

**HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**  
**Wednesday, 5 July 2023**  
**ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A**

**Chair:**

Hon. A. Piccolo

**Members:**

Hon. J.A.W. Gardner  
Mr M.E. Brown  
Ms N.P. Clancy  
Mr J.P. Fulbrook  
Mr D.G. Pisoni  
Ms P.K. Pratt

*The committee met at 09:00*

*Estimates Vote*

**DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION, \$3,631,281,000**  
**ADMINISTERED ITEMS FOR THE DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION, \$428,355,000**

**Minister:**

Hon. B.I. Boyer, Minister for Education, Training and Skills.

**Departmental Advisers:**

Prof. M. Westwell, Chief Executive, Department for Education.

Mr C. Bernardi, Chief Operating Officer, Department for Education.

Ms A. Millard, Deputy Chief Executive, Partnerships, Schools and Preschools, Department for Education.

Mr B. Temperly, Deputy Chief Executive, Strategy and Corporate Services, Department for Education.

Mr A. Creek, Executive Director, Finance, Department for Education.

Ms C. Feszczak, Executive Director, Student Pathways and Careers, Department for Education.

Dr P. Smith, Executive Director, Strategic Policy and External Relations, Department for Education.

Ms L. Schonfeldt, Executive Director, People and Culture, Department for Education.

Mr D. Humphrys, Acting Executive Director, Support and Inclusion, Department for Education.

**The CHAIR:** Good morning and welcome to today's hearing for Estimates Committee A. I respectfully acknowledge the traditional owners of this land upon which the committee meets today and pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to elders both past and present.

The estimates 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 on an approximate time for the consideration of the proposed payments, which will facilitate a change of departmental advisers at the appropriate time. Is my understanding correct, minister?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** Member for Morialta?

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** Changes to committee membership will be notified as they occur, and members are reminded they need to provide the Chair 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 8 September 2023.

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

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

I remind members that the rules of debate in the house apply in committee. Consistent with the rules of the house, photography by members from the chamber floor is not permitted 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 applies in the house; that is, purely of a statistical nature and limited to one page in length. The committee's examinations will be broadcast in the same manner as sittings of the house, through the IPTV system within Parliament House and online via the parliament website.

I propose to open the following line for examination: the portfolio is school education. The minister appearing is the Minister for Education, Training and Skills. I declare the proposed payments open for examination. Minister, you are welcome to make a statement and/or introduce your advisers.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Thank you, Chair. To my far left is the Chief Operating Officer, Chris Bernardi; to my immediate left, Chief Executive, Professor Martin Westwell; and, to my right, Deputy Chief Executive, Head of Strategy and Corporate Services, Ben Temperly. I do not have an opening statement.

**The CHAIR:** Member for Morialta, the floor is yours.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I refer to Budget Paper 3, pages 23 to 24, which talk about operating expenses. There is—well, let's call it a lot of variance today of \$387 million in operating expenses between the 2022-23 budget and the estimated result, and that increase continues over the forward estimates. Over the page, on page 24, it is described as an increase of \$381.7 million. It says that it is:

...mainly due to higher indexation applied to the Schooling Resource Standard base amount and loadings under the National School Reform Agreement.

The word 'mainly' is carrying a lot of weight there, so I have some questions that follow. Maybe if I can ask the first three questions at once and I will unpack them if the answer is missed. Firstly, can you explain the detail of how we are now applying a higher indexation to the SRS? How is that worked out and how much of the variance is directly as a result of that? Can you please clarify whether it is \$381 million, as it says on page 24, or \$387 million, as it looks like on page 23?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Thank you, member for Morialta; I am happy to do that. Perhaps I can make some very brief introductory remarks and then pass over to Chris Bernardi, who is, as you

will know, the expert on these things. I do not want to put words in Mr Bernardi's mouth, but I think some of this will come down to issues around timing and carryovers of money. I accept the point the member for Morialta has made about the two different figures, one of \$381.7 million on page 24 and then the other figure. I might pass over now to Mr Bernardi to provide you with a bit more detail and to try to answer a few questions that you have asked.

**Mr BERNARDI:** Thank you. One of the questions I wrote down was in terms of indexation. We are funded for education activities: we are funded in accordance with the National Schools Resource Agreement, which is commonly known as Gonski. The Gonski model, the commonwealth's funding model, will calculate and determine—I have a methodology for calculating the indexation, which is provided to us through Treasury processes.

As to the indexation, I will have to take some parts of this question on notice and come back. The indexation is determined based on goods and services, CPI and national wage-type index, but I will have to come back with the specific details about how that calculation works out. That indexation is passed on to us via the Gonski model from the commonwealth. The growth factor is impacted by timing adjustments as well, so I will need to come back to you with specific details about what is driving each of the indexation numbers in there. I can say that, through Treasury processes, government processes, we are provided with the indexation that comes through the Gonski agreement.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** If I can summarise, a large part of this then is due to the impact of inflation on the Gonski indexation model; is that correct?

**Mr BERNARDI:** How that Gonski model works out those rates—yes.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** That is helpful, thank you. If the figure is mainly due to indexation with potentially some timing adjustments as well, are there any other contributing factors to what we are calling a variance for the sake of this committee?

**Mr BERNARDI:** Earlier, you referred to a variance of \$381.7 million, which is the increase in operating expenditure for the department over the period of the 2022-23 estimated result to the 2026-27 budget. In terms of some more detail, that includes growth in programs—for example, investments announced in the 2023-24 state budget relating to the expansion of the School Breakfast Program and funding for the Smith Family for the students undertaking the Learning for Life program in government schools, funding for the government's election commitments for autism support in schools, five new technical colleges, mental health and learning support in schools and the midyear intake.

We have that salary of goods and services, indexation coming through the Gonski model. We have invested in significant amounts of infrastructure, so depreciation is playing a factor. We also have funding in there for supporting developmentally vulnerable children by increasing the reach and frequency of early childhood development checks, health checks and related activities. One of the things we know is that also across the forward estimates there is funding coming to an end for a national partnership agreement for Skills SA, but a new national skills agreement is currently being negotiated and is planned to come into operation from the 2024 calendar year.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Can I ask if it is possible to get a breakdown of the contribution that each of those factors makes? Some of them are listed in Budget Paper 5, some of them were listed in Budget Paper 5 last year and some of them have not been mentioned as separate budget measures but are contributing to the quantum.

**Mr BERNARDI:** I can do that, yes.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Thank you. Can I go back to that initial question of whether we ever got to the bottom of why it is \$381 million on one page and \$387 million on the other page?

**Mr BERNARDI:** I would need to come back to that, take that on notice.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I blame Treasury, just for record.

**Mr BERNARDI:** I am not sure it is a mistake. I will not say it is a mistake. I will have to come back to that detail.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I appreciate that probably the most significant contribution to the increase may well be inflation impacting the indexation rate, but the department has \$381 million or \$387 million more expended last year than the budget was. Is all of that \$380-odd million explained by the list that Mr Bernardi just read out, or are there other programs or uses to which that money has been put?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Would you like to answer that question, Mr Bernardi?

**Mr BERNARDI:** Again, when I come back with that question on notice, we manage a significant budget, over \$4 billion per annum, so there will always be timing variations and other smaller variations and other variations. When I come back, I will give what we are saying are predominantly the factors relating to that variance.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** This is still relevant to the same budget line. What is the status in negotiations of the National School Reform Agreement with the commonwealth? Without asking you to say when there might be a press conference, are we talking something we will expect within days, weeks, months, this Friday?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Well, I hope to be there tomorrow and Friday because it is the education ministers meeting across those two days and the big ticket item, as you pointed out, member for Morialta, is the next National School Reform Agreement, or Gonski. I would not say an announcement in days, no. There is still a fair bit of work to be done.

I recently made some public remarks that probably did not win me fans in all quarters about the need to get public schools to 100 per cent of the Schooling Resource Standard, given that they are not there. Mr Bernardi can correct me if I am wrong, but I think that additionality, as we used to call it, is worth to the South Australian system in the vicinity of \$190 million per year, if we get there. As a former minister, you will know well all the good things we could do with that extra funding.

Negotiations are underway. It will be the item of most discussion and debate tomorrow and Friday. I would say days or weeks is probably the best indication I can give you of when we might have some kind of announcement.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** The education union, amongst others, has argued that not only is there a suggestion that there should be up to 5 per cent more provided by the commonwealth to help get to the 100 per cent but an option is for the state to provide more. Obviously, the commonwealth has more money, but the state also, some have argued, has 4 per cent of the SRS to which it is allowed to apply things like contributions to the SACE Board and other regulatory bodies, contributions towards, potentially, depreciation, or some states talk about early childhood. Is the government contemplating offering to the commonwealth a reduction in that quantum of 4 per cent to boost the state contribution towards SRS?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Certainly it is a factor, but I have not had any discussions with Treasury or my ministerial colleagues interstate to that effect at this stage.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** How are students who are entering reception midyear being treated for funding purposes by the state and by the commonwealth?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I understand the point you are getting at there, which is around some recent changes to how the federal government has accounted for the funding that flowed to the non-government sector, in particular the Catholic system, towards the midyear intake they have been operating for a number of years—it might be close to 10 now, I think—since the public system, in what was, in hindsight, a poor move for midyear intake. We have been in very strong negotiations with the federal government and the federal education minister around why we do not believe that is fair. We have been united with the non-government sector around fighting to have that money reinstated, and we are still doing that. Those negotiations are still underway.

If I could pre-empt what your next question may be—that is, around whether or not the state might have to step in if we cannot—I would say that is something that we will consider if we have to, but I have not given up yet on being able to retain the money the federal government has provided to both those systems over a number of years because, as you well know, it is a significant amount

of money. I think the option of midyear intake for all students, regardless of what sector they are students in in South Australia, is a good thing for families.

I have a lot of information that I will not go into now, though, about how much interest there has been in the midyear intake for preschool, which kicks off in term 3, and then I think there will be a lot of interest for the midyear intake for reception next year too.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** The impact on non-government schools will obviously be significant, and I thank the minister for his answer and his acknowledgement of that. What is the risk for the public school sector of the commonwealth not funding the first six months of a student's reception in the public system when that starts next year? What is the financial risk?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I might make a few comments before Mr Bernardi. There will be an impact to the public system as well, if it is not maintained. There is no doubt about that, particularly given that we are—obviously this is the point of your question—reintroducing an extra intake for preschool this year and reception next year. As I said, I have not given up at all on us being able to retain that money, but I might pass over to Mr Bernardi for a few more specific comments about that.

**Mr BERNARDI:** Thanks, minister. The state government funded the midyear intake as part of last year's state budget. The number, from memory, for the six months, the terms 3 and 4 intake, commencing 2024 for reception, is around \$27 million of state funding. Obviously, this year we have been working on the midyear intake into preschools, which was also funded as a once-off at \$16 million to \$18 million or thereabouts. In terms of the detail about the cost of the terms 3 and 4 impact, we will be doing that work. In terms of that question about affordability, I would have to take it on notice.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I might just add briefly, member for Morialta, that regardless of what happens, as I said, I remain optimistic that we are going to be able to keep it. We are not going to give up on that. As you and I both know, the Catholic system are strong advocates for their system and fearsome opponents, and they are fighting with us for this. Regardless, the election commitments we made around midyear intake for preschool and reception obviously will go ahead, with preschool beginning in term 3 and reception beginning in term 3 next year.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** If I can maybe ask one last question on this line and potentially summarise the challenge in a nutshell, as I understand it, for a number of years Catholic Education and a number of independent schools have been operating a midyear entry and six terms of reception. Those first two terms of reception have had contributions from the state and the commonwealth according to the Gonski model. The changes, as I understand it, from the commonwealth are that they are now proposing to fund only one year of reception and not the 18 months as they have been.

As Mr Bernardi said, last year's state budget funded the new midyear intake policy, the \$17 million. That had in it, I assume, the underlying assumption that the commonwealth would continue to fund reception for six terms if a student was doing six terms. Mr Bernardi may have already taken this part of the question on notice, but maybe we can be clear: what is the assumption in last year's budget on how much the commonwealth contribution would be to the extra two terms of reception each year going forward, notwithstanding that the minister still hopes to keep that money?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Mr Bernardi might provide your response.

**Mr BERNARDI:** The state budget papers last year reflected the cost to the state government. We would have worked out the number based on the Gonski model, so therefore there would be a commonwealth component which comes in as additional revenue offset by additional expenditure. In terms of the value relating to the commonwealth component, I do not have that with me; I will have to take it on notice.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I will turn to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, pages 180 and 181. For the benefit of the officers, there are some questions on infrastructure. If I can invite the Chair to defer to the member for Frome.

**The CHAIR:** Member for Frome.

**Ms PRATT:** Thank you, Chair. In reference to the line that the member for Morialta has just opened, or perhaps on page 182 in relation to capital works, as you know, minister, in late March last year the Kapunda community as a whole and particularly the staff and the students were devastated to wake up to that tragic fire at Eringa at Kapunda High School. In attendance was yourself and the shadow minister, and I was there as well. We all spoke to the staff at the time, and they have done an extraordinary job. With the rebuilding of Eringa, noting its historical significance to the community and not just the school fraternity, can you please update the house on the rebuild project, including funds committed and the time lines for that project?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am happy to, member for Frome. Thank you for the question. I will begin by thanking you and the shadow minister for the way you have worked with both the community and with me as minister to give me the space to try to get the best outcome for the community. I have to say it was a learning curve for me because I think I was 10 days into the job when I got a call in the morning to say a high school had burnt down, which is not ever ideal.

As well as those calls, I had calls from member for Taylor and the member for Ramsay, who I think were both students there at some time, who reinforced with me straightaway the special nature of the Eringa building. I did not really appreciate that until I got there that morning and saw the enormous crowd, which I think I likened to a wake at the time. People were very upset, and it was great that you both made the time to be there as well; that is important. I want to say from the outset that I do appreciate that and understand how important this building is not only to the Kapunda community and the high school but to the state in terms of the incredible history that was in there, a lot of which we lost.

I can give you an update on where we are at. I appreciate that these things are painfully slow, particularly when we are trying to access the state insurance we have for things like this, but that is compounded by the incredibly unique nature of the building. Correct me if I am wrong, but I think that when some more recent upgrade work was done there to bring it back to how Mrs Kidman had the building, there were tiles that were actually created that did not exist to match the ones she had in there. There is this incredible amount of work that has gone on to find what the cost would be to put that back in.

The community has been very patient, and I think it is good because I am confident now that what we are going to put back there is a complete replacement and what the school and the community deserve. I will try to give you an update as best I can of where we are in that process. We have a master plan now for the restoration of both the Eringa building and the replacement of building 14. That is by Grieve Gillett Architects, and it has been done in accordance with both the Education and Heritage SA requirements which, of course, are very stringent—and so they should be—when it comes to a building like this.

I am told that the advantage of that option is that it adds a sizeable new staff area and toilet block that will be linked to the restored Eringa building. I am pretty sure, from memory, those buildings that were not part of Eringa that were there probably were not in fantastic shape—the kind of stuff we built back in the day where we attached these almost shanties to pieces of heritage. It makes you shake your head. I do not blame you for that, Ben, it is okay. It was before your time.

The concept design is due imminently, which will be great. I will share that with both of you when I have it and we can share it with the community to get feedback. I give you that undertaking now. The current project program anticipates the tender and construction contract will be awarded by the end of this year, so not too far away now really, with the replacement of building 14 being completed in term 4 next year and Eringa completed in late 2025. The cost to restore and replace building 14 is still being assessed but early estimates are in the order of \$24 million. The amount factors in the additional provisions to be included in the project, which I mentioned before in terms of some upgraded work.

That is the broad brushstroke of where we are at. I am happy to take any more questions you have, but I am confident that with what we have done, in terms of the work Grieve Gillett has done, we are going to be able, as best we can, to replace what was there and also provide better and more modern spaces for the school. As I said, when we get that concept design, which will be very soon, I am happy to share it with you and the shadow minister. We can do some work with the

community if you would like, to make sure they are happy—because there is a great deal of ownership from the community over the site, which is good.

I know the end of 2025 might seem like a while away, but I am pleased that what we are doing here is actually going to do the building and the community justice and, as best we can, replace a unique part of our history.

**Ms PRATT:** Thank you for that information. I look forward to the update.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I am going to ask a question specifically on behalf of the member for Schubert, who is very interested, as the minister knows, in Nuriootpa High School. As the minister is aware, there have been significant challenges at Nuriootpa High School in recent times—some dreadful instances of bullying, in particular, have been reported.

As I understand it, one of the recommended improvements at the school relates to updating all the toilet facilities, and I believe some work has begun. Can the minister update the committee on the work done so far? Is there more work to come, and what other measures is the department looking at to fix the challenges at Nuriootpa High School?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Thank you, member for Morialta, and in the absence of the member for Schubert I want to thank her in the same vein as I did the member for Frome before, because she is a very proud former student of both Angaston Primary School and Nuriootpa, which I think is very impressive. I was really pleased that she joined me the other day—well, it was at her invitation, really—to come along and spend time at the school communities and spend time talking to the school leaders there as well.

We all know when these kinds of things happen at schools and you have this negative attention around things that have happened—I am not saying that some of it was not possibly warranted—that the whole school community hurts. It is always good when you have members of parliament from the other side of the aisle who are willing to work with you to get a good outcome for the school community, and that is what the member for Schubert and you have done here, which is good. I am happy to go into what we are doing.

There are already toilets which have been dropped in there, a new modular toilet the member for Schubert and I inspected, and they are in the process of being hooked up. They are far and away better than the existing ones there, which I have to say are not great. The member for Schubert and I spoke with the principal, Gerri Walker, and I have since spoken to Mr Temperly, who might add some comments to what I am saying, about what we can do to get those new toilets hooked up as fast as we can.

There are also issues with vaping at the school. There are issues with vaping in lots of places, but I think in some sites it gets to the point where younger students are not comfortable using toilet blocks because older students are in there vaping. The existing toilets at Nuriootpa High School are classic probably sixties, seventies kinds of jobs that are not like the new stock we put in now. I have been talking to the department and Mr Temperly around what we can do to offer a refurbishment of those as well, which is what was requested by both the member for Schubert and the school community.

Other work we are doing there is akin to the work we did at Golden Grove High School last year in terms of adding in some extra resources, an extra leadership position and some parent liaison work. The school is currently reviewing its bullying policy because the feedback from the parent community was that they did not think it was clear and that it was not always being applied consistently, so that is happening as well.

Another thing I might point out that I observed when I was taking the tour with the member for Schubert is that the school has a very comprehensive CCTV set-up, which is quite a modern one but was not in all places operational for reasons that still remain unclear to me. I have asked for that to be acted upon very quickly to make sure the school has access to that, and there is CCTV outside toilets and in different places where sometimes poor behaviour can occur.

I am confident that with all things taken into account we can turn things around there and regain the support of that part of the student community—or, more so, the parent community—that

has felt like things have gone a little awry in some cases. I might pass over to Mr Temperly now, who will talk about the process around what we do with that existing toilet block. It will cost money, as these things do.

**Mr TEMPERLY:** Through you, minister, as the minister mentioned, the priority currently is to get the modular toilet facilities connected to essential services as quickly as possible. We imagine at this stage that is looking like sometime around the beginning of week 3 of next term, but there is current working happening to look at how we can fast-track so that they are available even sooner. In terms of the existing toilet facilities, the asset services team has completed an initial desktop review as to the condition of those facilities and the design. There is a meeting on site at the school with the principal this coming Friday to talk about the possible scope of the remediation work that will be done on the school toilets.

The other investigation that is happening through the infrastructure division is on the installation of vape detectors. The utility of vape detectors is very contextual in terms of their suitability, depending on the circumstances locally, so we will explore that with the school leadership. As the minister mentioned, we are also looking at the CCTV system in the school to make sure it is operating as it should.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Last year, the minister was good enough to take on notice a request to provide a budgeted expenditure for all projects for each year of the forward estimates and that came through. Would the minister be able to provide us again with such a list this year?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** We are still on the same pages, pages 180 and 181, on which are listed all the infrastructure investments. In relation to the voluntary mergers program, are there any schools currently who have expressed an interest in the program who are under consideration, or at any stage in that process and, if so, which ones?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Member for Morialta, the answer at this stage is, no, there are not any. There is obviously the closure of Geranium Primary School, which I visited recently which does not have any students, and the closure of Coonalpyn Primary School, which again did not have any students. At the end of last year, the Moorook Primary School community voted in favour of amalgamating with Kingston-on-Murray Primary School. All students have already successfully transitioned to their new school for the start of the school year, and we have commenced the closure process for Moorook. That is all.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** In relation to Seaview Downs Primary School, which is listed third from the bottom on page 181, it is identified for a time line of September 2025, as opposed to the original completion date of December 2023 from previous papers. Can the minister explain that delay?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I might pass over to Mr Temperly, who has had a longer association with this project than I.

**Mr TEMPERLY:** There are a number of reasons why the time lines for Seaview Downs have changed somewhat. That was one of the projects where the finalisation of the architectural services was pushed back, partly due to the Year 7 to High School program. One of the consequences of that was that the escalating building costs that occurred between the time the project was announced and the current day have required us to engage in further scoping conversations with the school.

However, the predominant factors influencing the time line for that project are the discovery of significant asbestos content in the buildings that are being remodelled and also the sequencing required, given it is such a large project. We have to stage the construction of the new buildings with the decommissioning of the old ones to ensure the school can still operate properly.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I note that in last year's budget there was an estimated result of \$1.5 million for the 2021-22 financial year. The budget had \$8 million for 2022-23 and \$5.5 million for 2023-24. This year's budget identifies \$400,000 having been spent in 2022-23 and \$14.6 million for the 2023-24 year. What reassurance can you give the community that their school will not be delayed again past the September 2025 quarter?



**Mr TEMPERLY:** Now that we have finalised the scope and have a more concrete understanding of the building program as it relates to the operation of the school, we are confident in those time frames. Having said that, there are a number of factors that ultimately influence the delivery of these projects, such as weather and other factors, but we are confident we can meet those time lines.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Can the minister explain the delay in the rebuild of the Pimpala Primary School? The \$12 million originally intended for completion in December 2023 is now listed for September 2025.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** We have some detail on that for you as well, and I will again hand over to Mr Temperly to talk about Pimpala Primary School.

**Mr TEMPERLY:** The factors impacting on the Pimpala delivery dates are much the same as Seaview Downs: again, significant asbestos content discovered in existing buildings and the requirement to engage in additional scoping conversations with the school due to escalating building costs.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** These discoveries of asbestos at these two schools, were these in buildings or site rooms that were not previously identified on the department's asbestos register?

**Mr TEMPERLY:** I will have to take that on notice to provide an exact answer.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** And I would welcome the minister's thoughts on his confidence in that asbestos register, depending on the answer to that question. The budget for Pimpala last year was an estimated result of \$1.2 million, having been spent in the 2021-22 year, and \$8 million last year, so \$9.2 million was to have been spent by 30 June this year. This year's budget suggests that far from \$9.2 million having been spent, it was \$400,000 that has been spent. Can I ask what happened to the \$1.2 million that was supposed to have been spent in the 2021-22 year, or is that being accounted for differently?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will pass to Ben Temperly.

**Mr TEMPERLY:** Through you, minister, those revised cash flows reflect the delays that we were just talking about. The cash flows that were put in the budget papers are estimates based on how we understand the project will play out, so in circumstances where there are delays those cash flows will change. I understand that for any delayed capital works projects, to go to your question about the \$1.2 million, from the previous financial year would be carried over to support the project being delivered in the coming years.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** September 2025 is listed in the budget paper. Can the students and families at Pimpala, in your view, have some confidence that it will be completed on time for that time frame?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes, we do.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Thank you. I have similar questions in relation to Nailsworth Primary School, a \$5 million project: last year's budget suggested there was \$700,000 having been spent and \$3.5 million for this year and \$800,000 for the year to come. The delay is from June 2023 to March 2025. This is a smaller project than the other two. Can the minister explain the delay, and is there any reassurance that the Nailsworth Primary School community can have that the new listed date is the final offering?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes, I am happy to answer that question, member for Morialta. The answer is similar to the previous two that Mr Temperly has given. The information I have from the department is that protracted delays in the engagement of architectural services due to the finalisation of projects for the Year 7 to High School program have caused the delays, but I am reassured that Nailsworth, as is the case with Pimpala and Seaview Downs, can have confidence in the dates we are projecting now.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** The protracted delays as a result of the Year 7 to High School project have been identified in relation to all three of these schools. Given that the budget for these

three schools was provided in the middle of 2021, towards the end of when the Year 7 to High School process was happening—indeed the contracting of builders I do not believe was intended to start for any of these until after year 7s were in high school—is the minister talking about the large volume of school works more generally that were on the books already, or is there something specific about year 7 that was starting after the 2022 school year that we have missed?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will pass over to Mr Temperly, member for Morialta, who will give us an answer to that question.

