

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Friday, 20 June 2025

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

Chair:

Hon. A. Piccolo

Members:

Hon. D.G. Pisoni
Mr D.K.B. Basham
Ms C.L. Hutchesson
Mr L.K. Odenwalder
Ms C.C. O'Hanlon
Mr S.J.R. Patterson

The committee met at 09:07

Estimates Vote

DEPARTMENT FOR ENERGY AND MINING, \$68,285,000

Minister:

Hon. A. Koutsantonis, Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Minister for Energy and Mining.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr P. Martyn, Chief Executive, Department for Energy and Mining.

Mr V. Duffy, Deputy Chief Executive, Department for Energy and Mining.

Mr S. Crafter, State Lead, Whyalla Steelworks Industrial Transformation Unit, Department for Energy and Mining.

Ms R. Knights, Executive Director, Strategic Policy and Delivery, Department for Energy and Mining.

Mr N. Panagopoulos, Executive Director, Corporate and Commercial, Department for Energy and Mining.

Mr B. Zammit, Executive Director, Regulation and Compliance, Department for Energy and Mining.

Mr W. Pasten, Director, Commercial, Department for Energy and Mining.

Ms A. Butler, Director, Whyalla Steelworks Industrial Transformation Unit, Department for Energy and Mining.

Mr G. Dunseath-Hamilton, Director, Northern Water Commercial Team, Department for Energy and Mining.

The CHAIR: Welcome to today's hearing of Estimates Committee A. I respectfully acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional owners of this country throughout Australia and their connection to land and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures and to elders both past and present.

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

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes.

Mr PATTERSON: Yes.

The CHAIR: Changes to committee membership will be notified as they occur. Members should ensure the Chair is provided with a completed request to be discharged form. If the minister undertakes to supply information at a later date, it must be submitted to the Clerk Assistant via the Answers to Questions mailbox no later than Friday 5 September 2025.

I propose to allow both the minister and the lead speaker for the opposition to make opening statements for about 10 minutes, should they wish to 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 and 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 who are 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 the committee. Consistent with the rules of the house, photography by members from the chamber floor is not permitted while the committee is sitting. The minister 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, it is purely statistical and limited to one page in length. The committee's examination will be broadcast in the same manner as the sittings of the house, through the IPTV system within Parliament House and online via the parliament's website.

I now proceed to open the following line for examination: the portfolio of the Department for Energy and Mining. The minister appearing is the Minister for Energy and Mining. I declare the proposed payment open for examination. Minister, do you wish to make an opening statement?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: No, I will just introduce my staff to the committee, if that is appropriate, sir.

The CHAIR: Yes, go ahead.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: To my left is my Chief Executive, Mr Paul Martyn, to my right is Mr Sam Crafter and to my far left is Mr Vince Duffy. Sitting behind me is Mr Will Pasten, Ms Rebecca Knights, Ms Amy Butler, Mr Ben Zammit, Mr Nick Panagopoulos and Mr Giles Dunseath-Hamilton.

The CHAIR: There is no statement, so the floor is yours, the member for Morphet.

Mr PATTERSON: Thank you, Chair. I just want to say thank you to the staff for the work they have done in preparing the budget.

If I go to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 105, the investing expenditure summary, it details moneys invested in the Hydrogen Jobs Plan. We were expecting to see \$388 million spent, instead we have \$132.497 million as the estimated result and then overall we are seeing a total project cost of \$195.9 million, down from \$593 million.

In previous budget estimates, we have talked through this a few times and we have expected to see all being revealed and now we come here and we find out there is a big drop. Can the minister confirm, if there was \$132.5 million, if we can call it that with rounding out a million spent in 2024-25, that the spending in the 2023-24 financial year was the difference between the \$195.9 million and that \$132.5 million, so making it \$63.4 million spent in the 2023-24 financial year?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes, we have said that before in the Budget and Finance Committee.

Mr PATTERSON: In terms of the spending of that \$63.4 million, just to break it down, at the last budget estimates you were able to say that money spent in 2023-24 year included \$25 million on the deposit for the turbines. Was any more money spent in the 2023-24 financial year for those turbines.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I do not want the committee to feel as though I am attempting to be difficult, but we are currently in the market to dispose of the turbines in a commercial transaction and, as much as possible, I would like to maintain a level of commercial integrity during that process. I am very confident we can recover if not all our costs but more, given the international waiting list for gas-fired turbines and the ability of the government to get in early given our election commitment. These turbines are in high demand.

