstra on behalf of the government of South Australia. It will subsidise the installation of an improved mobile network extension device (a mobile repeater) to boost the signal for an eligible residence or business. I am further advised that this was put in place under the former Liberal government. I do not have information as to whether they did go through a competitive process or not.

Mr WHETSTONE: Yes, they did, and it was a process that was evaluated by the commonwealth, telcos and the state government. Again, I come back to my question on the network extension devices program. My concern is that \$680,000 does not go far. What I would like to tell the rest of regional South Australia is the answer to: is your government going to put a blackspot program in train for South Australian regions?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Well, the former minister might like to ask his former colleagues why that amount was allocated to the Adelaide Hills—

Mr WHETSTONE: No, we ask the questions.

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: —and why the former government—

The CHAIR: The member asked a reasonably loaded question, and I allowed the question to go ahead. Members on my left will listen to the minister's response. If you do not want to give the minister some latitude, I suggest you ask tighter questions. It was fairly broad, so the minister has a broad response as well.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I appreciate that the member of the committee may have criticism of the former Liberal government for not providing enough funds or for providing them for the Adelaide Hills region. In terms of the reasoning for that, he would be well advised to speak to the former government ministers who put this program in place in the way that it is.

Mr WHETSTONE: How much money is in the budget for the blackspot program of the state government?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Under the commonwealth government's Mobile Black Spot Program, state government co-funding, exclusive of GST, was committed to round 4, \$4.94 million; round 5, \$0.86 million; and round 5A, \$0.27 million.

Mr WHETSTONE: Is that your answer for how much money you have put in the 2022-23 budget for blackspot funding?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: As I mentioned, that was for rounds 4, 5 and 5A. I am advised there is \$1.9 million in the 2022-23 financial year.

Mr WHETSTONE: Thank you, minister.

Mr TELFER: How many individual projects do you expect to be delivered in partnership with the federal government in utilising that \$1.9 million?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised that over the last 12 months this has been a work in progress between the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and PIRSA. That work is ongoing.

Mr TELFER: I seek some further clarification. Has the minister sought a commitment from the new federal Labor government for ongoing funding for mobile blackspot programs over the forward estimates?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised that we are expecting about six to open in the fairly near future. There may be a number of different funding streams in terms of the commonwealth government programs that will go towards this.

Mr TELFER: Thank you for that answer but, just for clarification, the question was: has the minister directly sought commitment from the new federal Labor government for ongoing funding for mobile black spot programs?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I have been in contact with the new federal government about a range of matters, indicating that I would like to meet with the relevant minister to discuss a number of issues that relate to regional South Australia.

Mr TELFER: But not specifically the Mobile Black Spot Program?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I cannot recall whether I specifically mentioned that in the letter. I mentioned a range of issues and said that I wanted to meet to discuss these and other issues.

Mr WHETSTONE: Minister, have you met with any of your federal counterparts?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I have been in contact with the new Minister for Agriculture seeking a meeting.

Mr WHETSTONE: What was his name?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am sure you could google it if you are unaware.

An honourable member interjecting:

Mr WHETSTONE: I am not asking you.

The CHAIR: The next question.

Mr WHETSTONE: Thank you, sir—

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: It is Murray Watt, but I am surprised that the member for Chaffey does not know the name of the new Minister for Agriculture.

Mr WHETSTONE: Clearly incapable—

The CHAIR: Order!

Mr WHETSTONE: On Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, pages 54 and 55, the temporary closure of cuttlefish, prior to your decision to impose a temporary 12-month closure on the take of cuttlefish in the waters of Spencer Gulf north of the line between Arno Bay and Wallaroo, did you consult with the Minister for Science before making that decision?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: It is an interesting topic for the opposition to raise in terms of the giant Australian cuttlefish. Of course, the giant Australian cuttlefish is an iconic species in South Australia, and each winter tens of thousands of these cuttlefish aggregate at a discrete location in the Spencer Gulf on a rocky reef and spawn there. This is the only known aggregation of this dense a spawning aggregation of this species in the world, so it attracts significant tourism to the area.

It is interesting that there was a cuttlefish closure in place under the former Labor government, but then that was allowed to expire on 14 February 2020 under the former Liberal government. In 2021, the year following the lapse of that closure—the former government's decision to allow the closure to lapse—the estimate of the giant Australian cuttlefish numbers was the lowest it had been in seven years. One year after that closure was allowed to lapse, it was the lowest number of giant Australian cuttlefish that had been recorded in seven years.

Mr WHETSTONE: That is not true. Do not mislead the parliament.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: That was a decrease of 56 per cent from the 2020 estimate of 247,146 individuals. In delivering the election commitment, we have reinstated the cuttlefish species

closure north of a line between Arno Bay and Wallaroo in the Northern Spencer Gulf, and this will protect the giant Australian cuttlefish population.

This has been done and it has been received very well by those involved in tourism, by those involved in the local Whyalla district and in fact by people across South Australia, Australia and further afield. We see tourists come from all over the world to see this outstanding and unique spawning aggregation that occurs. This is the aggregation that the former Liberal government was happy to allow to lapse and that resulted in a significant decrease in the number of cuttlefish.

This was a commitment that was made prior to the election. It was made as part of the teamwork that the then Labor opposition is renowned for. We are very good at operating as a team. I know that is a little bit foreign to some members in this place, who are currently on my right. We operate as a team so that we can address both the tourism issues and other issues in regard to the giant cuttlefish closure, and I am very glad that the Malinauskas Labor government has been able to deliver on this important election commitment.

Mr WHETSTONE: The question was: did you seek any science evidence on that decision?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: The science evidence is that it was the lowest level in seven years—

Mr WHETSTONE: No, you were patting yourself on the back.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: —of Australian giant cuttlefish numbers.

The CHAIR: The member has asked the question twice and the minister has responded. The minister made it very clear it was a cabinet decision, which means it is a decision of all ministers. Next question, member for Chaffey.

Mr TELFER: Perhaps some clarification or additional information then: did the minister seek scientific advice from SARDI or PIRSA about whether the temporary closure of the cuttlefish was necessary for their protection?

The CHAIR: Member for Flinders, I think I have made my ruling quite clear, but I will repeat it. The ruling was twofold: (1) the minister has already indicated the drop in numbers as a basis for the change in policy—

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: From SARDI.

The CHAIR: —and (2) the minister also indicated it was a team response, in other words it was a cabinet decision, which means advice from across cabinet would have been received. Next question.

Mr TELFER: I appreciate your commentary on it.

The CHAIR: It is not my commentary, it is my ruling, and you will go to the next question.

Mr TELFER: Very well. Prior to the minister's decision to impose the closure, did the minister consult with recreational or commercial fishers?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: This was a fulfilment of an election commitment that was made by the then Labor opposition prior to the election. We have now fulfilled that commitment, and I am very glad to say that we are now able to protect the giant cuttlefish in the Upper Spencer Gulf, something that sadly the former Liberal government failed dismally to do, which resulted in that seven-year low numbers of Australian giant cuttlefish.

The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, sub-program 1.2, on page 54. How will arrangements allowing commercial fishers to carry over uncaught quota or to overcatch their quota entitlements assist our commercial fishing industry to respond to market fluctuations while maintaining sustainable fish stocks?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I thank the member for this question and note their ongoing interest in ensuring sustainable and profitable commercial fishing activities in our state. Of course, they also support our regions and small businesses.

In 2020, to assist the fishing industry overcome the impacts of COVID-19 shutdowns, temporary arrangements were implemented for South Australia's commercial fisheries, allowing for uncaught quota entitlements to be carried over to one or more quota periods. These arrangements provided licence holders with the opportunity to recoup their financial losses in the following years. The temporary COVID-19 assistance measures identified a need for ongoing application of undercatch and overcatch provisions in South Australian fisheries so that commercial fishing industries could respond promptly to market changes.

There are currently no standard provisions in South Australia's commercial fisheries to carry over uncaught quota entitlements and only limited overcatch arrangements, although these arrangements, I am told, are in place in commonwealth fisheries and others internationally. The Department of Primary Industries and Regions developed a policy paper on managing undercatch and overcatch in South Australian fisheries, identifying ongoing undercatch and overcatch provisions of up to 10 per cent of quota entitlements on individual licences as well as exceptional circumstances.

The first regulation amendments to implement these arrangements come into effect on 1 July 2022 and the arrangements approved to date relate to the blue crab, pipi, giant crab, rock lobster and vongole fisheries. Similar arrangements are now being sought for the marine scalefish species, snapper, King George whiting, garfish, calamari as well as for abalone, sardines and Gulf St Vincent prawn fishing rights.

The proposed amendments will enable fishery licence holders who have quota entitlements to maximise their opportunities by reacting to market fluctuations. It is considered that the proposed amendments will result in greater resilience, and a competitive advantage for South Australia's fisheries will flow on with benefits to the state's economy. The arrangements are not considered to have any additional impact on the marine environment. They relate to species that are managed through commercial quotas and will not result in any net increases or reductions in total commercial catch and/or effort above the total levels that are set out in formal management plans for each relevant fishery.

PIRSA, with advice from the South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI) will assess uncaught or overcaught quota entitlements across all relevant fisheries at the end of each quota. This is a practical measure that has been called for by industry and other stakeholder groups. Our government will continue to work cooperatively in developing policies and strategies that will help the fishing industry for many years to come.

Mr TELFER: On that same subject matter, Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, pages 54 and 55, a very important aspect for my electorate in particular: which fishing stakeholders has the minister met with since the election?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: A very large number. Within about the first 48 hours of becoming minister, I was very pleased to be able to reach out by phone to an extensive stakeholder list that included commercial and recreational fishing groups. Since then, I have met with a very large number. I cannot name them all off the top of my head; they have been too numerous.

Mr TELFER: On Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 54, targets 2022-23, the top dot point states:

Implement a range of red tape reduction measures to create increased business efficiencies as part of the reformed Marine Scalefish Fishery.

Can the minister please explain what those measures are?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: There is a working group that is in place with the Marine Fishers Association that is looking at a number of different items in terms of red-tape reduction. We are very pleased to be able to work collaboratively with them and hear the different suggestions they have, as well as providing input from the department to ensure that the outcomes that we have will be beneficial for all concerned as well as for the overall fishery.

Mr TELFER: So, for clarification, there are not any measures that have been identified yet. Those measures will be identified through that consultation process.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: My advice is that it is a work in progress, so I am sure there have been discussions already about some possibilities, and that work continues.

Mr TELFER: Further on from that, there is an aspect of that dot point that says 'create increased business efficiencies'. Can the minister highlight any of the examples of business inefficiencies currently?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: In many ways, the answer is the same as to the previous question, in that there is a working group in place to address some of those issues and come up with suggestions. As an example, because of course the Marine Scalefish Fishery has moved to a quota fishery and there has been a reduction in the number of vessels in the fishing fleet, I am advised that there are some regulations that are under consideration as to whether they are still appropriate to be used or whether they in fact are contributing to business inefficiencies.

Any changes, of course, will only be made once there has been full discussion and consultation and once there has been full exploration and investigation to ensure that there will not be any unintended consequences in the event that such regulations may be removed or amended.

Mr TELFER: Further, will these efficiencies have set measure points—will be measured—and will they be reported on publicly?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: The main indicator relates to sustainability of the stock, because of course there is no capability to have an efficient business if we do not have sustainable stocks in the fisheries, so that will be one of the major indicators. Remember, too, that all this work is happening in consultation with industry, with the Marine Fishers Association, and so the response to any things that are proposed or indeed implemented will form part of that ongoing feedback, which is so important for PIRSA and for me as minister.

Mr TELFER: Will those measures then be reported publicly?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: If we make changes to regulations, then obviously that will be public.

Mr TELFER: No, the outcomes. I am not talking about the aims; I am talking about the outcomes.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: The sustainability of stocks is always public, as is the scorecard—that is, an annual scorecard—which includes measurement and reporting on the economic measures.

Mr TELFER: Yes, they are very valuable data sets. Do the specific business efficiencies that you are aiming to drive through this implementation have measure points, and will they be reported?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I think I have already answered that question.

Mr TELFER: I disagree, but I will go on. You talked about sector consultation. What sector consultation will be conducted? Is it going to be broad, or are there going to be specific individual members on that working group?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Currently, the working group is coming up with suggestions and potential changes that might be appropriate and beneficial. As I mentioned, the working group involves the Marine Fishers Association. If there are then proposals for changes, that will be consulted on in a broader sense with other sectors of the fishing sector, because, as I am sure members are aware, a number of other sectors will fish for more than one species.

Mr TELFER: I appreciate that, but I am trying to get clarification as somebody who talks to those key stakeholders regularly. So the working group currently is just the Marine Fishers Association?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: My advice is that currently the work is with the Marine Fishers Association, but any changes, such as changes to regulations, will be consulted on more broadly with, for example, the recreational fishing sector, the conservation sector and so on, so that there is full consultation for anything that might have impacts on those other sectors.

Mr WHETSTONE: In Budget Paper 5, page 102 notes that the \$1.95 million allocated to the forest products master plan has been funded from the Regional Growth Fund. How much of the \$15 million allocated to the Regional Growth Fund has been committed to various initiatives in 2022-23 and over the forward estimates?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: The government has remained committed to \$15 million per annum for the Regional Growth Fund. In terms of the particular question about the master plan, it is taken from the Regional Growth Fund. I am not sure if the question from the member is with regard to other forestry matters—for example, the centre for excellence is not being funded from the Regional Growth Fund.

Mr WHETSTONE: My question was: how many other projects have been funded from the Regional Growth Fund?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: There are a number of projects, including some of those that were announced under the previous government. The Regional Growth Fund is a total of \$15 million per annum. There are multiple projects. Usually, when there are competitive rounds, for example, the successful outcomes and recipients are then put onto the website. I seem to remember that in the former government there were a couple here and there that were not made public. Certainly, if you are looking at the individual grant amounts, they will be on the website in due course.

Mr WHETSTONE: My question was: what initiatives have been funded out of the Regional Growth Fund for the 2022-23 budget and the forward estimates? How many election commitments were funded out of the \$15 million Regional Growth Fund?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I do not have the number off the top of my head. I am happy to take that on notice.