**Mr TEMPERLY:** It is partly both. Obviously, the year 7 building program was probably the most ambitious building program that the department had undertaken at that time. There were a number of decisions that we had to make in order to prioritise that work and to get that work done and, in some cases, such as the examples that we have talked to at the moment, it has led to a delay in the engagement of the architects and other services required to get the building started in those schools.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** So we are talking about this period between July and December 2021 when the focus was on finalising those year 7 projects. You are saying that work that would have been done by staff in engaging some of that early work was instead pushed out for a few months.

**Mr TEMPERLY:** That is correct.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** But not a year and a half?

**Mr TEMPERLY:** That is true.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Roma Mitchell Secondary College, listed on page 181, is listed for completion in December 2024. It is a \$21 million project identified for significant extra student numbers that are anticipated to come. They are not necessarily in 2024, but certainly in the years ahead. It is a delay from March 2024 originally—nine months, so not as long as some of the others, but nevertheless on a significant project. Can the minister explain that delay?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Thank you, member for Morialta. I am informed that the commitment for Roma Mitchell was always to have it ready for the start of term 1 2025 and that we are on track still to do that.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** So the original March 2024 was optimistic, but December 2024 meets the needs of the project?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** That is correct.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** That is good news. Adelaide Botanic High School has a more urgent time frame. Will the third tower at Adelaide Botanic High School be ready for the beginning of next year's school year?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Obviously, this is a very significant project that had bipartisan support from both parties before the last state election, and an important project that I think it is fair to say had an ambitious time line from the start made more difficult by the negotiations that we had to undergo with the now former Adelaide City Council, who were somewhat reticent to provide the licence to build and agree to the land swap, despite the fact that I thought it was an exceptionally good deal for the Adelaide City Council and one that I am pleased they eventually acquiesced to.

I am reminded that the contractual completion date is still February of next year, but that will be very tight. There is a possibility that it will be delayed. Exactly what that delay could be is not 100 per cent clear at this point. As you would remember with Morialta Secondary College and the delay we had there, it was not until much closer to the projected completion date that we had clarity from the builder—and in this case it is Lendlease—about when that date would be.

Regardless of what the completion date will be—and I will have clarity on that, I hope, later this year—I can tell you that I have met personally not only with Dean Brown on a number of occasions but we have met together with the builders to discuss what is happening. We are working on obviously contingency plans around if we have to accommodate students somewhere else until the build is complete where we do that. I understand those negotiations are still underway.

I am confident that soon we will have a CBD location that is an educational institution locked in as an option should we need it for years 11 and 12 students only to spend some time there if they need to until the build is complete and they can enjoy what will be, I am sure, an incredible new build at Adelaide Botanic High School. I remain hopeful that we can catch up some time but, should that not happen, we are very well advanced in having something appropriate and fit for purpose for senior students to be at should that not be the case for the start of term 1 next year.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** With Morialta Secondary College, which the minister referenced in his answer, it was fortunate this year, when building works were delayed there as a result of extraordinary rains last year, that the Magill campus of UniSA was available for those first four weeks of term and, particularly because uni students do not start their studies until later in the year, there were no uni students there to get in the way of the year 7 students from Morialta.

Is it anticipated that the contingency plan the minister is anticipating may or may not need to be put into use next year. Do we have a time frame on how long we are negotiating with whatever educational institution it might be across the road? In particular, is it anticipated a plan might be needed past the start of March, when the uni students go back?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Member for Morialta, the site that we are negotiating on would provide availability for us beyond March, should we need it. Does that answer your question? I am happy to provide more if I can and if you wish.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** How far beyond March?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Well, I am not giving the answer in a way of foreshadowing or forecasting what the delay could be, just what we are able to get from the site that we are looking at. There will be more than enough to cover any delay, and it will not be impacted by university students coming back.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** The minister identified that there would be an opportunity for year 11 and year 12 students to use alternate facilities for the period before the third tower is complete, which has a certain logic to it. The current site at Adelaide Botanic, as I recall, has a capacity for about 1,200 students—

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** That is correct.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** —and the new building has an extra 700, which are not anticipated to be full on day one. How many students, over and above the 1,200, are we expecting there to be next year at Adelaide Botanic High School?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Somewhere between 120 and 200, depending on enrolments.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Does the minister have updated expected enrolments over the next six years at Adelaide Botanic and Adelaide High School?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I might take that on notice. I am happy to come back to the member for Morialta on that.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Has the minister had any advice from the department in relation to longer term needs for CBD schools, in particular sites that might be in question, whether that be the Keswick Barracks, the ABC building at Collinswood, Hampstead Rehabilitation Centre or others?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am advised that we expect the additional capacity being built at Adelaide Botanic High School, for which you correctly pointed out is 700, will see us through to the medium term if not the long term. That is the hot off the press advice I have from the department.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Does that include a reassurance that the specialty programs at Adelaide High and Adelaide Botanic High—which includes 60 students for language specialisation at Adelaide High, 30 students for sports at Adelaide High, and I think 20 students for health sciences at Adelaide Botanic per year, in addition to the Enter for Success program for children under guardianship and for Aboriginal students—would be able to be maintained at present levels throughout the forward period?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes, it does.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** There are three budget lines that talk about the next set of questions I have: Budget Paper 5, page 26, talks about government schools and preschool upgrades; and Budget Paper 3, page 31, talks about capital investment by agency. For ease, let's go to Budget Paper 3, if we all want to read from the same page.

Budget Paper 5 talks about the \$100 million over four years for upgrades to government schools and preschools, and I note that the government did media on this at the time. I will go to Budget Paper 5, page 26, where \$74.5 million in expenditure is identified, of which \$54.5 million has been taken from the 2026-27 year and reprofiled into other years. The \$20 million difference between the 2026-27 reprofile and the \$74.5 million total, is that new money, or is some of it already allocated to Education within its capital investment budget?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Member for Morialta, could we perhaps pop to the next question and give Mr Bernardi time to find that? I am happy to come back to it.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Thank you. In relation to Budget Paper 3, page 31, there is \$30.719 million listed under 2026-27. Has that been allocated to specific projects, or is some of it still unallocated?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Could you repeat the budget reference, sorry, member for Morialta?

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Budget Paper 3, page 31, where the general government capital investment by agency lists how much is anticipated to be actually expended. We have the remainder of the school buildings and the technical colleges over the next few years, and then in 2026-27 the expenditure drops dramatically to \$30.719 million. I am asking if that \$30 million has been allocated to projects yet or if it is unallocated money within Education's forward budget?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** We now have the answer to the previous question, if we could go back to that, and then we can come back to the second one. The \$20 million is new money, is my advice from Mr Bernardi.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Thank you.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Do you want us to answer your other one?

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Let me ask one in the middle. The new money is the \$20 million and the other \$54.5 million was reprofiled. While we are on this Budget Paper 3, page 31, this \$30 million figure here, can I just clarify that without the reprofiling of that \$54 million in this year's budget measure it would have appeared as \$85 million rather than \$30 million? The subsequent question is: is this \$30 million allocated or not yet?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Mr Bernardi will provide an answer.

**Mr BERNARDI:** In our forward capital investment budget, we do have uncommitted capital not aligned to a specific project, but I would need to come back with the reconciliation with reference to this line that is referred to on page 31.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** So it could be that that \$30 million is the tail end of some projects and in addition to that it includes unallocated capital as well?

**Mr BERNARDI:** Potentially, yes. I will come back to you on notice.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Thank you. We have discussed in previous years that there is an expectation, I think it is \$60 million or \$70 million, or it might be more, that Treasury puts into Education for assumed capital projects going forward. What is the annual input from Treasury into that in future years? I assume it just goes up by indexation?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am told it goes up by indexation. The amount is around \$60-ish million, but we can take it on notice and provide you with a more specific answer.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** That will be helpful. Going back to Budget Paper 5 and the new projects, how were the schools that are set to benefit from these investments selected?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Which projects?

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Budget Paper 5, page 26, talks about \$100 million over four years for upgrades and capital works for a number of projects, which are urgent, and I assume were provided by the department. Then there are the gyms, and then there are the assets at 50 metropolitan schools, regional schools and preschools. How were those sites selected?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am happy to answer that question. One cohort was election commitments made before the last state election. I am sure you would be familiar with those projects. I would like to add, of course, that the department supported those projects. That was the advice I was given in writing by the department after coming to government. In terms of the extra money that has been added in this budget towards those election commitment projects, they were also supported by the department, but the other projects separate from that all came off the department's priority list, and that list was unchanged or untouched by me.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** The priority list, am I to take it that the first list of \$65 million for investing expenditure is the one you are saying was provided by the department?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** And the government neither added to nor subtracted from the priority list from the department?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** That is correct.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** And the \$10 million for school gyms is to deliver election commitments that were funded last year according to Labor's election promise. Am I to take it from that that the department's advice this year has been that the Labor Party's election promises were going nowhere near delivering what the promises were, so this \$10 million was necessary to deliver those projects in full?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I would not accept that characterisation.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Would we call it a blowout?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** No, we would not call it a blowout.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Why not?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Let me explain why not. Yes, extra money has been put in to make sure what was committed to at those schools or sites that received an election commitment, what was promised, could be delivered. As has been the case with a whole range of projects, and I have a list somewhere, we have had a lot of pressure because of an increase in materials and labour. There are a whole range of projects I have committed extra money to to meet the original scope, and that is true of these projects as well. I understand that accounts for the money we have put in.

I do not accept that it is a case of a blowout or getting the calculations wrong. We are in an unprecedented situation at the moment, and you certainly experienced it in your time as well, with global increases in the cost of materials. We have to make a decision at all these sites of either changing scope and providing or delivering less than was promised or putting extra money into projects and making sure that we deliver what was intended and promised.

I am doing that not only at those sites you identify that were election commitments by the then opposition, now government, but also at a whole host of sites in areas that are not held by government members of parliament, regional areas, to make sure, as best we can, we deliver what people or communities were originally promised.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Minister, in fairness, I think that is an optimistic characterisation. There were investments made by the new government of a half a million or a million to projects of the value of \$5 million, \$7 million or \$10 million before. These projects were originally \$1 million at Brahma Lodge, \$1 million at Ingle Farm, \$1 million at The Pines and \$2.5 million at Hillcrest for a total investment of \$5.5 million in last year's budget. They are now being upgraded to \$16 million projects. I invite the minister to reflect on whether indeed there was ever any possibility that those projects could be committed for the promised sums at the election. Is it the department's advice that to deliver what was promised will take three times as much money as was in last year's budget?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Thank you, member for Morialta, but I stand by my original answer. I do not have anything further to add.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Missed it by that much.

**Mr BROWN:** Good projects.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I am sure they are good projects. I am identifying that they are costing a great deal more than the government had suggested. There is \$25 million of operating expenditure in 2023-24 to upgrade, repair or replace assets at 50 metropolitan schools. That is operational funding. Can I clarify that is attributable to our Gonski spend?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** As a point of clarification, member for Morialta, are you referring to the 2023-24 budget announcement?

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Yes, it is still on page 26 of Budget Paper 5.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am told it is counted towards Gonski. It is operating expenditure.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Previously I have heard the minister say that the education department and government should not be counting infrastructure money towards their Gonski spend. I note that these \$25 million worth of commitments appeared in a press release from the government talking about its school infrastructure investment. Are these the funds that would usually just be described as the minor works budget within the education department?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** With that in mind, can we have that list of schools that are benefiting from these minor works—not just the list of schools but how much is being allocated to them and what the projects are for?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am happy to take that on notice and provide that information when we can. Mr Bernardi tells me there is still maybe a little bit of work to do, but we can provide that to you.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Thank you. Is it—

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Sorry to rudely interrupt, but I do have a list. It is not particularly long, so I can read it out.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Sure.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** The first category, which is bitumen replacement and upgrade works, including paving remediation for an allocation of \$3.4 million:

- Adelaide East Education Centre;
- Alberton Primary School;
- Eastern Fleurieu School, Strathalbyn 7-12 campus;
- Flaxmill School P-7;
- Madge Sexton Kindergarten;
- Mary Bywater Memorial Kindergarten;
- Parndana Campus;
- Riverton Primary School; and
- Warradale Primary School.

Under bushfire resistance and risk reduction works, a total of \$1.1 million shared between:

- Aldgate Primary School;
- Bridgewater Primary School; and

- Upper Sturt Primary School.

Under demolition of aged infrastructure, \$300,000 shared between:

- Elizabeth Downs Primary School; and
- Wandana Primary School.

Under proposed works of replacement of heating, cooling and ventilation covering whole of Paralowie School and whole of building at Whyalla Stuart Campus R-6, a total of \$4.7 million. Under roof, gutter and downpipe replacement, an allocation of \$4.8 million:

- Augusta Park Primary School;
- Cummins Area School;
- Eudunda Area School;
- Newbery Park Primary School;
- Playford International College;
- Valley View Secondary School;
- Madison Park Primary School;
- Aberfoyle Park High School;
- Brighton Primary School;
- Plympton International College;
- Plympton Primary School; and
- Reynella Primary School.

Under structural and geotechnical remediation works, \$1.7 million shared between:

- Highgate School;
- Parafield Gardens High School;
- Richmond Primary School;
- Seacliff Primary School;
- Tintinara Area School; and
- Wallaroo Primary School;

Under upgrade, refurbishment or replacement works to toilet facilities—

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** How much is that one?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Sorry, that is \$3.7 million shared between:

- Clarendon Primary School;
- Craigburn Primary School;
- Karcultaby Area School;
- Lameroo and District Kindergarten;
- Manoora Primary School;
- Moonta Area School;
- Naracoorte South Primary School;
- Para Vista Primary School; and

- Wirreanda Secondary School.

The final cohort is asset upgrades and replacements to traffic infrastructure, windows and ceilings, specialist areas, and walls and flooring, a total of \$5.3 million shared between:

- Balaklava Primary School;
- Ascot Park Primary School;
- Coomandook Area School;
- Evanston Gardens Primary School;
- Henley High School;
- Leigh Creek Area School;
- Leigh Creek Kindergarten;
- Naracoorte High School;
- North Ingle School;
- Palmer Primary School;
- Paracombe Primary School and preschool;
- Parkside Primary School; and
- Tintinara Area School.

I think that is the list.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I thank you for that. Can I ask if we can have on notice the ultimate reconciliation—because some of those will have significant variance between what is required at individual schools within those categories—when it is ready.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Once that is finalised, yes.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Thank you very much. What is the status—

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Sorry to rudely interrupt again, but we have an answer to a previous question. I might pass to Mr Bernardi, if that is okay.

**Mr BERNARDI:** Through you, minister, earlier a question was asked about the movement of \$387 million. I have worked that out. That is the difference between the 2022 original budget, on page 23 of Budget Paper 3, of \$4.106 billion and the estimated result of \$4.493 billion, which is a difference of the 387. The increase in expenditure of that around \$387 million since the 2022-23 original budget is primarily driven by the transfer of Skills SA from the Department for Industry, Innovation and Science to the department on 1 July 2022, which totalled \$378.6 million.

The 2022-23 original budget for the training and skills was included in the Department for Industry, Innovation and Science's budget. Following the signing of the CE agreement for the machinery of government change, the budget expense of \$378.6 million was transferred from the Department for Industry, Innovation and Science to the Department for Education, effective 1 July 2022.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** So there was a \$381 million, let's call it a variance, from Education and \$6 million from Skills, then?

**Mr BERNARDI:** No, from the variance of 387, which is original budget to the revised budget on page 23.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I am just trying to clarify the difference between 387 and 381.

**Mr BERNARDI:** Yes, 378 of it is related to Skills and the rest would be the other parts of the department.



**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** If there is any further information about the difference between the numbers on page 23 and page 24 beyond that, I am sure you will get back to us.

**Mr BERNARDI:** Absolutely, yes.

**The ACTING CHAIR (Mr Odenwalder):** Member for Morialta.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Thank you, sir. In relation to page 181, the infrastructure, the 20 schools that were funded with infrastructure projects last year, I assume they all come under this title of 'Other school projects'—Yankalilla, Mawson Lakes, the original Plympton project, and the four school gyms we talked about earlier. Can the minister identify which one of these, if any, has been completed, when the others will be completed, how much has been spent on each so far and when they are budgeted to be upgraded.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I have a list here which I might quickly read in of projects completed in 2022-23: Ardtornish Primary School, at a budget of roughly \$5.9 million; the Australian Science and Mathematics School at a budget of \$3 million; Banksia Park International High School—

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** These are not the ones that were announced last year. I am talking about the election commitment ones.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am advised in terms of the election commitment ones to which you refer that they are all still ongoing apart from the Mawson Lakes bridge, and it is good to have the member for Florey here who joined me at the opening of that just last week.

**Mr BROWN:** A fine project. Thanks for funding that.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** A good bridge.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Regarding the business cases for the proposed new schools in Mount Barker and Adelaide's northern suburbs that the minister has previously described, where are those business cases up to?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will pass over to Mr Temperly in a second but, as the member for Morialta correctly points out, we have announced that the sites where we will need to look at building new schools in the immediate future are Mount Barker, and work has commenced on that business case. I think I answered a question from the member for Morialta, possibly in this place, or maybe I took it on notice, that Infrastructure SA will get that business case as well to do their work. The other is a school in the north which Mr Temperly can perhaps provide more detail about, but I would anticipate it is further north, given where the growth in areas like Riverlea and those parts of the state are at the moment. I will pass over to Mr Temperly to give some details on where the business cases are currently at.

**Mr TEMPERLY:** Both business cases are close to completion, so we are at the step of the process of commencing the engagement with Infrastructure SA on the analysis that is being undertaken to date. The business cases themselves are quite different. In Mount Barker, it is much more the traditional business case, looking at demand for schooling and preschooling in Mount Barker itself. The work we are doing in the north is much more expansive looking at the whole of the northern suburbs taking in future demographic changes and housing developments. But for both we anticipate that we will have advice from the minister prior to the end of this year.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Are there any other new schools at the point of requiring a business case in other growth areas, or areas that have experienced significant infill?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** No, not at this point, member for Morialta.

**Ms CLANCY:** On the same budget line item that has already been discussed, alongside investing in capital, can the minister talk about the Every School a Great School initiative recently announced and how it will reduce pressure on schools?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Thank you, member for Elder, for your question. I am very pleased to be able to provide some information around that recent announcement. Yes, the comments I have made recently publicly have been along the lines of a predilection that governments, of both persuasions, have had for a long time now, which is continuing to invest in, upgrade and expand

what I might characterise as existing schools of choice, and the ones in the shared CBD zone are obvious examples, so are schools like Glenunga and Marryatville.

I do not in any way mean that as a criticism; they are fantastic schools, but I think we probably sometimes put the job of lifting up those schools that may not be first choice for families, and that have a large amount of existing capacity which is unused in the too-hard basket, because the truth is that it is not easy to do that work. It is often, although costly, easier to simply add existing capacity at schools that have a very much established demand and, in a lot of cases, waitlists. So we know that, once the extra capacity is provided, those spots will fill up and those families will be happy.

This initiative is going to focus, I think, on trying to do more in terms of where we prioritise our spending as a department and a government, focus on those schools that need some assistance to perhaps have some new infrastructure, and that is always part of the equation. As much as we say that what really matters in schools is what happens inside classrooms and the quality of our teaching and learning—and that of course is true—it does not change the fact that parents will make at least part of their assessment or judgement about where to send their children based on how the school looks, the infrastructure at the school.

The cold hard fact is that, despite the work that has been done over a number of years to upgrade our schools, there is a lot of stock that has not had the same kind of attention. Every time we upgrade a school, build new infrastructure, we probably only compound the issue there in terms of the school down the road that does not have the same investment, and the choice that families need to make around where they send their kids.

I will point to a couple of examples around where we have shown you can lift schools up. One example I have is Plympton International, which has a pretty incredible story of enrolment growth. I might not have the year correct, but I think it was around the 2016 kind of mark that there were around 360-odd enrolments, and it is now projected to be in the 1,100 vicinity in the not too distant future.

There were some zoning changes in there, of course, that probably contributed in some way, but there has been a lot of new infrastructure put there, and it is very impressive. There is also the bilingual language program, which is proving very popular, and some excellent leadership that has been shown in the school. I think those things combined have turned around the public perception of the school, and it is now well and truly a school of choice.

That is great for a number of reasons. It is great because there was existing capacity there which we could use without building more capacity, and it is good because local families get to choose their local school. There are all sorts of downsides when that does not happen, including families, in their minds, being forced to trek across town or out of the immediate area to send their kids to a different school. That has an impact on busy people's lives, on traffic, and all those sorts of things. It also does a lot to build confidence across the board that families can send their kids to their local school and be confident they will receive a really high-quality, excellent education.

The other school in my local patch that I would like to highlight, which was the subject of a really pleasing article in *The Advertiser* I think just last week—it could have been this week—is The Heights School. I remember when I was just a humble candidate for office, the calls I always got about The Heights from the community were from those who lived closer to Banksia Park International but who were zoned to The Heights; they wished to get their children into Banksia Park because they had heard that The Heights was not a good school and they did not want to send their kids there.

I can tell members now that the school has the zone in force for possibly the first time in its history, and the calls I get now are from people who live outside The Heights zone who want to get their kids into it. A number of things have happened there: STEM lab, new gym, new classrooms—and I thank the former minister for continuing those projects—as well as some great leadership there, that really turned things around. It is now a school of choice and one that is getting some well-deserved plaudits for the results it is getting.

'Make every school a great school' is one of those classic, government-type slogans, but it is very true and I want, as best I can in the time I have left in this job, whatever it is, to make sure we

do the hard work in those other schools we might identify that fall into the category of not having had the attention they deserve, and try to lift them up.

We have a number of examples across the state now where it can work. It takes investment, though, and it takes a bit of clever thinking around specialisation—and I point to Plympton there—and it takes quality leadership as well. I am proud of this initiative, and I hope in years to come we can point to some other schools that might be success stories because of it.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** On Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 188 in relation to FTEs, can the minister identify how many schools in South Australia are currently seeking to recruit a principal?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will take that on notice, member for Morialta.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Thank you, and in doing so can I also add a couple of other categories? In addition to seeking how many schools are currently seeking to recruit a principal, also how many schools have an acting principal and therefore will soon be recruiting? How many schools have a principal in the last year of their appointment with no confirmation as yet that they will be rolled over? When will decisions be made relating to principals being rolled over in their appointments?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am happy to take all those on notice and provide an answer to you.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Thank you. If we go to the previous page in relation to country teachers pre-service programs—actually, I will start specifically in relation to the extension of country loadings, which the Labor Party had as an election commitment. Previously country loadings tapered off after five years, or there might have been adjustments depending on the circumstances for teachers on those contracts, but the new government promised that teachers in the country would keep those loadings indefinitely. Has that change been made yet or is it still to be enacted?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Thank you, member for Morialta. I am happy to provide an answer to that question. Yes, you correctly identify one of our election commitments, that is, to make the country incentive zone allowance (CIZA) ongoing. I think the timing of this is obviously important in relation to that member's previous question, too, around attracting and retaining staff which is a challenge being felt across Australia more than ever before, particularly in the Eastern States. I think New South Wales and Victoria have a lot of teacher vacancies.

The current state of play, if I can put it that way, is that the CIZA, the country incentive zone allowance, expires after five or eight years, and it depends on the remoteness of the staff member who has attracted that. We are actually in the process as we speak—or I may even be doing it now, member for Morialta—of announcing that the allowance will become an ongoing payment.

This will mean that anyone who is eligible to receive the allowance in the 2024 school year, including those who move to a regional school or preschool for the first time, receive the allowance for as long as they are in the country. The amount they receive will depend on what zone they fall into. Of course, it is an election commitment that we must deliver, but I am confident that is going to play a role in attracting more staff to go to the country, which is where we feel those shortages most acutely, and also in doing something to raise the profile somewhat of the important role that country teachers play, not just in schools but in the communities that they move to.

I remember all too well where I grew up when we would regularly have teachers who would come down from Melbourne and stay a few years, and the community loved it, and they might join local sporting clubs like the footy club, then after a few years they would disappear. The loss was not just felt by the students in the school but it was felt by the whole community. That is certainly the case in South Australia where we have a very urbanised population and lots of small regional locations where that issue of attracting and retaining people I think is even more acutely felt.