I think it is appropriate that you have the whole numbers, but when you are asking me for a breakdown on the turbines, I am going to politely decline to give you more details for the very purpose of the commercial integrity of the sale process to make sure that we maximise the most we can for the taxpayer. I think it is very important for me to reiterate to the committee the importance the turbines have for South Australia. The process that we are going into to dispose of the turbines is vitally important.

Since the privatisation of ETSA, the state has been subjected to monopoly rent behaviour by gentailers in the state. We lost our ability to recover any money from our fixed assets transmission and distribution because they were privatised by the then Olsen Liberal government, and that meant that the state was put at the mercy of gentailers. That also means that they can dispose of these generators or curtail them, which means that the firming response that we need from gas-fired turbines is vitally important for system security.

The sale process is not just about recouping our money, which is a priority, but probably more importantly about maintaining system security and ensuring that the state has a viable competitive process in the market, where there are other people offering these types of services. The difficulty I have in answering that question for the member is, if I give him the breakdown, the people who are currently in a tender process with us will be able to calculate exactly what we paid and it would remove some of that competitive tension. So I politely decline to answer that question in the interests of the taxpayer in the state.

Mr PATTERSON: How much of the \$63.4 million was spent on the hydrogen storage plant and equipment?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: We did not build the hydrogen storage plant. Again, I think I need to do a bit of revision. The state government deferred the Hydrogen Jobs Plan for a number of reasons. The first reason, obviously, was the integrity of the steelworks at Whyalla, for which the Hydrogen Jobs Plan was quite clearly designed.

We decided to build an electrolyser in Whyalla alongside the steelworks for a reason. We were not building a generator where you would normally build it because we wanted to have the ability to provide hydrogen to an offtaker in direct iron reduction facilities at Whyalla to beneficiate our magnetite to green iron to meet export demands into Europe and North Asia because of carbon pricing in those jurisdictions on the import of beneficiated iron using coking coal.

Mr Gupta decided to start using the people of Whyalla and his creditors as a bank and was not repaying his debts. The blast furnace was in a long and prolonged shutdown, which I think he did deliberately to try to minimise cost while he was expanding his empire everywhere else at the expense of Whyalla. The member knows full well that I, to this day, maintain we could have met the timeframes in 2025; however, what we have done is deferred our plans and reallocated that money to Whyalla. What we have been able to achieve I think has been overwhelmingly positive for the people of Whyalla and for this country.

Prime Minister Albanese and the federal Labor government intervened with a \$1.9 billion package. Now that \$1.9 billion package is a game changer for the people of Whyalla because, as opposed to the last administration in Whyalla where the four Australian banks conducted the

administration and sold to Mr Gupta, there is no recapitalisation money. What Mr Gupta was able to do was take nearly \$11 billion of revenue from the mines and the steelworks from 2018, and we saw a massive expansion of his empire in Europe, taking hundreds of millions of dollars out of the country each and every year. This is different this time. So when the member asks me how much was spent on a hydrogen storage facility, or how much was spent on anything else, the truth is all that was stopped. We are going to recover all of our money from the turbines, if not more. I am satisfied with the work that we have done to protect the taxpayer and reinvest in Whyalla.

Mr PATTERSON: To follow on from that, you are just saying there is no order made to do with hydrogen storage. None of the \$132.5 million in this financial year 2024-25—there will be none spent on hydrogen storage equipment because you have not made an order for it. Is that what you are saying?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: No, I am saying that we deferred the Hydrogen Jobs Plan to invest in Whyalla.

Mr PATTERSON: So how much of the \$132.5 million in 2024-25 was spent on a hydrogen storage plant and equipment?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I have answered that now twice.

Mr PATTERSON: Have you placed an order for hydrogen for the storage equipment?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: The hydrogen storage solution is now a hypothetical because we have deferred the Hydrogen Jobs Plan. Our investment in the Hydrogen Jobs Plan ultimately one day will occur, and the reason it will occur is because this is not a matter of ideology. It is a matter of chemistry. If you want to beneficiate magnetite to green iron, you can use gas methane and it does have a marked production of carbon emissions. But the only way you can actually remove all carbon emissions from beneficiation of magnetite to remove the oxides is by adding hydrogen.

What I think is occurring here—and I do not want to have a quarrel with the member because I think he is quite a good person—is the member is attempting to say the Hydrogen Jobs Plan was deferred because it was not real. I reject that completely. The work that the team had done was world class. The engineering that they had done was world class. Orders were being placed to facilitate the construction of the Hydrogen Jobs Plan. The reason it was deferred was because we wanted to invest into Whyalla.