Mr TELFER: As a subsequent question to that, can you clarify for us how much of the \$15 million per annum is left within the fund for consideration for any other projects in the 2022-23 period?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I do not have that figure in front of me. Of course, it also does depend on whether grants that were made or allocated in previous funding years—going back three, four, five years—have come to fruition. Some of the funds that remain in the Regional Growth Fund are allocated and some are unallocated, and it depends very much on the different milestones of the different projects that have already been funded—some of course end up not coming to fruition, others do—so that is a constantly moving feast.

Mr TELFER: Subsequent to that, you do not have the dollar figure that is remaining unallocated within the Regional Growth Fund?

The CHAIR: The minister said she will take that on notice.

Mr TELFER: No, she did not. I am happy if she takes that on notice.

The CHAIR: I am pretty sure that is what she said.

Mr TELFER: She did not.

The CHAIR: Sorry?

Mr TELFER: I did not think she did.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: What I can tell members of the committee is that the Malinauskas Labor government will continue to invest in regional areas through the Regional Growth Fund, including a focus on projects that act as enablers to regional industries, growing jobs and strengthening regional communities.

The Malinauskas Labor government will maintain the \$15 million per annum for regional development funding. The government looks forward to building on its strong track record of investing in regional communities because, of course, from 2014 to 2018 the equivalent fund then drove economic growth and productivity by investing in regional infrastructure and creating jobs and new opportunities for regional South Australia.

The \$15 million per annum was established during that time, when it was known as the Regional Development Fund. The broad objectives of the RDF grants program were to support regional economic development by creating new jobs and improving career opportunities, providing better infrastructure facilities and services, strengthening the economic, social and environmental base of communities—

Mr TELFER: A point of order.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: —supporting their development and delivery of projects and leveraging funding and investment.

The CHAIR: Minister, there is a point of order. Point of order, member for Flinders?

Mr TELFER: I have a point of order under 128, relevance. I am specifically asking about the remainder of the funds. I appreciate the commentary about it, but it is a specific question. If the minister does not have the answer, I am quite happy for her to take it on notice. I do not want to eat into the valuable time of the committee with this sort of commentary.

The CHAIR: That is not your decision, member for Flinders.

Mr TELFER: I know that. That is why I am bringing the point of order to you, sir.

The CHAIR: I think that the minister was actually addressing the question. Does the minister have that information, or would she like to take it on notice?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I do have some further information, which is that the former government, between 2018 and 2022 committed more than \$85 million through the fund, so more than that \$15 million per annum.

A number of those projects were announced very shortly before the election. It is unclear what kind of business case was provided for some of them and whether that was therefore going to meet all the objectives of the Regional Growth Fund. If there is more position I can provide, I shall do so on notice.

Mr BELL: I refer the minister to the same budget line. Has the entirety of the state government's commitment of \$10 million been paid to the Mount Gambier city council for the Willunga Recreation and Convention Centre to this date?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised that the \$10 million was indeed from the Regional Growth Fund. The departmental officers are not aware whether all that has been expended. I am happy to take that question on notice because of course it is a very important project to the South-East. I am happy to provide any additional information that might be available.

Mr BELL: My final question, minister, is: can the minister detail the final cost estimates for the Willunga Recreation and Convention Centre, including all costs pertaining to the entire project?

The CHAIR: Your reference point again, sorry?

Mr BELL: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, program 2, page 60, regional development. In essence, is the minister able to detail the final cost estimates for the Willunga Recreation and Convention Centre in Mount Gambier, including all costs pertaining to the project, such as landscaping, electricity, infrastructure and furnishings?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised that that information certainly should be able to be provided. I am sorry, we do not have it today, but I am happy to take it on notice.

Mr WHETSTONE: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, pages 56 and 57. Given the current outbreaks of foot-and-mouth disease in Indonesia, why have you, the minister, not identified foot-and-mouth disease as one of the emergency high-level threats for emergency animal disease preparedness and surveillance projects?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I thank the member for his question. Foot-and-mouth disease is treated in the same way as similar emergency animal threats in the way that funding is allocated.

Just by way of example in terms of animal biosecurity responses in the state, PIRSA is currently responding to a nationally agreed strategy to an outbreak of Japanese encephalitis. That

disease is new to Australia and cannot be contained or eradicated. It has been declared a disease of national public health significance and PIRSA is working with SA Health to support the human health response and with livestock industries, working to support disease management and business continuity.

Money is provided by the Australian government to support states and territories in animal health response, and that will often include things like surveillance activities. When we look at Japanese encephalitis, for example, \$1.2 million of funding is provided to South Australia. There are other outbreaks of other diseases, or there are things such as lumpy skin disease, which is also a high risk to South Australia.

The estimates indeed from a structured expert judgement session facilitated by the Centre of Excellence for Biosecurity Risk Analysis suggests that there is a 42 per cent probability of a significant exotic disease incursion in Australia in the next five years. The estimated cost of a foot-and-mouth outbreak in Australia would be absolutely significant. Successful management of an emergency animal disease outbreak relies on investment and surveillance for early detection of disease and pre-outbreak preparedness to underpin effective response activities.

PIRSA's animal biosecurity programs prevent, detect and respond to threats posed by significant or emergency animal diseases, and those activities underpin our domestic and international market access for South Australia's \$4.5 million livestock, wool, dairy and seafood industries. I am advised that the significant work that is going into place by PIRSA for exotic animal disease preparedness includes the sorts of activities that are needed, whether that be for lumpy skin disease, foot-and-mouth disease or other outbreaks.

Mr WHETSTONE: Minister, how much money is allocated to the budget to emergency animal disease preparedness and surveillance projects?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Biosecurity is a broad remit. There is \$64 million currently provided in the budget in the 2022-23 financial year for biosecurity. The impact would of course be devastating on any of the emergency animal diseases. In response to the significance of both foot-and-mouth disease and lumpy skin disease outbreaks in Indonesia, PIRSA has reprioritised staff resources to focus on emergency animal disease preparedness activities. That includes engaging additional skilled veterinary officers to build broader capacity in animal health risk-based decision-making for animal disease threats, which of course includes foot-and-mouth as well as lumpy skin disease.

PIRSA is supporting national work underway to update policies and plans for both foot-and-mouth disease and lumpy skin disease, including participating in working groups to address specific policy and operational issues. They include such things as vaccinations and diagnostics. PIRSA is drafting a state foot-and-mouth and lumpy skin disease action plan that will identify any additional work required within South Australia to bolster the operational preparedness. The plan, of course, has to align with the nationally agreed AUSVETPLAN, which I am advised is under frequent review.

The Chief Veterinary Officer is meeting with CEOs of Livestock SA, SA Dairyfarmers' Association, Pork SA, and meat processors, to discuss preparedness activities for the South Australian livestock industry. There is a joint PIRSA industry scenario exercise planned for mid-July and early August. The outcomes of that exercise will inform future preparedness activities, including communication needs for the livestock industry.

Activities are also underway to increase foot-and-mouth diagnostic testing capability and capacity at Vetlab, the state animal health diagnostic laboratory. Preparations are underway also for the molecular diagnostic suite upgrade, with works due to be completed in the coming financial year. Surveillance and communication have been enhanced to increase disease awareness for early detection of disease and a rapid response.

For members' interest, PIRSA has also been working with the pork industry on preparedness for African swine fever, and much of that work also applies to other diseases, such as foot-and-mouth disease. It is important for members to realise that a lot of the preparedness activities can apply to different types of disease outbreak. Therefore, when we are looking at surveillance, when we are

looking at the AUSVETPLAN and when we are looking at increases to the number of veterinary officers and so on, all these are working collectively together to address the potential for outbreaks of animal diseases.

We are also working with our federal counterparts in other jurisdictions because, if we were in the unfortunate situation of having an outbreak of any of these diseases, it would be a shared response across the country. It will certainly be a shared risk, so it is important to work together on these. I am pleased to be able to report on those specifics that PIRSA is currently undertaking.

Mr WHETSTONE: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, pages 56 and 57. Currently, there are 12 Queensland fruit fly outbreaks in the Riverland. Can you tell me how many of those outbreaks have been in backyards? What is the detection break-up of backyards and commercial?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Whilst we do not have the exact numbers, I am advised that most outbreaks have been in backyard fruit, which I think certainly underpins the importance of communication strategies for those with backyard fruit trees. I think there has been very strong participation from industry through the Riverland Fruit Fly Committee. There have been a number of meetings and discussions and people working together to come up with the best outcome in terms of trying to eradicate fruit fly in the Riverland.

We know that there were multiple metropolitan outbreaks in the previous two years, and significant funds had to be expended on addressing those. Fortunately, they are now eradicated, but we are still left with outbreaks in the Riverland. This government is committed to continuing the efforts needed to eradicate fruit fly in the Riverland, and that includes working with both industry and backyard fruit tree growers.

Mr WHETSTONE: Minister, will you please take on notice the backyard detections versus commercial detections?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Yes, if that is available, I will certainly bring it back.

Mr WHETSTONE: Is there any consideration by your government or by you to look at the Sunraysia model, with the concerning number of backyard outbreaks, and whether you will implement a domestic strategy more so than a commercial strategy?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I have asked my department to look at all possible strategies that might be available to assess whether or not they are expected to be effective and also whether they are likely to be applicable in South Australian circumstances. I think it is important that we continue to think innovatively about addressing fruit fly.

Previously, over the last two years, whilst there was success eventually in eradicating metropolitan outbreaks, we have not seen the same success across all the outbreaks in the Riverland. I am certainly keen to hear from industry or other stakeholders about ideas that they think might work, have those ideas tested and then look at whether any of them might be appropriate for implementation.

Mr WHETSTONE: I have one last question on fruit fly. Will you undertake some level of feasibility for some of the technology that was brought into metropolitan Adelaide for Mediterranean fruit fly that can now be used on Queensland fruit fly, such as Biofeed or looking at larger releases of sterile fly?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: We are always happy to look at other potential solutions, as long as they are in line with the national protocols and can be used appropriately in a South Australian context.

Mr TELFER: I refer you to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, pages 56 and 57. How many government biosecurity officers and veterinarians does South Australia currently employ?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Do you mean the South Australian government?

Mr TELFER: Yes.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I can advise that in the biosecurity section there are 172.59 full-time equivalents. I am advised that there has been an increase in veterinarian officers. We can take further information and bring it back on notice. We are in process of increasing the

veterinarian numbers. My understanding is they have not actually been recruited and are not on board as yet.

Mr TELFER: I think that information about the biosecurity officers and veterinarians as a whole would be a good one, if you are able to take that on notice.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Certainly.

Mr TELFER: What is the total funding allocated for government biosecurity officers and veterinarians in the 2022-23 period and over the forward estimates?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I think I advised earlier in this session the total budget for the biosecurity section of PIRSA, so I have already provided that detail.

Mr TELFER: The plan to recruit the additional government biosecurity officers and veterinarians, has that been undertaken already? Have the steps already been put in place or is that something you are saying is going to happen in the future?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised that that is happening as we speak, that at least one of the positions has already been advertised and others will shortly follow.

Mr TELFER: Has the minister taken advice from PIRSA on the optimal number of government biosecurity officers and veterinarians for South Australia? Is there a target?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: The target is to have appropriate positions for appropriate services. Obviously, if there are different incursions of whether they be plant diseases or animal diseases, the needs of the agency and the needs of the community will change.

Mr TELFER: What about on current need?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised that the current FTEs are addressing the current needs, and, in the same way as when there were numerous additional fruit fly outbreaks additional staff were brought on to address those, if there are other emergencies in terms of either plant disease or animal disease outbreaks, or other emergencies such as that, then additional staff can be brought on.

Mr TELFER: Thank you for the answer. If the current FTEs are adequate for the current need, why is there more recruiting happening?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: My understanding is the FTEs include those we have just said will be increased. I am advised also that we need to deliver services in regard to the commonwealth program for Japanese encephalitis, so that also requires those additional positions.

Mr TELFER: Subsequent to that, has the minister received advice from industry on the optimal number of government biosecurity officers and veterinarians they believe is necessary for the state government to employ?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: We are not aware of industry providing or, indeed, having a number in mind of what they consider to be the optimal number.

Mr TELFER: Have you consulted with the industry on what they believe is going to be necessary?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: My understanding is that PIRSA is in constant communication with industry and is always keen to have feedback and to incorporate that feedback into their plans and processes going forward.

Mr TELFER: In Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, pages 56 and 57, it is still talking about biosecurity. Is the Labor government committed to establishing a biosecurity centre in South Australia?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Could you be more specific in regard to what you are asking?

Mr TELFER: There is federal funding available, and the previous government was pushing for a biosecurity centre to be locked in. It had not been as yet, but I believe, as an individual, that it would be a good thing for the state government to continue to look at. I am just wondering—

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am sorry, who did you say was pushing for it?

Mr TELFER: There was federal funding—

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Yes, I heard that, and then you said—

Mr TELFER: —and the previous government had been pushing to try to seize the opportunity for a biosecurity centre in South Australia.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: The advice I have received first of all raises some questions around clarity regarding the question. I am making the assumption that the member is referring to the commonwealth government funding of \$30 million Australia-wide that will be made available over three years to build national resilience to manage fruit fly, with at least \$20 million of those funds being allocated to South Australia. Is that what the member is referring to?

Mr TELFER: Yes.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Okay, thank you. That announcement noted that the Building Resilience to Manage Fruit Fly package would provide funding for essential upgrades to state-managed roadblocks or quarantine stations to stop the spread of fruit fly, consolidation and expansion of sterile insect technology capability to drive down pest pressure in vulnerable areas, and critical post-harvest treatment infrastructure nationally to grow exports.

The package has to be for projects that are in the national interest. In order to support that requirement, as well as to remove any contention around what projects qualify as national interest, I am advised that the commonwealth government is undertaking an independent scoping exercise for the investments to be made. It is expected that scoping exercise will take several months to complete.

The South Australian government and industry stakeholders have had initial meetings with the contractor undertaking that scoping exercise to explain South Australia's importance to the national fruit fly system, and the need for co-investment to support the significant work that the South Australian government is already undertaking in this space. We are certainly keen to make sure those funds that can be accessed go to addressing this significant problem in our state.

Mr WHETSTONE: I have one last question on the Qfly outbreaks in the Riverland. Can the minister give me a breakdown on individual cost per declared outbreak of those 12 outbreaks?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I do not have the individual costs in front of me, but what I can say is that the funding going forward has been predicated on the average costs for outbreaks in the past. That is why the \$13 million currently in the 2022-23 financial year is considered appropriate to manage the current outbreaks we have.