Just a little bit of detail that I might put on the record around what the zones pay: zone 2 is closest to a populated area and zone 5 is the most remote. Zone 2 is \$1,989 in addition per annum; zone 3, \$3,508; zone 4, \$6,187; and zone 5 is \$10,023 per annum. But beyond the implementation of this election commitment, any further changes to the scope of CIZA are being discussed with the AEU as part of the negotiations now for the next enterprise bargaining agreement. Depending on

how we go with that, I hope that I might have some more to say about it in the not too distant future. At the moment, I am pleased to announce that it will be operational for those who move to regional schools or preschools for the first time in the 2024 school year.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** To be clear, the program does not include teachers who are in country schools now or who may even start between now and the end of the year. Those teachers will still be under the original arrangement and will not have indefinite country loadings included in their pay?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** At this stage, no, because that was not the election commitment, but I am working on that as part of the enterprise bargaining agreement with the union in the hope that it might be something we are able to offer.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Who is negotiating the EB with the union; is that you or the Minister for Industrial Relations?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** It is IRAP, which is under the Minister for Industrial Relations—yes, the Attorney, who is also the Minister for Industrial Relations, but IRAP handles that.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** How many teachers exercised their right of return after teaching in the country for the required period of time last year in 2022? Potentially, could we have that figure for each of the last five years? I will not blame the minister if he takes it on notice.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Thank you—and, yes, I shall.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Does the department have a target for how many teachers will exercise that right this year and next year and so on?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will pass over to the chief executive for that one.

**Prof. WESTWELL:** We do not have a target for that. Of course, what we want to do is maximise retention of educators in the country. The country incentive zone allowance, an announcement made today, will support that teacher retention in regional areas.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I move to a new budget line, page 189, and the explanation of significant movements. At the top of the page, there is \$4.1 million for autism support in schools, which is the difference between the 2023-24 budget and the 2022-23 estimated result. At the bottom of the page, there is another \$4 million for autism support in schools, which is comparing the 2021-22 actual with the 2022-23 budget.

Am I to take it from this that this \$4 million in neither year was included in last year's budget? Or, to ask the question in a different way, is this \$4 million in 2022-23 and the \$4 million in 2023-24 effectively the same \$4 million in separate years, or is it \$4 million in the first year and then \$8 million in the second year?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will pass this to Mr Bernardi.

**Mr BERNARDI:** I am advised that you are correct. In the first year, it is \$4 million, being a half-year impact, and then it grows to \$8 million.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** That makes a lot of sense, thank you. How much was actually spent in 2022-23 on this project?

**Mr BERNARDI:** I would need to come back with that one.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Are you happy to take that on notice, minister?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am happy to take that on notice.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Thank you. Are all services being continued that were previously and/or are currently being provided by Autism SA or other NGOs serving students with autism? Perhaps I can ask a clarifying question: can the minister provide a list of all contracts and other financial arrangements between the department and Autism SA in 2021-22 and 2022-23, and are any of those services ceasing this financial year or next?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am happy to answer that, member for Morialta, and then I might give a few reflections on the program. There have been no changes to funding to Autism SA or any other non-government service providers since the introduction of the autism inclusion teachers. Perhaps this is an opportunity for me to talk a little bit about this program.

It was on 1 February that I joined the Assistant Minister for Autism, the Hon. Emily Bourke in the other place, and we launched the first network of autism inclusion teachers in public primary schools, creating a network of autism expertise right across the state. The sum of \$28.8 million over the forward estimates is being provided collectively to allow each primary school to release a teacher to the role for one day a week or one day a fortnight, depending on the size of the school. Also, 427 schools have an autism inclusion teacher, and this covers 97 per cent of eligible schools.

I might just take this opportunity to thank those in the department, as well as the Hon. Emily Bourke, for what I think is some pretty amazing work in a very short period of time. I have to be honest and say that my levels of confidence were not very high about us finding the staff in that period to commence their work, but I was very pleased not only with both the work of the assistant minister and those in the department, some of whom are with me here today, to get that done, but also the willingness of teachers, who are already incredibly busy, to put up their hands and take on that role. I think that it speaks really highly of our workforce and that it is also an acknowledgement from the workforce that we need to do more in this area.

I have heard the Premier speak on a number of occasions about what led to his desire to do something in this space. It was born out of four years of street-corner meetings, town hall-style meetings and that sort of thing, where the Premier said that he was basically inundated with people who came up to him and spoke about a child or a family member with autism who they knew was struggling in their school setting and not getting the support that adult thought they needed or deserved. The Premier was overwhelmed by that, and I think he hit the nail on the head in terms of the need for this in the system.

It is my desire—and at this stage it is a desire only—not to have this be the end of our ambitions for the support we provide to students with autism. We will look at whether there are opportunities in the future to increase the loading or the provision at those primary schools. I do not pretend that the current allocation is going to meet all the demand we have out there in the system to assist these students, so it is something we are watching very closely in terms of its success.

When visiting sites, I have been pleased to have the opportunity to speak to the staff member who is performing the autism inclusion role at that site, and they have been largely positive about what they are doing, but certainly they have pointed out to me that in many cases they feel there is opportunity or scope for them to do more of that work, and that is something we will look at in the future.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** The minister said there were no changes to any of the arrangements. Can he provide reassurance that any contracts ending in June 2023, any time-limited contracts relating to this, have been renewed—that is, contracts or other financial arrangements?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will try to see if I can answer that for you now; if not, I will take it on notice. My answer, member for Morialta, is that we do not think so, but we cannot be 100 per cent sure, so we will come back to you.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I appreciate it; thank you. Can I go to page 179, the general line about the net cost of providing services. In relation to the government advertising that has been supporting the technical colleges, noting the recent round of government advertising about Findon Technical College in particular, how much is that advertising costing and who is paying for it?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am happy to get you an answer on that. While we are doing that, member for Morialta, I have been reminded that, in terms of CIZA (country incentive zone allowance), people who are currently receiving CIZA at the moment will also receive it ongoing, as well as those who are moving to the country in the time frame. Separate from that is the negotiation with the union that I mentioned, around existing country staff who are currently not attracting CIZA because they might have timed out. So there will be new people but also people who are currently getting it now

who will continue to get it under the delivery of the election commitment, and then on top of that there are the negotiations with the union.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** To be clear, anyone who is currently getting the country allowance will continue to get it, anyone who comes in will get it and the people who currently do not have an allowance are the group in question.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** That is correct.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** That is fair enough. Regarding government advertising, who is paying for your ads?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** The total amount for the advertising campaign is \$1.2 million. It comes out of the funding bucket for the technical colleges, which is Department for Education funds.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** So the money we acquit to the federal government is our contribution towards meeting our Gonski responsibilities? It includes \$1.2 million that is paying for advertisements for Findon Technical College's enrolments next year and the other technical colleges programs?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** We will take that on notice and come back to you with an answer.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** What is the purpose of the ads?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** To build awareness of the tech colleges, to let both prospective students and families know that it is an option. I know that in the case of Findon, which will be the first to open, from the principal there, Kathleen Hoare, the advertising has been very well received and something that she has said is important, because there is little point in building five technical colleges, I think to a total value of \$208 million, from memory, without it.

It is obviously a significant change to the system. There is nowhere else in Australia, to my mind, that is doing this at the moment. It is a \$208 million investment, \$175 million capital and \$33.8 million operating across the three years, starting from 2023-24. With Findon opening in term 1 2024, I think is important that we let families know that this is an option for them. It is something we want students to take up.

It certainly has very broad support, I think, from employer groups, including some like BAE that we have partnered with at Findon, and there will be more partnerships that we will announce in the not too distant future. We want students to know that that option will be there for them, to move into the tech college at year 10, do years 10, 11 and 12 and then go out into the workforce.

The purpose of the advertising campaign is to make sure that South Australian families know of the option and start contemplating it now, because decisions around what students might do in their senior years and beyond are made, often, at the junior high school level, and those key influences around students, like mum and dad or grandma and grandpa, are already having those conversations with them around what they think they should do, and they all collectively need to know that our tech colleges will be an option for them.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** The Findon Technical College, as I think the minister just confirmed, is looking to be delivering for students in years 10, 11 and 12, and my recollection previously is that it will have a total of 200 enrolments. How many enrolments is it taking next year, and is that just for year 10s, or is it for 10s, 11s and 12s?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** There will be enrolments starting next year for years 10 and 11 at Findon. We anticipate enrolments—and these are approximate figures because the enrolment process is underway now—of 60 year 10 students and 60 year 11 students.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** At \$1.2 million for a program that is seeking 120 enrolments, that strikes me as about \$10,000 advertising costs per enrolment. Had the department considered any other means of attracting enrolments to Findon Technical College that might potentially have cost the public education schools budget less money than \$1.2 million?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** First of all, I do not think that is right because you are characterising it as being advertising only for Findon, which is not right. It is advertising across the state for all five

because they are all going to be online by 2026, so that process has to start now, so, no, I do not accept that.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** We will move on. Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 179, is the workforce summary. In relation particularly to corporate staff, does the department still have a number of staff working from home, the arrangements that started during the pandemic? Especially given the encouragement that the Premier and others have given to get people working in the city again, does the department have a clear plan and time line in place for staff who are working from home to return to the office?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Thank you, member for Morialta. If you are okay with it, I might pass to the chief executive to give you an answer on that.

**Prof. WESTWELL:** Obviously, with our service delivery roles with work performed on site to support students and student learning, those educators, that workforce, have always been in schools where possible. They have not been working from home; they have been providing that service and I think it has been a great credit to those educators that they have continued throughout COVID and some of the challenges. Where other workers were able to work from home, they have been able to continue that service and that connection to students wherever possible. The majority of the department's workforce is in those frontline service delivery roles in our schools and preschools, and now that requires them to work on site.

For our central divisions, the department's corporate office rosters are managed within the individual divisions and teams and that takes account of the work performed, the team's operational needs and the individual's circumstances as well. I think it is important that we retain that flexibility to respond to the nature of the work, the nature of the operational needs and the nature of the individual circumstances.

We do continue to support working from home arrangements and we have platforms, of course, like Teams and our Ed Remote Gateway to make sure that people can retain their productivity when working from home because they can access all our systems remotely. The responsibility for the day-to-day management of that sits with employees and managers to ensure that the work outcomes that are required are achieved and that we manage performance issues wherever they arise.

I might just add that in terms of making sure that we are getting the productivity that we need from our staff, whether they are working remotely or they are working in the department, with any performance issues that are identified, when employees are working from home, individual rosters are adjusted, if need be, to ensure the appropriate management oversight.

We do have flexible working arrangements for staff beyond working from home, and that is important as well. Work can be provided, so flexitime, compressed working weeks, purchased leave and job sharing, and those arrangements are managed and monitored locally. I just end by saying that the workforce advice that we have regarding flexible working arrangements always aligns with guidance from the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Thank you for that; that is helpful. Can I ask if you have any data, and I am obviously happy for you to take it on notice if it is not readily to hand, on the current proportion of staff working from home, particularly out of these corporate roles, and staff working in the office, and has that proportion changed over the last year?

**Prof. WESTWELL:** I will make best endeavours to get that data available. Because it is managed locally and that flexibility is applied—it might not apply in the long term—it might be difficult to get that data exactly, but I will make best efforts to get that for you.

**The ACTING CHAIR (Mr Odenwalder):** I might turn to the member for Florey.

**Mr BROWN:** Can the minister provide the committee with examples of how the government is helping South Australian families with the cost of living?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Thank you, member for Florey, for your question. I am very happy to provide you an answer about some of the initiatives that the government has put in place. We all know here, as I am sure the members for Elder, Playford, Unley, Frome and Morialta would, about

cost of living biting at the moment. There is absolutely no doubt about that, and it is certainly something that I hear as a local member more and more. I think we have to take into account what we can do in all parts of government, including education, to try to give a bit of cost-of-living relief to families.

I think one of the great traps in this job given the very generous—I think very generous—pay that we receive as members of parliament and ministers is it is very easy to get out of touch with what everyday working families and elderly, vulnerable South Australians have to contend with and how, to us, sometimes what we might perceive as relatively small amounts of money can be an incredible block to them being able to lead healthy, active and happy lives.

The materials and services charge, which is the amount of money paid to attend a public school in South Australia, I think is a very good example of that. It is not what you would describe probably as a large sum of money given what could be spent on one's education, but the election commitment that we made—and it was matching the former government on this—to have a rebate of \$100 for each child off the materials and services charge I think has been really welcomed by families and is a reminder to all of us in this place about how even what might be in the scheme of things not a huge amount of money can be very welcomed and important for families.

I do not have it in front of me but from recollection the set materials and services charges in the primary school setting is something like \$269 or \$270 per child. In the high school setting it is about \$355. Schools can raise that with the agreement of governing councils and parent bodies, and some schools do that, but a lot do not. The rebate that we have provided both last year and now this year, and we will be providing again, provides \$100 off, which, if you have two, three or four children at school, very quickly becomes a considerable amount of money.

I am pleased that we have continued it. If I were to be very frank with you, at the time that we committed to it, or matched the then government's commitment, I wondered about whether or not that \$12 million would be the best bang for buck that we could get, because it is quite a blunt instrument. I am now very, very glad that we did commit to it and are continuing it, because the more families I speak to—some, of course, are not comfortable in having that conversation but some are—they have been quite honest with me about the difference it has made to them.

The other notable thing that we have done—and I was with the member for Elder at Clovelly Park Primary School when we announced this—is provide more money for KickStart for Kids and Foodbank for school breakfasts. I was joined by the member for Elder and the Premier on that day, and we were able to serve some of the kids breakfast. They joined us in preparing the toast and putting the Vegemite and jam on. We spoke to the principal there as well, who is a very impressive person.

What we have done is give a \$6.5 million boost to the program. Before that boost, those two excellent organisations, KickStart for Kids and Foodbank—and we were joined on that day by Ian Steel—were funded by the government to provide something like 400,000 breakfasts across the system across four years. This funding will mean that that will be increased to 1.4 million breakfasts. It will mean in some cases that schools that do not offer a breakfast program will be able to offer a breakfast program, and those like Clovelly Park Primary School that offer one but not every day I think will be able to increase their offering.

There are a couple of examples I will give. I think there is one here that is not mentioned in my notes (and I am sure someone next to me will correct me if I am wrong), but we might have done something around the threshold or indexation level for the School Card—not a huge change but enough, hopefully, to enable some families with multiple children to be eligible for the School Card amount, which is another important thing.

If you look at the annual School Card income limits, again, I think this is a very strong reminder about how tough some people are doing it. To gain access to the School Card in the 2023 school year with one dependent child, the annual School Card gross income limit is \$66,412 and then going up to five children is \$71,156—and I think that is combined gross family income. We have a number of families, of course, who access that, which I think goes to show that there are people out there doing it tough, getting by on very small incomes. That is why things like School Card, breakfasts and the materials and services rebate are important.



**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I will use the general expenses line on page 188 for the next few questions. What attendance data does the department currently require schools to provide to head office? How many chronic truancy referrals has the department received so far this year and how does that compare with previous years?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Thank you, member for Morialta. I will give you as much detail as I can and am happy to take anything else over and above that. Truancy is a perennial issue, of course, particularly around the use of the powers under the act in terms of prosecution, which—you and I both know, having being involved in discussions in this place around legislation and potential changes to the act—is not always as easy to use as one might like. I think it is fair to say I have pushed the agency very hard in my first 18 months on using it in cases where we think it is valid.

My concern is more that if we have provisions in legislation like the ability to prosecute parents who are actually playing an active, deliberate role in preventing their kids from going to school and politicians like myself go out and talk about it but then we never use it, people wise up really fast and realise that it is a paper tiger and is never going to be used.

My point has been that I am not asking the department to be out there prosecuting people willy-nilly, left, right and centre, but there are legitimate cases, as the member for Morialta and I both know because we have been privy to them, where parents have actually actively done things to stop kids going to school. In those cases I want the act to be used to take appropriate action against them but also to make it clear to others out there who might be contemplating similar action to know that we are prepared to use it.

Currently, there are three cases involving five children that are with Crown for advice on prosecution. There are a further 25 cases that involve 39 children that are under what I would describe as 'close scrutiny' of the department. We are working on these cases to try to get the kids back to school. That is the best outcome; I support that outcome. I am not here saying to the department, 'I don't care whether or not we can get them back to school in another means. Throw the book at them.' I am saying that when all those things have been exhausted then it is time to use the act.

Of the previous cases under consideration, some have not progressed to prosecution because we have successfully re-engaged the kids, which is good. Obviously, sometimes the act and the provisions within it are useful, because once families realise that we are actually going to pursue it to the letter of the law, all of a sudden behaviour changes and the kid comes to school. That is the best outcome.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** That is the main purpose of the changes to the act.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes, indeed, that is correct. That is right. We know that this stuff is really complex and there is often all sorts of stuff going on at home. There might be child protection involvement; there could be drug use, alcohol, domestic violence, all sorts of things. The poor kid, of course—it is another reason why we need to do everything we can to get them to school.

I am happy to provide more specific data if we find it, but I would say most students attend school regularly. There are a small number who are absent from school a lot. There is a range of reasons for that. Attendance at school is important for learning. It is also about socialising. It is also, as I just mentioned, for those kids who might be from a troublesome home environment, to give them some respite from that and to have the eyes of other adults on them to be able to see how they are going and refer them to other support services or authorities if that is necessary. I might now pass to the chief executive, who I am told has a bit more detail to provide if you are okay with that.

**Prof. WESTWELL:** I will provide you on notice some specific data. As you say, schools from all three sectors are required to provide attendance data, and I will give you the breakdown of that. As to just some broader attendance rates, attendance rates from reception to year 12 from 2021 and 2022 were 87.0, 88.9 and 84.5 per cent respectively. Earlier than that, between 2010 and 2019, attendance rates were pretty steady between 90 and 91 per cent, so this is something we are really concerned about.

The South Australian attendance data for government schools certainly aligns with the rates recorded in government schools nationally, and that reduced attendance rate linked to COVID we

have seen in all the states and territories. The breakdown of the 84.5 per cent attendance rate in 2022 was the result of 11.5 per cent authorised absences and 4 per cent unauthorised absences. Those unauthorised absences mean where no parental approval is received by the school and there is no explanation for why the student is absent.

Those authorised absences are the ones that continue to be the majority of absences; they were through COVID and we are still seeing that now. We have started to see some early signs that attendance in 2023 may be better than in 2022, but the attendance rate still remains below the 2021 COVID-19 related absences we are still seeing in our system. It is too early to tell whether those current attendance rates reflect any broader impact on school attendance that is going to go beyond COVID. We have a number of projects and processes to support attendance and really get those students back to school.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** The minister gave us some helpful figures earlier, but in relation to those families who are not engaging or are acutely being scrutinised by the department, is the education family conferencing model being used to engage with those families? How many students have been referred for an education family conference perhaps each year over the last couple of years since the introduction of the conferences?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Working backwards, I will get that number for you. Are they being used? Absolutely. Can they be effective? Absolutely. I know the member for Morialta knows how these work all too well but, perhaps for the rest of those present today, they are voluntary, independently mediated meetings between families, schools and other professionals. They have a strengths-based approach to support families and children to have a voice in developing strategies to improve school attendance.

They are an important step, they are certainly still being used and I absolutely support that because, as I think we all agree in here, the best outcome is that we find a way for students to get back to school without punitive measures like prosecution. I will get the data on how many of those for the member for Morialta.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Going to page 188, the FTEs budget line, I have some questions in relation to staffing issues. Does the department's modelling of projected supply and demand of teachers over the next three years per se show increasing shortages of teachers relative to demand?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I might invite Laura Schonfeldt to come and speak. I will ask Laura Schonfeldt, the Executive Director for People and Culture, to sit in the stead of the chief executive and provide an answer to the member for Morialta.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** An outstanding suggestion.

**Ms SCHONFELDT:** Our team works with schools and preschools across the state to do planning for their workforce profiles over the coming years. What we have been doing over the last number of years is working with schools to see how far out they can forecast their staff profiles. Many of the things that can contribute to staff profiles are not known significantly far in advance because, as you will understand, sometimes teachers will make decisions about their retirement or their personal situation for the coming year.

What our profiling shows at the moment is that the situation is relatively stable. We have shortages in some areas, mainly in specialist secondary subjects and for some country locations that are particularly hard to fill and that have always been harder to fill. We are working with programs like Teach for Australia to make sure we can close some of those secondary gaps; those programs are designed to get teachers out to those hard to fill locations.

What we are seeing with our initial teacher education numbers is that they are moving, but we are not 100 per cent sure what the impact of COVID will be on that. We are working through the ATWD data we got recently to understand what the future pipeline looks like. I would not say we are seeing a significant change—that was your question—in the teacher pipeline for South Australia at this point, but we are consciously monitoring it and making sure we are understanding what it would look like in the out years.

We know that at the moment it takes four years to take an undergraduate teacher through an initial teacher education program or, if we are using programs like Teach for Australia, where we can get them in and work with them through employment-based pathways.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I am sure, minister, you would have heard—and I am sure the executive director and other senior staff would have heard when talking to principals—that recruitment is increasingly an anxiety they feel and that principals in inner metropolitan schools have applicants for every position but potentially fewer applicants of high quality than they used to. For the sites that Laura Schonfeldt identified in the country or for specialist secondary subjects, that is exacerbated further.

Does the department have an assessment of the numbers of vacancies schools are carrying at the moment? Is there any assessment of what the trend is likely to be in the coming years? Perhaps I can ask a broad question that may capture all of it: how is the department planning to manage this risk?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Thank you, member for Morialta; it is a very good and fair question and something that is on the mind of everyone at this table. It is certainly on my mind. I watch what is happening in New South Wales and Victoria, in particular, and one of the figures given to me about New South Wales was 3,000 unfilled teacher spots. I would very much not like us to get anywhere near that.

I can tell you that at this moment—as at week 7, term 2—there are 51 teaching vacancies across the system. They are there for a range of reasons, including being unable to fill a role previously advertised (as the member Morialta identified), backfilling leave, backfilling resignations or retirements, or backfilling where a teacher has been seconded to another role. We are at 51. I do not like to see any and, as Laura mentioned, we are working where we can with Teach for Australia to fill some of those hard to fill spots.

We are certainly in a much better position than some of those Eastern States are in currently. I do not take that for granted though; we have to keep doing the work. Perhaps I can mention one of the election commitments around specialist teachers, which the member Morialta was probably going to touch on anyway. We are still doing work on that, and we are confident we will deliver it. We are doing a lot of work with stakeholders at the moment around what that might look like because, yes, it is obviously important, but we are trying to do it at a time when we have particular and acute issues around attracting people to be teachers, for reasons we all know. I will point to—

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** It is alright. You have 2½ years to get it done.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes, thank you. Indeed. But I want to have it done as soon as we possibly can, because of course every year that goes past where a student does not have a specialist teacher is not a good thing for their education. But there are job opportunities out the wazoo—I am not sure if that is a parliamentary term or not—and I do not personally take credit for that; they are just the facts.

It is a harder value proposition to put to people now than it has ever been to say, 'You should be a teacher'—despite the fact that there is a good solid starting wage of around \$75,000 in the public system and I think it is around that in the non-govs as well—when there are all these other job opportunities out there that pay the same, possibly more, and they do not have the stress and workload that teaching does. That is what we are up against.

The department is doing some really exciting work, which is how I would describe it, around teaching in the country, which is good. A concierge service, as we are calling it, is working with young teachers who are going out to do their initial teacher education and their placements to help them in terms of finding somewhere to live. We have connected them with other students who are going to the same place. It might be Port Augusta. We have done a few social events. I was at a thing at Sprout kitchen at Mile End recently where we had the whole group in and they took them through a bit of an exercise, which was probably just as much about getting to know each other as it was teaching them to cook a few meals.

One of the things the chief executive said to me not long after both of us took our jobs that has stuck with me was when I asked, 'What can we do to attract people to go to the country?' The

point he raised, which had not really struck me was, when we talk to those young people who might be inclined to go and do that is that any housing stock we have, which is obviously incredibly difficult to find anyway at the moment because of issues around rental availability, is not what you would describe as fit for purpose for perhaps a young man or woman who would like to maybe share-live with another young man or woman, so they have support and all that kind of stuff.

They are still built for nuclear families, which is what I lived in when I was born when my dad was a teacher at Hawkesdale in country Victoria. We lived in the teacher's property, which was a little three-bedroom weatherboard thing, which is probably still used by the school. But unless we do innovative things to attract people into country areas like the example Martin gave, I fear we are not going to be successful. I guess what I want to say is that we are contemplating doing those, and the teaching in the country concierge stuff that we are doing I think is a great example of that.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** In relation to the recruitment processes that Victoria is doing, and there may be other states, where they are giving people substantial sums of money to relocate, do we have any data on how many South Australian teachers we have lost to Victoria or interstate as a result of those recruitment policies?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes, and I have made the point at the national Education Ministers Meeting in front of those jurisdictions that have done that about how incredibly disappointing I think it is that we are not working together to grow the pie instead of trying to nick each other's teachers. Nonetheless, Victoria have well and truly gone down that path.