I am not going to have a debate with the member about: was this component ordered for the Hydrogen Jobs Plan? If the member then says, 'Aha, gotcha, that component wasn't ordered, therefore the Hydrogen Jobs Plan is not real and was never real and could never have been delivered,' to meet some sort of ideological argument out of estimates, the truth is we had a fundamental crisis on our hands. We had a city on its knees and Whyalla's strategic importance to the country cannot be overstated because it is the last sovereign steelmaking capacity this country has. It is the last place in the country we make long products like rail line and structural steel. So I am not going to enter this debate with the member about, 'Was component 4X5Y ordered, and if it wasn't ordered therefore the whole thing collapses.' It is just ridiculous.

Mr PATTERSON: Actually, what we are doing is going through the fact we have spent \$195.9 million of taxpayer money and we want to know what we have to show for it. So we do not have an order for the hydrogen storage. In terms of electrolyser plant and equipment, was there any money expended in the \$132.5 million on the purchase of electrolyser, plant or equipment?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: As I said in my first answer, I am convinced that we can recoup that and more through the sale of the generators.

Mr PATTERSON: But that does not answer the question. The question is: is there any money of the \$132.5 million on hydrogen plant and equipment in that money?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I think it does answer your question, because—

Mr PATTERSON: No, it does not, because you are saying you are going to sell the turbine and make all the money from the turbine and pay off the electrolyser, the storage, but then you do not have storage, so that is fine. You do not have to pay that. I am just asking about the electrolyser.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: As I said, we have deferred the project. I am quite confident we will recoup this money, if not more.

Mr PATTERSON: That does not answer the question, though, minister.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I think it does. I think what your question is trying to show and what you are trying to pose to the people of South Australia is that somehow this money was wasted, or that somehow that money will not be recouped, or that there was money forgone. What I am saying to you is: I am confident we will recoup this money.

Mr PATTERSON: You are saying we are having to sell the turbines, but there is no mention that we are having to sell electrolyzers. You could just say, 'We don't have to sell electrolyzers because we didn't have any electrolyzers purchased,' which is what your CE gave evidence to the Budget and Finance Committee about.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: What you might have also seen were press releases we put out that we had gone out to tender and we were engaged in detailed engineering and design works. I am confident we will recoup all that money.

Mr PATTERSON: How much of the \$132.5 million was invoiced by ATCO Australia?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: As I said, this is my overarching answer to that question: I am supremely confident we will recover all those moneys. There are a number of commercial arrangements that the government has entered into which remain confidential and those confidentiality requirements need to be maintained and honoured, and they were honoured by the previous government as well when they were in office.

As a former industry and trade minister you would know the importance, when governments sign contracts with companies, of having certain provisions in them. The ability to maintain those provisions is very important for the government, for any government of the day, to maintain a level of sovereignty and minimise risk for investment in the state. When people do business with South Australia they need to know that when they sign a contract, the conditions in that contract will be honoured. One of those contract conditions is commercial confidentiality and I am going to honour it.

What we will give you is holistic numbers, and you have those holistic numbers here. They are laid out by the Treasurer in the budget. They are accurate. There is an annual statement that comes out in September/October which you can match them against, there will be a Mid-Year Budget Review and then there will be another budget next year. After the election, if you are successful, you will have access to all those documents and you will also be under the same obligation that I am to maintain that confidentiality.

My hands are tied here: if I tell you the answer you are looking for, I am breaching this contract. ATCO are a company that operate the Osborne power station, and they are a trusted partner in South Australia and I want them to continue operating in South Australia, but if they start seeing that every time they sign a contract with the South Australian government I am in here blurting out the confidential details in parliament to meet the needs of an opposition, they are going to think, 'Why are we doing business in South Australia?' So you know the answer to the question you have asked me. You know I cannot answer it. I would much rather talk more in depth about the department's future plans, but if you want to focus on the past, I am here.

Mr PATTERSON: I am focusing on the \$195.9 million. So that \$132.5 million would include invoicing from those contractors: ATCO Australia, BOC Linde, Epic Energy?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I have answered that, Mr Chairman.

Mr PATTERSON: Does that include invoicing from BOC Linde? Are there amounts in there—you do not have to say what they are, just yes or no?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I think that amount would involve people who were involved with the Hydrogen Jobs Plan, and we have put out press releases saying that some of the contractors

that were successful in tender processes were BOC Linde, ATCO, General Electric and other contractors.