Consistent with the approach of the former Liberal government—and, I suspect, probably the former Labor government prior to that as well, but certainly the former Liberal government—in the event of additional outbreaks, we would go to the Department of Treasury and Finance and ask that that funding be made available through the biosecurity fund. Obviously we are attempting to eradicate fruit fly. We cannot anticipate whether there will be further outbreaks in the years going forward and, if so, how many there will be. In terms of accessing funding, that is why it needs to be in response to those outbreaks.

Of course, there is ongoing biosecurity work done by PIRSA in addition to specifically addressing outbreaks, which are all about readiness, education and contributing broadly to eradication efforts, as well as individual funding that is provided in terms of funding the additional staff needed to do the work currently underway to address the fruit fly outbreaks. That includes things like sterile insect technology, laying baits and picking up fruit that is dropped in areas close to the incursion areas.

Mr WHETSTONE: The simple question was: can you give me a breakdown of the individual outbreak costs, please?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I said I did not have that in front of me at the moment.

Mr WHETSTONE: Will you take that on notice?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Certainly.

Mr TELFER: Chair, can I have more clarification on the last subject I was asking about?

The CHAIR: It is 12.15, the time allocated, so we are moving to forestry. I clarify that the omnibus questions for forestry, regions and primary industries can be read at the end of this session. There being no further questions, I declare the examination of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development complete.

Departmental Advisers:

Prof. M. Doroudi, Chief Executive, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.

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

Mr J. Speed, Chief Executive, ForestrySA.

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

Ms M. Spencer, Chief of Staff, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.

Ms A. Barclay, General Manager, Office of the Chief Executive, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.

The CHAIR: I now open the examination of the portfolio for ForestrySA. The minister is the Minister for Forest Industries. I advise members that the proposed payments for the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development remain open for examination. Minister, when you have an opportunity, you might want to introduce your new advisers.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Thank you, and can I make a short opening statement?

The CHAIR: You can do that, and the lead speaker for the opposition can make a short statement if he wishes as well. I note the presence of the member for Kavel.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I would like to provide a very brief opening statement before answering questions. The government's interests in forestry are led—

Members interjecting:

The CHAIR: I refer everybody's attention to the minister's statement. Thank you.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: —by both ForestrySA and the Department of Primary Industries and Regions (PIRSA). I am happy to place on the record that in this session I am happy to take questions on any aspects to do with forestry.

The South Australian Forestry Corporation, trading as ForestrySA, is a statutory authority with commercial and regional economic responsibilities. ForestrySA's key commercial activity is the management of the Mount Lofty Ranges forest estate, with over 10,500 hectares of commercial pine plantation area. ForestrySA also delivers specified non-commercial activities on behalf of the state government. PIRSA is responsible for providing policy advice and for implementing the government's initiatives to develop the state's forest and wood products industry.

With me today I have Mr Julian Speed, the Chief Executive of ForestrySA, and Mr Rob Robinson, Director of Forestry at the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development. Behind me, continuing on, are Professor Mehdi Doroudi, Chief Executive of PIRSA, and our chief financial officer, who was previously present, as well as Ms Ann Barclay and Ms Meagan Spencer, who is my Chief of Staff.

South Australia's forest and wood products sector is significant to the state's economy, contributing more than \$1.3 billion annually. That was the figure in 2021. It also supports 18,000 jobs either directly or indirectly, and many of those jobs are in regional areas. The South Australian government is committed to supporting the South Australian forest and wood products industry to

ensure its long-term and sustainable future, driving further sector and regional growth. I look forward to questions.

Mr WHETSTONE: Thank you, minister, and thank you to your staff. I refer to Budget Paper 5, page 101, election commitment. When does the minister expect the fire towers will be replaced with new technology, and is there a date set for its completion?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I thank the member for his question. The election commitment does indeed provide \$2 million to replace fire towers with new technology, such as camera technology, to provide a landscape-level fire detection program in consultation with industry. There will, however, be a period of transition, and that is why we have undertaken to ensure that existing fire towers continue to be serviced whilst they are needed. Details are in development in close cooperation with industry and the relevant government agencies.

Forestry companies and the South Australian Forestry Corporation have been collaborating for many years, many decades in fact, to protect the South-East plantation assets from fire. They share knowledge, experience and firefighting crews to attend to fires quickly when threats arise. Early detection is important in facilitating this rapid response and mitigating the loss of plantation assets during a fire. Of course, any fire that threatens plantation assets also has the potential to threaten local communities, which is why it is so important to have an up-to-date and best practice fire approach.

There are a number of technologies available and more are in development, and it is important to get the investment right. Engineering audits have been undertaken on existing fire towers, and the structures and maintenance will be applied where necessary to ensure reliability and safety. The \$2 million commitment is in the current budget, and to continue the high level of asset protection desired by all forest growers ForestrySA's 15 prized and specialised fire trucks remain active in their duties.

The amount for the election commitment has been put into the 2022-23 financial year, and we are working with industry to determine the project priorities. This could include rebuilding or refurbishing some of the towers and will of course include the new fire detection cameras that have been outlined. Certainly we are hopeful that they will be in place during the 2022-23 financial year, subject to that consultation as well as things such as availability, which COVID has affected in many situations.

Mr WHETSTONE: What is the cost of ensuring that the existing fire towers are serviceable during this transition period and is the extra \$2 million part of that required maintenance program?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: The total cost of that maintenance is approximately \$150,00 per year, and the \$2 million will include that funding.

Mr WHETSTONE: On Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 58, what government plantations are currently being leased by OneFortyOne? You sold nearly all of them, but I am asking what is remaining.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: All the government plantations in the South-East and western Victoria, where the land is still owned by Treasury, are leased to OneFortyOne.

Mr WHETSTONE: Is the weighbridge leased to OneFortyOne? Is the ForestrySA building leased to OneFortyOne?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: The member's question specifically related to plantations. On the subsequent question about the weighbridge, I am advised that that is licensed to OneFortyOne. In terms of the building, it is 50 per cent leased to OneFortyOne, and members may be aware that there are other tenants in that building who have leases with ForestrySA.

Mr WHETSTONE: Does the government have any other commercial arrangements with OneFortyOne?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised that the only other commercial arrangement in place is the purchase of seedlings from the nursery that is OneFortyOne. In fact, just a couple of weeks ago at country cabinet I had the pleasure to go and visit the seedling nursery. It is an outstanding facility, which I was very pleased to be able to inspect. Some new work is going to be happening

there that will enable it to provide better working conditions for those who work with the seedlings as well as a number of other positive benefits. I am advised that is the other commercial relationship with OneFortyOne.

Mr WHETSTONE: When was the last compliance audit undertaken on the terms of sale by OneFortyOne when they bought the plantations from the South Australian government?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised that there is ongoing reporting against the sale conditions. I am advised that currently the information from the 2021 calendar year (because it is done on a calendar year) is being assessed and will be completed in due course.

Mr WHETSTONE: Are you aware of any noncompliance issues through that audit?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised that the assessment is still being undertaken. There are no noncompliance issues being investigated at present.

Mr WHETSTONE: Can you tell me the estimated cost of the compliance audit?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: We can take that specific information on notice.

Mr WHETSTONE: Thank you. Of the \$6 million budget allocated over four years for the forestry centre of excellence, is that entire \$6 million coming out of the Regional Growth Fund?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: None of the \$1.5 million per annum for the centre for excellence is coming out of the Regional Growth Fund.

Mr WHETSTONE: Was there any money out of the Regional Growth Fund for the centre of excellence?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: No.

Mr WHETSTONE: On Budget Paper 3, page 72, table 5.4, minister, can you explain what purchases are expected in the 2022-23 year over the forward estimates with the funding listed in the table?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: You said Budget Paper 3; is that correct?

Mr WHETSTONE: I said Budget Paper 3, page 72, table 5.4.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised that the \$0.7 million in table 5.4 is for some upgrades to the Kuitpo depot of ForestrySA as well as some plant and equipment.

Mr WHETSTONE: I refer to Budget Paper 3, page 114, annual programs. Can you explain what the proposed expenditure of the \$620 million includes?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I think the member is referring to \$620,000 rather than \$620 million, and that is for plant and equipment and roadworks, as stated in that budget paper on page 114.

Mr WHETSTONE: Sorry, minister?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I said I think the member might be referring to \$620,000 rather than what I think he said was \$620 million.

Mr WHETSTONE: Six hundred and twenty; I beg your pardon.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: And that is plant and equipment and roadworks, as stated in that table.

Mr WHETSTONE: Thank you; that is my mistake. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 58, disaster recovery funding. Can you provide an update of the \$2.6 million funding to address removal and non-native blue gum pine trees spreading after the fires, particularly the \$800,000 towards the Cudlee Creek project and the \$1.8 million towards projects on Kangaroo Island?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: The member I think referred to the bushfire recovery program, where there is \$1.28 million to support the removal of Tasmanian blue gum plantations and restore areas to agriculture on Kangaroo Island and \$0.51 million to control Tasmanian blue gum wildlings

on Kangaroo Island. I am sorry, I am not sure whether the member asked for additional information to that.

Mr WHETSTONE: There were two disaster recovery funding arrangements: \$1.8 million towards projects on Kangaroo Island and \$800,000 towards the Cudlee Creek project.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I think that the \$1.8 million comes from those two programs that I mentioned: \$1.28 million to support removal of Tasmanian blue gum plantations and restore areas to agriculture on Kangaroo Island, and \$0.51 million to control Tasmanian blue gum wildlings on Kangaroo Island. That is the \$1.8 million you are referring to. Was there additional information you wanted about that?

Mr WHETSTONE: I would like to know what the projects entail.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am happy to answer as best as possible, but I would point out that some of these questions would have been better off in the previous section because it was with regard to bushfire recovery. I will certainly endeavour to give you additional information.

Mr WHETSTONE: Take it on notice?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised that these programs are being delivered on the ground through the Kangaroo Island Landscape Board. The \$0.85 million for Cudlee Creek is to support landholders and removing plantations and restoring the areas to agriculture, as I first stated.

Mr WHETSTONE: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 58. As an election commitment, the Labor policy document, Forestry Industry, states that water management is crucial to many of the industries on the Limestone Coast. Has your government committed to a review of the 2013 Lower Limestone Coast Water Allocation Plan, and how much money was budgeted for that review?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: The election commitment relating to the water allocation plan is in place. That review of the water allocation plan will be under the responsibility of the Department for Environment and Water, so you would be best placed to direct any more specific questions to that minister.

Mr WHETSTONE: Are you able to give me any understanding of who will conduct the review?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: That would be best addressed to the other minister, the Minister for Environment and Water.

Mr WHETSTONE: Who will be providing the terms of reference for that review?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I give the same answer: you need to direct that question to the responsible minister.

Mr WHETSTONE: Will there be any involvement from industry, from the forestry sector and from your bureaucracy within forestry?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Within the election commitment and the document you refer to, there is also reference to ensuring that all the affected water users have a seat at the table. That is something that we have been very keen on and something that we have certainly been involved in over the last two years in particular.

We have had multiple meetings with water users in the Limestone Coast, and that includes with the forestry sector as well as other water users. I would like to pay tribute to some of the work that has been going on down there on a cross-sectorial basis. It has certainly been very promising and encouraging to see that different water users are willing to work together to try to come up with the best outcomes possible for all users of the finite resource.

That kind of consultation will continue. We are very keen to involve as many people as possible, and I know that the Minister for Environment and Water is also keen to ensure that all water users do have a seat at the table and that the allocation plan review is done and is informed by the most up-to-date and relevant science available.

Mr WHETSTONE: Minister, are you aware that the industry is currently undertaking a review of the water allocation plan?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I think that you will find that the industry is undertaking investigations into water use and the way that is most appropriate in terms of scientific analysis, and they are keen to feed that science into the review.

Ms WORTLEY: I have a question, which I think fits in with what the member opposite was asking. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 58. Can the minister advise the estimates committee what Labor's election commitment to the forestry industry was, and what was announced in the recent state budget to deliver on these promises?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I thank the honourable member for her question and appreciate her interest in this important industry that is so incredibly valuable to our state. The forest industries contribute about \$3 billion to the state's economy every year and, as I mentioned earlier, provide about 18,000 direct and indirect jobs. While in the Limestone Coast recently, both the Premier and I had the opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to the industry by announcing that the budget will enable the investment of \$19 million to help grow and develop the state's forest industries which, as we know, is one of the biggest contributors to the Limestone Coast.

In this 2022-23 budget, we have committed to a new forestry centre for excellence, which will secure a long-term forestry research and development capability. It will be based in Mount Gambier and will have a commitment over 10 years of \$15 million. It is incredibly important that for research they do have that certainty of funding. Having short-term funding is particularly problematic when you are looking at research for a product that actually takes 30 years to grow, when we are looking at pine, and so having that certainty of funding over 10 years was very much appreciated by the industry.

It is a centre that industry has long advocated for, and I am delighted that it will be based in Mount Gambier. Discussions have already commenced to start the implementation of the policy in regard to the centre for excellence. This will place Mount Gambier at the centre for research excellence in forestry around the country, which is incredibly important for us as a region and as a state. We have also committed to supporting and expanding the role of the Forest Industry Advisory Council as an ongoing platform for government and industry to work together.

I received feedback both when we were in opposition and since that while the concept of an advisory council was certainly valued and valuable, there were a number of members in the industry who did not feel that the government adequately supported the major roles that the FIACSA could play. Of course, that will now change under this government. An amount of \$2 million over three years is indicated to develop a forest products domestic manufacturing and infrastructure master plan, and that will include a focus on future skills needs because, in common with many parts of regional South Australia, skills shortages are a considerable barrier in terms of being able to develop business, and forest industries are certainly no exception to that.

The \$2 million indicated to replace fire towers has already been addressed. A little bit more information on it, however, is that the technology will be delivered in partnership with the Green Triangle alliance, which is a group of the nine largest forestry growers in the region. In fact, the system, which uses artificial intelligence to continuously improve the way it detects smoke plumes, notifies operators to the likely presence of a fire and then enables the operator to alert emergency responders who can be provided with real-time images and meteorological data to help them determine the best and safest approach to combating the fire.

Again, I was very fortunate to be able to actually see some of that technology when I was in the South-East recently as part of country cabinet, and the Minister for Emergency Services also joined me on that. I think these are some excellent advances that will be progressed under this government in order to support and expand the very important timber and forest industries in our state.