I just spoke to Ms Schonfeldt, who is not aware of any. I do not know if we collect data but I have asked the question on a number of occasions. I am aware of one, I think, who might have called in to 891. That person may not have been a public teacher, but I have a feeling—and given that I grew up there—that they might have moved from the South-East in South Australia to south-west Victoria, which is possibly a Mount Gambier to Portland move, to attract the extra money. But that is all we are aware of. I have had no feedback or any indication that we are losing teachers at this stage to Victoria's disappointing attempts to take our staff.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Well, why would you want to go there? In relation to Labor's election commitment to 'increase the percentage of permanent teachers by at least 10 per cent', has the minister or the department yet worked out the parameters that the government is setting itself to achieve that commitment? For example, are we talking about between March 2022 and 2026? Last year the minister said, 'I am not going to give you a figure now but there is work being done now. I am sure once that work is done, we will be able to say more on that.' So a year later, has that work been done and what are the parameters for the Labor Party fulfilling its election commitment on increasing the percentage of permanent teachers?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Thank you, member for Morialta. I do have some detail on this and I might go to the genesis of it. The reason we have said 'by at least 10 per cent' is that there was at the time of us being in opposition—and there may still well be—a disagreement between the union and the department on what levels of permanency in the system are, so to avoid a silly game of semantics we committed to at least 10 per cent.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I am not sure you have succeeded if that was the goal.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** We shall see. Nonetheless, I think it is a very important election commitment now more than ever. We have already spoken about CIZA, the country incentive zone allowance and its importance. Another part of that is permanency and trying to convert those who are on contracts to permanency when they are people whom we want to have long term in the system.

I can say we have started the process of meeting the election commitment and increasing the rates of permanency in the system. Based on 12,182 permanent teachers as at June 2022, to deliver on this commitment the department will employ 1,218 more teachers permanently within this term of government, being a 10 per cent increase. This commitment includes preschool teachers—that was something I pushed for, and I can tell you I am very glad that we did that—and it is on track to be delivered within this term of government.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** So the department is defining the commitment as 12,000 to it being increased by 10 per cent of the base number. I note the election commitment was to increase the percentage of permanent teachers. Can I ask then what is the current percentage of the department's teaching workforce that hold permanency? Last year, I think the minister reported the department said it was about 80 per cent.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will take that on notice, member for Morialta, and get you an answer on that.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Thank you. On page 187, there are highlights and targets to do with the technical colleges. Last year, we discussed the need to work collaboratively across sectors, particularly in regard to the proximity of Findon and the Catholic Education system's Western Technical College being so close. Can the minister advise what progress he has made towards that collaboration?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes, your recollection is correct. I have met, of course, with representatives of the Catholic system—chief executive, Neil McGoran, and the recently departed chair of the board, Professor Denis Ralph—about that. At the last conversation I had, which I think might have been the last meeting I had with Professor Ralph before he retired, we discussed this and I think I am accurate in saying that they felt we had met our commitment and done a good job of protecting Western Tech from in some way cannibalising their enrolments by what we will be offering at Findon.

I have said on a number of occasions publicly that if these tech colleges are to play the role that we envisage for them and increase people moving into the professions in VET pathways that are in such dire demand, there is no point us setting up tech colleges that just take or diminish enrolments from the existing Catholic ones like Cardijn, Western Tech and St Pat's, and we made deliberate decisions around what was offered at Findon to do that, and I believe we are meeting that.

On the flip side of the coin, at Port Augusta we have had representations from the Catholic system there who would very much like to have access to our tech college. We have Clare Feszczak here who has done some superb work on designing these things. I think we have a model where we can do that. It was my ambition with these that they are not cookie-cutter technical colleges, which are the same. They will not only offer different courses but they will potentially be flexible and nimble enough to change their specialisations in the future, should that be needed.

One thing that spelt the death knell for the old tech colleges—and I went to one in Victoria that became a secondary college—was they were totally and utterly locked into what they offered forever. My tech college was automotive, woodwork and metalwork. Because of the way it was set up it could never do anything else, and when the demands of Portland in the south-west changed it was no longer relevant. If we do the same thing with these five, in 10 years we are going to be saying that they are not producing the graduates we need.

That goes as well to meeting the commitment the Premier gave around making sure that particularly the regional tech colleges like Port Augusta and Mount Gambier are tech colleges for the whole area. They are for the Limestone Coast and they are for the Upper Spencer Gulf, and that means, in terms of Port Augusta, that we have a flexible enrolment model where non-government students who may wish to will be able to get access, where that is what those systems desire.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** How many students from local public schools have taken up the opportunity to engage with Western Technical College, which Catholic Education offers for all schools from all sectors? Has the minister discussed this opportunity with local public school principals to ensure they are familiar with it?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Perhaps I could be bold and jump ahead to what I think the member is getting at, in a very respectful and polite way, which is about representations, no doubt, that we have both had from the Catholic system that there have been comments or action taken by some of public school staff around the Western Tech area to dissuade public students from using Western Tech. I can say that conversations have been had with those schools to make sure that the principals, and therefore the student body are aware of the option, and to make sure that we are not taking some kind of active step to prevent them from accessing it.

I support that, just like I support making sure that what we are providing at Findon is complementary to the offering at Western Tech, which is important. I feel like I have certainly made good on that commitment. I have been very strong in my comments with Prof. Westwell and Ms Feszczak around that—that this is about growing the pie, not about taking enrolments. I have to give a shout-out here to the ever-present Danny Deptula from St Pat's, who is at every single event I go to, and probably the member for Morialta too.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** He is a great man.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** He is a very good person. I caught up with him recently and said, 'What you have done at St Pat's in no small way is the inspiration for what we are trying to do in the public system. It is to complement you, and I don't want to do anything which diminishes the amazing tech college you have created out there in the northern suburbs.'

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Can I go to languages. Will the government continue to provide support to Unley High School, Norwood International High School, Aberfoyle Park High School and Roma Mitchell Secondary College to enable them to continue offering the International Baccalaureate Diploma pathway for their senior secondary students? I note that the entrepreneurial strategy extra funding was seen as a time-limited program by the government, and it ends at the end of this year. Does the IB program face a similar fate?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Before I pass to Martin Westwell, let me perhaps talk about the entrepreneurial programs. Yes, it is time-limited funding, but I am reassured that all the sites that were doing it are going to continue doing it. That is a good thing and I support that. I have not taken a flamethrower to anything yet. There is always the flamethrower in the kitbag, but it is not really my style, as I think the member for Morialta knows. I have made it clear that things the former government did which worked should be kept and built on, and if there is advice that I receive from the department about things that need to be changed I will take that into account. But I did not charge in and say, 'Right, we are going to blow up those entrepreneurial schools because they weren't my idea.'

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** There are a lot of kids in those schools.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes, exactly, and the feedback I have is that it is positive, but I have gone back, particularly after you asked me the question in question time, I think, just to be absolutely rock solid that they have worked and will be continued in a strong fashion. I am told, absolutely, they are, but in terms of the other detail, I might pass to the chief executive.

**Prof. WESTWELL:** Languages remain a priority for us in public education. It is interesting to note that when students get to year 12 and are looking at stage 2 of the SACE there is a very wide range of language offering at stage 2 that students in the public system take up. The number of languages available in the public system is more than double that available in the independent or Catholic schools. It is interesting to note that almost every Catholic school offers Italian, for example, so it is very much connected to the culture. Almost no independent school offers Italian. A range offer German, but they tend to be the Lutheran schools.

In public education, what we find is a really wide range, representing that strength of diversity that we have in public education around languages. We want to support that. We want to make sure that our students from that range of backgrounds who come to public education can find that sense of belonging through studying their own language, through being successful and sharing their expertise in their own language with other students, as well as the benefits that come from language learning.

I am really keen that our students are not just learning a target language but that we are also setting them up to be learners of language, so that when they go into their out-of-school lives as young people, and then beyond school, as they make that transition they are able to go out with the confidence of being language learners and being able to develop that as they need to in their futures. As part of that, we will continue to support those schools in the public system that have the International Baccalaureate.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Can the minister advise if the new government will continue the work that was underway prior to the election in relation to the MOU with the Italian consul to support Italian language teaching in South Australia?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I might hand over to the chief executive to give you an answer on that question.

**Prof. WESTWELL:** This is something that is important for us in South Australia. It is a really important relationship. That agreement has been signed. We are in the process now of the implementation. We want to make sure that this is going to make the biggest difference and add value for us in South Australia for our students, and so there have been no changes to that program. Of course, things have been interrupted by COVID and so on, but we are still working towards implementing that without any significant changes.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** In relation to page 180, there is an agency output about vulnerable learners. Has the Department for Education maintained its plan of action with the Department for Child Protection? I might ask a long question and then you can either answer it or take it on notice, as you wish. What actions is the department undertaking as a result of this work and does the minister engage with the Minister for Child Protection in particular about those students who have been supported by this work, if it is still happening?

**The ACTING CHAIR (Mr Odenwalder):** I remind members that we have less than a minute to go in committee.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I will not be offended if the minister takes this one on notice.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** We will take the substantive part of it on notice, but, in terms of engagement between me and the Minister for Child Protection, yes, and I am the minister responsible for the Child Death and Serious Injury Review Committee as well. So I still have a lot of engagement, I guess, in child protection matters in that capacity. In terms of your broader question around that program, I am happy for us to get you a far better answer than the one I could provide you in the small amount of time remaining.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** One last question, and it fits in very neatly with the last one: how many children under guardianship are in our public school system currently?

**The ACTING CHAIR (Mr Odenwalder):** You may want to take that one on notice, minister. I am cognisant of the time.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** We can get you that. We will take it on notice.

**The ACTING CHAIR (Mr Odenwalder):** The allotted time having expired, I declare the examination of school education complete.

*Sitting suspended from 11:30 to 11:45.*

#### **Departmental Advisers:**

Prof. M. Westwell, Chief Executive, Department for Education.

Mr C. Bernardi, Chief Operating Officer, Department for Education.

Ms A. Millard, Deputy Chief Executive, Partnerships, Schools and Preschools, Department for Education.

Mr A. Creek, Executive Director, Finance, Department for Education.

Dr P. Smith, Executive Director, Strategic Policy and External Relations, Department for Education.

Mr D. Humphrys, Acting Executive Director, Support and Inclusion, Department for Education.

Ms N. Atkinson, Head, Office for the Early Years, Department for Education.

Ms C. Parker, Director, Early Childhood Programs, Department for Education.

**The ACTING CHAIR (Mr Odenwalder):** Welcome back, minister. Welcome back, members. We are now examining the portfolio of the Office for the Early Years. The minister appearing is, of course, the Minister for Education, Training and Skills. The proposed payments remain open for examination. I now call on the minister to make a statement, if he wishes, and to introduce his advisers.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I do not have a statement. I introduce Natalie Atkinson to my right, who is the Executive Director in this area, and staying with me for this one is the Chief Executive, Martin Westwell, and our Chief Operating Officer, Chris Bernardi.

**The ACTING CHAIR (Mr Odenwalder):** Welcome to you all. I understand the member for Morialta is the lead? Yes. Do you have an opening statement?

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I do not, sir. I am happy to go straight to questions.

**The ACTING CHAIR (Mr Odenwalder):** Go ahead.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** We will go to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 184, which deals with expenses and covers many things. Can the minister or officers provide an update on the operation of the national agreement in place that supports preschool funding? I note that on the last line of the page it describes a \$4.3 million drop in funding from the commonwealth, I assume.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** The status of the agreement or reason for the variation?

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Yes, I guess they are two separate questions. You can answer them in whichever order you prefer.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I just dobed myself in for a second question. On the reason for the variation, we will seek some information. We will either take it on notice or answer it in a few moments, if we can get it. In terms of the status of the agreement, I can provide some information to the house on that.

The Australian government and all state and territory governments have agreed to the preschool reform agreement, a four-year national reform agreement from 2022 to 2025. The funding supports delivery of a top-up from an average of 12 to 15 hours a week of quality preschool programs—obviously, the member for Morialta knows this well. The agreement provides funding of \$28.2 million to South Australia for 2023, with a further payment of approximately \$2.48 million once-off top-up funding for the midyear intake, which has been agreed with the Australian government.

We are continuing to work with the Australian government, states and territories to progress the reform initiatives with a focus on the new enrolment and attendance measure and the outcomes measure. I know that the member for Morialta will be very familiar with this move towards the outcomes measure for those early years. It will also have a focus on improving preschool participation and outcomes, including for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and disadvantaged children, who particularly benefit from preschool. I think that is probably the sum of my answer for now.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** And the \$4.3 million drop in funding at the bottom of the page?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am seeking an answer on that. I will take it on notice, or if we get it in this session we will provide it to you.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I have a couple of other questions relating to the \$4.3 million drop, so I might ask them now so they can be taken on notice and, if we come back to them, then that is fine. How does that drop impact on non-government preschools, long day care providers offering preschool-type programs or any other service that is approved for the sake of the national program? Does the commonwealth provide funding on the same basis and at the same amounts to students irrespective of whether they commence at the start of the year or midyear? That second part you may be able to answer straightaway, but could you take on notice the first one?



**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I can provide a little on the one you suggested that maybe I could, which is true, and the other part I think I will take on notice. As at term 2 of this year, 300 non-government early childhood education and care providers have an existing funding agreement to deliver 600 hours of quality preschool to children in the year before full-time school. As part of the department's agreement implementation strategy, the grant funding scheme for these providers has continued unchanged in 2023—for instance, the same funding categories and amounts as per the 2022 year.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** What progress has been made, if any, on the accountability or the outcomes measures, as I think the minister described them, that were part of the national preschool reforms?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** The answer I can provide for now is that it will be one of the items for discussion tomorrow. Again, I thank the members for Unley and Morialta for allowing me to be there so I can discuss it.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Have there been any adjustments to the arrangement in place for Catholic Education to provide a certain number of publicly funded preschool places since the election? Is the government considering increasing the number of those places or indeed making any alternative adjustment?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes, I can answer that one. Obviously, I have had strong representations from the Catholic sector, as no doubt the member for Morialta did when he was minister. The suggestion I gave Dr McGoran and Professor Ralph at the time was that that should be something they provide a submission on to the royal commission because it would be good to have it considered as part of that. I believe that has been done.

I would imagine we might have a recommendation as part of the final report on what should be done in terms of the capped places for the Catholic system. They have certainly made their position very clear about their desire to have the cap extended so they can have more places. I thought, given we have a royal commission into three-year-old preschool, it would be worthy of consideration within that.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I am sure they will look forward to an answer. I am sure they were hoping for something before 2026, but neither of us promised it, so this is what happens.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Well, it is not to say that that might not happen because, if the royal commission were, for instance, to provide a recommendation that the cap should be lifted, it is something obviously the government will have to consider, but it is something that, if a recommendation were made and we were agreeable to it, I presume could probably start before that period.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Have there been any adjustments to the arrangements in place for, I think, a dozen or so non-government long day care services that have fully funded preschool-type programs for the year before school? Have there been any changes to the arrangements for those? How many services are there, and are there any adjustments?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I might pass to Ms Atkinson.

**Ms ATKINSON:** The funding agreements for the six non-government preschools and RICE were renewed from January 2023 to December this year and included a one-year extension term option too. Again, the intention is to review the arrangements for those grant agreements following the outcomes of the royal commission.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Apologies if you said this, but for how long have those agreements been renewed?

**Ms ATKINSON:** It is to the end of this year at the moment. There is an option for extension.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** When will the sites and services be advised of if there is that extension?

**Ms ATKINSON:** In the second half of this year, after the royal commission.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I will get to more questions on the royal commission later, but can I ask one important question of the minister: when is the royal commission now due to hand down its report? Is it still August, or has that changed?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** It is unchanged; that is the same.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** And it is the minister's expectation at the moment that it will be in August? Has the minister had any requests to extend that?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** No, I have not, and that is my understanding.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Targeted family support programs are one of the objectives on page 183. I am going to use that to ask questions about a range of engagements with non-government providers, if that is okay. Can the minister identify which programs of Raising Literacy Australia have been funded over the last three years, and can he confirm they will continue to be funded in the years ahead?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will take a little bit of it on notice, but we are working with them now on ongoing future funding for a range of those programs. I think that is the best way for me to put it.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Can the minister similarly identify which programs of the Smith Family have been funded over the same time frame, and can he confirm they will continue to be funded into the years ahead?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** The Smith Family, as I am sure we both agree, do some really, really important work, and I think their services are being called upon and will be called upon more and more. In this most recent budget, we provided \$4.153 million for the Smith Family's Learning for Life program, from 2023-24 until 2026-27 financial year. That funding will allow the Smith Family to support an additional 700 students each year in the Learning for Life program that is in government schools—2,800 students over the four years in total.

The Smith Family's Learning for Life program recognises that extra support for children experiencing disadvantage is important to keep them engaged in school. Learning for Life helps children create better futures for themselves by providing financial assistance to help families meet the cost of school essentials (uniforms, books, excursions), support from a Learning for Life program coordinator to connect the child and their family to local learning opportunities and other supports, and access to the Smith Family out-of-school mentoring and educational programs to help children get the most out of their school years. We are seeking a little bit more information about other funding commitments.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** If I can assist while they are looking for it, there are some programs the Smith Family has been running in terms of reading and numeracy in early years, and I am particularly interested in whether they are going to continue.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** We will take that on notice, member for Morialta.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Thank you. Are there any other charities or non-government organisations offering to provide reading and book programs that the minister or the department has provided funding to and, if so, on what basis?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** One that I can provide an answer to now is Raising Literacy Australia for the supply and distribution of the preschools reading packs, \$170,000. I might pass to the chief executive for the rest.

**Prof. WESTWELL:** As you know, we have a range of grant programs. The main one that is supporting reading packs is certainly Raising Literacy Australia. I could not rule out that there are others, but certainly through the range of grant programs that we have there may be others, so we will look at those and take that on notice if that is okay.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I can add one more I have just found, member for Morialta, which is United Way, \$53,328 for Imagination Library for children in Playford.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** In relation to page 183, targets, the Early Years SA mobile app is obviously a very important part of the early learning strategy which we were very proud of in

the previous government, and I am very pleased to see the work is continuing. When is this app going to be launched and what will its key features include?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes, you are right and I agree this is a fantastic thing. I think I am right in characterising it as the Blue Book gone into app and online format for ease of use, which I think is fantastic. We are very close to a public launch; in fact, I think I had an update on it at the start of this week where I got to see a presentation of what the app will look like and a run-through of how it will work. I think it looks fantastic and the Office for the Early Years has done a really good job on it.

Pleasingly, I think it will be something that parents pick up and use. I do not feel the need to go on endlessly because you have a very good understanding yourself, member for Morialta, about why we are doing it and what it is there to do, but my broad answer is that we are super close to going live and the launch. It has ticked all the boxes in terms of ease of use on your, potentially, mobile phone version of the data that parents have historically collected and kept in their Blue Book.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Thank you. I look forward to the invitation.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Happy to give you one to that one, absolutely.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Thank you very much, sir. In relation the child development checks, can the minister summarise the findings of the pilot programs and identify what model or models will be used going forward to expand these checks?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes, member for Morialta, I can. Again, I acknowledge the work that you did in this space and we have continued that—no flamethrower here. The government is expanding the reach of child development checks across the state through a range of pilots, which the member for Morialta just alluded to, with government and non-government partners. The Office for the Early Years is responsible for commissioning the expansion of child development check reach to 80 per cent, and to expand the schedule of checks to include screenings at 12 months and three years. Nine pilots have commenced or are currently being initiated with more that are due to start by the end of this year.

Early learnings from the pilots are informing planning for that scaled rollout. Complementary activity such as the development of the early years app, which we just spoke about, will also assist parents and caregivers of young children through the provision of quality and relevant information to support their parenting journey. Regarding the pilot programs, I am happy to give you a bit of information on this. Five pilots have commenced or are being initiated with Playgroup SA, Nunkuwarrin Yunti, the Caring Futures Institute at Flinders University in collaboration with Goodstart Early Learning, the Eyre and Far North Local Health Network and Family Day Care.

Based on data available to us, there is an approximately 45 per cent uptake of screening when offered through the place-based pilots. Further pilots are preparing to roll out in the coming months. Pilots are being designed to test different service elements—staffing, screening tools, location, incentives, parental engagement, virtual services and hours of operation. Feedback from parents and caregivers is that it is important that families are aware of different services and supports in their community and that they are easy to access.

All pilots have built in a service pathway to support families with the next steps if they need them, including accessing things like playgroups. In terms of reach, learnings are anticipated through the pilot evaluation. Whilst formal information is not available yet regarding the reasons for a 45 per cent uptake of the child development checks, anecdotally it is understood that some families receive their checks through alternative providers such as their GP or CFHS. Others have suggested that they assume that long day care providers are doing the checks, while others have stated that they are confident that they would seek out child development checks if they thought there were developmental vulnerabilities.

I will be a bit more specific about the pilot. Within the first nine months of operation, the Caring Futures Institute have offered child health and development checks to 1,822 families, with 770 checks undertaken. Of those undertaken 111 were for children from culturally or linguistically diverse families and 22 were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children. Similarly, Playgroup SA reported that over a period of seven months 605 child development checks were offered and

290 checks undertaken. Of the checks undertaken, 86 children were from culturally or linguistically diverse families and 13 were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children. I will probably leave it there, but I can take more questions.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** That is interesting and helpful, thank you. What is the time frame for the next phase of decisions about where investments are going to be further made, and when will we know what the full rollout is to look like?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will pass over to Ms Atkinson, who will provide a bit of detail about that.

**Ms ATKINSON:** The pilots are informing the scale-up of the checks in the program as a whole. What we are doing is evaluating each pilot as we go and now looking at the pieces of the pilots and how they fit together as a whole, which will inform the plan for scale-up from next financial year. As you may recall, the funding scales up gradually over four years.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** So the next financial year we will move to, I think, is it \$8 million again next financial year and \$16 million the following to complete this program?

**Ms ATKINSON:** It is roughly \$8 million this financial year we are now just into, and then next financial year—

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** In 2024-25 it becomes \$16 million a year, having been \$8 million a year this year and last year?

**Ms ATKINSON:** That is right.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Can I ask a data question. There are checks at different levels, at birth and so on, and they will expand as of next financial year. Do we have some information about the percentage take up of each of the different checks at each of those stages? If it is possible to get a historic comparison over the last few years that would be helpful.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes, I am happy to do all those things. I might pass over to Ms Atkinson, who can give you some information about that.

**Ms ATKINSON:** We obviously have the data from the pilots we are rolling out now, and we work really closely with CaFHS, who are the majority provider of health and development checks in South Australia as well. They hold their data centrally, but we work really closely with them on that.

The challenge with having a full picture across the state at the moment—and this is something we need to work towards—is that, of course, families also get their checks from GPs and paediatricians. They are all different datasets and always connected. That is one of the future rollout goals, I suppose.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** The research that informed the early learning strategy identified certain percentages for each of the checks. I do not know if that work was done exclusively to inform that strategy or if there is a baseline figure that is captured somewhere for the Productivity Commission or somebody, maybe on a delay. Is it possible to get whatever the most recent data on that is?

**Ms ATKINSON:** That was CaFHS data so we would have to work with them, but I am sure we can take that on notice and come back.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Thank you very much. Another point on the same page and in the same area is in relation to playgroups. Do we have any information about how this project has seen increasing numbers of families engage with playgroups, and do we have any information about how many families engage with playgroups now compared with previous years?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** We have something; we are just fishing it out for you. It is a very good question.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I will start another line and be happy to come back to that. I refer to pages 180 to 181 in relation to the infrastructure projects. It is a much shorter run in this session than last session, but the Elliston RSL Memorial Children's Centre was a \$2 million project.

My recollection is that when this funding was originally allocated in 2021 the project was urgent because of the condition of the facilities, and it may have even been that the original preschool was unusable and they had relocated into the school, from memory. This was originally intended for completion in December 2022, then June 2023; it is now listed for March 2024. Are you able to provide any advice on what the status of that project is? Why has there been a second set of delays? Are we confident that it will be completed in the first quarter of next year?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** While we are fishing out something on Elliston, member for Morialta, I think Ms Atkinson has some data for you on the playgroups, and then we can bounce back if that is okay.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Excellent.