Mr PATTERSON: There is invoicing in that \$132.5 million for the services they provide and ergo in the \$63.5 million. Did you have to pay break costs for contracts? You talk about entering into contracts with these companies. You do not have to say the amount.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: No.

Mr PATTERSON: Does that \$132.5 million include any funds for the virtual gas pipeline that was going to involve trucking in gas to Whyalla?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: The gas pipeline work continues. That work is vitally important. This is where the opposition and the government diverge. This government is a strong supporter of natural gas in this state. We believe natural gas is a critical commodity. We mine it in South Australia, we explore for it in South Australia, and we release tenements for exploration in South Australia.

There was a very sad occasion in this parliament when the former government banned unconventional fracture stimulation in the oldest basin this country, the Otway Basin, which I think personally had a devastating impact on investment and confidence in the state. That 10-year moratorium that they placed on that type of behaviour had a significant impact on investment in gas in this state and led to contagion. We saw activists attempting to stop gas exploration. The state believes that gas is a commodity that can be used for good.

The reason we want to get gas to Whyalla and increase the capacity of the lateral and/or explore for other options—and this is the basic formula that I want to go through the committee—as a rough guide, when you use metallurgical coal to beneficiate iron ore, for every tonne of iron ore you beneficiate you release two tonnes of carbon dioxide. When you use natural gas to remove the oxides from iron ore to beneficiate it to iron, the release is about 0.6 tonne, 600 kilograms of carbon dioxide. There is a big step down from 2,000 kilograms down to 600 kilograms, a big step down in carbon dioxide emissions.

If you are building a direct iron reduction facility in Whyalla to beneficiate the magnetite and remove the oxides and create iron, adding methane is a big step down in the amount of carbon dioxide. It is a good stepping stone to hydrogen. The constraints in Whyalla are water and gas, so the government is still actively looking at that and that is a process that is ongoing.

Mr PATTERSON: Sure. There are a few points there, obviously. We were talking about delivering gas to your power station.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: What power station?

Mr PATTERSON: You were saying that was what the tender was about, delivering gas to the power station, the hydrogen power station. In terms of gas, I have said also that gas is a good way to reduce carbon emissions for steel.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Why did you vote to ban fracture stimulation in the South-East?

Mr PATTERSON: That is the issue that you are trying to distract. So if we can look at—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: You are the alternative mining minister in this state—

Mr PATTERSON: —page 118, Chair.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: You are the alternative mining minister in this state and you still defend the ban on fracture stimulation. Why not condemn it now? Condemn it now. Say it was a mistake.

The CHAIR: Minister.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: You cannot do it, can you?

Mr PATTERSON: We are still on that page, page 105. At that point, when you put out that tender, that would have been on the understanding there were not going to be electrolyzers to be

able to produce the hydrogen at the time, so why did you not tell the people of South Australia that you had not ordered the electrolyzers and that was the reason you were having to truck in the gas?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: What does gas have to do with electrolyzers?

Mr PATTERSON: Because you put out a tender because the government said they needed to truck in four terajoules of gas per day to run your turbine.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: That is not the question you asked me. The question you asked me—

Mr PATTERSON: And then the question is: if that was the case—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: No, Mr Chairman. Just to be clear about this—

Mr PATTERSON: —to run it on hydrogen, why did you not—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: —the question you asked me was: why did I go out to tender for the electrolyzers without sufficient gas? And I am asking you: why would I need gas for the electrolyzers?

Mr PATTERSON: I think you have misinterpreted the question or I did not say the question correctly, so I will say it again.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Can you say it correctly now?

Mr PATTERSON: I will ask it again. If you were having to truck in the gas, and the gas was there to run the turbines, that was because hydrogen was not going to be produced by electrolyzers to power it.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: No.

Mr PATTERSON: The question is: why did you not tell the South Australian people at the time? We now know there has been no order for electrolyzers, so why in September did you not tell South Australians that there was no order for the electrolyzers?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: The conspiracy theories might be fun on YouTube but this is the real world, so can we please be serious. The reason you might want to truck in gas is you might want to have starting options for the turbines. It is not unusual for turbines to run on different fuel sources. The thing about the turbines that we have ordered is that they can operate entirely on hydrogen and entirely on gas, or a mix, so it is well within the realms of possibility that you produce hydrogen.

But depending on when you need the fast-start generators, you might want to start in a period when the conditions were not suited for the production of hydrogen, given the cost of power from the grid, so you would have the ability to start them with gas. The conspiracy theory that somehow this meant we were never going to run them on hydrogen—I mean, mate, if you want to talk about conspiracy theories go on *Tucker Carlson*. Do not come in here and give me the conspiracy theories. Can we just be serious?