The Hon. D.R. CREGAN: Can I take the minister to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, at page 58, Sub-program 1.6: Forestry Policy. The committee touched on these matters earlier in relation to the replacement of fire towers with new technology. Can the minister outline the exact type or types of

technology likely to be considered for implementation at the site? With your leave, Mr Chairman, and the leave of the committee, I will explain. There is some concern in my community as to the possible loss of experienced CFS fire observers, and a subset of the question is whether CFS volunteers will continue to be involved in either the selection of the technology or the use of the technology.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I think it is important to differentiate between what we were referring to in the South-East and these fire towers, which do not currently involve the CFS. They are towers that are particularly in the plantations, and they have a different framework, if you like, under which they operate.

In a general sense, in terms of any camera technology or fire detection technology, it needs to be proven to be effective and proven to be the best way of addressing fire, detecting it and therefore making sure that we are protecting our very valuable assets, whether they be commercial assets or indeed the most valuable—our communities and our people. I think it is a different issue, but I do appreciate the member's interest in addressing fire and ensuring that he is representing his community, in terms of making sure that the best and most appropriate approaches are available.

The Hon. D.R. CREGAN: As a supplementary, to eliminate any confusion that I think has taken hold in my community, including amongst observers in the Adelaide Hills, this investment does not relate to any fire observation practices currently in place in the Mount Lofty Ranges?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: That is correct. This is purely in regard to the Green Triangle region.

The Hon. D.R. CREGAN: Excellent.

Mr TELFER: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 58. Can the minister detail operating and investing budgetary allocations across the forward estimates dedicated to recreational activities at both the Fox Creek Bike Park and the Kersbrook ForestrySA site, with the latter otherwise known sometimes as Bennett's Reserve?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised that the Fox Creek project was a commonwealth and state government funded project that is now almost complete. I am advised that there is the expectation that all the funds will be expended by 1 July this year. In terms of the other reserve, I am happy to take some more detail and bring that back on notice.

Mr TELFER: Thank you. I appreciate that. Can you clarify that there are no additional budgetary allocations towards the Fox Creek Bike Park?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: All the information I have is that that project is almost complete and that therefore all the funds required for that project will have been expended by 1 July.

Mr TELFER: Further to that, earlier in the year the organisation Heroes on the Homefront were approved for funding from PIRSA for their work at Bennett's Reserve. Will this be honoured by the new Labor government in the forward estimates?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised that that is still included as an allocation under the Regional Growth Fund.

Mr PEDERICK: I refer you to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 58, forestry policy. Is ForestrySA advocating for maintenance and upgrades to roads that connect forest assets to mills or ports?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Could the member indicate which line he is referring to on page 58?

Mr PEDERICK: I am referring to Forestry Policy, Description/objective, where it talks about the 'development and implementation of policy initiatives', as well as working across the challenges and opportunities facing the forest and wood products sector, utilising cross-government business investment (I am paraphrasing) and so on.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I think the member asked whether that was part of ForestrySA, and the answer is that particularly that subprogram does not fall under ForestrySA anyway. Perhaps what he wanted to ask—and I do not mean to put words into the member's mouth—is whether there is advocacy on roads in terms of assisting—

Mr PEDERICK: I will give you another then: is the minister working on collaborating with the Green Triangle freight hub to address regional roads in the Mount Gambier and Portland area?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised that PIRSA and the forestry section within PIRSA do get involved in advocacy in terms of things such as roads. The Green Triangle freight industry plan has been in existence now for some years, with regular reviews and updates. It involves local industry and other stakeholders.

It is incredibly important not just because, course, we have roads in South Australia but because a lot of our freight is going through Victoria to Portland. The Green Triangle Freight Action Plan and, indeed, the multitude of stakeholders who have been involved in working on that are incredibly important, and they have done some excellent work. PIRSA is involved in that through our forestry section.

Mr PEDERICK: I refer you to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 58. Does the minister believe there is a shortage of timber for the housing industry in South Australia?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Yes.

Mr PEDERICK: What is your plan to address that shortage?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I thank the member for his question. It was a bit of a surprising question because I would have thought it was simply a statement of fact, that pretty much anyone in the country would be aware there is a shortage of structural timber. It has been exacerbated by fires not only here in South Australia but even more so in the Eastern States, such that there are now huge increases in terms of timber product prices as well as difficulty in availability.

In the last couple of years, whilst I was in opposition I was very actively involved in discussions with, for example, small builders who were at risk of going under because they could not access the product in the first place or, if they could, the product was far higher in price than they had budgeted for. Depending on what sorts of contracts they had with those who were building homes, it often meant those builders needed to bear that cost.

I advocated, as did some of the crossbenchers in the other house, in terms of trying to give assistance to make sure the timber that was available—on Kangaroo Island, for example—was utilised, came off the island and got into the South Australian timber market. Sadly, of course, we saw such slow movement from the former Liberal government that there has been very little movement at all in that space.

I recall that it was back in May 2020 when the federal government announced the Forestry Transport Assistance scheme, which included matching funding from the states. New South Wales and Victoria signed up to that scheme, but I am advised that South Australia did not. That was perhaps the first place where some action could have been taken by the former government, but they failed to do so.

On 4 June 2020, the federal government announced the HomeBuilder Scheme, which of course increased the demand for timber because there was the impetus to either build new homes or, in certain cases, add on to existing homes. Throughout August to December 2020, housing demand was increasing and the industry back then was warning of material shortages, including in timber.

In September 2020, then Minister Whetstone ceased to be minister and was replaced by Mr Basham. In February 2021, the following year, there was extensive media coverage of the timber shortages—which again is why am absolutely flabbergasted that the question arises whether I think there is a timber shortage. Well back then, back in 2020, we knew there was a timber shortage. It was not until April 2021, I am advised, that then Minister Basham met with building industry leaders.

In June 2021, there was media coverage of a timber round table—in which I was involved, as well as the Hon. Frank Pangallo from the other place—and extensive media coverage of the issues, including some of the small builders who were facing such a crisis. If I recall correctly, one was from your electorate, Chair. It was very, very distressing to see the sorts of pressures that he and others were under.

We were told that on 4 June—a day or two after that round table and a day or two after the media coverage—then Minister Basham went to Canberra to talk about the transport assistance scheme with the federal assistant minister. On 25 June 2021, then Minister Basham announced an expression of interest for a \$2 million fund to address timber shortages. A month later, on 29 July the then minister conceded that there was no assistance forthcoming at that date and that he was waiting to hear back from the federal government. At that time, there were still no announcements of any outcomes of an expression of interest or any other assistance to industry.

That brings us to where we are now. In that time, there was also the Smith Bay proposal that was not backed by the then Attorney-General, and that meant there were further issues in regard to getting any sorts of products off Kangaroo Island. The Department of Primary Industries and Regions did lead the Kangaroo Island timber task force. There is no criticism whatsoever of PIRSA; it is not their fault there was so little so late from the former Liberal government in terms of trying to address timber shortages, at least in part by utilising some of the timber on Kangaroo Island.

I have met with those who own the timber that is on Kangaroo Island. I have been advised that some of the timber that would have been suitable for structural purposes is deteriorating and that some of it is no longer going to be fit for that purpose. It is a very sad litany of lack of action, inappropriate action or slow action from the former Liberal government, which means that we have not been able to address the timber shortage, even though we do have some timber available in this state.

Mr WHETSTONE: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 58. You talked about the lack of action. Minister, what you have done to have structural pine timber transported off Kangaroo Island so that it can help with the shortfall?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I have met with a number of those who were involved in attempting to do that. There are some issues in regard to SeaLink, which has an opportunity, and I understand that the Jamestown Morgan's mill is utilising SeaLink for some of that timber to come off, but of course it is at a very small capacity. The Construction Softwood Transport Assistance Program was to subsidise the transport of burnt softwood timber logs from Kangaroo Island to the mainland. Eligibility for that program opened in October 2021 and applications will close in June 2023 or prior if funds are expended.

There has been some assistance that has enabled some logs from KI to be transported to the Morgan Sawmill, and the program remains open if there are other companies that do meet the criteria. I am advised that the SeaLink ferry is the only current way to move timber off the island. Of course, that does have limited capacity, but other options are being examined by commercial interests as well as the Kangaroo Island Council, according to my information.

Mr WHETSTONE: So you have done nothing?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I have done—

Mr WHETSTONE: You have met people, but you have not done anything.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I think if we had seen some action two years ago when this issue first emerged, then we might be having a different conversation now. It is quite remarkable that the opposition today is able to come and ask what has been done in the nine weeks or so since the Malinauskas Labor government has been in place after doing so little for two years whilst they had the reins. The former government has not been able to expedite any of the timber coming off in a significant way that actually would address the circumstances.

As I mentioned, only a small amount has come off the island, and now some of that timber is no longer fit for purpose. I would love it if I could go back in time and change the nature of timber so that it would not deteriorate over one to two years, but of course that is not possible. I think this is real testimony to the absolute debacle of the former government and what they have not done in terms of trying to address this issue. To then try to come in here to budget estimates and imply that what we have or have not done in nine weeks since would actually make a difference—

Mr WHETSTONE: Minister, a simple question.

The CHAIR: The member on my left will listen to the answer.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: —is quite remarkable. I think those opposite should be quite ashamed of their lack of action, both the former government and the former minister, because there really is not anything that has been able to be achieved in a significant way—and I emphasise 'a significant way'. There has been a small amount with Morgan Sawmill, but the length of time has been absolutely remarkable.

Generally, in popular parlance, this is what would be referred to as an own goal by the opposition to be even asking this question, because it is a remarkable failure by the former Liberal government in terms of addressing this issue.

Mr WHETSTONE: Are you aware under the previous Labor government and the sale of the south-eastern forests to OneFortyOne, and after a compliance audit with the sale of the forest, that we saw a shortening of the rotation age from 36 to 30 years, that we saw a regrading of pulp timber to saw log timber and that we saw large amounts of South Australian pine being exported under pulp log?

The CHAIR: Member for Chaffey—

Mr WHETSTONE: Are you aware that the forests were overharvested under your government?

The CHAIR: Member for Chaffey, the question is on which line?

Mr WHETSTONE: Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 58.

The CHAIR: And the question is?

Mr WHETSTONE: The Labor government committed to investigate options for delivering water flow from the drainage network away from sea and retaining it into the landscape, based on scientific analysis.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: That is not what you were talking about a moment ago.

Mr WHETSTONE: Minister, which portfolio has responsibility for that project?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: That will be under the responsibility of the Minister for Environment and Water. I would refer back to my earlier answer in terms of the excellent work that is being done across stakeholder groups with all the users of the water resource. It is an important aspect that needs to be addressed because we do not want winners and losers when it comes to water. Water is a precious and finite resource.

I have been very encouraged by the way that individual water users and sectors have been willing to work together, looking at whether there are opportunities to re-use or redirect that water. The project will be under the Department for Environment and Water but, as Labor does work as a team, both as a cabinet and as a wider parliamentary party, we will be keen to work across portfolios, but with DEW being the lead agency.

Mr WHETSTONE: Is it true that you do not have faith in the Department for Environment and Water to undertake the investigation?

The CHAIR: That is not a question.

Mr WHETSTONE: It is a question.

The CHAIR: It is not. It is actually introducing debate. You can rephrase the question or you can move on to another question.

Mr WHETSTONE: Do you have faith in the Department for Environment and Water to undertake the investigation?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am very confident that the Minister for Environment and Water, in conjunction with her colleagues, working as a team as we always do, and communicating with all the relevant departments, will be able to come up with an appropriate outcome. Again, it is really important, and it would be great to see the opposition get on board as well, to actually work together and collaboratively to ensure that we have a good outcome for all water users, whether it be agriculture, whether it be forestry, whether it be dairy and so on.

I think it is incredibly important that we do work together and I hope, although it may be a vain hope, that the opposition might also try to work collaboratively on an issue that affects our state and the South-East region in particular in such a significant way.

Mr WHETSTONE: On Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 58, have ForestrySA met their fire reduction burn targets?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised that there are not specific annual targets in place through ForestrySA. What occurs is that fire activities are done within guidelines that are set by the emergency agencies and that includes the Department for Environment and Water as well.

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

1. For each department and agency reporting to the minister:
 - (a) Which administrative units were created, abolished or transferred to another department or agency between 22 March 2022 and 20 June 2022 and what was the cost or saving in each case?
 - (b) Will the minister advise whether it will be subject to the 1.7 per cent efficiency dividend for 2022-23 to which the government has committed and if so, the budgeted dollar amount to be contributed in each case and how the saving will be achieved?
 - (c) What is the number of executive staff to be cut to meet the government's commitment to reduce spending on the employment of executive staff by \$41.5 million over four years and, for each position to be cut, its classification, total remuneration cost and the date by which the position will be cut?
2. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, how many executive appointments have been:
 - (a) Made since 22 March 2022 and what is the annual salary and total employment cost for each position?
 - (b) Abolished since 22 March 2022 and what was the annual salary and total employment cost for each position?
 - (c) What has been the total cost of executive position terminations since 22 March 2022?
3. For each department and agency reporting to the minister:
 - (a) What savings targets have been set for 2022-23 and each year of the forward estimates?
 - (b) What is the estimated FTE impact of these measures?
4. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, what is:
 - (a) The total number of FTEs in that department or agency;
 - (b) The number of FTEs by division and/or business unit within the department or agency;
 - (c) The number of FTEs by classification in each division and/or business unit within the department or agency;
 - (d) The actual FTE count at 20 June 2022 and what is the projected actual FTE count for the end of each year of the forward estimates;
 - (e) The budgeted total employment cost for each year of the forward estimates;
 - (f) The notional FTE job reduction target that has been agreed to with Treasury for each of the forward estimates?

5. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, could you provide:
 - (a) How many targeted voluntary separation packages are estimated to be required to meet budget targets over the forward estimates and what is their estimated cost?
 - (b) How much is allocated to be spent on targeted voluntary separation packages for financial years included in the forward estimates (by year), and how are these packages to be funded?
6. For each grant program or fund the minister is responsible for, please provide the following information for the 2022-23, 2023-24, 2024-25 and 2025-26 financial years:
 - (a) Name of the program or fund;
 - (b) The purpose of the program or fund;
 - (c) Budgeted payments into the program or fund;
 - (d) Budgeted expenditure from the program or fund; and
 - (e) Details, including the value and beneficiary, or any commitments already made to be funded from the program or fund.
7. For the period of 22 March 2022 and 20 June 2022, 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.
8. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, provide for each individual investing expenditure project administered, the name, total estimated expenditure, actual expenditure incurred to 20 June 2022 and budgeted expenditure for 2022-23, 2023-24, 2024-25 and 2025-26.
9. Can the minister list each department and agency reporting to her and programs or initiatives that have been funded or budgeted for but not publicly announced or disclosed in the budget papers?
10. For each department and agency reporting to the minister:
 - (a) What is the total cost of machinery of government changes incurred between 22 March 2022 and 30 June 2022?
 - (b) How much is budgeted to be spent on goods and services for 2022-23 and for each year of the forward estimates?
11. For each department or agency reporting to the minister in 2022-23 provide the number of public servants broken down into headcount and FTE's that are (1) tenured and (2) on contract and, for each category, provide a breakdown of the number of (1) executives and (2) non-executives.
12. For each department and agency reporting to the minister:
 - (a) How many FTEs are budgeted to provide communication and promotion activities in 2022-23 and each year of the forward estimates and what is their estimated employment cost?
 - (b) What is the total budgeted cost of government-paid advertising, including campaigns, across all mediums in 2022-23?
 - (c) Will the minister provide a breakdown of expenditure on consultants and contractors with a total estimated cost above \$10,000 engaged between 22 March 2022 and 20 June 2022, listing the name of the consultant, contractor or service supplier, the method of appointment, the reason for the engagement and the estimated total cost of the work?
 - (d) Will the minister provide an estimate of the total cost to be incurred in 2022-23 for consultants and contractors, and for each case in which a

consultant or contractor has already been engaged at a total estimated cost above \$10,000, the name of the consultant or contractor, the method of appointment, the reason for the engagement and the total estimated cost?

- (e) Will the minister advise what share it will receive of the \$1.5 billion the government proposes to use over four years of uncommitted capital reserves held in the budget at the time it took office, and the purpose for which this funding will be used in each case?
- (f) How many surplus employees were there at 20 June 2022 and, for each surplus employee, what is the title or classification of the position and the total annual employment cost?

The CHAIR: We do have time for one more question.

Mr TELFER: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 58. Thank you for coming back in, minister. In your capacity as Minister for Forest Industries, will you have responsibility for the industry reference group that your government has announced it will establish to work with the landscape board to provide input into the independent review of the Lower Limestone Coast Water Allocation Plan and the development of the plan?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I will certainly be happy to engage with them. I am advised that members of the forest industry will be engaged with the landscape boards in that endeavour.

Mr TELFER: Will you have the responsibility for the industry reference group?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: I am advised that the industry reference group is part of the landscape board processes. The landscape boards do not fall under my responsibilities as minister.

Mr TELFER: Are you aware of when the industry reference group will be established and when the announcement of the composition will be?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Given that that is under the Department for Environment and Water, the question would be best addressed to that minister?

The CHAIR: The time allocated for the examination of this line is now closed. There being no further questions for the minister, I declare the examination of the proposed payments for the Department of Primary Industries and Regions and Administered Items for the Department of Primary Industries and Regions completed. I would like to thank the minister, her advisers and members of the committee for the deliberations this morning and this afternoon.

Sitting suspended from 13:15 to 14:15.

DEPARTMENT FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORT, \$1,086,425,00
ADMINISTERED ITEMS FOR THE DEPARTMENT FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND
TRANSPORT, \$6,293,000

Membership:

Ms Hood substituted for Ms Hutchesson.

Ms Stinson substituted for Ms Wortley.

Mr Cowdrey substituted for Mr Whetstone.

Hon. D.G. Pisoni substituted for Mr Pederick.

Minister:

Hon. G.G. Brock, Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Roads, Minister for Veterans Affairs.

Departmental Advisers:

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

Ms A. Hart, Director, Office for Local Government, Department for Infrastructure and Transport.

Mr D. Whiterod, Team Leader, Local Government Policy, Department for Infrastructure and Transport.

The CHAIR: Good afternoon, members of the committee, minister and advisers. I understand that the minister and the lead speaker for the opposition have agreed on an approximate time for the consideration of the proposed payments, which will facilitate a change of departmental advisers. Can the minister and lead speaker for the opposition confirm that is the case?

Mr TELFER: Yes.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Yes, it is Mr Chairman.

The CHAIR: 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 2 September 2022. I remind members that omnibus questions for all Minister Brock's portfolios were asked on Friday by the member for Hammond, so you do not need to ask any omnibus questions today.

I propose to allow both the minister and the lead speaker for the opposition to make opening statements of about 10 minutes, should they wish to do so, but they do not have to. All questions are to be directed to the minister, not the minister's advisers, through the Chair. 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.

I will now proceed to open the following lines. Portfolios are the Office of Local Government, the Outback Communities Authority and the Local Government Grants Commission. The minister appearing is the Minister for Local Government. I declare the proposed payments reopened for examination. Minister, do you wish to make a statement or introduce your advisers?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: No, thank you, Mr Chair, there will not be any opening statement by me. I would like to introduce my advisers and staff. On my left is Alex Hart, Director, Office of Local Government. On my right is Jude Formston, Executive Director, Department for Infrastructure and Transport, and behind me is David Whiterod from the Office of Local Government.

The CHAIR: You are the lead speaker for the opposition.

Mr TELFER: Yes.

The CHAIR: Go ahead.

Mr TELFER: I will make a statement before I start questions. As someone who has had a long association with local government it is a privilege to open up these numbers. Although the page numbers are scant, the detail is well fit to be unpacked. I think there are a lot of different areas not just within the pages of 143 and 144, which I assume we will be in most of the time, that impact local communities and local government in particular.

I certainly note the experience of the minister in local government and you, Mr Chair. To have three of us as former mayors is probably unique, and it gives us an insight into the impact state government decisions have on local government and local communities.

The CHAIR: You can ask questions, member for Flinders.

Mr TELFER: Thank you very much, Mr Chair. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, pages 143 and 144. Does the Office of Local Government have a component of savings to be made under the efficiency dividend targets?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Yes, the Department of Treasury and Finance has given all agencies a savings. It is a very small savings and it will not have very much impact on the overall budget. Before I start, I would also acknowledge the member's role in local government over many years, and I am looking forward to working very closely with him in the next four years.

Mr TELFER: Thank you, minister. Can you give me a percentage number for that component of savings to be made under the efficiency dividend targets?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: The department have not worked that out at this stage. They are still working through that. Certainly, once we get it, I am happy to share that information with the member. I will take that on notice.

Mr TELFER: Thank you very much. I thought you might be able to work it out. With respect to the changes in FTE, there is a change from 12.1 to 10.5. Can you give us an explanation about that change and what impact it might have towards any specific local government area?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: The position that will be reduced was through the MUNS project, and that will expire on 30 June this year.

Mr TELFER: Through the what, sorry?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: The MUNS program. Are you okay with that?

Mr TELFER: No, I would like an explanation of that.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: We can give you an update on that in a minute. That position will terminate on 30 June this year. That certainly will not have any impact on the operation because that was only there for the delivery of the MUNS program.

Mr TELFER: Can you give me an explanation of what the MUNS program is, please, for those of us who are not as well adept at some of the acronyms?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: In 2020-21, the state budget allocated \$9.1 million to address repair of renewable and reciprocal services (MUNS) related infrastructure that is critical to the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal communities. It included roads, waste landfills, playgrounds and public spaces, base-water systems and household septic tanks.

The funding commitment was based on an audit of all the infrastructure in communities that identified a priority listing for all needed infrastructure work. This program will address critical needs, improve safety and amenities in the communities and ensure that all communities are best placed to service and maintain infrastructure that is in good condition over the coming years.

Most of the infrastructure funding will be spent by 30 June 2022—as I indicated earlier, because that is when the program will cease—to ensure that all communities receive the infrastructure renewals they need as quickly as possible and that the funding stimulates local employment at this time.

Discussions with all communities regarding prioritised work and opportunities for Aboriginal employment were completed in mid-December 2020. Wherever possible, procurement processes have involved select tenders solely to Aboriginal companies identified as capable of undertaking specific projects and employment of local Aboriginal labour.

In relation to the position that has been queried, an additional FTE was committed to this program. As I said a bit earlier, that project will finish at 30 June, so that is where the impact will come in.

Mr TELFER: That is the 1.0 FTE change, and there is also an additional 0.6 change. Can you explain what that area is going to be in?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: As I said earlier, the department is working through this. The Treasurer has given all departments efficiency savings, and the department is working through that. The 0.6, as I have been advised, is part of the MUNS program, that particular portion of it. It should have very little impact on the operation of the Office of Local Government going forward after that.

I have also just been advised that in addition to the MUNS program, the reduction, there is a further reduction and the department is working through that at the moment. That is the program that, as I said to the member earlier, as soon as we get that information from the department and finalised, I am happy to share it. I will take that on notice and share that with you as the shadow minister.

Mr TELFER: Certainly that information is very important, that seemingly a \$9.1 million project has been cut.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Can I clarify that it is completed: it is not cut. It was only there for a 12-month period of time. It was always going to expire on 30 June, to be completed by then, so I would prefer if the member does not say 'cut'. That was the term of the project and it was going to expire on 30 June, so I think we need to make certain for *Hansard* that that project was there for only a certain period of time and that the expiry date is 30 June 2022.

Mr TELFER: Apologies.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I just want to get it clear.

Mr TELFER: I will not say that it has been cut; I will say that the new government has not renewed the project. Minister, from page 144, can you explain the 25 per cent decrease in the budget line grants and subsidies?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I am advised that the variations in the Office of Local Government program are largely generated by the MUNS, the Municipal Services in Aboriginal Communities program that is delivered by the Office of Local Government. In the 2020-21 state budget, \$9.1 million was committed to this program, which is therefore shown across both supplies and services and grants and subsidies for the three years which is included. With your indulgence, Chair, I would just ask for the officer Alex Hart to clarify a couple of those projects for the member, if she can.

Ms HART: Thank you minister. As the minister has indicated, the variation in our budget, particularly across supplies and services and also the grants and subsidies figures, is almost entirely generated by specific project funding that was provided to our office to deliver specific projects, in particular the \$9.1 million the minister has referred to for the repair and renewal of infrastructure across communities that receive municipal services grants.

Looking at the supplies and services budget, the 2021 actual figure there, the expenditure of \$590,000, actually reflects not the MUNS infrastructure program that for that year was attributed entirely to grants and subsidies but, in fact, the spend on the local government information framework, also known as Councils in Focus, which generated the Councils in Focus website, that was a 2021 budget initiative that was delivered across that year by our office.

In the ensuing year, you can see that we had a \$3.337 million attribution to our office to spend on the MUNS infrastructure. As the minister indicated, that program is scheduled to be completed on 30 June this year, hence the loss of the position connected to that but, things being as they are, there has been a bring forward of a portion of that money into 2022-23, which is reflected in that larger figure of \$4.335 million.

So the \$2.329 million is not entirely but largely the money that was spent on the MUNS infrastructure program and the \$4.335 is the carryover that was necessary to request at the time of the budget. That will need to be significantly less because, in the ensuing time, we have both paid quite a number of invoices that have come in through the completion of projects and also made some good progress on putting contracts in place for the remainder of that \$9.1 million spend.

The amount for 2020-21 for the MUNS infrastructure program was put into grants and subsidies, which is why that looks unusually high at \$5.288 million. The other two amounts you can see there are \$3.993. They are a combination of the annual service grants that go out to all communities, which sit at around \$3 million a year, plus an extra million dollars a year for 2021-22 that was given directly to the South Australian Housing Authority to undertake much-needed work to upgrade septic tanks in a number of Aboriginal communities across the state.

So, it was a million dollars in 2020-21 and another million dollars in 2021-22, which is why there appears to be a drop in the grants and subsidies from \$4 million, approximately, to just below \$3 million.

Mr TELFER: For clarification, the funds that have been cut from here, both the MUNS and the valuable Indigenous septic tank replacement program, are both from Indigenous community projects?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: We need to clarify. I need to get it right because, in future years, looking at the wording may have an influence. The programs have been completed. Once those programs are completed, those funds will come away from there, so, yes, the member is correct in that terminology. That is what has impacted that.

Mr TELFER: I am certainly not one to get into semantics, but I will clarify and say that the two projects that have not been renewed are both from Indigenous projects.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Yes, that was always going to be the time frame for the completion of the three-year period; therefore, yes, that is going to be completed at 30 June 2022.

Mr TELFER: Can I ask a subsequent question to that, Mr Chair? Regarding the projects that were delivered under those two schemes—the MUNS and the Indigenous septic tank project—was there a review of them to ensure that there were not additional works that were necessary that flowed from a formal review to ensure that the decision that was made to not renew that program was one that was made with full information?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: First up, I am advised that a complete audit was carried out on all Aboriginal communities involved with this to ensure that all the infrastructure was coming up. I have been advised that the audit took around about three months and, to the credit of the previous government and the previous ministers, that audit identified that there was a requirement of around about \$9.1 million required to fulfill that detailed audit that was done over that three-month period. I am advised that those funds were guaranteed in the 2020-21 state budget.

I want to congratulate and commend the previous government and also the previous minister for being able to get that money. I am sure that the member, being an ex-mayor and also presently in the Local Government Association, would be very well aware of the challenges that outback communities, specifically Aboriginal communities, face up there. Any of this \$9.1 million I am very sure would have been very greatly appreciated and received by those communities there to try to get them a far better living standard and help them in their journey in life.

Mr TELFER: Thank you very much, minister, and I echo your commendation of the previous government. Were all works that were identified through that audit process delivered by the funding stream, and was there a report which flowed from that to ensure that that program was delivered?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Sorry, Mr Chair, could the member please repeat that?

Mr TELFER: Were all works that were identified through that three-month audit process actually delivered by the funding? Was there a subsequent audit and report to ensure that those works were completed?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I again thank the member for his question. I have been advised that after the completed audit, which was pretty detailed, there may still be some projects in some areas that have not been completed by 30 June this year, but they will be completed in the next two to three months, and we will ensure that happens. The Labor position, which has been allocated extra to assist this to make certain we have this up, will be ceasing on 30 June, but we can give a guarantee, I am advised, that all the projects, any other projects that have been identified, will be completed this coming year.