**Ms ATKINSON:** I do not have the Playgroup SA data on hand, although I believe they do publish a degree of it on their website. From the perspective of the department's Learning Together playgroups programs, the numbers I have as at term 1 2023 are that we had 5,101 active enrolments in our Learning Together playgroups.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I have an answer for you now on Elliston, but we are seeking a bit more detail on one aspect. Estimated completion, yes, June 2023; estimated completion March 2024 is the latest data I have. There was a significant review of the project in response to escalating construction market conditions. Additional funding was approved to deliver the required scope of \$1.4 million. To be perfectly frank, I cannot remember whether I approved that or you approved the extra \$1.4 million.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I suspect it was you.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I think it might have been me. It does sound like something I would do because I am very generous. We will come back on that part, just to confirm my generosity.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** And indeed the reason for the delays. So it was to do with getting the funding right was the main—

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Stuff got more expensive, essentially, and blew it out.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** That is the technical term.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes, the technical term, that is right. It is very frustrating, though, I have to say.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Under the other school projects, the new investments this year, the minister took some answers on notice earlier in the estimates session on schools. Can I just get a reassurance from the minister that inasmuch as any of those things he took on notice relating to schools also relate to preschools? Can he include those in his answer?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am happy to do that.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** That will save us some time now, thank you. Going to page 184 and the general expenses line, can the minister identify—and I will ask a longer question because the similar question on principals the minister took on notice—how many preschools in South Australia are currently seeking to recruit a director, or have an acting director and therefore will soon be recruiting, or have a director in the last year of their appointment but no confirmation as yet that they will be rolled over? When will decisions be made relating to directors being rolled over in their appointments?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am happy to take that on notice as per the other ones, member for Morialta, and come back to you with an answer.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Thank you, sir. Has the minister received any feedback on workload issues for preschool directors, and is recruitment currently getting easier or possibly harder?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes, I have received feedback about workload. I do not think there is a corner of the broad education system in South Australia, and I think I can safely speak on behalf of my interstate colleagues, when I say workload issues are prevalent everywhere, and that includes

preschool directors. I cannot give you a rock-solid answer on whether or not recruitment is getting easier or harder, but I can say that, insofar as recruitment for those positions is akin to recruitment for positions in primary schools and high schools, I would imagine it is not getting easier but that it is possibly getting harder—and that is the case nationally, if not internationally.

We have shown our willingness in the first 18 months or so of government to try to do things to attract people to the role in the preschool directors area. One thing is certainly support for them to do their role and workload, and we are trying to get right down into the nitty-gritty so to speak on what we can do around workload issues, which is complex. The chief executive has something he would like to add to that.

**Prof. WESTWELL:** Just the detail, really. We are working closely with the Preschool Directors Association around how we can help them to be more efficient with things like financial transactions and things like that, providing more support from the department so that they can spend more time on the floor leading their sites. Of course, those financial transactions have to be dealt with and have to be dealt with properly, but we want them to spend less time on those, so we are looking at how we might be able to provide that support.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** As I recall, one key driver we were working on of improving efficiency and making life easier, reducing red tape for preschool directors, was to do with IT systems. The SWiFT internet project obviously first got fibre-optic to the preschools and then the second part of the project made the internal systems work within the preschools. My recollection is that the EMS (Education Management System) project is also supposed to radically reduce workload in this space. When is the EMS project due to be completed for all sites across the system? It would be in schools as well as preschools, but I suspect it will have a bigger impact on preschool directors than it will on principals?

**Prof. WESTWELL:** Absolutely, in terms of preschool directors. The use of EMS and the financial components of EMS is one way in which we can provide that support, and we are providing that support for preschool directors.

I have data as to the end of week 5 of term 2 this year that EMS had been rolled out to 367 sites, the administration module to 294 preschools. We only have four standalone preschools where it is yet to be rolled out. This will be completed imminently, if it has not already been completed, to get those last four standalone preschools onto EMS.

Seventy-three schools are now live with EMS and completing the decommissioning of on-premise legacy systems. That covers both finance and administration modules. In terms of some of the dates that we have for our rollout projections, the EMS project is projected to complete another 62 sites over the remainder of this year. School and preschool rollouts will be determined on a term-by-term basis. We do that to minimise any risks. The project is expected to return to full scale through this year so we can get some more rollouts next year.

**The ACTING CHAIR (Mr Odenwalder):** The member for Elder has a question.

**Ms CLANCY:** Can the minister provide information to the committee about the model proposed by the royal commission in its interim report?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Thank you, member for Elder, for your question, and I will happily do so. I was pleased to officially receive the interim report of the Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care, which was handed down by Commissioner Julia Gillard AC earlier this year. While there will of course be changes before the final report is handed down—and we have discussed when that will be; it will still be as per the original plan, towards the end of August—I thought the interim report did provide a very comprehensive road map for the government on how we can fulfil our election commitment.

Key findings from the interim report, if I could summarise, include confirming that universal preschool is an important measure for improving the lives of all children. To go off on a little bit of a tangent, one thing that I thought was very interesting, and that was reinforced to me by the royal commission team, was looking at the AEDC data around the vulnerability of kids. It showed us what we probably all know around the increasing vulnerabilities in the already more disadvantaged parts of the state.

The drop-off we have seen in South Australia in terms of vulnerability was also quite pronounced in more advantaged or perhaps wealthier parts of the state as well. It is important that we do not fall into the trap of thinking that three-year-old preschool is something that is just going to benefit kids in hard-up areas; there is actually real benefit in terms of assisting kids from more advantaged parts of South Australia to improve their learning and social-emotional wellbeing and all that kind of stuff.

I think that is something we need to keep in mind around the power of this for all South Australian kids, regardless of where they live. Of course, it will not surprise anyone here, member for Elder, that the interim report found that, disproportionately, the positive impact will be for children from vulnerable or disadvantaged communities. This of course comes as no surprise to anyone.

The interim report also highlights the importance of the quality of three-year-old preschool programs, and by that I mean that we cannot just offer anything. They need to be quality. If we want the benefit of this we need to make sure that what is offered is a high-quality program. The report explores different approaches to delivering universal three-year-old preschool, with the royal commission recommending in the interim report a mixed model across both government and non-government sectors.

The reason that the royal commissioner made that interim recommendation was around the relative ability of the mixed model to reach a high percentage of three year olds, which of course is what we want, and the speed with which it could be rolled out, which of course is another important thing. They are the two things the royal commissioner leant on, in terms of making that interim recommendation.

It would be remiss of me not to use this opportunity to thank the royal commissioner and her team for a great piece of work. It is very thorough. One of the things that has made me really pleased, as minister, is that a lot of the groups who wanted to be heard as part of this—and who probably, in the back of their minds, thought they might not get the chance—have spoken to me and felt that they were heard. Many got a chance to speak with the royal commissioner; some did not, but they all feel like they have been heard and that the things they said were reflected in the interim report, and I am sure they will be reflected in the final one too.

There has been some positive feedback so far about the interim report from some of the groups, including Children's Advocacy Alliance, Goodstart Early Learning and the education union as well. There will no doubt be complexities that we will have to deal with as part of this. It is a very big undertaking, but I feel that now we have something that is a road map to point us in the direction of exactly what we need to do to achieve it and to start applying ourselves to that.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Going to the highlights and targets on page 183, particularly both highlights and targets relating to autism, how many staff have been recruited with, and I quote, the 'autism qualifications and experience' identified in Labor's commitment?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** For clarification, member for Morialta, this is around our commitment to have more early years staff?

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Yes. It is:

Established autism qualifications and experience as desirable criterion for staff recruitment in preschools...

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I do not think at this point that I can give you a number, but the work to deliver the election commitment has well and truly started. The information I have in front of me is that it is on track. We have already updated the position description component of the job advertisements to include the criterion around a qualification in autism or equivalent relevant experience. At the moment, we are working on ways of collecting appropriate data so we can monitor how successful that is. I will give you a commitment that, once we have something, I will be happy to provide it to you. It is of course only right that we should be held to account for the commitments we make, including this one. Once I have that, I am happy to speak to the member for Morialta again. Indeed, it may be something that we make public, but it will be an ongoing piece of work.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Very sensible. Thank you, sir. Do you have a target for recruitment in this area?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will pass over to the chief executive, but my broad answer would be probably not a specific target, because it is a big undertaking. My target is as many as we possibly can as fast as we possibly can, but that is probably what the minister always says.

**Prof. WESTWELL:** We are trying to deal with the complexity in this space by not so much having a target in terms of the number of people who are recruited—but of course sending this clear signal that that is a preference, to have a relevant qualification in the early years—but also providing professional learning opportunities for the staff we have. It is clearly somewhere where we can build up that capability. We will look at that response in terms of having sent the signal, the clear opportunity, and saying that this is something we value within the system but also providing that professional development. We will look at how those things develop in the system and respond accordingly.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** You have touched on where I was going next in terms of those professional development opportunities. I am wondering who is delivering that professional development. Is it the department or Autism SA or someone else? How many staff have accessed and/or are targeted to access that professional development?

**Prof. WESTWELL:** We are looking at a range of offerings. Our internal professional learning portal has some opportunities for staff. We are working with a range of other providers. Again, with this complexity, we are looking to step in, see what works most effectively, provide some of those things and dampen down the things that we perhaps think are not working so well. It may be that different people in different contexts find different types of professional learning most impactful. We want to make sure that it is accessible to everyone as well. We can provide a list of the providers and the sort of professional learning that is available.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** That is a list of people who are offering the learning being provided by the department free for your staff?

**Prof. WESTWELL:** Yes.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** On the same page, one of the highlights and targets relates to the royal commission again. When will the government deliver its response to that report, which I think the minister said earlier will be provided in August? When is the government's response going to be delivered?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** My answer at this stage is as soon as we can. We are in discussions at the moment around how quickly we think we can do that, given that it will be a sizeable report and a fair bit to consider, with modelling and things like that to be done. It may be that we provide a high-level report pretty quickly and then do some more work on a longer response or submission, but either way my ambition—and I know the Premier's—is that we do that as quickly as we can after we receive the final report from the royal commissioner.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Is the minister familiar with the article, 'South Australian kids to have better start', by Lynn Cameron in *The Advertiser*, which was noted as 'Sponsored content for Government of South Australia'? Are any other examples of the government's plan for three-year-old preschool to be advertised using government funds, and how much did this cost? Was it the royal commission or was it the department that paid for it?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Could you just repeat the name of the article?

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** 'South Australian kids to have better start', and it had above that title 'Sponsored content for Government of South Australia'. It is my cunning plan to garner favour with *The Advertiser* by drawing people to their website!

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes, I think it is DPC. I am personally not familiar with it. I think it is Department of the Premier and Cabinet in a partnership with *The Advertiser*. I cannot give you any more answer than that. I would have to refer you towards DPC for that one.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** In that case, I will save the royal commission for later if I have time for one more, sir?

**The ACTING CHAIR (Mr Odenwalder):** Yes.



**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Thank you. In relation to performance indicators on page 185, there is a drop in preschool services, from 339 in previous years to 335 under the estimated results. Can the minister advise what these four services that seem to have been removed from the list are?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am happy to ask Ms Atkinson to provide an answer on that one.

**Ms ATKINSON:** I do not have the list of the service names, but my understanding is the drop is in relation to preschool delivery through school in really small regional communities and there is just a threshold whereby the Education Standards Board registers it as a preschool program or not, I think, on six enrolments above or below.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** That would explain why the number returns to a higher number this year—

**Ms ATKINSON:** That is right, because that is the targeted budget.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** —because if you get more students it will become a preschool again.

**Ms ATKINSON:** Yes.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** In relation to rural care, can the minister advise whether funding for these services is confirmed at at least the current levels for the coming years? Is it reliant on commonwealth contributions and is there any risk to this project?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** While we are seeking some specifics, perhaps it would be an opportunity for me to talk about some of the issues that we are facing in terms of child care in the regions because it is something I have had a great interest in in my time so far.

A couple of examples I would point to in terms of the work that we have done are in Kingston SE around trying to ameliorate the so-called childcare desert in areas like that. I want to use the opportunity to thank the member for MacKillop for his work with us on that and the community group down there as well, who have been both patient and appropriately strident in their advocacy. I know we had a bipartisan federal commitment from both sides of politics at the federal election for some money towards the building, which we are going to create there, to co-locate on the school site and provide child care.

Of course, as is the case with almost every infrastructure project now, that federal government money was not enough to build it, so we have tipped in quite a lot as a state government to make sure an appropriate facility can be built. We have done some fairly innovative kind of work that we are going to have to do a lot more of to provide the staffing that places like that require to offer child care.

It is a very frustrating issue, in my opinion, because in locations such as Kingston SE it is not for lack of a waitlist. There is a long-established waitlist of more than 50 families in that area. There is proof and evidence of it having been there for a number of years, but we still cannot entice any private or not-for-profit providers to set up in that area, so the community, of course, is lacking childcare options. I am pleased that we have stepped into the breach there with \$3.5 million from the state government and \$1.8 million from the federal government, which will mean that we can actually create something there, which will be in the long term sustainable and provide childcare options for the community.

Of course, Kingston SE is not alone. There are a number of other regional communities of which I am aware—Bordertown is certainly one—where they have the same issue and we are doing what we can, but it is difficult given that it is not an area that the state government has traditionally been responsible for and, with the escalating cost of building anything really, it is not just issues around staffing that are going to be complex, but it is finding the money to actually build facilities.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Rural care, sir?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes, I am happy to come back to rural care. I will pass over to Ms Atkinson to offer some comment on that.

**Ms ATKINSON:** With regard to the commonwealth funding, we currently have grant funding through the commonwealth Community Child Care Fund and that runs to the end of this financial year, so June next year. At the moment, the 17 services are continuing as normal.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Until at least June next year?

**Ms ATKINSON:** Our intention is to continue them.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Thank you.

**The ACTING CHAIR (Mr Odenwalder):** The examination of the Office for the Early Years is complete.

#### **Departmental Advisers:**

Prof. M. Westwell, Chief Executive, Department for Education.

Mr C. Bernardi, Chief Operating Officer, Department for Education.

Dr P. Smith, Executive Director, Strategic Policy and External Relations, Department for Education.

Mr A. Creek, Executive Director, Finance, Department for Education.

Ms M. Bensley, Chief Executive, SACE Board, Department for Education.

Ms K. Leaver, Chief Executive, Education Standards Board, Department for Education.

Mr G. Mackie OAM, Chief Executive, History Trust SA, Department for Education.

**The ACTING CHAIR (Mr Odenwalder):** We will move on now to Administered Items. The proposed payments remain open for examination. I call on the minister to introduce any new advisers and make a statement, if he wishes.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I might introduce the new people who are joining me here to stay for this session. Obviously, Mr Bernardi and Professor Westwell are staying, and I have to my right Dr Peta Smith, Executive Director, Strategic Policy and External Relations. I do not have an opening statement, and I am happy to go straight to questions.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Page 209 deals with most of the budget lines relating to non-government schools. In relation to the provision of funding to non-government schools through the Non-Government Reform Support Fund, as the minister is aware, this fund provides essential support to the non-government sector to support schools to meet the needs of students with a disability through the nationally consistent collection of data, as well as governance and financial literacy support for board members and NAPLAN support. Many smaller, low-fee, low-SES schools rely heavily on the support this fund provides, and the federal government has announced it will not continue, as I understand. What support will the minister give our non-government sector to seek reconsideration of this federal decision?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will have to take that one on notice, member for Morialta.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** In the event that the commonwealth is not persuaded by what I am sure will be strong recommendations from the minister, will the state government consider other ways of supporting our non-government schools?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** There will certainly be very strong advocacy from me. I made it very clear, I think, in the last couple of weeks that I am happy to have those arguments with the federal colleagues, regardless of which government is in power at the time. If they are ultimately unsuccessful, then of course we will go back and consider what can be done in the absence of that federal funding.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Thank you very much. In relation to the application of both direct measure of income and also to the transition of schools receiving 22 per cent of SRS—even if historically they had been receiving more than 22 per cent of SRS, as some schools had been—

obviously all those schools that will see a reduction would like there not to be a reduction, but for the most part we hope they have had time to make adjustments and that they will manage.

I think the minister would be aware that there is at least one school that appears to be a significant outlier, a school that serves communities of disadvantage, a low fee, faith-based alternative that its families value. Will the minister give some consideration to providing further transition support to support such a school in those circumstances, as both governments have in the case of the special schools in the independent sector?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Thank you, member for Morialta. Yes, I understand that there is a case to be made around why the school that I believe you are asking about could be treated in a different fashion, as were Suneden and Aspect. I am happy to consider what can be done.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** In the negotiation of the next National School Reform Agreement, will the government seek to maintain the commitment of successive governments, Labor and Liberal, to funding non-government schools to 22 per cent of SRS?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** There are absolutely no plans not to, let me say that, and my intention is yes. Having been there working for a former Premier when that commitment was made and understanding the pain that was gone through to get there, I do not intend on being the minister who winds that back.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** That would be something to watch. Can the minister provide a guarantee that the South Australian government will not seek to remove current exemptions for payroll tax and the like from non-government schools, as your colleagues in Victoria have recently done?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** The comment I might offer, member for Morialta, is I think it probably falls into the purview of the Treasurer. That is my advice from Mr Bernardi. Nonetheless, we do not have any plans to do that. The information that I have at this stage is I understand Victoria are in the process of maybe reconsidering exactly what that level of support is.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I understand the government has changed the no-interest loans for non-government schools program back to a low-interest loan for non-government schools program. Can I ask how much money this will save the government?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** You are correct. We did, and we did in consultation with the non-government sector. I spoke to both Dr McGoran and to Ms Grantskalns at that stage. Of course, they both said that they would like to have it forever but understood that it was going to revert back at some point. They accepted that and we have done that. Mr Bernardi might have some specifics, perhaps. We will take that on notice.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Can the minister advise what schools have been funded through this program since the election and when the next round opens or, if it is currently open, when it will be determined who has been successful?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am happy to do that, member for Morialta. I will come back to you with a list of those that have been funded. The scheme will continue, with one round per year commencing in 2023. Round 4 of the scheme is expected to open in November of this year and close in February 2024. I will come back with a list of those schools funded under the program since the election.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Thank you very much. Is the government going to continue providing state government funding towards the chaplaincy program, which I think is now called the National Student Wellbeing Program?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** How much is the allocation of state government funding towards the program?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will get that for you, but I might just add a comment. The consideration that is being done now is the election commitment from the federal government around offering their money on a basis that schools can choose between faith or non-faith-based providers.

We are trying to grapple with that. As I am sure you are aware, providers like Schools Ministry Group, aside from the very good work they do, do it at a pretty low cost.

We have to grapple with what could be a situation where those schools that put their hand up to have a non-faith-based worker, which I totally support, might not come at the same cost as a pastoral care worker. We are working on that at the moment. You can ask another one perhaps, and then I will come back with an answer on how much—

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Every few years, when the national funding is renewed, there tends to be a process where you work out whether the proportions going to each sector will stay the same or whether they will adjust, and then you go through a process of working out which schools get the funding and whether some will miss out. When is that process going to be completed so we are able to identify which schools will be funded going forward for the next few years?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Just as a point of clarification, do you mean the student wellbeing funding boost from the commonwealth or separate to that?

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** No, separate to the boost—the chaplaincy program and whatever its successor is called now.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** My advice is that we do not think there is a change, but we will get an answer to you before the end of this session.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** With that in mind, I am aware that several dozen schools at least have decided since the former government made it allowable to use their own funds towards a program, having previously not applied for funding. Will those schools be considered to now get some of the funding under the new program? Can the minister confirm that the decision taken to allow schools to use their own funding towards chaplaincy or a broader secular wellbeing program will be continued to be allowed?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am advised and I recall that we are working on that detail, basically as we speak, on how that might operate.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Is the government considering altering the funding per school to enable an increase in hours per service to be supported by these centrally provided funds?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will take that one on notice, member for Mordialta.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I have one or two questions on the History Trust, then Education Standards Board and SACE.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** No problems. We will switch.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** It might not take long. What is the update on the History Trust's head office, History Trust House or whatever it is going to be called, and how long is the new accommodation secured for?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Chair, I will introduce Mr Greg Mackie OAM, who is here on behalf of the History Trust. I am happy for Mr Mackie to make some comments, but there are a few introductory remarks that perhaps I could make, too, to try to answer the member for Mordialta's question.

In terms of the new premises, later this year the History Trust will move from temporary premises at 77 Grenfell Street into new premises at Security House, Level 2, 233 North Terrace. Funding of \$302,000 was allocated in the 2022-23 financial year as part of that budget review to support the relocation. Future additional budget allocations as part of the 2022-23 Mid-Year Budget Review to support the increased costs of the relocation to that new premises are in 2023-24, \$671,000; in 2024-25, \$686,000; in 2025-26, \$702,000; and, in 2026-27, \$718,000. I am very happy for Mr Mackie, if you are okay with that, member for Mordialta, to make any additional comments he would like to make.

**Mr MACKIE:** Thank you, minister. Member for Mordialta, I am pleased to report that we actually achieved the relocation two weeks ago, and so we are now in fine digs at Level 2, 233 North Terrace. It is an almost 100-year old building, Security House, and we occupy the entire second floor.

We are very grateful for the assistance we receive from the department, and also the Department for Infrastructure and Transport, in relation to design of the fit-out. It gives us for the first time in 42 years a purpose-designed home where we have not had to be shoehorned into a site that was less than optimal.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Thank you; you have escaped the compactus! In relation to the History Trust collections, the Minister for Arts yesterday advised the committee that the original scope of the project had been restored, with some work from her department, which is good news. Can I confirm that, in relation to the History Trust collections, the state history collections—that means all those artefacts that were supposed to be moved in—will be moved in when the job is complete?

I am advised that the Minister for Arts also said that the time frame for completing that project had been deferred. Has the History Trust received reassurance that the continued rental you will need to bear as a result of the delay, any increased costs for that, will be borne by the storage collection budget and not by your budget?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Thank you, member for Morialta. I will have a go at answering all those questions. DPC and DIT are jointly managing the delivery of the new dedicated and combined Cultural Institutions Storage project, which was announced by the former government in the 2021-22 state budget. As you identify, the project does sit with the Minister for Arts and the History Trust, and the state history collection remains a part of the project scope. That is good news I think we can all agree.

I understand the Minister for Arts provided information to you yesterday about the scope and timing, to which you alluded. The History Trust has informed me that DPC have opted to renew the lease on one site that houses parts of the collections of both the History Trust and the SA Museum. In terms of costs, I believe at this stage neither DIT nor DPC have advised the History Trust of any lease cost increases that will impact its operating budget when the current lease concludes. Anything I have not answered I am happy to take on notice and come back to you.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** ESB?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes. Thank you, Mr Mackie. Chair, I introduce Kerry Leaver, who is both the Chief Executive and the Registrar of the Education Standards Board, to the table.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Welcome. Again, on the same page and reference, is the government proposing to make amendments to the Education and Early Childhood Services (Registration and Standards) Act and, if so, why?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** At this stage, I have not been advised of that. If that changes, I will provide an update.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Can the minister guarantee that ESB services will continue to be provided on a cost recovery basis or less and that schools or services will not see increases in their regulatory costs?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** The information I can provide is that nothing has come to me yet to suggest that is what is going to happen, but Ms Leaver informs me that the ESB itself is reviewing the fee levels because they have not been changed since the act came into effect. There is nothing with me at the moment to suggest that is imminent, but I will await advice from the ESB around what they are proposing and make a decision based on that.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Has the government received a request from the ESB for extra state funding to meet its regulatory responsibilities?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes, we have. I think we are also familiar with the recommendation made by the royal commissioner in an interim report around that, and I certainly acknowledge the very important work of the ESB. It has been an issue for as long as I can remember, dating back to 2011-12, around funding for the ESB in order to enable it to do its important regulatory role and get out there and do those assessments and investigations of sites.

We have currently assisted, or perhaps are in the process of assisting, the ESB with seconding some staff from the education department over there. I might pass to Dr Smith to talk a bit more about that.

**Dr SMITH:** We are supporting the ESB with the recruitment of three staff. Two have been identified and we are just looking at the third, with the two we have identified due to start in the next few weeks.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Are they staff who will still sit on the education department payroll?

**Dr SMITH:** Yes.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** So an in-kind contribution.

**Dr SMITH:** That is right.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Has the minister received warnings from the ESB in relation to the standards of care in government OSHC services?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** In some cases, yes, I do get briefed on those as the minister. Of course, a number of those, when they are government sites, will flow through the incident management division as well, and then there are some cases where the ESB will take compliance action and go through that process. I am informed by the chief executive/registrar about that action when it occurs. We obviously take that very seriously. It is an important role. I think we are in the process at the moment from a department perspective of writing to sites to remind them of obligations under the act and what they must do and doing everything we can to ensure high levels of compliance with that.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I have a couple of questions for SACE to finish off. Perhaps while the advisers are changing, can I ask a question that Mr Bernardi might be able to help you with? On page 209 near the bottom of the page, there is a \$306,000 transfer from contingencies listed in 2022-23. Are you able to advise what that is for?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I shall put Mr Bernardi on the task. Perhaps while that is being done I will introduce Ms Michaela Bensley, Chief Executive of SACE, and we could pop to a question there so that you get to use your time and then come back to Mr Bernardi.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Very good of you. Can the minister advise what funding the government is providing towards the proposed learner profile for South Australian students and how that will work in relation to ATAR?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Thank you, member for Morialta. I will pass over to the chief executive for some comments on that.

**Ms BENSLEY:** No additional funding for the capabilities work on the learner profile, notwithstanding the funding that was provided in response to the stage 2 review, which focused on the implementation of an entrepreneurial capability and foregrounding that within the SACE, and so those funds are continuing to be used to utilise that work, particularly in the rollout of our two new subjects.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Do you expect that there will be a learner profile pilot at some stage utilising the resources you already had? Would you care to put a time frame on when you think that will be potentially available?