Mr PATTERSON: It is not a conspiracy theory, it is just an obvious statement of fact.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes, sure it is.

Mr PATTERSON: There was not going to be any hydrogen to power your power station when the turbines arrived. Moving on, but still on that same line, there is no money to be spent in the budget for 2025-26. If there are going to be sale proceeds, does that \$195.9 million take into account sale proceeds of the turbines?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Sale proceeds will be accounted for when they come into the budget.

Mr PATTERSON: So they are not in the budget at the moment?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: We have not sold them yet.

Mr PATTERSON: Sure, but there is no estimate of what you would be budgeting for?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Treasury estimates were yesterday—you could have asked that of the Treasurer—but from my understanding we have not sold the turbines yet, so how can we account for the money?

Mr PATTERSON: I am just making sure—that is fine. I refer to the Budget Measures Statement, page 32. It talks about the Whyalla turbine divestment. As part of the sale price, it is going to cost \$3.8 million to oversee the divestment of the four hydrogen-capable gas turbines. Will the government take physical delivery of these turbines prior to sale?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: It depends if we sell them beforehand or not.

Mr PATTERSON: Are the turbines still in the US at the moment?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I do not have a GPS tracker on them, but they are being manufactured and their delivery will begin this year.

Mr PATTERSON: Can the minister explain the sale process and what the \$3.8 million will be used for?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: The \$3.8 million will be used to manage a tender process for the sale of the turbines.

Mr PATTERSON: Why does it cost \$3.8 million to manage a tender process for the sale? What is involved in selling them then for that much?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I think it is normal practice that you would have a percentage of money being spent. For example, let's say, hypothetically, the sale process of the turbines takes a bit longer. There are storage facilities that we would need to house the turbines. There are costs associated with that. My instincts are that the sale process will conclude well before this, because they are highly sought after, and there has been lots and lots of interest. So whether that \$3.8 million is spent or not, we will find out in the MYBR or the next budget, but it is prudent to have some money in place to make sure you can conduct an appropriate sale process.

Mr PATTERSON: Has the sale process commenced?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes.

Mr PATTERSON: Have you put out expressions of interest for that?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: The sale process is a matter being conducted by the agency. There are early processes that I have been going through. Cabinet has set out a process for the department to follow. The department is following it. I am not sure when the public call occurs, but I can get back to you with that.

Mr PATTERSON: You are not prepared to say where the turbines are, whether they are here in Australia, whether they are on the way, enroute, but at some stage the turbines will be delivered. You are putting them out to sale and theoretically you could sell them beforehand or after. Will the state government pay the full contracted amount for the turbines prior to the sale?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: It depends on when we sell the turbines.

Mr PATTERSON: Conceivably what could happen is you could ask the potential purchaser to pay the balance of the sale and so the moneys—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: In effect, they are buying our slot potentially, depending on when the purchase occurs. These are four units. Those four units will be operational and ready to go relatively soon, depending on how quickly the sale process goes, depending on how quick the tender process is, depending on how large the offers are.

Mr PATTERSON: From that information, does that mean there are still moneys to be paid for the turbines? You do not have to say how much there is but, in terms of the state government, I am trying to get an understanding of the sale process. If a company can come in and say, 'Well, we are going to take ownership of these turbines and we will pay the balance,' does that mean there is still a balance outstanding?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: We have paid the milestones required by General Electric to have our 200 megawatts available by this year.

Mr PATTERSON: When you say 'paid the milestones', that is fine. Have you paid the final milestone, which would be taking ownership of them?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I am not going to say anything that would in any way hurt, hinder or inhibit the sale process to maximise value for the taxpayer. I do not want anyone who is listening to this to be able to assume, to know, how much we have paid, what we have paid, because escalation occurs quarterly. These things, to be bought on the market after they are delivered is a bit like some items when they come out of a showroom; they are more expensive rather than depreciating, given their availability.

I am not letting any potential tenderer know exactly what the state is owed or what it is going to pay, other than to say we have 200 megawatts for sale of fast-start turbines that are aeroderivative made by General Electric. They are being delivered this year, and I am confident we can sell them at a premium. I am not going to do anything that would damage that sale process, and you would not want me to.

Mr PATTERSON: No. That is fair. I understand the issues, and thank you for answering the questions. I understand where you are coming from, but there is a significant expenditure there. When you talk about it being delayed—we have delayed the hydrogen power plant—when will this hydrogen power plant be restarted, if it is just delayed?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: That is an excellent question. I am glad you have asked that, because that depends entirely on the sale process in Whyalla. KordaMentha and 333 Capital are operating the data room for the sale of the assets in Whyalla. You will want to settle in for this.