As I said before on other occasions, I am happy to communicate with the shadow minister regarding any issues or variations in that project because these projects are very well received by the outback communities, in particular, and Aboriginal communities. I know the dedication of the shadow minister for local government and his passion for community people in the outback areas, so I am giving an undertaking and I will continue to give that undertaking to ensure that any changes or challenges will be communicated with the shadow minister.

Mr TELFER: Thank you, minister. It certainly seems to be a very valuable program and we need to ensure all the works were done appropriately. Can I get a little bit more explanation around the \$4.335 million supplies and services line because there is still a bit of ambiguity around that? There was a statement, I thought, that some of that funding was already used before the end of this financial year. If that number is going to be different, what is the number for this financial year?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Again, I thank the member for the question. That \$4.335 million is as is indicated. What I will do, if it is okay, is ask the Director of OLG (Office of Local Government) to give the member and the estimates committee some more information on that. The director has all that information, so I will ask the director, if it is alright with you, Mr Chair, to facilitate that.

Ms HART: Thanks, minister. As I said a little while ago, that figure in our supplies and services largely represents the carryover that was needed to be requested at budget time for the MUNS infrastructure program. I am sure members can appreciate that delivering infrastructure renewal in remote Aboriginal communities can at times be challenging and not always run quite as smoothly as one would like.

The number looks quite large, but there has been significant movement on that since the budget papers were released. There have been about \$900,000 worth of invoices that have come in and been paid in the intervening time, so the carryover will not be as large as is indicated in this budget paper (of course, that will be clarified in next year's budget) for some significant road projects.

One of the other road projects that did not quite make it over the line in time for this budget was a repair and reseal of roads in homelands on the West Coast, which are homelands outside Ceduna. That contract is around \$1.4 million, and it has just been signed with the relevant supplier. I am very happy to say that it is an Aboriginal-owned company that will be delivering that work, which is terrific.

Then there is an assortment of other projects that have not been quite completed or that have had some other issues that have prevented them from being implemented. We have a significant upgrade of the wastewater plant at Yarlana, a small community just west of Ceduna. That is mostly done, but we have about \$100,000 worth of work to complete there.

We have had some negotiations with the Oak Valley community, which is in the Maralinga Tjarutja lands. We originally anticipated we would be doing some road renewals, but the community communicated to us that they would actually prefer the money we had allocated to that to be spent on constructing a large shed to keep their MUNS equipment safe and secure, so we will be redirecting the funding towards what they have told us is their community priority.

We have another piece of work that has not progressed as quickly as we would like, and that is waste clean-up at Yalata and Koonibba. That is proving to be a little bit challenging; sometimes it can be challenging to just locate where in the communities the waste clean-up needs to happen, from what is essentially illegal dumping. It can be quite time consuming. That is another project that will be getting our close attention over the next few months.

Finally, the last significant chunk we would like to get out the door but have been prevented from doing simply because we have had challenges finding contractors in recent times—which I am sure members can appreciate—is some money that is there to upgrade playgrounds in all the communities and resurface courts. We have just had trouble finding a contractor who is available to undertake that work for us, which is why that project, worth in the order of about half a million dollars, has been delayed.

However, as the minister said, we are expecting to complete that whole program in the next few months—as soon as we can because it is, of course, vitally needed and much-appreciated work in all the communities that receive it.

Mr TELFER: I have another question for the minister. We will continue on with Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 143. In the targets 2022-23 there is a statement around the establishment of the new council member conduct management framework. What are the new arrangements with the new council member conduct management framework?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I thank the member for the question. As the member would realise, as an ex-president as well as an ex-mayor, this local government reform is going to be very important. One of the most significant reforms of the Statutes Amendment (Local Government Review) Act 2021, which was the amendment act, is a new council member conduct management framework. This new framework will formally commence in November 2022 to coincide with the new term for councils following the state council elections. I am looking forward to this being implemented.

Under the new framework, councils will continue to have primary responsibility for managing complaints about poor council member behaviour. However, a new behaviour standards panel (the panel) will deal with matters that cannot be resolved at a council level: in particular, repeated or serious misbehaviour by council members. The panel has been given wideranging and flexible powers to enable more efficient resolution of difficult behavioural issues, including the power to suspend a council member for a maximum period of three months with or without payment of allowances.

While the panel's formal functions will not commence until November 2022, the three-member panels have been appointed to enable them to establish the practice directions, guidance papers and operating procedures that are necessary to have in place before November 2022. Again, the Local Government Association is closely involved with this work. I also note that the OLG is working very closely with the LGA on all aspects of the new framework and appreciates its commitment to implementing the new arrangement, particularly the panel. That is where it is at. That will be in place after the November 2022 council elections.

Mr TELFER: Who is going to be responsible for the costs of that new council member conduct management framework going forward, and is there insight into what those costs might be?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I am advised that the cost of establishing the operation of the panel will be undertaken by the Local Government Association. I am also advised that when the panel is up and running the costs involved will be borne by the council that is involved in bringing the concern to the panel. However, I am very confident that the cost that will be incurred by the council that is involved with the councillor or the elected member who has been brought into question will be far less than councils are currently paying in legal fees. Again, the LGA is responsible for the establishment and the operation of the panel itself but, once the issue has been raised by whichever council it is, the financial concerns will be the responsibility of that council.

Mr TELFER: Do you have any insight into the dollar figures of what those establishment costs might be and/or the expected operation costs?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I am advised that the Office of Local Government has been working very closely with the Local Government Association, and that partnership has been going on for a while. I give credit to both the Office of Local Government and the LGA for working very closely together on that. I do not want to indicate the cost at this point, but on a monthly basis the Office of Local Government will give an update of the costs that are being incurred during this period of time.

However, I am also advised that that is not a very significant amount. As I indicated previously, I am very happy to report back when the final dollar amount is established and available. I will not only take that on notice for this estimates committee but also liaise directly with the shadow minister.

Mr TELFER: Who is going to be responsible for the development of the Community Engagement Charter, which is referenced in the same targets on page 143 of Budget Paper 4, Volume 3?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Regarding the Community Engagement Charter, the Statutes Amendment (Local Government Review Act) 2021 introduced the requirement for a community engagement charter (the charter), which will replace current prescriptive statutory requirements with a more modern and flexible approach to council community engagement policies. The charter will set minimum standards for the most significant decisions councils make, such as their draft annual business plan and also the rating policy for each year.

The charter will, however, largely focus on a principle-based approach to allow councils to determine how exactly they will best engage with their communities on their decisions and their

activities. I am sure the member is aware—as an ex-local government president, as I and others in this house are—of the community engagement and how we do that for communities in both the metropolitan and regional areas. I have been advised that consultation on the draft charter will be delayed until after the elections.

Feedback received over this period will help to inform the final charter to ensure that it finds the right balance between enabling councils to use their knowledge of how to engage with their community and also to assure ratepayers that proper attention will be given to the most important decisions councils make each year. The member also asked who is responsible for publishing the notice that will establish the charter. I can advise the member that I will be responsible for publishing the notice that will establish the charter. The Office of Local Government has been working with the LGA on this.

We have to make certain we get this right. We want to make certain we get this communication out not only to local councils but also to the general public.

Mr TELFER: For clarification, the question was: who is responsible for the development of the Community Engagement Charter? Is your answer that it is going to be the OLG?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I am publishing the notification, so I am responsible.

Mr TELFER: What about the actual process of development? Who is going to be leading that? Is it going to be the OLG or the LGA?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I am advised that the Office of Local Government will be giving me advice on that. I am very happy to continue the liaison with the shadow minister to ensure that we work together to establish the best opportunities for this process to get into place after the November 2022 council elections.

Mr TELFER: Is the minister aware of concerns from local government about increased costs to ratepayers because of government election promises about council infrastructure, which have foisted increased infrastructure and depreciation costs onto councils?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Can the member repeat the question and provide the committee with the line he is referring to?

Mr TELFER: I guess it would be, minister, that the targets consider legislative amendments, and this is something that is very pertinent to local government at the moment. Increased infrastructure costs that get put onto councils, especially from other levels of government, mean that the depreciation then needs to be calculated into long-term financial plans. As you would be well aware, councils are expected to have 100 per cent asset renewal within their long-term financial plans, so higher infrastructure means that there are going to be higher depreciation costs on councils.

The CHAIR: Can the member for Flinders just reference that again for me, please? I did not quite see that one.

Mr TELFER: The interesting part with these two budget papers—literally, two pages—is that all these items that pertain to local government have to be focused on by the Office of Local Government. I am asking if the office is aware of these things and, if so, whether there will have to be resources that are allocated to it from these numbers here on page 144.

The CHAIR: I will make a ruling on this because I think this one has gone a bit beyond what is in the budget papers. I make the ruling on the basis that it is open to members to ask those sorts of questions at question time. Question time and estimates are two different processes. Question time is designed for what I believe are questions like you have asked, quite legitimately. What you just asked does not fit that requirement, so you need to either rephrase the question so it fits into one of the requirements on page 143 or wait for question time.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Point of order, sir: the objective and description of the Office of Local Government are very clear. The Office of Local Government provides policy and other advice to the Minister for Local Government. This includes advice on the operation of the Local Government Act and related legislation. The question—

The CHAIR: Which section of the act are you referring to?

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I do not need to refer to the section of the act, sir. It refers to the entire act in this description, and the member is rightly asking a question related to that act.

The CHAIR: I am ruling that is beyond the scope of this estimates committee. If the member can find—

Mr TELFER: I will do my best to reword. Has the minister been advised by the office about concerns from local government about increased costs to ratepayers because of election promises made and infrastructure being funded that are within councils' long-term financial plan implications because of the depreciation costs?

Ms STINSON: Point of order: there was no budget paper reference there.

Mr TELFER: It is Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 143. The original question included that because of the paragraph at the top.

The CHAIR: Given the nature of the question, which has quite a broad latitude, the minister has broad latitude in terms of the response he provides.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Mr Chairman, are you allowing me to make a comment on this?

The CHAIR: Yes, of course. I just said that.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: To the member, two things: if you have any examples, I would be happy to hear them; secondly, I have had no discussion from any councils regarding those projects that were election projects by the Labor Party leading up to the election. Certainly, those infrastructure programs you are talking about—I think that includes for not only local government but other associations, private stuff—will be done by the planning and infrastructure minister, but I am happy to take anything on board.

If the member has any examples of councils that may have a concern, bearing in mind any council that applies for any grants whatsoever is going to increase the value of all its assets, which then impacts, as he says and quite rightly, the depreciation costs. Has the member any examples of councils that may have brought it to his attention? I am happy to take that on board after this meeting.

Mr TELFER: Any council that has received funds to put infrastructure in that were not already accommodated in their long-term financial plan, any of those would have an impact on their capital over and above what their long-term financial plan would be, so there are a number.

I will carry on, if you like. Obviously, you have not quantified any of those potential rate increases, so I will not ask that question.

Mr Cowdrey interjecting:

Mr TELFER: Exactly. Minister, can I turn to one of the local government reforms. It is obviously something which is within the remit of the minister. Are you aware about the arrangements ESCOSA are developing at the moment for the statutory requirement?

Ms HOOD: Reference, please.

Mr TELFER: It is the local government broadly as a whole. I can also point out in Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 182, the specific process that—

The CHAIR: Page?

Mr TELFER: Page 182. This is around the ESCOSA management processes.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Can you repeat the budget paper?

Mr TELFER: Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 182, about the local government impacts on the ESCOSA review process.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: That is not through my area; it is through the Department of Treasury and Finance. However, if the member has any examples, I can take that on notice and get back to the member.

Mr TELFER: Perhaps the question I will ask is: in noting that ESCOSA is an independent statutory body, has the minister provided any feedback or guidance to ESCOSA as to some of the parameters of the scope of review proposed in their draft framework and approach?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I am just a bit confused about whether that is a question that relates to the Office of Local Government.

Mr TELFER: It is in your role as Minister for Local Government in an area of local government reform, which is a key target area, which you have highlighted within the papers on page 143 of Budget Paper 4, Volume 3.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I am happy to have a further discussion with the member on that one. I think it is a mixture between two roles, but I certainly have a lot of communication with relevant ministers. I am happy to have a discussion with the member later to clarify that and get back to this committee later.

Mr TELFER: This is specifically around that top dot point, that your targets 'continue the implementation of local government reforms'. This is a key aspect of the reform. I was just asking whether the minister has provided any feedback or direction to ESCOSA as to some of the parameters of the scope of review proposed in their draft framework and approach.

The CHAIR: I am trying to understand your question, member.

Mr TELFER: I am sure the minister does.

The CHAIR: The question is—and you have referred to page 182?

Mr TELFER: No, I have now referred back because I did not want to confuse the minister. It is Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 143, under targets 2022-23. The top dot point is to 'continue the implementation of local government reforms'. A key local government reform is around the ESCOSA draft framework and approach. I asked whether the minister has provided any feedback or guidance to ESCOSA as to some of the parameters of the scope of review proposed in their draft framework and approach.

Ms STINSON: Point of order, Mr Chair: the budget line that is referred to comes under ESCOSA, which is a budget line that has already been before estimates and there have already been questions taken on it. Although the member may quite rightly be pointing out something that is of general importance to the area of local government, these estimates have to be related to a particular budget line to do with local government. I would ask that that question is ruled out of order. Maybe question time might be a better place for that question.

The CHAIR: I am happy to allow the question if the member can provide a specific program or project which ESCOSA will be undertaking which will impact directly on local government.

Mr TELFER: I have removed the bit that the member for Badcoe was concerned about because I did not want to have any ambiguity. A key aspect—

The CHAIR: I am still failing to understand the point.

Mr TELFER: A key aspect of the implementation of the local government reforms was the development and implementation of an ESCOSA draft framework and approach for management of council finances. This is specific around that. Has the minister provided any feedback or guidance to ESCOSA as to some of the parameters of that scope of review proposed in their draft framework and approach?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I know that the ESCOSA report has now been made public, but the principal location for this is the Local Government Association. I encourage the Local Government Association to engage closely with ESCOSA on this and the method that it proposes to use to provide advice to councils. Again, I am happy to take that question on notice and get back not only to the estimates committee but also to the member.

Mr TELFER: Further to that then, is the minister aware of the concerns of local government and the Local Government Association about the breadth of the review process which ESCOSA is

proposing and which is going to put what the LGA says is an undue extra cost onto councils because of the process they have proposed?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I am advised that ESCOSA are a statutory authority, and they are liaising directly with the Local Government Association and all councils. Again, I reiterate that councils have their own direction. They have to tell the LGA what they want and what their concerns are. Certainly, I encourage all councils to engage constructively with ESCOSA as the new scheme is implemented. I am certainly very happy to take up further discussion with the LGA to find out whether there are more serious concerns about that.