**Ms BENSLEY:** Yes. We have begun that work in response to the stage 2 review. We have been working through two pilots with schools now around the foregrounding of capabilities and then have built a visualisation, which is the learner profile, to help support the conversations that happen between teachers and students around the growth of those kinds of capabilities. We are in pilot 2. We expect there to be subsequent pilots.

I think the focus over the next couple of years will be how we foreground those capabilities within our subjects and we are working with the system to better understand how the assessment of those capabilities will actually work so that it is fair, valid and reliable such that we can certify it, and

then the place within the SACE of the learner profile is something that we are working with schools on over the next few years. So it will be progressively implemented.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Do we have a report from the returning officer?

**Mr BERNARDI:** The \$306,000 was to pay for TVSPs in the 2022-23 financial year for the reg board.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** For which?

**Mr BERNARDI:** The Education Standards Board.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** In relation to SACE International, can we get an update on the marketing of the operation of SACE International over the last year? Have we still got the same take-up from our friends overseas? Has it improved or declined? Are there any targets for its expansion in the coming year or years?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Ms Bensley.

**Ms BENSLEY:** The last three years have been really challenging with education, particularly in the international marketplace. A range of our schools have actually still been in COVID lockdowns for the last three years, which has obviously put pressure on our growth agenda. We have been focusing primarily on growing and developing the numbers within our existing schools, rather than branching out into new places or new ventures at this point in time. We do have a growth agenda, but we are actually having to work in partnership with schools to realise what that looks like in the changing nature in terms of its competitiveness and the impact of COVID over the last three years.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Do you have information in relation to the profitability of the SACE International for the SACE Board? I remember Professor Westwell was enthusiastic a few years ago about its expansion and what that would mean in terms of funding itself. How is that tracking?

**Ms BENSLEY:** It would be tricky at this point in time to actually have a real baseline because the baseline has changed so much over the last three years in terms of the take-up of those numbers. I would be able to come back more fulsomely in terms of the revenue that it raises for SACE, but at this point in time we are in a period of recalibrating not only our targets but engaging with schools now that they are starting to open back up again.

**The ACTING CHAIR (Mr Odenwalder):** Sadly, the allotted time has expired. I declare the examination of administered items complete. Thank you, minister.

*Sitting suspended from 13:00 to 14:00.*

#### **Membership:**

Hon. A. Piccolo substituted for Mr Odenwalder.

#### **Departmental Advisers:**

Prof. M. Westwell, Chief Executive, Department for Education.

Mr C. Bernardi, Chief Operating Officer, Department for Education.

Ms C. Feszczak, Executive Director, Student Pathways and Careers, Department for Education.

Ms M. Richardson, Deputy Chief Executive, Skills SA.

Ms B. Curtain, Director, Skills Policy Reform, Skills SA.

Ms P. Savage, Principal Adviser, Skills Planning and Purchasing, Skills SA.

**The CHAIR:** Good afternoon. The portfolio is Skills SA. The minister appearing is the Minister for Education, Training and Skills. The proposed payments remain open for examination. Minister.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Thank you, Chair, and welcome back. Could I introduce the group at the table now. I have, again, Mr Bernardi and Professor Westwell, and joining us is Madeline Richardson, the Deputy Chief Executive for Skills SA. I do not have an opening statement.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I acknowledge the minister has not been doing opening statements all day to allow extra time for questions. I have always said I will commend the government when they do good things—so thank you. Page 193 of the Agency Statement, Volume 1, relates to a lot of things we will be talking about. Can the minister advise a time frame for South Australia's commitment to a new National Skills Agreement beyond the current 12-month agreement?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Thank you, member for Morialta. I am happy to provide some content for you there. The federal, state and territory governments are working as we speak towards a five-year National Skills Agreement, which is envisaged to start in January of next year. The vision and guiding principles for longer term reform under a new NSA has been agreed by skills ministers and endorsed by the national cabinet already. All governments are working collaboratively based on the vision and guiding principles that were endorsed.

If I could take this opportunity to talk about the priorities for this government, they include: flexibility in the agreement, in terms of South Australia being able to choose its own priorities—which I think is very important and I would imagine will be supported by the other jurisdictions; a fair funding split between commonwealth and state; security of funding beyond a five-year agreement, which I have already raised with the federal minister; support for TAFE SA, which I have raised with the federal minister Brendan O'Connor as well; a focus on improving completions and targeting funding to better meet the labour market needs; and an improved access to VET and a concerted effort to lift the status of VET would be my summary of the priorities.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** In relation to the one the minister just mentioned on improving completion, how does he propose the agreement will do that?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Thank you, member for Morialta. I have tried to make completions a focus of our work in the first 18 months, and I put my hand up on behalf of the government at one of the very first skills ministers meetings that I attended to lead a national piece of work around what we could do to improve the completion rate. To that end, a VET Completions Taskforce has been established with key skills systems stakeholders drawn from training providers, industry, unions and governments across Australia.

We have been engaging with stakeholders locally through a forum in South Australia, including documentation of a model that can be applied in other states and territories, because, as I have said, we put our hand up to lead that work. The understanding there is that we will share what we create with other states and territories.

Maybe I could try to be more precise in what we are focusing on. I think a fair bit of it, and this has been completely based on feedback from employers and training providers, is on supports around the student, the apprentice or the trainee in terms of what wellbeing support can be provided. I think what we run up against here is a long-held practice—and I do not blame anyone for this—where we have looked at wellbeing support, in terms of what you can do to make sure someone gets through from commencement to completion, as something that we accept as being part and parcel of the education system in primary school and high school, but it is not really seen as the job of governments to play a role in our training sector.

I think the role of government in the training system, both in South Australia and elsewhere, for a long time has more or less been to work out what the Subsidised Training List is, what the priorities are, what the rate of subsidy is and then to provide those and step away. I foreshadow that I think there is a now a role for governments, both state and federal, to play in supporting employers and training providers in being able to provide better wellbeing supports to young people who are struggling to complete.



That is the feedback I have had from a number of training providers and employers. The most memorable one was from Anthony Kittel from REDARC, who spoke about the lengths he had gone to to try to get an apprentice through from commencement to completion, including dropping in at that person's house every single morning and picking them up and making sure they were awake and dropping them home, and that still did not work.

All the feedback I have had is that those problems are more acute now because there has been a well-established and documented general decline in the wellbeing of young people, and that is having an effect on their ability to go all the way from starting a course or traineeship or apprenticeship through to completion. I hope that what we come back with at the end of this task force work will be something around the role that governments can play.

In terms of the negotiation we did around fee-free courses, and there were 12½ thousand of those in South Australia, I pushed very hard at the national meetings to make sure that—insofar as TAFE was funded to provide some of those, and I think we did about 10½ thousand—they would also be funded to make sure they could do the work that I think traditionally they have done well around providing that extra wraparound support, because it is more important now than it has ever been in the past.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** There was a lot in that answer, so I have some questions that flow on from points the minister made. You talked about the VET task force, which, as I understand it, is a task force of the national ministerial body but is being led by South Australia. In the context of that work, the minister described a local forum as well. I am also interested in what role the Skills Commissioner and the Skills Commission plays in this work. My first question is: who is on the task force and who is involved in the local forum—I am happy to have that taken on notice, if that suits the minister—and what is the interplay, the input, that we are getting from the Skills Commission in this work?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** While we are sourcing that information, it is probably a opportunity for me to make mention of Renee Hindmarsh, who unfortunately had to resign from the Skills Commissioner role because of family commitments interstate. It was sad to lose Renee; I thought she was doing a really good job. I did my best to convince her to stay, but I ultimately failed. We have just now appointed Cameron Baker in a merit-based selection process, and he will be the new Skills Commissioner in South Australia. Yes, my anticipation would be that he will play a role in this. I would like the insights of the person who is there to be the independent Skills Commissioner to provide advice outside of government into what we should be doing as part of this national piece of work.

The task force members are: Madeline Richardson on my right, Craig Robertson from the Victorian Skills Authority, Joseph Mitchell from the Australian Council of Trade Unions, Megan Lilly from the Australian Industry Group, Natalie Heazlewood from the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Jenny Dodd of TAFE Directors Australia, Troy Williams from ITECA, Maxine Sharkey from the Australian Education Union, Peter Dawkins from JSA (Jobs and Skills Australia), Belinda Campbell from the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, Jeremy Kurucz from the New South Wales Department of Education, and Ross Kelly from the Western Australian Department of Training and Workforce Development.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** And the local forum?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** The first local forum that we held might have been six weeks ago. We held it at the Wine Centre. It was a large gathering of invited guests from across the breadth of training providers, employers and people from different parts of government. There were students there as well. It was a day-long session. We had facilitators for it. I came and spoke as part of it to try to set the scene as best I could for why we were doing it and what we wanted to get out of the day.

We have provided the model of what came from there. I think, from memory it was all, recorded by a group that we had there. We provided it to other jurisdictions so that they can hopefully do the same thing and then feed the input that was gathered from that forum into the overarching national process around what changes we think we need to make in this capacity.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Can the minister advise how many extra apprentices and trainees the work and the broader skills agreement is expected to deliver?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I cannot foreshadow that yet because we have not signed the agreement.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Can the minister confirm that the anticipation is that the new agreement will take effect in January 2024, I think he said, so the current agreement takes us through to 31 December in the expectation that at some point in the next six months he will sign the new agreement, which will commence on 1 January; is that right?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I think, broadly speaking, yes. There is an interim fee-free agreement until the end of the year before the new agreement is set to start in January.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Just going back to the minister's first fulsome answer, in talking about the completions, is there a target for completions of Aboriginal trainees and apprentices? Perhaps the minister can advise how many we have now, what the proportion is now and what the target is.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I do not have specific targets to give you. Certainly, I would like to see increases across the board, including with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainees. I am pretty confident in saying that the completion rates there would be lower than the non-ATSI completion rates.

**The Hon. D.G. PISONI:** Down on what they were in 2018.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Am I answering the member for Unley's question?

**The Hon. D.G. PISONI:** Mine was not a question.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** My ambition, of course, is to increase across the board in all levels, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainees. As we do further work, we may come to a point where we set specific targets, but that also may not be the case. It depends how effectively we are going.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Can I ask if the minister is able to provide us with the completion rates for Aboriginal trainees and apprentices over the last six years and also for trainees and apprentices with a disability?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am happy to take that on notice. We can get that from the NCVET reports, from past NCVET reports.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Still on page 193 and in relation to the same line, has the minister had training providers express concerns to him in relation to uncertainty around their funding as a result of the agreement not yet having been concluded? Does his level of confidence in the time frame he outlined earlier give him the courage to provide them a guarantee that it will be signed by the beginning of next year?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am really confident that it will be. I am not going to offer a guarantee, but I do not see any reason why it will not. In relation to the first part of your question, I have certainly had reinforced to me by providers the need to have it online and signed as soon as possible to provide that continuity of funding. That was the reason we struck a one-year agreement with the new federal government as soon as we could and that is the reason it was only a one-year agreement and not a longer one—because we needed to have that offering as fast as we could, including the fee-free places.

We could have taken our time to announce, in the first instance, a five-year agreement, but that would have taken longer than it did take us because I think, from memory, we announced the one-year agreement in November or December with Minister O'Connor, which meant we could hit the ground running and get those fee-free courses and other things out the door. I am as confident as I possibly can be that it will be in place by January. Minister O'Connor, I have to say, is very good to work with and keen to get an agreement as fast as we can, as are other skills ministers as well.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I remember all the nice things I used to say about federal ministers with whom I was in negotiations.

**The CHAIR:** The member for Playford has indicated he wishes to ask a question.

**Mr FULBROOK:** My question relates to Budget Paper 5, page 69. Can the minister explain what feedback led to the Regional Skills Development Fund being established and how will this fund benefit additional training opportunities for regional South Australia?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** The most recent budget has funding in it for a Regional Skills Development Fund. The piece of free advice I get as minister more often than anything else in the skills and training portfolios, particularly as I do regional trips, is about the need to try to bolster the ability of training providers such as TAFE to be able to operate in 'thin markets', I think is the vernacular we use.

I think this is particularly pertinent for South Australia because we are a relatively small population in a very large geographic area, which means we have thin markets everywhere. I think that has prevented us from being able to offer training in smaller regional parts of South Australia because we were unable to reach the requisite number of people to take the course.

One of the things that has frustrated me the most in these portfolios is this constant suggestion that the fact we have thin markets or cannot provide the same access to and sometimes quality of training in all parts of the state is a failing of governments current and prior, when it is actually just the nature of the state we live in, and it probably will always be that way, in that we have a comparatively big capital and that the next largest city, Mount Gambier, is about 25,000 people.

In states like Victoria or New South Wales—Victoria is a good example; it is a much smaller state and has a lot of very large regional hubs like Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong and even places like Warrnambool. They can offer training from those places and the smaller areas that are scattered around it, and there are many in those states too, and students can relatively easily travel to that location and access training. That is not the case in South Australia, and it is not because any government has failed the people of South Australia: it is the nature of our state.

The Regional Skills Development Fund will enable us in the case of TAFE—and I am happy to talk about this in the TAFE session as well—to offer training where the course numbers might be smaller, which is important, because I think the long-term viability of a lot of the places I am talking about here hinge on the ability of people to access training there. Particularly small businesses, if they cannot find people to come and work for them, they might close up shop. When that happens, slowly but surely the town disappears, and there are lots of examples across Australia but particularly South Australia where that has happened.

One of the things we need to put in place to try to prevent that is opportunity for training. The Regional Skills Development Fund will do just that. To specifically answer the member for Playford's question, it has been the consistent feedback of training providers but, more importantly, employers in a lot of areas scattered across the state that we needed to do something about it, and I am pleased that we have found a way in this budget.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I will go to a slightly different topic perhaps and talk about the interplay between skills and technical colleges. Do we have an understanding of how many apprentices or trainees are set to be enrolled in technical colleges? I think there might be a shuffling of advisers back there. Earlier today, we discussed the enrolments for Findon next year, where we are expecting year 10s and year 11s, about 60 of each, to be enrolled. Firstly, are any of them anticipated to undertake school-based apprenticeships or other apprenticeship-type pathways next year? Does the government have any targets for how many apprentices or trainees Findon and the other technical colleges will provide?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I might start with a few high-level remarks and then introduce Clare Feszczak, who is the executive director in the department who has been doing the work on technical colleges and who I will pass to for some more detail. As we have already discussed this morning, member for Morialta, each technical college will have a target of a minimum of 200 full-time equivalents once they are fully operational.

The operating models for each site, with the exception of Findon, which is the first to open in January and is largely locked down under development at the moment, is that each student will have a transition plan and will be supported to their next phase post school, which could be directly to employment, it could be into an apprenticeship or traineeship or into a career within the industry through university. The employer partners—and we have announced one of those already obviously at Findon—guarantee a job with every student if they choose to take it.

I recall in last year's estimate session you asked a question a bit similar about apprenticeships. I will pass over to Ms Feszczak for some more details, but I can inform the committee that apprenticeships will be part of the advanced manufacturing stream at Findon, and I expect that they will be part of other technical colleges as well once we announce those models and specialisations.

**Ms FESZCZAK:** Through the minister, each technical college will have industry training programs co-designed with employers. If I talk about Findon as the example, given that Findon is opening next year, Findon will have three industry training programs: advanced manufacturing and engineering, health and social support, and early childhood and education. There is an industry training program designed for students in year 10, year 11 and year 12.

The content of the programs is agreed with employer partners. For advanced manufacturing and engineering, the program does involve school-based traineeships that then lead into apprenticeships post school. The tech colleges are all designed around employer-endorsed industry training programs, so it is really dependent on what the industry want.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Can the minister or Ms Feszczak identify how many places are on offer in each of those three programs—advanced manufacturing and engineering, health and social support, and early childhood and education—at year 10 and year 11 level next year?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Approximately 20 in each stream in each year level.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Ms Feszczak identified that there would be the opportunity for traineeships prior to the end of their schooling that would then potentially become apprenticeships in advanced manufacturing. Is the model designed so that all 20 of the students in that advanced manufacturing and engineering stream will become school-based trainees with the industry partner identified? At what point will that be? Will there be any next year while they are in year 11, or is that something that is awaiting us in 2025?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I might pass over to Ms Feszczak to answer that.

**Ms FESZCZAK:** All year 11 students get the opportunity to participate in a school-based traineeship as part of advanced manufacturing and engineering in year 11.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Is it an opportunity that they are expected to take up, so by the end of the year we will see 20 trainees having commenced their traineeship? How long does that traineeship take? Does that take them through to the end of high school, or are they able to start the next stage, which was described as an apprenticeship, prior to their finishing high school?

**Ms FESZCZAK:** If I use the example of advanced manufacturing and engineering, the program is designed such that students will do the school-based traineeship in year 11, and then in year 12 they have the opportunity to complete all the SACE requirements and transition into apprenticeships as part of year 12. It is really important for us in the design that all students complete their SACE before they move and transition into work.

As part of the model, we have also looked at the university pathways. There is the opportunity to transition into full-time apprenticeships with the employer partners, but there is also the opportunity in year 12 for students to go on to a higher ed pathway if they choose to. We have looked at designing these in a way—and have built into the design, bridging courses and opportunities with universities so it is automatic entry into university if students do choose to go down that route in year 12.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** We have talked exclusively about the advanced manufacturing pathway. Can I ask about health and social support and the early childhood education pathways at Flinders? Do we have the industry partners for those identified yet? Have they been

announced? Maybe I can ask the minister, or Ms Feszczak can talk to how that model is different for those two sections.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes, we have announced some. We are happy to mention those again now if that is okay. BAE Systems and Liebherr in advanced manufacturing; Southern Cross Care in the health space; Helping Hand, again in that space; Precious Cargo in early childhood education and care; and Goodstart Early Learning in early childhood education and care. They are the partners that we have announced for Findon Technical College across the three streams.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** How will those partners be engaging with the students, from next year, who are in years 10 and 11?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Those industry partners that I just listed will play a role in delivery. They will assist in placements for the students in the stream that relates to them, so they get work experience and an idea of what the job will look like that we hope they will go into at the end of their time at the college. They will have already, I believe, probably in the case of BAE at least, played a role in the course development to make sure that what we will be teaching there is relevant and up to spec with what the employment or industry partners actually need from those graduates.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** In relation to the program, we described the year 11s getting a traineeship and then year 12s being able to enter an apprenticeship in advanced manufacturing. Is that a similar model for these other two programs—although traineeship is probably more relevant for some?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes, so with the other two it is really complete the relevant cert 3 and those two other streams and then, ideally, out into employment after the three years at the technical college is complete.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** So it is a direct training model, without the paid pathway for the health and social support and early childhood, until after they have completed year 12; is that correct?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** That is correct.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Who is going to be delivering the training in each of the different areas? Is it TAFE, non-government RTOs, industry-led RTOs, teachers?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** In the case of health and social services, the ANMF will be providing the training there, which I think is fantastic news and I know it will be of very high quality. In the other two streams at Findon, it is TAFE, and all three have been selected based on the recommendations that the industry partners have made. I anticipate the mix will most likely be in terms of who is providing the training, and it will most likely be different at all five of the technical colleges. As I foreshadowed from the start, we hope there are opportunities—for example for some of our industry training providers, the ITPA members—to be partners with us in providing that training at some sites as well.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Can the minister advise how many enrolment applications have been received to date from students wishing to attend Findon next year?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will take it on notice and try to find that for you if I can.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Can the minister advise in the same vein what will happen with the applicants who are unsuccessful in gaining an offer to train and attend at Findon Technical College? Will they be given opportunities to be directed to other locations?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will take that on notice as well and provide some information back to you about what would happen in that eventuality.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Can the minister describe the process for employers or potential industry partners who wish to partner with the department at Findon were there an opportunity—or indeed the other technical colleges? Is there an open call for that, or is it a curated opportunity for the department to reach out to the people the department sees as being of value?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** That is a good question. It is certainly not curated. We have been very keen to encourage as many potential industry partners to put up a hand to partner with us as possible. I know I have been involved in more meetings than I can remember right now where I have made sure I have made it clear to all the representatives there that they should reach out to the executive director here if they have an interest in partnering with us.

There was a very large piece of industry engagement done during 2022, and I take this opportunity to thank the assistant minister and member for King, Rhiannon Pearce, who worked with Executive Director Claire Feszczak and her team on doing that. Over 500 industry representatives were part of that industry engagement during that period, and a number of the potential partnerships that have now eventuated at Findon were born out of that process. I expect that further partnerships, which will be announced in due course, will come from that process as well.

No, it is not a curated approach: it is more of, I think you characterised it, an open call. We are keen to try to involve as many as we can, and every opportunity I have I encourage people to do so. Claire might have a bit more detail around how that industry engagement process worked.

**Ms FESZCZAK:** As the minister mentioned, last year we did broad industry engagement across the state. As a result of that we had a number of leads, and we followed up on those leads. There is absolutely no doubt that industry and employers are really very, very supportive of the technical colleges. In the department, we have an industry engagement team, and the role of that team is to follow up those leads and that interest. Whilst we have secured the partners for Findon, we are working on securing partners for the other technical colleges at the moment.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Can I ask a slightly more general question in this area. Are we able to identify how many school-based apprentices and school-based trainees there are currently this year within the public school system? Given that it is possible that if a number were provided for this year there may yet be more coming later this year, perhaps for a more fair comparison can I also have how many there were last year and the year before—or let us say the last five years? I should say that if it is easier to provide an across-South Australia figure rather than just public schools, I am happy either way.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will do my best to get you an answer—and I do have information for you now, member for Morialta. The previous government's VET for School Students policy has been rolled out across public secondary schools. In 2023, over 4,500 students from government schools commenced VET as part of the Flexible Industry Program, or FIP. That would include school based, but I do not have a breakdown of that here today. We could try to get that for you.

There are over 370 VET courses identified as suitable for school students as part of their secondary education program, including 259 qualifications in a FIP, and 115 stackable VET options. All 259 qualifications in a FIP are subsidised by the state government through the Training Fund.

There are over 60 training providers on the preferred provider register that have a head of agreement with the department to deliver quality VET for Schools enrolled students. As part of the trainees in schools initiative, a total of 275 students have participated in the program with 127 school-based trainees currently active and progressing in their career pathway within government schools and preschools.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I commend Ms Feszczak for her outstanding work in preparing a lot of that work. I am pleased to see it continue. I think the minister said he would try to get us the more specific numbers, so I will confirm that you are happy to take that on notice.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will get the breakdown on the 4,500 for you.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Thank you, and I am interested in also how many trainees or apprentices are working in the public sector.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I shall try. I am not sure if that comes under my purview or someone else's, but I shall try.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Maybe if you can try at least to get the school-based apprentices and trainees, and obviously I am interested in the number who have commenced and the number who are underway.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Okay.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Back to Findon, if I may, has ASQA approved the training delivery model for the new technical colleges? Is it required to?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** It is not required to.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Is that because the training is being provided by ANMF and TAFE, and they are considered the trainers rather than the technical college?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** That is correct.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** In terms of the facilities and equipment and machinery that will be used at the new technical colleges, I am conscious of the background the minister provided before about his old school becoming obsolete in terms of its equipment. How is the government avoiding that? What sort of equipment and facilities are being created to particularly serve these ends, and what would make these different from what has traditionally been called a school?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will ask Ms Feszczak to provide some detail on that question, member for Morialta.

**Ms FESZCZAK:** The facilities and the equipment in the technical colleges are designed around training requirements but also industry standards currently and into the future. As to the design principles of a technical college, one of them is adaptable and flexible spaces to allow for futureproofing the facility.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I guess I am trying to get to the bottom of how we have 4,500 students undertaking Flexible Industry Pathways across 140 or 150 government schools already, many of them with similar numbers of students undertaking those VET pathways to what the technical colleges will be providing. Apart from the intense engagement of the government to get these industry partners in place and apart from the fact that they are new builds, what is it that makes these five technical colleges different to all of the other public schools that have Flexible Industry Pathways, school-based apprenticeships, industry partners promising jobs, and apprenticeships and traineeships commencing while students are at school?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Member for Morialta, there are a few things I might say to that. First of all, we need to remember that the specialisations of the tech colleges in lots of cases, or almost all, are possibly different from what students are studying in FIP, and the idea behind the tech colleges is not to replace FIP. They are to be complementary and attract people who might not want to do a FIP to go to a tech college. By the same token there are those who might not feel that a tech college is for them who continue to do a Flexible Industry Pathway at school. Akin to the answer I gave in terms of the Catholic system's tech colleges and the public system's tech colleges, the idea is that they work together and grow the overall pie.

In terms of your question at the end about how it is different, there are some remarks I would like to make in regard to that, and they are different in terms of the industry training programs. With employer partners who have influenced the design of the programs and the facilities, which I spoke about before, we have had direct feedback and involvement from, in the case of Findon, BAE, Helping Hand, Southern Cross and Liebherr. I might be missing one there.