Obviously, there are some very prestigious and reputable international players and Australian players looking at Whyalla holistically, that is, pit to port. Depending on the consortium that buys it, their final investment decision on direct iron reduction and the electric arc furnace is going to be vital to this. Let's focus on the direct iron reduction facility. If you started today to build a direct iron reduction facility, you would probably need a good two years of detailed design.

You would have to assess the life of the blast furnace, because you do not want to have a time when the blast furnace is closed and a direct iron reduction facility is not built. That would mean job losses in Whyalla, so you have to stage those. As you are staging those, you would want the direct iron reduction facility to operate on gas for a period of time, because there is another opportunity for us, which is direct capture carbon storage in Moomba. There is an ability for us to use gas and capture the carbon and store it efficiently in Moomba, which is also being looked at.

Let's say a consortium buys it and their timeframe is five years for direct iron reduction and they want to use gas. That gives the government time to know that, when they get to FID, the government now must start considering hydrogen facilities, because the only way you are going to get beneficiated briquetted iron into Europe for a premium is to meet their CBAM requirements, which is that they are carbon abated. That is either through a certified carbon capture and storage process or hydrogen. There is no other way. It is not politics, it is not ideology, it is science.

Someone is going to need to build a hydrogen electrolyser to decarbonise that. We know that you will not because, despite it all being about hydrogen, hydrogen, hydrogen and the massive investment that you made in Port Bonython to build a hydrogen import facility and export facility—we will talk in a moment about how successful that has been—and how you were all rushing to cut the ribbon on the first hydrogen electrolyser down at Tonsley and how you all loved that process and you all were owning hydrogen, now you have dropped hydrogen because you think it is aligned with the Labor Party.

Rather, you should look at it in a purely scientific way of how do I remove the oxides from iron without creating carbon dioxide? There is only one way, and that is to add the H molecules and you get water as a byproduct. That is just chemistry; it is not politics. Someone is going to have to build a hydrogen electrolyser. It will either be the government, because it will not be you—it will only be a Labor government, because you will not decarbonise steelmaking—either us or a private consortium.

In terms of the Hydrogen Jobs Plan, someone is going to build it, because it has to happen. You guys are out there trying to hold back the tide, but that is not going to happen. It is not real. I have even heard Liberal MPs talking about us wanting to use hydrogen to 'burn' to make steel and iron, so there are obviously Liberal MPs out there who do not even understand the chemistry of what we are attempting to do, which is really frightening.

So someone is going to build it. It might be the government in a version of the Hydrogen Jobs Plan or it might be a private operator. One way or another—and I stake my political career on this—someone will build an electrolyser to feed steelmaking in Whyalla, because it is the only way to remove the oxides from the iron ore. It is the only way to do it carbon free.

Mr PATTERSON: Thank you for that explanation, which really tries to divert from the question. The question was: will the project, which has been delayed—so you have delayed a 250 megawatt electrolyser. You have talked about that, but then there was also 3,600 tonnes of hydrogen storage and then there was a 200 megawatt turbine. That was the package.

You are trying to conflate the fact that the Liberal opposition is pointing out and opposed to a massive amount of taxpayer money on that solution as opposed to hydrogen. I have no problem with you saying that I was saying 'hydrogen, hydrogen, hydrogen'—fine, because (a) I understood the opportunities of it but (b) I was very mindful about the time it would take to actually ramp it up and not go for something in 2025 like you have done.

When you are saying it is delayed, are you going to have the Hydrogen Jobs Plan as it was outlined to the people of South Australia before the 2022 election? Is that going to come back and when is that going to come back, the whole thing?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I just gave you my answer.

Mr PATTERSON: No, you did not. You mentioned electrolyzers and that it might be a private consortium or the government. We need to understand. You are trying to say it is delayed—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes.

Mr PATTERSON: So where is the project that is going to bring back 200 megawatts of turbine that is going to be powered by the hydrogen gas with the 3,600 tonnes of storage? That is what the project was. You are saying it has just been delayed; now we have found out that maybe bits of it are going to come down and it might be in five years or it might be a bit later. I am trying to get an understanding because we need to understand it. We have spent \$195 million in the budget here. What has been delayed?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: You see the irony in you asking me eight months before an election what our plans are when you have not even released an energy policy. You see the irony here, right? We have an energy policy, we are out to auction for the firm, we are out to auction for our generators to get more capacity to the system, we are building an interconnector, we are seeing massive reforms in the electricity market and we are regularly bringing the legislation to the parliament to reform the National Electricity Market. There has been silence from the opposition—in fact, you have rekindled an old policy on battery storage that failed in the last term.