As I said, I am happy to take that on notice and provide any further information. I am happy to have a dialogue with the member any time at all for him to understand a little more. I will be able to get some more information from the LGA for my own perspective. I encourage the LGA to liaise with ESCOSA and particularly with all councils because the LGA is the parent body representing all councils in South Australia.

The CHAIR: You have an answer; next question.

Mr TELFER: I am well and truly ready for the next question. We spent too much time on that one. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 143. Can I get an insight into the South Australian Local Government Grants Commission? Has there been any change in allocation of funds to South Australia from the federal government—which are distributed by the grants commission—because of methodology implications? Has there been any change in the allocation?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I am advised by both my advisers that we have had no advice of any changes at all at this time, but again I am happy to take that on notice to get more clarification and information.

Mr TELFER: What is the expected workload output of the South Australian Local Government Boundaries Commission for 2022-23? Has there been any change in allocation of funds towards the boundaries commission?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: The South Australian Local Government Boundaries Commission is the independent body that assesses and investigates proposals for changes to council boundaries and makes recommendations to the minister in accordance with the Local Government Act 1999. I am sure that the member is aware of this.

Since its commencement on 1 January 2019, the commission has received a number of proposals that it is currently working through in accordance with this process. These include significant proposals from the Town of Gawler and the Campbelltown City Council. These are the ones that I have been advised of.

If these proposals proceed to an inquiry, the inquiry will be undertaken by a team of investigators appointed by the commission and paid for by the initiating council in accordance with the act. When the inquiry is complete, the commission will provide me with a report with their recommendations for any changes. These reports must also be publicly released on the commission's website. The commission is also currently undertaking an inquiry into the publicly initiated proposal to alter the boundaries of the Copper Coast Council and the Barunga West Council near Tickera.

As minister, I have no role in the process to consider boundary changes until such time as the commission makes the recommendations to me at the end of its inquiries. As I say, I think this system going forward will help any opportunities for adjustments of council boundaries if it is required by the community and the commissioner.

Mr TELFER: The question was: has there been any change in the allocation of funds towards the boundaries commission?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I am advised that, no, there has not. The other thing is that, as I said a minute ago, any costs involved with the commission will be recovered as part of the boundary changes from the council that initiates. I indicated a bit earlier that the commissioner will give me a report, and before councils initiate or proceed any further they need to be advised by the

commissioner of the cost factor. Whatever the cost involved, it will be borne by the council initiating the opportunity for a council boundary change.

Mr TELFER: Have there been any efficiency dividends placed on the delivery of municipal services in the Aboriginal communities program?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I am advised that the grants are in the forward estimates. There have been no changes and it is just a normal thing of the CPI. The Treasury indication, to my information, is that other than the CPI increases there are no changes.

Mr TELFER: Have there been any efficiency dividends or changes to the Outback Communities Authority budget?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I have been advised that, yes, the Treasurer has put some savings there, but they are working through that at the moment. For the member's information and for other members here, the OCA is in the process of that responsibility coming from the Department for Infrastructure, coming across to the Office of Local Government. Again, the departments are working very closely together and, as soon as that information is available, I am happy to bring that back to this committee or through the process and also happy to liaise directly with the member concerned to make certain that we have all this information there.

Mr TELFER: Do you have any insight into what these efficiency dividends are going to mean for outcomes for the OCA?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: No. At this particular point I have had no indication. As I said a couple of minutes ago, both the AGD and the departments are working through that at the moment but, to answer the question, I have no information at this particular point.

Mr TELFER: That information would be very valuable to you as the member for Stuart, I am sure. Have you received a report from the Outback Futures Project?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: The Outback Communities Authority (OCA) has focused on the delivery of the Outback Futures Project, which is to determine the needs and aspirations of outback communities and how these will be best supported in the longer term. The OCA provided the Outback Futures Report, which I have received, to the previous government in December 2021 and released the report publicly in late January 2022.

Recently, I was pleased to receive the final recommendations from the OCA on the culmination of this work. I really cannot express all my appreciation for all the recommendations the OCA has made that resulted from extensive engagement with outback residents and stakeholders. I had discussions about this report already with many people in the outback, in Blinman and Yunta and other locations, while visiting as the local member.

The report gives a comprehensive picture of the issues facing people living in the outback and the challenges in providing services and support to our most remote communities. The government is considering its response to the OCA's final recommendations and will respond in due course, noting the importance of this decision for the future of our outback communities.

I am a great supporter of the OCA, and I think they have done a fantastic job. We have a few challenges going forward, but certainly I am happy to look at this futures report and to have a close liaison with the shadow minister. Just because I am the minister does not mean I have all the information. I am very happy to communicate and consult with the shadow to make certain we can get the best opportunities. I encourage the shadow and others in this house to suggest anything that will improve the conditions of people in the outback, which can be considered in addition to the futures report.

The CHAIR: The time allocated for the examination of this line has expired. There being no further questions, I declare the examination of the Department for Infrastructure and Transport and Administered Items for the Department for Infrastructure and Transport complete and refer the proposed payments to committee B for further examination. I thank the minister and his advisers and thank the members of the committee.

Sitting suspended from 15:17 to 15:30.

DEFENCE SA, \$13,499,000**Membership:**

Mr Cowdrey substituted for Mr Telfer.

Minister:

Hon. G.G. Brock, Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Roads, Minister for Veterans Affairs.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr R. Price, Chief Executive, Veterans SA, Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

Ms C. Bohan, Director, Veterans SA, Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

Mr P. Murdock, Manager, Finance, Veterans SA, Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

The CHAIR: I am opening the Veterans SA portfolio. The minister appearing is the Minister for Veterans Affairs. Minister, do you wish to introduce your advisers and make a statement, if you wish?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Thank you, Mr Chairman. I am not going to make an opening statement, but I would like to introduce my advisers. On my right-hand side is Mr Richard Price, the Chief Executive of Defence SA. On my left is Chantelle Bohan, the Director of Veterans SA, and behind me is Peter Murdock, Manager, Finance, Defence SA. I am not going to make an opening statement.

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

Mr PEDERICK: Just a very brief statement, thank you, Mr Chair. I would just like to acknowledge everything that veterans have done for this state and this country in their service. I certainly acknowledge their families as well and thank them all for their support for their veteran family members and thank them all for their service.

I will now go to questions. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 166, program summary, income expenses and full-time equivalents. There are 4.4 FTEs in the budget for Veterans SA. Can the minister tell me what their job titles and their roles are?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I thank the member for his question. We have a Director of Veterans SA who is one FTE. I have put that in there because it adds up to 4.4. The Deputy Director of Veterans SA is one FTE; there is an administrative assistant, who is 0.8 FTE; an engagement and commemoration officer at 0.6; and a veterans liaison officer, who is one FTE. That brings the total base of 4.4 FTEs.

Can I also acknowledge the veterans. While I said I did not want to make an opening statement, I do want to reinforce what the shadow minister has indicated about the veterans across all regional South Australia and metropolitan Adelaide over many years. As the shadow minister did, I give credit to them and my utmost dedication to their families and all survivors. We are both going to be working very closely to get the best opportunities for all our veterans in South Australia in particular.

Mr PEDERICK: I go to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 157, program net cost of services summary. The 2022-23 budget is made up of \$1.851 million as the net cost of services. Can the minister break down that cost for the committee?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Out of the total expenses of \$1.851 million (I think that was the figure the member indicated), there was \$985,000 in grants and subsidies and \$281,000 for supplies and services. Employee benefit expenses is \$610,000. That gives the \$1.851 million.

Mr PEDERICK: I go to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 157, key agency outputs, dot point 9:

- engaging across the community of veterans and their families to educate, inform and facilitate connections with the right services, programs, ideas and networks at the time when they need them most.

What engagement and processes are in place to fulfil this key priority?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: You can see, from page 157 and the key agency outputs, that the key priorities are for Defence SA and not Veterans SA. I ask the member to ask the Minister for Defence, the Deputy Premier, when she is before the estimates committee.

Mr PEDERICK: This is asking about engagement across the community of veterans and their families, connecting them with the right services and programs. I am just wondering about what engagement, but you are saying that is more for Defence; is that what you are saying?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I thank the member for his question. In addition to having regular meetings with the various agencies, organisations and committee forums I am going to have, one of the things we want to do is conduct regular community or outreach engagement opportunities, with a focus on the regions in particular, in this instance, and also for metropolitan Adelaide.

Consistent feedback received by Veterans SA was that regional veterans felt their needs were not being met and that they were isolated from support services and programs. As a result, Veterans SA has undertaken regional outreach commencing in 2021-22. In September 2021, Veterans SA provided a grants program to selected ex-service organisations to attend the Yorke Peninsula field days at Paskeville (I am not sure if the member was there). The field days provided the regional veteran community with the opportunity to engage in significant face-to-face interactions with Veterans SA and service providers.

A similar program was planned for the Riverland Field Days in Baramba, but these field days were cancelled due to COVID restrictions. As an alternative, Veterans SA hosted a two-day regional outreach program in the Riverland a few months later, bringing together ex-service organisations for a forum and expo-type event. Veterans SA is preparing a grant funding round for selected ex-service organisations to apply to participate in the Riverland Field Days in September 2022. Other regional engagement opportunities with key service providers are also being considered by the department.

Veterans SA is also developing a regional outreach program that will assist in the creation of networks of regional veterans across the state who meet regularly and includes local veterans alongside members of the wider community, council members in particular and local business owners. Once established, the networks would run independently and the agency's role would then be to connect additional networks as necessary, provide general advice, receive feedback and take action as required.

Veterans SA would also undertake regional outreach visits as required with a group of partners that is compiled based on the needs of the veterans in the local community, as reported by the network. The positive impact of such an initiative would result in a better supported local veteran community and connection to the wider community in regional areas. This network will also enable Veterans SA to collect relevant feedback and information around the needs of regional communities, as told by the community itself.

This outreach model will be based on the successful Wellbeing SA suicide prevention networks that have been operating for some time. My philosophy is that we need to get out there and talk to these people face to face. I did a video a couple of days ago, which is on the Veterans SA website.

The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL: It is on MTV as well.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: It is on MTV, is it?

The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL: Yes.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I did a video where I indicated that on 14 July I will be having a forum opportunity at the Torrens Parade Ground. I am encouraging members and their families to come and meet the minister. That will be the start of the direct communication with not only the older community of veterans but also the younger ones and their families in particular.

Mr PEDERICK: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 157, key agency outputs, dot point 10:

- working with other South Australian government agencies to provide support to ex-service organisations that support the community of veterans and their families

What interagency work goes on and what support is provided to ex-service organisations to support veterans and their families?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: The South Australian Australian Defence Force arrival survey is going to better assist our understanding of current issues of concern and requirements of our veterans and their families. I am sure everybody in this house is concerned about the requirements of our veterans and in particular their families. To help us gain a better understanding of the experience of defence families posted to South Australia, Veterans SA developed a short survey to help build a more accurate picture of the individuals and families who have recently arrived in South Australia as part of the Defence Force community.

Veterans SA is committed to working to ensure that the policies and the services in place to support ADF members and their families are reflective of the needs of the community. The online survey, conducted by Veterans SA in March 2022, sought to gain a clearer understanding of defence families' experiences when moving to South Australia in order to improve policies and services to better support them and their families.

All three ADF services, that is, the Air Force, the Army and the Navy, were represented in the survey, which was completed by current serving members and their partners in both metropolitan and regional areas. Of the respondents who had children, the majority were either early childhood or primary-school-age children. The vast majority of respondents indicated that South Australia was a desirable posting location, with many identifying the lifestyle, the weather and leisure options as major benefits of moving to the state.

Despite these strengths, the survey identified a number of areas for improvement. Housing experiences, limited children's education options and issues around employment opportunities for spouses were identified as concerns for defence families posted to South Australia. The department will continue to work across the state government to ensure veterans and their families are considered in new policy and program proposals or revisions.

I am committed to working collaboratively with other state government agencies to ensure that policies and programs consider and work to improve the needs of veterans and their families. Currently, Veterans SA is working with the Office for Women on a range of strategies to address the issue of domestic, family and sexual violence within military and veteran communities.

Veterans SA is also working with the Office of the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment to explore ways to increase access to work experience and employment within the public sector for veterans and will engage with the Department for Education to identify and support the development of strategies that improve the identification of military or veteran children within the education system and improve educational outcomes for this cohort.

If children are moving into another school—and some of these families move from more than one school a year—they are coming into foreign territory and they have to make new friends. Sometimes communities are not aware of the challenges and isolation these children experience and it is very hard for these children to integrate into the community.

Veterans SA remains committed to improving outcomes for veterans engaged in correctional services and continues to support the Department for Correctional Services in their efforts to address the needs of veterans within the system. Again, I have had discussions with people who have been

involved with that process. We need to identify those things early so we can help people who have those challenges before it goes too far.

Finally, Veterans SA is collaborating with the Department for Innovation and Skills to explore avenues to address the training and employment needs of military and veteran spouses in high-demand job sectors. I indicate that this has been happening for some time and that the Department of Veterans' Affairs wants to ensure that we commit to whatever was put in place by the previous government.

We will work very collaboratively and closely with the opposition and the shadow minister in particular, as well as other members in the house, to ensure we have the best opportunities and results for our veterans—the older veterans and in particular the younger ones.

Mr PEDERICK: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 165, highlights 2021-22 and dot point 2, which talks about credentials and identity verifications. Has the veteran credential and identity verification initiative been implemented?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I am advised that the agency chaired the commonwealth and state veteran working group and presented a veteran credential and identity verification initiative for discussion at a Data and Digital Ministers' Meeting (DDMM).

In August 2021, the Data and Digital Ministers' Meeting agreed to a program of work consisting of national priority data-sharing projects. Veteran health was identified as a key priority and selected as one of the scoping projects. Veterans SA chaired the working group, as indicated, consisting of representatives from the commonwealth and all states and territories. This project aimed to identify legislative consent and privacy barriers and opportunities for sharing identifiable, non-identifiable and aggregate data on Australian veterans between commonwealth, state and territory agencies.