In terms of how the course is structured and the skills that are learnt, that is a difference first and foremost in terms of how they deliver workplace experiences for the students and then the employment opportunity to follow. It is designed to be a seamless process—for instance, where you might enter the advanced manufacturing stream at Findon and leave and go straight to BAE or Liebherr.

You already have the relationship with the partner in that case. You already have most likely—or definitely, I think—have done some work experience or placements with them, so you know what it is going to look like, and the nature of the course you have undertaken across the three years at Findon has been in no small way influenced or co-designed by that big employer as well. They are all key differences in the models to begin with.

There will be state-of-the-art facilities, as you have alluded to, and we have been very careful in making sure that the equipment we intend purchasing—with a mind to the point I made and you have reiterated around ensuring that they can remain nimble and change if need be—has a long life cycle. As the executive director said, the way that the building or the college itself is designed is for flexibility and being able to change things so we can do that in the future.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** In relation to the work experience that will be undertaken, the minister or Ms Feszczak earlier identified six or seven employers, and I think the minister said they would provide work experience. Will the department or the school try to find any other employers to offer work experience opportunities and, if so, what will those businesses be required to do? This question would also apply to the original six working with children checks required. What are those employers required to do to qualify as a host business?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** They will have to meet all those requirements around working with children checks and make sure that any of the employees there who have any contact with children are fit and appropriate people to do so with all the records of checks, so I can confirm that now.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Is it just the businesses outlined before, or are you going to be looking for other businesses as well to provide further work experience opportunities?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** As I know you know, member for Morialta, the work experience component is largely focused on year 10, as has been the case, and there will be flexibility in there for the students who are part of that stream at that technical college to seek or have work experience with a broader range of employers, not just the ones who are the industry partners.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Coming to the end of this line of questions, can I ask is the government—as a result of its policies of the five technical colleges, fee-free TAFE and the National Skills Agreement—in a position to set a target for the number of extra apprentices and trainees who will start paid training because of the government's policies?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Thank you, member for Morialta. I can say my target is as many as we possibly can, but I am happy to pass to Executive Director Madeline Richardson for perhaps a bit more detail.

**Ms RICHARDSON:** Thanks, minister. Looking at the number of people undertaking training in our system, there is a volume dimension to that, but it is also about the quality of those experiences, it is also about the alignment with the areas of need and it is about employer satisfaction as well. In thinking about volumes of training, we also need to consider those dimensions.

We also know that, through various agreements that we are party to—both past and those that we anticipate, particularly the National Skills Agreement—there will be implementation plans and, no doubt, key performance indicators that will rest under that agreement that will also give us a guide in terms of what the targets or goals are into the future.

**The CHAIR:** Member for Elder, you would like to ask question? I noticed you were waving at me.

**Ms CLANCY:** Thank you very much. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 193. The paper talks about a new skills plan for South Australia. Could you provide further information on this and on why the government believes it is important?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes, of course it is incredibly important, I think more so now than it has ever been before because of the skills crisis we face nationally, which we are certainly not immune to in South Australia. In fact, having been involved in government in different ways for quite a long time now, and having been to many country cabinets in different capacities, I do not really ever recall in the community forums we have had in the past where skills was one of the issues that a number of questions are asked about. That is probably an unfortunate thing, but it has certainly changed.

In the community forums at the country cabinets we have had in the last 18 months, it is regularly raised by members of the South-East, Upper Spencer Gulf, Kangaroo Island and a number of places we have been, which I think highlights how front of mind it is for people at the moment,



particularly employers in regional parts of South Australia. For that reason, it is critical that we get it right, and our plan needs to be the thing that informs us about that.

The plan itself will provide the framework, I guess, for where the more than \$200 million investment in skills is actually going to go. It has to be focused, as I said in a previous answer, on labour market needs and the work we do in outreach from the skills part of the department. The Skills Commissioner has to play an important role in this as well, but also my role as the minister, and the role of the cabinet, is to make sure that we are actually out there and accessible to employers right across the state to hear what those labour market needs are.

A good example of the importance of that, member for Elder, is the bucket of money, if I can describe it as that, set aside in the budget—it might have been last year's budget—for skills shortages. I think it was about \$8.8 million. What we intend using that for, from memory, is commercial cookery, bricklaying, concreting and saw doctoring.

These were all things that were reiterated to me and other members of the cabinet, and then shadow cabinet, over a long period of time. They were raised with us continually about the need to do something, so the Treasurer and I worked on having some money available there so that some pathways could be created so that we could provide the very specialised employees that are needed by those really important industries, including the forestry industry in the South-East, for instance, which I think is a good example of a specialised industry in South Australia in a localised area.

To inform the plan, engagement was undertaken to hear what is most important to South Australians. I released the government's immediate responses to the Skills Plan in March. This was backed by a \$13.7 million investment, which included three new grant programs to support solutions to skills shortages, pilot new skills centres in our regions and provide greater learner support services as well.

In addition, we are making it easier to find information about skills and training opportunities and pathways through a new online one-stop shop. That is certainly in response to specific feedback we have been given by members of the community, whether they are regional training providers or employers, about how difficult it can be sometimes to get the information they need in one location to understand what might be available to them. The final Skills Plan is going to be released in early 2024. This will also consider the outcomes of the TAFE SA road map and the new National Skills Agreement as well.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** On page 195, Skills SA, the number of apprentices and trainees in training, on the top line you will see that the 2021-22 actual is 25,300 and the 2022-23 estimated result was 28,000. You may or may not have an actual now, but if you have one I would love to hear it. The 2023-24 target is a drop of 3,000 from the last financial year. Can the minister advise why the government is forecasting a drop in apprentices and trainees in training?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will pass to Ms Richardson to provide you with an answer to that question.

**Ms RICHARDSON:** I think when we look at the number of apprentices and trainees in training, we see some of the effects of the COVID stimulus playing out, in particular wage subsidies that we saw provided by the commonwealth, up to 50 per cent of wages paid by the commonwealth for apprentices and trainees being taken on, and a range of other supports in place at that time.

What we see across the training data is uplifts throughout that time, and what we are seeing now perhaps is a return to more average levels over a longer time series. Where we have seen some of those numbers fluctuate a little bit, some of the COVID activity and the stimulus, we can attribute those numbers to what was happening in the system at that time.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Is it a priority for the government to find mechanisms to deal with some of those challenges Ms Richardson has identified and, indeed, is the government going to be seeking to increase apprentice and traineeship commitments over the forward estimates?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Member for Morialta, could I trouble you for the question again, sorry.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I was not reading it. While the minister was seeking advice and counsel, as is his right to do, Ms Richardson was identifying some of the challenges that have confronted the government over the last year. I was asking if it is a priority for the government to confront those challenges and come up with new ways forward and, indeed, if the government will be seeking to increase the number of apprenticeships and traineeships over the next year and the years ahead?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Absolutely, we will be seeking to increase the numbers of apprenticeships and traineeships. I can categorically say yes. If we do not do that, we are going to really struggle to get on top of the skills shortages that we have. The technical colleges, of course, are designed to be part of that solution, as well as a number of the other things I have mentioned. I do not have a specific number for you but, yes, absolutely it is the ambition and aim of this government to increase the numbers of trainees and apprentices.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Given that we have the figures on page 195 that are there, with the target for the year ahead being a lower number than the estimated result from last year, and the minister says he does not have a specific number that is a target for the government, I ask him: will there be more trainees and apprentices or fewer trainees and apprentices than this number over the forward estimates?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I certainly hope that there will be more. That is our ambition. We need to sign the new Skills Agreement first, which of course is basically the major part of how we seek to deliver those increases. I would hope that once we have signed that there will be perhaps a bit more clarity from me in terms of exactly how we will seek to do it, but obviously the Skills Agreement is the biggest thing in this area that the state government signs up to. I am confident that what we will agree to, ultimately, with the federal minister and other states and territories, will be something that absolutely must facilitate an increase in those numbers and will be judged accordingly.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Is the minister also focused on continuing to expand those areas for paid training, where new traineeships and apprenticeships have been created over the last few years? I am thinking particularly in areas like cyber IT, child care and other feminised workforce areas, which I know were a priority for the previous government. Is the new government going to continue to invest time and energy in those paid pathways so that those particularly female-dominated industries do not have people consigned to paying for their own training or having their training paid for before they are going to be able to go out into the paid workforce, which is a key benefit of apprenticeships and traineeships?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** It is indeed; I agree. Thank you, member for Morialta. You make an excellent point and you are right: one of the other sort of wicked problems that we have at the moment is the fact that, in order to facilitate people perhaps changing career, as an example, the current system is not particularly flexible in providing them with a way to do that whilst maintaining an income. We are asking people who are already drawing an income, and most likely supporting a family of their own, to often forsake some of that so they can go and get a qualification that will then enable them to go and find employment in the job they are seeking to move into.

In the current climate, where we do have cost-of-living concerns, and also where there are lots of well-paid jobs available where potentially a new qualification or additional qualification is actually not needed, it is important that we find ways to facilitate that training without the person in question having to take a massive cut to their pay. We are certainly focused on that.

I can tell you that progressing gender equality or doing something around those professions, many of which are in the most in-demand category that have been highly feminised in the past, is one of the key directions for the upcoming National Skills Agreement. We have already begun the work on how we facilitate that, and of course a very key part is the 12½ thousand fee-free places because it means that those people undertaking a spot do not need to pay for their course. There are 10½ thousand through TAFE and 2,000 through other providers.

I have had the opportunity to speak to a number of people who have taken advantage of those positions and I have always been very keen to ask, 'What role did the course being free have in your choosing to do it?' Of course, there is always the concern when you do something like this

that you are simply offering up a free course to somebody who was already going to pay for the course and therefore you are not actually increasing the number of people in that training. I am pleased that the feedback has uniformly been that for many people it was the defining feature about why they decided to access training in the first place and that if it were not fee-free they would not have been able to do it.

There are a number of examples about what we are already doing in response to the very valid question you asked, but there will be more, and the National Skills Agreement will be key in that.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Directly to the point the minister just made, what is the average cost to government of each of the fee-free TAFE training qualifications completed in either TAFE SA or non-government RTOs? There might be a different answer for those two parts of the question.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will take that on notice and come back to you with an answer.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Is the minister able to advise whether there is any data reporting completion or dropout rates in the fee-free courses across TAFE and the non-government sector?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Thank you, member for Morialta. We are monitoring it closely. I do not have the data to hand, but I am sure it is something we can at some stage get. I am loath to say that I will take it on notice because we might not have it yet, but I am sure at some point we definitely will.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** If you are happy to say you will release it publicly, then that will do for me.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** We shall, of course. It is obviously a very key part to seeing the effectiveness of the fee-free courses.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Is the minister able to give us some advice on whether there are apprentices or trainees who are able to do some of their studying in relation to these fee-free courses, or are they excluded from that?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Member for Morialta, I will pass to Ms Richardson to provide some detail on that one, if I may.

**Ms RICHARDSON:** Thank you, minister. Apprenticeships and traineeships under the fee-free initiative are not the primary focus, because the employer is often paying for the apprenticeship or traineeships. Because it is very much focused on alleviating that fee and those costs for students, it is not excluded, but it is not the primary focus.

**The Hon. D.G. PISONI:** On the same line, before I move onto my line of questions here—

**The CHAIR:** Perhaps you could mention what the line is, please.

**The Hon. D.G. PISONI:** It is Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 194. Are there still subsidies from the government available to employers for courses that are completed by apprentices and trainees?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Chair, I might ask if I could just bring up director Bec Curtain, who will swap out with the chief executive for the next few questions.

**Ms CURTAIN:** Apprenticeships and traineeships continue to be a focus for the Subsidised Training List, and they are unrestricted in a lot of areas because, where there is a guarantee of a job and a training place that aligns to that job, the government will subsidise that training.

**The Hon. D.G. PISONI:** Minister, has there been any change in the subsidy rates for employers under the free TAFE program?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** It is not just fee-free TAFE—10½ thousand of the 12½ thousand are TAFE, but the other 2,000 are non-TAFE.

**The Hon. D.G. PISONI:** We have just heard that apprentices and trainees do not qualify for free TAFE or are not a priority. I think that is what I heard come from the table. I am asking whether subsidies remain at the same level under the new agreement for free TAFE, or has there been a change in subsidy levels?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Ms Curtain will provide an answer.

**Ms CURTAIN:** Under the fee-free arrangement, there is the existing subsidy rate. That has always been in place and that continues. There is an additional payment to cover the lost student fee. Where there is an apprentice or a trainee place undertaking a fee-free place, that increased subsidy would be paid to the training provider in lieu of the fee, which in the case of an apprenticeship or a traineeship may be paid by the student or the employer. It does not go directly to the employer, but it is additional subsidy to offset the cost for the training.

**The Hon. D.G. PISONI:** Minister, my question was: has there been any change in the size of the subsidy? Is the subsidy the same for subsidised courses under the free TAFE program or has there been a change of subsidy? Is it higher, is it lower or is it the same as what it promised before the new agreement?

**Ms CURTAIN:** If I may, the subsidy rate for the training is the same but there is an additional subsidy that is paid on top of the existing rate to cover the loss of student fee revenue.

**The Hon. D.G. PISONI:** Can the minister advise what the non-government training provider sector expenditure was for 2022-23? How does this compare with the previous financial year, 2021-22?

**The CHAIR:** The member for Playford can have the next question.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will take that question on notice, sorry, member for Unley.

**Mr FULBROOK:** My question relates to Budget Paper 5, page 28. Can the minister update the committee on how the Malinauskas government is supporting group training providers and registered training providers, in particular not-for-profit and industry-based training providers?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am very pleased to provide the committee with some information on this. There were two initiatives here provided most recently to assist both not-for-profit and industry group training organisations, firstly, \$9 million over three years to establish a capital and equipment fund through a competitive grant process. I am particularly proud of this one because I know that specifically the ITPA training providers have been asking for this for many, many years and unfortunately were unsuccessful.

It was raised with me, I think, for the first time by Simon Last from the Construction Industry Training Centre (CITC) when I was there with the then opposition leader and deputy opposition leader announcing the technical colleges election commitment. Simon took me aside and spoke about a fund that used to exist in years gone by and sadly ended, which those training providers were able to access when they needed to make a large capital upgrade.

When you consider that these are not-for-profit training providers who invest what they make back into the provision of their training, and if we take the CITC as a good example with the courses that they run, they have some pretty expensive equipment. The one that Mr Last pointed out to me on that occasion was a large crane that they have at the back of their facility. Courses around things like dogging and things like that are really important because it comes down to the safety of the worker and the safety of the worksite. If the equipment that is being used to provide that training is not as modern and fit for purpose or as similar to what would be used on the actual worksite as can be, then we run the risk of the training not being appropriate and the safety of the worker being compromised.

That is one example, but I know that every other one of those not-for-profit training providers, whether it is PEER or the MTA or ATEC, would provide their own example of how they have found it hard at times to be able to find the money needed to upgrade the equipment for their training. I am really pleased that this \$9 million fund over three years to establish a capital and equipment fund through that competitive grant process will be there so that we can make good on the commitment

that the Premier and I both made before the election to all those providers, and more, that I just listed before.

I have said that I think governments of both persuasions in the past have taken them and the work that they do for granted. Certainly that has been the position of people like Paul Unerkov, and I want to thank him for all his years of work on the MTA. There are lots of areas of training provision that are provided in South Australia by organisations like the MTA, for example—paint and panel is one that springs to mind—which are obviously necessities and we have to have them.

If it were not for the work of, for instance, the Motor Trade Association, we would not actually have anyone in South Australia potentially offering training for the people who will go and work in those body shops and we would be lost. I think it is not right that we have taken them for granted when it has come to providing support from the state government for the work they do. That is why we have committed that \$9 million over three years so they can make an application to the department for a new piece of equipment, for instance, and then an assessment is made by the department, which may ultimately flow to me as minister for us to sign off on.

The other part of your question, member for Playford, that I would like to address is in regard to the boost. This has been raised with me as well on many occasions. If I recall correctly, it was first raised with me at the Apprentice Employment Network at Mount Lofty House when I was the shadow minister, about the need to commit again to another round of the GTO boost which, for those committee members who might not be aware, is there to help bridge the gap for employers between having a direct indenture agreement basically with the apprentice themselves, so going it alone, or going through a GTO.

We know, because we have just had a long conversation in this session, member for Playford, about the work we are trying to do around improving completion rates, that GTOs in many cases have very high completion rates right up in the 90s. When you consider that the completion rate across all forms of training—apprentices, traineeships and everything in between right across Australia—is sub 50 per cent, obviously it is important that we do everything we can. That includes committing again to a GTO boost so we can encourage employers to, yes, have access to an apprentice, but ideally go through a group training organisation that provides a lot of that other wraparound support.

If things, for instance, were to go south with the employer in question, they can then find an apprenticeship with a new employer so they can continue and ideally complete their apprenticeship and then get out into full-time and fully paid work. I am pleased that those two initiatives were supported in this most recent budget and look forward to hearing some feedback from some of those industry training providers and GTOs about what it means to them in terms of being able to provide high-quality training and attract more people to be apprentices.

**The Hon. D.G. PISONI:** I am very happy to see the boost that I introduced continued, minister. Well done. How many non-government training providers are currently delivering government-funded courses in South Australia? How does that compare with the numbers in 2021-22?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I just want to bathe in your—I acknowledge your thanks and I appreciate it. We will get an answer for that question. I have an answer for you on that question, member for Unley. I will hand over to the executive director to provide it to you.

**Ms RICHARDSON:** We have around 150 contracts that we hold with non-government training providers. As you would be aware, those are where those providers have a contract with us for the delivery of subsidised training. We are seeing that number hold steady, and so the same amount of providers are still delivering training. There might be some movement in and out of that, but it is holding steady.

**The Hon. D.G. PISONI:** Minister, this is the same budget paper, Volume 1, but this time page 195, government expenditure per annual hours of VET delivery. Can the minister advise the number of paid training hours delivered by TAFE SA in 2022-23, as well as non-government training providers in the same period?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Perhaps I could take that question in the TAFE session, when I have the TAFE chief executive here.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Non-government training providers were part of the question too.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am happy to try to answer the non-government training providers part now, but I do not think I can answer the TAFE bit right now. The other one we can have a crack at now.

**The Hon. D.G. PISONI:** Perhaps the other questions I have along this line could be reserved for that as well.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** In relation to the second part of your question, member for Unley, about non-government training providers, I will take that on notice and come back to you with an answer, but if you like I am happy to have a crack when I have Mr Coltman next to me for the TAFE session.

**The Hon. D.G. PISONI:** Thank you.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I go to Budget Paper 3, page 5. Can the minister confirm which non-government and industry-based training providers will receive support through training subsidy increases under the budget commitment over four years?

**The CHAIR:** What dot point was that?

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** It was Budget Paper 3, but I think there is also a reference in Budget Paper 5, and I am rapidly going to that to find the page number.

**The CHAIR:** I am on Budget Paper 3, page 5, but I cannot quite find the reference.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I am sure it is there but, just in case—

**The CHAIR:** I have no doubt, but I would like to see it myself as well.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I am also looking at various measures on page 28 of Budget Paper 5, the bottom measure on page 28 of Budget Paper 5.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** We are working through the details with the sector now, and we can come back to you with more detail as soon as we have that.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** The sector is pretty large. Can the minister identify how that process is working? Is it a particular stakeholder group or a series of the industry-led GTOs? If the minister could explain how that process is working and how that funding will be administered, it would be helpful.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will give a bit of a broad brushstroke answer to your question as best I can and then pass to Ms Richardson. I understand the groups we are consulting or working with include ITECA, the AEN and ITBA, but I will pass over to Ms Richardson for a bit more detail.

**Ms RICHARDSON:** Thank you, minister. For each of those new initiatives, as you would anticipate with the developing guidelines, that would outline the type of criteria, the key objectives and eligibility. In doing so, as we normally would as part of any new significant initiatives under TAFE, we undertake consultation. We meet regularly with those peak bodies, so we can use that forum that I host really regularly.

We have sat down recently with GTOs to talk about the new initiatives. We will continue to do so to make sure those new initiatives and the advice that the minister receives is reflective of those consultation processes. The guidelines transparently set out all the key elements to invite appropriate applications and engagement with the sector that supports the objectives as they are set out in the budget.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** How many non-government training provider subsidy reviews are currently being undertaken?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** As probably both the members for Morialta and Unley know, providers can request a review at any time. It might be triggered by an increase in the cost of labour or materials. A good example of that again is probably stuff like the course I mentioned before around paint and panel, which I know is one of the reasons the MTA has invested in the virtual paint technology so that when they are teaching people how to do the process they do not go through a whole heap of consumables unnecessarily.

I will pass over to Ms Richardson for a bit more detail. In terms of an actual current list, we would have to come back to you on what subsidy reviews, if any, are underway.

**Ms RICHARDSON:** My apologies, I do not have on hand the number of active applications, but it is an open process where at any time a provider can come and sit down and talk to us about their current experiences in delivering subsidised training. As the minister highlighted, often the issues we hear are around cost of materials, changed delivery modes, student volumes, class sizes; it might be about where it is being delivered as well.

So all those variables play out in the discussions we have with training providers about the level of subsidy that they are receiving for their delivery. We would make that assessment and consider any adjustments, if any, to the subsidy level and then we would also look at how that plays out across the sector as well.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I appreciate you taking that on notice. In addition to the ones that are currently underway, how many have been completed since the election? In particular, how many have seen changes in subsidy out of that set?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Thank you, member for Morialta. Again, I would probably take that on notice and come to you with that information.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** In relation to the AMFA, the Maritime and Fisheries Academy, has the funding support that I think the AMFA was promised before the election to relocate to a new and more suitable location been provided, and is there a peppercorn lease arrangement in place?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** That is a TAFE one. Is it okay if we were to do that one in the next session?

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I am happy to, sir. Can I ask across the skills area—and I will ask again in TAFE separately in case there are any others that relate to TAFE—of those 150 or so non-government training providers, how many of those receive support from the department or from the government in terms of their accommodation through either subsidised lease, peppercorn rent or the provision of infrastructure in other ways?

**The CHAIR:** Member for Morialta, while we wait for the answer, the next question should be a short one and not with 10 parts.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** We shall take that one on notice.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** On page 193, objectives, can the minister advise what the government is doing to support training being delivered for the government's hydrogen commitment to be realised? Chair, for completeness, it is the first dot point under economy on page 5 of Budget Paper 3.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Thank you, member for Morialta. I will say a couple of things before handing over to Ms Curtain in terms of what we are doing there. Of course, one we should mention is the fee-free courses which include electrotechnology on their base qualifications which would be needed for many of the people who would be envisaged to work on the hydrogen plant.

The other thing I might foreshadow is specialisations for some of our technical schools, particularly the Upper Spencer Gulf area around providing pathways there for people who live in the area to access one of the jobs that will be created by the construction of that plant. I will pass over to Ms Curtain for a few more comments.

**Ms CURTAIN:** Thank you, minister. In addition to the work that the minister mentioned, we are also working closely with the Department for Industry, Innovation and Science to understand workforce need in relation to clean energy and understand the changes that will be needed in training

products. We are working closely with Jobs and Skills Australia on the Clean Energy Capacity Study to understand both the scale and the type of need into the future so that we can make sure we have the right products in market to build the skills off the bases that the minister talked about around how people might upskill from an electrotechnology qualification into the clean energy workforce.

**The CHAIR:** The allotted time having expired, I declare the examination of Skills SA complete.

*Sitting suspended from 15:32 to 15:45.*

#### **Departmental Advisers:**

Mr D. Coltman, Chief Executive, TAFE SA.

Mr G. Rix, Executive Director, Finance and Performance, TAFE SA.

Ms F. Champion, Chief of Staff to Chief Executive, TAFE SA.

**The CHAIR:** I wish to open the portfolio of TAFE SA. The minister appearing is the Minister for Education, Training and Skills. The proposed payments remain open for examination. Before I call on the minister to make a statement or to introduce his new advisers, I wish to advise the committee that I have received a letter from the Deputy Premier, and I will read the following letter to the committee. The minister wishes to correct the record and further clarify a response that she made on Monday 3 July during the Environment Protection Authority hearing, and I quote:

I was asked by the member for Colton whether I could explain the reason for an additional \$680,000 of funding allocated towards the management of some legacy waste drums.

In my response I stated that this funding 'was about dealing with a legacy program known as the Household Hazardous Waste and Farm Chemicals Program'. This program dealt with particularly hazardous chemicals. Under the program, the EPA is responsible for the ongoing management of the material which was historically collected and is currently stored in 106 drums.

I also stated in my response that 'among the drums there were 47 drums of organochlorine pesticide and 57 drums of what is called intractable wastes. They are classified as "Class 6—Toxic and Infectious Substances". The drums had been stored at a location at Gepps Cross, and it was discovered, when the EPA was notified by the companies doing that storage, that there was an odour that was being emitted and there was a concern that there was leaking. In order to deal with the drums leaking, we had to have them moved interstate, where they are able to manage those materials.'