Rather than lecture me about our Hydrogen Jobs Plan—which the government openly and honestly said we have deferred to save Whyalla and invest that money into Whyalla—think of the counterfactual, member for Morphett. Imagine if the government had pushed on and continued to build the electrolyser and the generator and Whyalla closed and went into administration, Mr Gupta shut the blast furnace and it went cold, and there were thousands and thousands of jobs lost in Whyalla. What would this meeting be like today? You would be sitting over there screaming at me, saying, 'Why are you spending money on an electrolyser when the steelworks has closed?' When we do the right thing and defer the investment in the electrolyser and the generator to put that money into Whyalla, you turn up and complain.

Imagine if we had done the opposite and fulfilled our election commitment rather than do the prudent thing, which is deal with the crisis in front of us—which you voted for and you supported us in doing it, unanimously, in this place and the other. Now you come and say to me, 'We have a right to know about the delay.' I am telling you: we are dealing with Whyalla. Whyalla is still a live situation;

Whyalla is not settled. We are still dealing with Whyalla. Once we have completed and secured Whyalla and its reinvestment and the people of Whyalla have continuity and security into the future and this country has a sovereign steelmaking capacity, then we will move on to the decarbonisation of ironmaking. The first step, which I have said, is gas. The second step is hydrogen.

If we had tried to do both—the move that we made on Mr Gupta and continued with the hydrogen plant—your complaint would be about debt and spending. So in any of the three scenarios, you would have complained. I am sorry if you feel some frustration in my answers, but this opposition is not about a constructive solution. All you are looking to do is to find grievance. What we have done is we have deferred the Hydrogen Jobs Plan to invest in Whyalla. That was the right thing to do—so much so, you voted for it.

The public supported it, the people of Whyalla supported it, the commonwealth government supported it, Peter Dutton supported it—everyone supported what we did. I feel absolutely no guilt whatsoever about what we did to save Whyalla, because, as far as I am concerned, had we not, had we lost the 2022 election and Mr Marshall had been re-elected, the people of Whyalla would now be picking up the pieces of a closed steelworks, because you would not have intervened.

Mr PATTERSON: So you can confirm, though, that there is zero dollars in the budget for the Hydrogen Jobs Plan going forward? That will be a new decision of the government and it will have to be introduced back into the budget as there are no dollars sitting there to pick it up. It is because you are saying, 'We are going to sell the turbines and that's it.' No money.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I think I have answered the question.

Mr PATTERSON: Let's talk about Whyalla, so we will go to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, sub-program 2.3, page 114. That is the work regarding Whyalla. In the budget it says that there was \$385 million spent in the stabilisation of the steelworks. Can the minister provide a breakdown of what that money is being spent on?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I am on page 115, which number are you pointing to?

Mr PATTERSON: It is page 114—we could go to page 115, 'Support the sale of the Whyalla steelworks to a new owner and work with them to invest in the upgrades...'

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: So the money is being spent obviously stabilising the steelworks. I will give you a more fulsome answer in a moment. When I visited the plant, before it went into administration, I spoke to some of the employees there and I said, 'What is going on in terms of maintenance?' There were water pipelines that were leaking and not being fixed, gas pipelines that were leaking and not being fixed. There was a lot of hydraulic equipment that needed repair and maintenance. A lot of the money that you have seen go into Whyalla right now is about stabilising and doing the repair and maintenance work that Mr Gupta had banked into his own pocket, rather than spend on the plant.

So, I think what the administrator is doing, with the assistance of the state and commonwealth governments, is pouring money—we have got the recapitalisation fund and the administration fund, and the administration money is used to do a lot of the care and maintenance that had been neglected by Mr Gupta. So you are seeing roadworks, for example; fixing up basic things like traffic lights that he just let fall over; cleaning; laundering of clothes that employees are meant to wear; and basic tools and carbon monoxide monitors that were just left unattended or not renewed. Gas pipelines have been repaired. Water pipelines have been repaired. There is equipment that is needed to maintain the blast furnace, especially hydraulic equipment; there are special types of Bobcats and shovels that are used that have hydraulic equipment that can withstand molten metal.