Early learnings from the working group deliberations identified that the complexities and the barriers surrounding cross-jurisdictional data sharing, including legislative and privacy barriers, limit the ability to derive meaningful outcomes from the likely data sources. A consent driven data-sharing model was developed and unanimously agreed by the commonwealth and the state working group. The model was presented to the DDMM by the South Australian Office for Data Analytics at a meeting in March 2022. However, no decisions regarding the progression of the proposal were made due to the commonwealth government entering caretaker mode shortly afterwards.

Again, I will be liaising with the new government and ministers to ensure that we get that opportunity. I keep saying this in this committee: I am happy to continue liaising and collaborating with the shadow minister and everyone in this house to get the best results for our veterans.

Mr PEDERICK: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 165, highlights 2021-22, dot point 3. You mentioned the survey that you have done, but also in that dot point it talks about the Veteran and Defence Families Forum and the pilot Veterans Mentoring Program. Can you give me some more information about those programs—and I think you have already had a look at the survey—and what outcomes have come from those programs?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I thank the member for the question on the Veteran and Defence Families Forum. Veterans SA is taking a proactive approach to planning veteran support and service that is based on evidence and feedback from the community. The agency held a full day forum on 3 May 2022. They provided invited participants the opportunity to provide feedback on Veterans SA's aims and objectives for 2021-22 that will help to shape aims for outcomes for 2023-24.

The forum focused on former serving members under 50 years of age, current serving members and their families. The program included a panel session, with a Veterans SA team who responded to questions about the agency's 10-year strategic outlook, 2021 achievements and planned activities for 2022. Attendees also participated in an open discussion around topics and themes of importance to the defence and veterans' community.

Key themes raised by the group included wellbeing and mental resilience, support for spouses and children, veteran and partner employment, veteran and partner identity, and cultural proactive approaches to veteran and family support and veteran discount programs. The agency has

released a preliminary summary of the key points for these issues as well as the actions for each as proposed by the group.

To gauge the thoughts of the broader contemporary veteran community, an online survey has been opened. Former serving members under 50 years of age, current serving members and their families were invited to provide input on the issues and proposed actions raised at the forum. The results from the survey will be considered, with the primary summary from the forum to inform the agency's future planning activities. Future forums and engagement activities will focus on other segments of the veteran community to ensure Veterans SA hears from these people as much as possible.

Another one was the pilot Veterans Mentoring Program, which was launched by Veterans SA in July 2021. Again, the previous government and the previous minister, the member for Dunstan, would have been part of that. The purpose of this program was to connect members of the veteran community with leaders and professionals across the South Australian community keen to mentor the veterans from a career or skills development perspective.

Following the announcement of the program in April 2021—again the member for Dunstan was the minister—Veterans SA was inundated with mentor registrations from professionals with a diverse range of experience who were keen to support the growth of those taking part in the program. The pilot program consisted of two separate programs with different objectives and outcomes that were established in response to the identified needs of the community.

The first program is the Female Veteran Mentoring Program, which was open to all those who identify as female who have had military experience and are currently living in South Australia. The second program is the Former Non-Commissioned Officers (NCO)—when I was in the Reserve—and Other Ranks Mentoring Program, which was targeted to support the professional development of participants who had left the Defence Force within the past three to eight years as a non-commissioned officer or other rank.

The program was facilitated by an external consultant, Christine Molitor, from Be Sustained. Eighteen pairs completed the six-month pilot program, and the feedback and outcomes (from both the veteran and mentor participants) were very positive. Some of the successes of the program included:

- at least four of the participants have been successful in applying for and gaining meaningful employment, supported by coaching and connections provided by their mentor;
- one of the mentees was successful in their application for a scholarship after encouragement and guidance from their mentor; and
- one of the mentees gained the confidence to grasp an opportunity to appear in media following encouragement and support in the development of presentation skills from their mentor.

As we all understand in this house, coming from the Defence Force, where you are under strict guidelines, training and so on, and then moving into the real world raises a lot of concern. These successful programs, I think, highlight these great opportunities.

Veterans SA has received feedback from multiple participants that they have experienced a significant shift in confidence and expanded knowledge of what additional supports are out there as they continue their transition journey from defence. Additional benefits from the program included:

- veterans making meaningful connections with professionals from the wider community;
- mentors and the wider community gaining a better understanding of the value that veterans can contribute; and
- mentees gaining a better understanding of their value and building confidence.

The program was officially closed at an event on 31 March 2022. In case the member is looking for this later on, the cost of the program in 2021 was \$64,000. Based on the strong community support for the program, Veterans SA hopes to run an expanded future mentoring program in 2022-23

including partners of current and former serving ADF members, with streams focusing on career and skills development and mentoring for entrepreneurs. I have also indicated before about the Australian Defence Force Arrivals in South Australia survey.

Mr PEDERICK: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 165, highlights 2021-22, dot point 4. Were all RSL sub-branches that made applications successful in accessing funds from the ANZAC Day Commemoration Fund?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I have been advised that the total budget allocation for grants in 2021-22 was \$100,000. Applications for the 2021-22 round of the ANZAC Day Commemoration Fund were assessed by a subcommittee of the Veterans' Advisory Council, which again was instrumental and which was set up by the previous minister, the member for Dunstan. I have had some meetings with the Veterans' Advisory Council.

Grants totalling \$81,788 were distributed during the 2021-22 financial year. I will just quickly mention some of the applicants. The Australian Foundation for Disability received \$2,000. I had nothing to do with this, and I had no conflict of interest: the Port Pirie RSL received \$3,085. Other applicants included the Largs Bay RSL, \$1,800; Port Broughton RSL, \$3,190; Enfield RSL, \$4,300; the Merchant Navy Association of South Australia, \$2,712; the Forest Range and Lenswood History Group, \$1,670; Vietnam Veterans Federation SA branch, \$3,094; Bute RSL, \$6,374; the Gladstone Community Development and Tourism Association, \$1,315; the RSL SA & NT, \$2,690; Kangaroo Island Council, \$4,532; and Aboriginal Veterans SA, \$4,230.

Again, the grants were all well received by those groups. As a bit of background, grant applicants must meet the following criteria to be supported. They have to support educating South Australia about the state's involvement in our nation's military history, including peacekeeping and peacemaking. I think that something we need to keep pushing forward is our history and involvement in our nation's military history.

The criteria also include to honour and commemorate the service and sacrifice of South Australian veterans; to assist the education of South Australian veterans' dependents, in particular, and that is very important; and any other purpose of a like kind determined by the minister, as well as any other suggestions that may come from anybody in this house, including and particularly the shadow minister.

Mr PEDERICK: On Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 165, highlights 2021-22, dot point 5, in relation to the three grant streams has there been a good uptake of grants funds from those streams and can you identify services and programs funded?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Was that highlights 2021-22 or targets?

Mr PEDERICK: Highlights 2021-22, dot point 5.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: First up, dot point 5 states 'Initiated three new grants totalling \$70,000.' That is what was allocated. I can advise that the lead time was very short—only six weeks from the time it opened. I have been advised that it opened in February 2022, with applications closing in April 2022. We had a total of \$29,800 that was approved in response to applications from the veteran community to the three competitive grant rounds.

I am also advised that there is a total of 11 applications across the three grants. A Veterans SA Commemorative Services Grant Fund to support ex-service organisations to host commemorative events got \$6,800; Veterans SA Capacity Building Grant Fund, to support ex-service organisations to improve their governance and strengthen their capacity building skills, \$13,000; and Veterans SA seed funding grant, to support eligible groups and organisations to help build community and capacity to deliver services for veterans and their families, was \$10,000.

I have also been advised that the first and the second grant program will be run again. as they were very successful. Out of that \$70,000 which was the total allocated, \$29,800 was expended, approved through the various organisations.

Mr PEDERICK: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 165, targets 2022-23, dot point 6. What programs are in place assisting the veteran community in regard to incarceration, employment and homelessness?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Again, I thank the member for his question. I have been advised that Veterans SA will continue to work collaboratively with all jurisdictions on matters of importance to the veteran community, including incarceration, employment and homelessness. These are three issues that I think sometimes we have not taken into account. They are something we need to identify because they can have long-lasting impacts not only on them but also on their families and their children.

On May 2020, the national cabinet established the National Federation Reform Council (NFRC). On 23 October 2020, the national cabinet established a NFRC task force, the Veterans' Wellbeing Taskforce. The task force is chaired by the commonwealth Minister for Veterans' Affairs. The task force consists of commonwealth, state and territory ministers responsible for veterans affairs.

I will meet my jurisdictional counterparts at least once a year and more frequently as needed and as determined by the chair. The task force will make decisions and agree on common principles, but there will be flexibility in implementation across jurisdictions to account for each jurisdiction's unique circumstances. The task force also meets as necessary with other ministers to enable collaborative work, noting that veterans' wellbeing issues cut across multiple portfolios. In this house, we all know that it is across multiple portfolios.

The task force makes decisions and agrees on common principles, but there is flexibility in implementation across jurisdictions to account for each jurisdiction's unique circumstances. The task force is supported by a biannual Commonwealth, State and Territory Committee (CSTC), comprising senior government officials. The CSTC committee is attended by the Veterans SA director, who meets with jurisdictional equivalents.

The Commonwealth, State and Territory Committee is a subordinate committee of the Veterans' Wellbeing Taskforce, which is intended to address issues of strategic and operational importance to the ex-service and defence communities across federal, state and territory jurisdictions, including acting as the main forum for dialogue between the commonwealth Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) and the state and territory government agencies responsible for veterans matters.

This includes providing advice on how differing levels of government can better facilitate a common approach to veteran and ex-service issues, providing a mechanism to disseminate information about DVA and state and territory initiatives and also providing regular consultation and discussion about emerging issues affecting veterans and their families, such as veterans' homelessness, transition from ADF to civilian life, suicide prevention, incarceration and health and aging.

Let me reinforce my real concerns about some of the challenges involving some of these people who are coming from the ADF into civilian life and their families and so on. I am sure I am speaking for everybody in this house when I say that there is bipartisan support to ensure that we get these people to come forward. It is easy for us to say they have an issue, but they need to come forward and be able to identify their concern and ask for help.

I will try to work the best I can with the shadow minister and others in this house to ensure that we get these people to come forward to get the service and assistance they urgently need because they have put their lives on the line for us in this house, in this state and in this country.

The task force also includes enhancing state and territory governments' understanding of DVA's service delivery programs and, where appropriate, identifying opportunities where the state and territory governments may become involved. We will also identify recommended topics of discussion for the task force and also be a forum for continuing discussions on matters arising from the task force.

I want to give a bit of clarification. I made a statement a minute ago about the VAC. Let me just say that the VAC was established in 2008 and the former minister appointed the current council. Those positions expire on 31 December this year. Again, the current council is doing a good job here and the former minister, the member for Dunstan, appointed members to that council. I have continued liaising with those people and also previous members of the VAC.

Mr PEDERICK: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 165, targets 2022-23 and dot point 1. What is the status of the action plan to deliver the initiatives and recommendations from forums and surveys?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I thank the member for the question. You asked about an action plan to implement or address the initiatives and recommendations from the forums and surveys.

Mr PEDERICK: I was wondering where that is up to and what the status of it is.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Yes, I am just reading that out, if I can. I am advised that in June 2022, Veterans SA will conduct an agency planning day, which will include identifying priority strategies and initiatives for 2022-23 and also beyond, based on the direct feedback and community consultation garnered from the Veteran and Defence Families Forum and subsequent community survey and the SA ADF arrival survey, completed this year, which I mentioned a bit earlier.

Veterans SA will examine the key themes, highlighted and suggested actions from the community, and examine how these fit with the agency's overarching strategic outlook. This will inform the development of an agency action plan detailing the advocacy, strategies, programs and initiatives Veterans SA will undertake to address the short, medium and longer term veteran community needs.

Mr PEDERICK: I refer you to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 165, targets 2022-23 and dot point 2. What are the particular governance issues that need to be addressed by ex-service organisations, and what is the total amount of funding available for this?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Again, I thank the member for his question. I am advised that my agency will continue to administer a number of grant programs each year on behalf of the South Australian government. This funding supports projects and events that highlight the importance of the service and sacrifice of the veteran community and provides the wider community with an opportunity to acknowledge, show appreciation and honour those who have worn our nation's uniforms.

These grants enable ex-service organisations and associations to educate younger generations through holding commemorative events and restoration projects, ensuring that future generations are educated on our nation's military history. This history is the foundation of our country and I will do all I can to ensure that this is not forgotten, and I am sure I speak for everybody in this house here, not only today but in the past and future.

Grant funding also permits ex-service organisations, support groups and like-minded associations to continue to deliver important services for the veteran community, providing grants for capacity building purposes—for example, website building, first-aid courses and staff training—enabling these organisations to remain relevant and qualified to continue to remain veteran focused and deliver important support to the community into the future.

Mr PEDERICK: I refer you to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 165, targets 2022-23 and dot point 4. What involvement is proposed in regard to the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Again, I thank the member for his question. On 19 April 2021, the former Prime Minister the Hon. Scott Morrison MP announced to the Australian government the establishment of a royal commission into defence and veteran suicide. The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide was officially established on 8 July 2021.

Under the Letters Patent, the royal commissioners are required to produce an interim report by 11 August 2022 and a final report by 17 June 2024. The final report was originally due on 15 June 2023; however, on 10 April 2022 the commission was extended for 12 months. I am sure the member is quite aware of this.

The royal commission is examining the systematic issues and contributing risk factors relevant to any common themes and past deaths by suicide of Australian Defence Force members and veterans and the experience of members and veterans who may continue to be at risk of suicide. This includes all aspects of service in the Australian Defence Force, the experience of those transitioning, the availability and quality of health and support services, pre-service and post-service

issues for members and veterans, members' and veterans' social and family context, such as family breakdown, as well as housing and employment issues for members, veterans and their families.

Both the Veterans Advisory Council and Veterans SA were issued and responded to a notice to give responses to the royal commission. The content of these responses was confidential, and they were submitted in October 2021 and February 2022.

For the information of everyone here, the commission is expected to be in Adelaide to hold block hearings in early 2023. I encourage people to attend. I am sure the shadow minister and I will work very closely with that.

The CHAIR: The time allocated for the examination of this line is now expired. I declare the examination of the proposed payments for Veterans SA complete. The proposed payments for Defence SA are adjourned until Thursday 23 June. Thank you minister, members of the committee and advisers.

At 16:17 the committee adjourned to Wednesday 21 June 2022 at 09:00.