I would like to clarify the record by stating that the drums are not interstate.

They have been moved safely and securely to another facility in Adelaide where they are being sampled and analysed. Once the EPA have results and a full picture of their exact chemical makeup, they will be moved again to appropriate facilities for final destruction and or disposal. The EPA anticipates it is a very high probability that the final destruction and or disposal will need to occur at an interstate facility as we do not have the appropriate facilities or disposal pathways here in South Australia.

I would also like to clarify that of the 106 EPA drums stored at the facility there was only 1 drum identified to be leaking, which has since been over-drummed and secured.

That is signed by the minister. Minister.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Chair, could I introduce the guests I have with me for this session of the committee. I have the Chief Executive of TAFE, Mr Dave Coltman; I have Mr Graham Rix, who is the Executive Director for Finance; and I have Ms Fiona Champion, who is from the Office of the Chief Executive. I do not have any opening statement, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Member for Morialta you are the lead still?

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Yes, although we will be moving around a little bit, but I have a short set first and then—

**The CHAIR:** You can stay in the same spot.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Yes, I will, thank you. I will use the general line perhaps in relation to the workforce summary on page 76. We are now on Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, for those



who are following at home in relation to that workforce summary. In relation to the TAFE corporate staff, does TAFE still have a cohort of staff working from home as a result of a change in business arrangements during the pandemic and, if so, is there a timetable in place for those staff who have been working from home to return to the office and, if so, can you table that plan?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am happy to answer that question. I might have a go first and then pass over to the chief executive, should he like to add anything more. TAFE's Voluntary Flexible Working Arrangements Policy informs non-executive salaried and weekly paid employees of voluntary flexible working options that are available to them and how they can access them. This will include working from home arrangements in some cases. Managers are responsible for developing arrangements in consultation with non-executive salaried and weekly paid employees to enable access to working from home arrangements.

Working from home arrangements enable a good balance of work, supporting greater staff wellbeing. They are designed to operate to the mutual benefit of TAFE SA and its clients and employees and take into consideration the operational needs and client service responsibilities of TAFE SA. Educational employees have the ability to access non-delivery time as part of their enterprise agreement, which facilitates working away from the workplace. I might pass over to Mr Coltman, who might like to add a few other comments to this answer.

**Mr COLTMAN:** Not all voluntary flexible working arrangements are available to all employees. Management determines which voluntary flexible working arrangements can be accommodated within a work group and enters into a consultation process to determine the parameters of each individual arrangement. These can be short-term arrangements as a result of an identified immediate need, for example, through the pandemic or any other major crises. These are generally available to TAFE SA staff on an ongoing basis. Working from home arrangements are certainly not suitable for all work groups or assigned duties and are only available to those employees whose work is suited to the arrangements. These are patterns that are not to exceed 12 months and so need to be renegotiated on a 12-monthly basis.

Where there are irregular or ad hoc requirements, short-term emergency situations can be agreed and entered into with management within TAFE SA. As part of this process, home-based worksite inspections are conducted and a completed report is attached to each arrangement. Managers must be satisfied that the employee has a satisfactory and safe worksite and that appropriate and safe equipment is available before an arrangement is approved. Consideration is also given to the appropriate storage and security of TAFE SA documents, information and systems utilised in the home worksite. I am happy to take any further questions.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I completely understand that there are a range of opportunities for people to work from home for various reasons. I am particularly interested in the consequence of returning to more normal arrangements post pandemic. I wonder if maybe I can ask one more question on this. What is the current proportion of staff working from home and staff working from the office in head office or in corporate roles? Has that proportion changed over the past year, since the middle of last year?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** We will take that on notice and come back to you.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I might see if the member for Unley wants to continue on Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 76.

**The Hon. D.G. PISONI:** We touched on this earlier, minister, and you committed to dealing with it in this session. For the government expenditure per annual hours of VET delivery, can the minister advise the number of paid training hours delivered by TAFE SA in 2022-23?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am happy to have a go at this and then let my colleagues add anything that may be relevant that I have not covered. The 2022-23 training profile planned subsidised training activity is at 7.28 million hours, and TAFE SA is forecasting to meet this target.

The external income budget of \$88.5 million is forecast to be achieved for the 2022-23 financial year. In terms of the 2023-24 training profile, that is currently under development and will align with TAFE SA's budget targets regarding training activity of 7.28 million claimable hours. Budget targets around external income, for instance non-subsidised activity, will also be met. In addition, the

2023-24 training profile will ensure that TAFE achieves the 10,500 fee-free training places. There are 201 award courses planned to be offered in 2023-24. I might pass over to Mr Coltman, if he wishes to add anything more to my answer.

**Mr COLTMAN:** There were 10.2 million registered training hours delivered in 2022-23, and this represented a 17 per cent decrease from 2021-22. The decline in registered training hours is in line with the decline in VET participation at TAFE SA as a result of the cessation of new enrolments in several business and community services courses in metropolitan locations, including aged-care, disability and children's services courses, from January 2021.

Business and arts courses registered the highest decline of 898,000 hours, which was 26 per cent, followed by health, communication and foundation skills courses, which declined by 694,000, or 28 per cent, when compared to the previous years. The registered training hours delivered consisted of 8.4 million registered training hours for the provision of services funded by government and 1.7 million registered hours for fee-for-service.

**The Hon. D.G. PISONI:** What was the value of those hours funded by government? There is a total income for the estimated amount for last year of \$307.224 million. How much of that came from the delivery of training hours?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am happy to take another question, member for Unley, while we find that answer for you, but I am confident we will.

**The Hon. D.G. PISONI:** This refers back to the set I had earlier that you thought more appropriate to ask in this session. This refers to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 195. Can the minister provide an update on the modelling which has led to the government expenditure per annual hours on VET delivery in 2023-24 increasing to \$24 an hour, when the estimated amount for 2022-23 was \$19.80 an hour?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Mr Coltman will provide some remarks as I find a bit more information to provide you as well.

**Mr COLTMAN:** The cost for delivery for TAFE SA we are able to provide for the member for Unley, having completed a costing model tool that allows us to assess the actual cost of delivery of each course by location, by class and by cohort. I would not be able to comment on the cost of delivery of non-government providers, because that information is not available to me.

**The Hon. D.G. PISONI:** Minister, can you advise what the average subsidy per hour paid to TAFE SA to deliver vocational education is?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** As I find that information for you, I might pass to Mr Rix, who can provide an answer to the earlier question that you asked.

**Mr RIX:** The total cost of subsidised training paid to TAFE SA in 2022-23 was \$198.7 million; in this budget, it increases to \$209.3 million for subsidised VET.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** In relation to your most recent question, I will pass to Mr Coltman to provide you an answer.

**Mr COLTMAN:** The funding model for TAFE in the past financial year has been an allocation funding model rather than an activity-based funding model. That means we can average out the hours of delivery to come up with a single cost, but activity is not reimbursed per se. It is an allocation model as agreed through the budget process.

**The Hon. D.G. PISONI:** Minister, I do not remember the exact hours that were quoted, but I think 8.1 million were paid for delivery, and that was an amount of \$191-odd million I think, so I cannot accept that answer, that there is not an hourly rate that is billed when specifically my question was about how many hours were billed and paid to TAFE for delivery of vocational education. There has to be a number in there for those two numbers to actually work—the 8.1 million hours of delivery equalling \$191 million of payment. Can someone explain to me how that happens?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am happy to pass to Mr Rix to provide some detail on that.

**Mr RIX:** We have not finalised this calendar year's or this financial year's resulting hours, which provide that comparable claimable hours number. They are still being finalised over this week and next as the term comes to an end.

**Ms PRATT:** I will now read in the omnibus questions:

1. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, how many executive appointments have been made since 1 July 2022 and what is the annual salary and total employment cost for each position?

2. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, how many executive positions have been abolished since 1 July 2022 and what was the annual salary and total employment cost for each position?

3. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, what has been the total cost of executive position terminations since 1 July 2022?

4. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, will the minister provide a breakdown of expenditure on consultants and contractors with a total estimated cost above \$10,000 engaged since 1 July 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?

5. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, will the minister provide an estimate of the total cost to be incurred in 2023-24 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?

6. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, will the minister advise whether it met the 1.7 per cent efficiency dividend for 2022-23 to which the government committed and, if so, how was the saving achieved?

7. For each department or agency reporting to the minister, how many surplus employees are there in June 2023, and for each surplus employee what is the title or classification of the position and the total annual employment cost?

8. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, 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 and, for each position to be cut, its classification, total remuneration cost and the date by which the position will be cut?

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

- What savings targets have been set for 2023-24 and each year of the forward estimates; and
- What is the estimated FTE impact of these measures?

10. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, will the minister advise what share it is receiving 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 is being used in each case?

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

- What was the actual FTE count at June 2023 and what is the projected actual FTE count for the end of each year of the forward estimates;
- What is the budgeted total employment cost for each year of the forward estimates; and
- 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?

12. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, how much is budgeted to be spent on goods and services for 2023-24 and for each year of the forward estimates?

13. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, how many FTEs are budgeted to provide communication and promotion activities in 2023-24 and each year of the forward estimates and what is their estimated employment cost?

14. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, what is the total budgeted cost of government-paid advertising, including campaigns, across all mediums in 2023-24?

15. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, please provide for each individual investing expenditure project administered, the name, total estimated expenditure, actual expenditure incurred to June 2023 and budgeted expenditure for 2023-24, 2024-25 and 2025-26?

16. For each grant program or fund the minister is responsible for, please provide the following information for the 2023-24, 2024-25 and 2025-26 financial years:

- Name of the program or fund;
- The purpose of the program or fund;
- Budgeted payments into the program or fund;
- Budgeted expenditure from the program or fund; and
- Details, including the value and beneficiary, or any commitments already made to be funded from the program or fund.

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

- Is the agency confident that you will meet your expenditure targets in 2023-24;
- Have any budget decisions been made between the delivery of the budget on 15 June 2023 and today that might impact on the numbers presented in the budget papers which we are examining today; and
- Are you expecting any reallocations across your agency's budget lines during 2023-24, if so, what would be the nature of this reallocation?

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

- What South Australian businesses will be used in procurement for your agency in 2023-24;
- What percentage of total procurement spend for your agency does this represent; and
- How does this compare to last year?

19. What protocols and monitoring systems has the department implemented to ensure that the productivity, efficiency and quality of service delivery is maintained while employees work from home?

20. What percentage of your department's budget has been allocated for the management of remote work infrastructure, including digital tools, cybersecurity and support services, and how does this compare with previous years?

21. How many procurements have been undertaken by the department this FY, how many have been awarded to interstate businesses, and how many of those were signed off by the chief executive?

22. How many contractor invoices were paid by the department directly this FY? How many and what percentage were paid within 15 days, and how many and what percentage were paid outside of 15 days?

23. How many and what percentage of staff who undertake procurement activities have undertaken training on participation policies and local industry participants this FY?

**The CHAIR:** The member for Playford and then the member for Morialta.

**Mr FULBROOK:** My question relates to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 79. Can the minister update the house on the rollout of fee-free TAFE at TAFE SA?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I thank the member for Playford for his question. I am very happy to provide some detail to the house about our fee-free TAFE initiative, which of course is an incredibly important one now, given the skills shortages and problems we are seeing right across Australia in terms of being able to fill vacancies and provide access to those who are looking for work or looking to perhaps change career or upskill to the training they need.

I was very pleased that very early in the piece, towards the end of last year we were able to sign a one-year agreement with the new federal government and have that online and operational as quickly as we possibly could because we knew that the need was dire and there were election commitments, certainly from the federal government, around fee-free positions.

South Australia was the first state in Australia to announce the new interim Skills Agreement with the commonwealth government. I did that at a signing with Minister O'Connor at Tonsley TAFE. I am pretty sure I was joined on that day by the member for Elder, which was fantastic, and she is here today. As part of the agreement, TAFE SA has been allocated 10½ thousand places of the 12½ thousand places allocated to South Australia in total. It is a \$65 million joint commonwealth-state investment. I have to say that the response has been overwhelming, probably more than certainly anyone at this table anticipated in our wildest dreams.

I can advise the chamber today that TAFE SA is on track to exceed its target early in semester 2. This, of course, presents the challenge of unmet demand. I can assure the house that TAFE SA still offers subsidised courses to people. We are hopeful that the next Skills Agreement, which we have discussed in some length here today, will continue fee-free TAFE and fee-free places next year when it commences, once it is negotiated and signed.

Alongside fee-free TAFE, I am really pleased that after years of declining numbers of students at TAFE, they are officially growing again. TAFE enrolments are 6 per cent higher than at the same time last year, at the end of May. This I think is a fantastic thing. We promised we would rebuild TAFE and that is exactly what we are doing. A great sign of that is that students are choosing to return to TAFE.

I have made it a focus of mine, in the time I have been minister, to not only get out and visit TAFE campuses, usually with the chief executive, in regional areas and metropolitan areas, and talk to staff and students but also to be quite honest and up-front. I want to thank the chief executive for his willingness to be like this too, to speak with those employers who perhaps in the past used TAFE but then stopped doing that about what their reasons for doing so were.

On a number of occasions, the chief executive has then gone away to meet with those employers to talk about what can be done to give them the level of confidence they need to again re-engage with TAFE. A very good example of that is GFG, who, very early in the piece, made comments to me about their unwillingness to use TAFE.

Instead of running away with our collective tails between our legs, we fronted up and have had a number of meetings, and the chief executive and his team have had a number of meetings with GFG to get right down to the nitty-gritty about what it is that led to them deciding not to use TAFE and what we could do to get them back.

I am pleased to advise the house today that we have been successful in those endeavours and will have GFG again partnering with TAFE to provide training. It is obviously not just important because GFG is such a huge employer, and I, of course, as the minister responsible for TAFE would like to have our big employers speak positively and passionately about TAFE, but it is also vital to our TAFE campuses in regional areas.

I would point particularly to Port Pirie, Port Augusta and Whyalla as places where I would like to see our provision of courses increase and the Regional Skills Development Fund will certainly be one of the ways that we do that, but I would also like to make sure that in those areas, whether it is the smelter in Port Pirie, GFG—all those big employers in those towns—wish to use TAFE as a

training provider because that is the way that I think we enliven those TAFE campuses and bring activity back there.

As we grow that kind of critical mass that we are often missing in South Australia because of the thin markets, it will then of course give us the ability to potentially offer other things as well. It is an opportunity for me today to thank all those who have been involved in that work and I look forward to having more to say once the next National Skills Agreement is signed around what fee-free positions might be a part of that.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I refer you to page 76 of Volume 4. The second line reads, 'TAFE SA delivers upon its functions as set out in the TAFE SA Act 2012 and the Ministerial Charter.' Can the minister advise when the ministerial charter was last updated and, perhaps on notice, can I ask that we get a copy of it?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** The Public Corporations Act 1993 applies to TAFE SA and requires a charter and performance statement to be prepared by the minister and Treasurer after consultation with TAFE SA. TAFE SA has a ministerial charter and performance statement in place, as you have correctly identified. TAFE SA provides monthly reports to me outlining performance against these priorities. I am sure that was the case when the member for Morialta was the minister responsible as well. TAFE also has an operational agreement that establishes the arrangements between Skills SA and TAFE SA to support TAFE to deliver on government priorities.

In 2022-23, TAFE is required to provide monthly reports, as I said, endorsed by the board, which address performance against the following priorities: delivery of election commitments; 12-month skills agreement; responding to economic and community needs; supporting students to succeed; sector-leading teaching and learning; building the brand of TAFE SA; valuing the TAFE SA workforce; maximising TAFE SA's assets as the public provider; and sustainable and efficient delivery. TAFE has been reporting to me against these priorities since January 2023. A ministerial charter and performance statement will be prepared for 2023-24 following finalisation of the road map for TAFE SA.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** From that, can I infer that the ministerial charter from 2019 or 2020 was the last one that was signed?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** The last charter and performance statement signed was for 2022-23 and finalised and signed by the Treasurer in June of this year.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** So quite recently. Can I ask for a copy of the current charter to be taken on notice perhaps?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes, I am happy to do that.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Similarly, in relation to the most recent performance statement which the minister referenced and is on the next line on page 76, can the minister advise when was the performance statement last updated? Can it be provided on notice as well?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** The performance statement was also signed in June. As per the legislation, it requires me to table it in this place, which I will be doing for both the charter and the performance statement.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I look forward to it; thank you. Has TAFE SA met each objective and directive under its performance statement—it might be the previous performance statement, potentially—for the 2022-23 financial year?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will take that on notice, I think, and perhaps come back with an answer. I have the priorities in the current one in front of me. I am not sure if I have the previous ones and an acquittal of how they did.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** In terms of monitoring progress against the performance statement, is that the monthly report that the minister referred to earlier? If not, is there another way that progress is reported against the performance statement?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will ask the chief executive.

**Mr COLTMAN:** A monthly report is provided to the minister and the TAFE SA board that reports against the objectives established in the charter and performance statement.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** In terms of the ministerial priorities list—I think the minister referenced this as well—is that incorporated into the performance statement, or does that document have some other kind of status?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** It is incorporated into that. I might also add that in terms of accountability and performance measures of course, as minister I also meet with the chair of the board, who is Joanne Denley, on a regular basis and seek to ask her questions about how the acquittal of that performance statement and charter and priorities is going.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Is it a public document, the ministerial priorities for TAFE SA 2023-24?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** It is all in the charter, member for Morialta.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** We will look forward to receiving that.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** It will be an occasion for celebration.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Yes, there will be tap dancing, I am told.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** And scones—and the member for Unley will thank me.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** On the workforce summary on page 76, the 2021-22 actual FTEs were 1,895.9. The estimated result is 1,930. Can I get a sense on who are the extra 35 or so staff, the new employees? What are their job titles? What divisions are they assigned to? What sort of salary band classifications are we looking at?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Thank you, member for Morialta. I will say that I am fairly confident that it relates to the reintroduction of the courses that were cut that the chief executive mentioned before, but I will pass over to the chief executive who might like to add something to that answer.

**Mr COLTMAN:** As noted as at 31 March 2023, we had a workforce of 1,921 FTE, which is approximately nine FTE below the cap. The growth from previous years was both forecast and related to the reintroduction of a number of courses in metropolitan areas—those in the business services, health and community, and foundation skills areas.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Are any FTEs appointed to oversee the proactive disclosure of TAFE SA executive expenses? If so, can we arrange for the website to be updated for proactive disclosure? It seems not to have been done since September last year.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Thank you for pointing that out. I shall make sure that is updated posthaste. I will confer in terms of the first part of your question.

**The CHAIR:** The member for Florey has a question.

**Mr BROWN:** My question to the minister relates to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 79. Can the minister update the house on the reintroduction of care courses at TAFE SA metro campuses?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Thank you for your question, member for Florey and, yes, I can. I will keep it brief so I can enable the member for Morialta to get an answer to the question he asked before.

It was an election commitment we made. I think it was the very first media conference, press conference, I did as minister with the Premier at the TAFE SA CBD campus, where we were joined, from memory, by Helping Hand and Rembrandt, two very large aged-care providers who had advocated for the return of these courses for the reason that TAFE had a very strong reputation in these areas, and it is an area where we need to grow the workforce. Under the policy position of the previous government, those courses were not offered in the metropolitan campuses anymore.

Of course, there is not just demand in the courses to which the member for Florey referred, which are individual support (ageing) and individual support (disability). We know about that, but another course was early childhood education and care, which is a priority for this government,

particularly in terms of the delivery of universal three-year-old preschool. The 2022-23 budget committed \$3 million per annum indexed to restore the community services courses across the metro area.

As a result of the return of these courses, 498 additional students have been able to access subsidised training and commence their study in community services with TAFE SA in the 2022-23 financial year. These students will assist in meeting demand for skilled workers in those industries into the future. The advice I have from the agency at this time is that they anticipate further additional enrolments in these courses in the coming years, which is very pleasing.

In terms of the restoration of early childhood courses, TAFE SA has invested \$627,000 as at 31 March 2023 to restore early childhood courses. This includes upgrading facilities and equipment, and staff costs. An additional 142 students have enrolled in that course in 2022-23. Regarding the restoration of aged-care and disability courses, just to give a breakdown of the 498 additional students in total, there are 99 additional students in disability courses and 60 additional students in aged care, and again money spent was used towards upgrading facilities and equipment and staff costs.

I might leave my answer there, Chair so I can give the member for Morialta an opportunity to ask another question. We may have an answer to the earlier question he asked before the member for Florey's, and I will pass to the chief executive to provide that.

**Mr COLTMAN:** TAFE SA has an officer with responsibility for proactive disclosures and, as the minister has indicated, we will ensure with urgency that the TAFE SA website is updated.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** In regard to the last answer from the minister, who was talking about courses reintroduced in the metropolitan area, can I ask what the status is of hairdressing courses in Whyalla. How many students are currently being taught in that course?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** We will take the question about how many on notice, but the courses are certainly operational because I have asked for an update on that recently myself. We will come back to you with how many students are doing the hairdressing course at Whyalla.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** If he is taking that on notice, can the minister also provide the breakdown of all the Whyalla hairdressing courses, including the number of staff as well as the number of students under each qualification. Are those staff based locally in Whyalla or are they being paid to travel to teach?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will have to take all those on notice.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** On page 79, under highlights, it talks about TAFE SA's digital infrastructure. Does that include investment in cybersecurity, and what steps is TAFE taking to keep data safe? There is obviously a well-publicised issue from around the time of the change in government, so we are keen to ensure that moving forward TAFE's data is secure.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will ask the chief executive to provide an answer to the member for Morialta on that question.

**Mr COLTMAN:** The TAFE SA board has approved a cybersecurity program of investment. This multiyear program seeks to ensure that TAFE SA data is protected and that the protocols and operating procedures within the organisation are fit for purpose. Obviously there have been some learnings over the past years, as for many organisations around issues to do with cybersecurity, as the technologies used by cyber criminals become more complicated or more mature. TAFE SA will continue to look at its own approach, and that is moderated also through audit processes to ensure that we are meeting not only best practice within the South Australian context but also within education providers across the country.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I understand that there was an investigation undertaken by the Principal Integrity Officer—a document was provided recently, the minister will not be surprised—into TAFE SA's handling of the matter around last year, particularly in relation to the period between 31 March and 5 July last year. My understanding is that investigation was due to conclude in April this year. Is the minister able to identify what the outcomes were from the investigation?



**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Mr Coltman will provide an answer to that question.

**Mr COLTMAN:** The investigation that was undertaken by TAFE SA's Principal Integrity Officer sought to understand had TAFE SA followed its own protocols and processes in handling the alleged data breach. It identified opportunities for improvement and, through the evaluation process, where there were opportunities for improvement, staff have been both censured and provided opportunities to improve their performance moving forward.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** In relation to highlights, there is the fee-free TAFE initiative. How did the government identify what courses were going to receive fee-free TAFE at TAFE SA? Was there consultation with the Skills Commission to determine which courses were the highest priority for TAFE SA to be providing?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** While the chief executive is finding a bit of information, I can definitely confirm that the Skills Commission did provide input. I think we can both agree that is appropriate and part of their remit.

**Mr COLTMAN:** The process for determining the fee-free course list was undertaken by TAFE SA in consultation with Skills SA, looking to both the industry needs and priorities as well as priority cohorts of students, those students who are most likely to be unable to access or be prevented from accessing vocational education and training because of their personal circumstances. Engagement with Skills SA ensured that the courses were aligned to the skills needs of the state as agreed by the commonwealth, and that priority cohort overlay was placed so that we could ensure that students with disabilities and students from First Nations families and a range of other priority cohorts were prioritised in terms of accessing the fee-free TAFE initiative.

**The CHAIR:** I will allow one short question.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Thank you, sir, that is very good of you. Again on the general budget line, did TAFE SA increase or decrease the number of students who were taught in rural and regional South Australia in the 2022-23 financial year, and how many students does TAFE SA expect to teach in rural and regional South Australia in the 2023-24 financial year?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I can happily tell the member for Morialta that from 1 July 2022 to 31 March 2023 a total of 11,091 regional students were enrolled in 239 qualifications and 104 short courses delivered by TAFE SA. This represented growth of 27 per cent in regional student numbers, which I think is really significant when compared with the same time the year before. I think that is a positive example of where TAFE is moving. The other part was the projection. I can say, I think confidently, that we hope to grow it again. I do not have the actual projection. We shall get that for you once we have it to hand.

**The CHAIR:** The allotted time having expired, I declare the examination of the proposed payments for the Department for Education and the Administered Items for the Department for Education complete. I thank the members of the committee. I thank the minister. I thank the minister's advisers, and I also thank my staff here for your contributions throughout the committee's hearing. I now lay before the committee a draft report for Estimates Committee A.

**Ms CLANCY:** I move:

That the draft report be the report of the committee.

Motion carried.

At 16:32 the committee concluded.