They were running low on key components there. If they had lost any of those, they would have been out for months while they were trying to get parts. So what you have seen is the steelworks come back up to an operational level that you would expect to see at somewhere like Port Kembla or that you would expect to see at POSCO, or at Nippon, or where Whyalla was when Arrium ran it and Mr Gupta took it over.

The amount of degradation that occurred at the steelworks under his ownership is probably criminal. It is terrible. So we are pouring money in to make sure that the workers have a safe

workplace, that it is fit for purpose and can produce and have longevity, doing the maintenance that was neglected for long periods of time on the rolling mill and on all the key parts of the facility that were neglected.

This is a bit of breaking news: Gupta had decided to no longer monitor carbon monoxide levels. That could have caused a death. Carbon monoxide now is regularly monitored. We know that when the levels are too high, which can happen through the steelmaking process, employees are not safe. A lot of that money is going towards that. There is money going into the mines as well to make sure that we can appropriately maintain a level of mining to feed the steelworks, because the steelworks can operate on magnetite after Project Magnet, and of course for export, and there has also been work done on the port.

What you are seeing holistically, from pit to port, is an investment in just bringing it up to standard that had been neglected by Gupta. I cannot remember how much his apartment in Sydney cost that he bought, but I suspect it was paid for out of the blood, sweat and tears of the people of Whyalla. I am pretty sure that money would have been used for maintenance in Whyalla, which is money that we have now put in. I read in the *Australian Financial Review* yesterday an article about Tahmoor coal. It is the same scenario: not paying royalties, not paying debtors. The New South Wales government is being referenced in there by sources saying that it is considering pushing Tahmoor coal into administration the same way we have.

This man is a bad actor. This man can redeem himself, I think, through a good negotiation, but we need to make sure that we invest heavily into Whyalla to undo the lack of maintenance. To Mr Gupta's credit, he had the right plan. He is exceptionally smart, a very intelligent individual, and he had the right plan for Whyalla. The problem is he did not invest in it, which is very frustrating—very frustrating. If he had focused on Australia, he could have been one of the greatest industrialists in this country, but he chose not to, and I do not know why.

It will surprise me to my grave why he did not focus on Whyalla. It was the golden goose: as I said, over \$7 billion in revenue in iron ore sales since 2018. It is a very low-cost mine. It could have been reinvested in, it could have done MEP1, MEP2, MEP3. We have done an analysis of mining expansion 1, 2 and 3. The work that Mr Gupta's team did was first class. It was first-class work, eminently investable, but the investment was not made. I do not understand why, but I think the expansions in Europe and the personal luxury go a long way to explaining why.

Mr PATTERSON: The condition of the furnace is a very key item. What is the condition of the furnace now, and was that where a lot of the expenditure had to go?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I think in speaking to KordaMentha, they were shocked at the condition of the entire plant from where they were when it was in administration previously—shocked. And you could see it on the faces of the employees. You could see that they knew. I have said this a couple of times and I want to say it again on the record in parliament: the men and women of Whyalla who worked in that steelworks were doing things they were not being paid for to keep that place going. I get pretty angry when I hear about some economic rationalist on the east coast saying we should have just shut the steelworks. When that blast furnace was down, I am not sure Mr Gupta was really fussed whether it came back up or not. Those employees in that team who ran the blast furnace, they are heroes. Those guys were carrying the entire weight of the city on their shoulders, and they did an exceptional job in bringing that blast furnace back on.

Now, what is the state of the blast furnace? Blast furnaces do not like being run hot and cold. Mr Gupta's plan, to give you some context, was that he wanted to operate the blast furnace the way you operate an electric arc furnace—hot and cold to meet demand. He was trying to hot idle it and then gear it up again. This blast furnace does not like going cold, it wants to run hard, so it caused a lot of problems. Now that it is running constantly, it is working well. A lot of the maintenance has been done around the tuyeres and making sure that all the cooling systems are working, making sure that all the ventilation systems are working, making sure the supply of gas is working, that there are stockpiles of coking coal. Everything that needs to be done to maintain a healthy blast furnace is now being conducted.

What damage was done during the period that Mr Gupta was running it at hot idle and trying to turn it down, you cannot tell because you cannot get in there to have a look. From the outside I

am advised it is healthy. Its output is consistent. It is pouring metal, it is doing well and it is running hard. It is unique, it is not off the shelf, it is bespoke, which is not good. I think it is fair to say this blast furnace will not get a reline. It might but it might get a partial reline if a new buyer buys it, depending on their timelines for direct iron reduction. It is hard to tell, but as to the advice I have received, everyone is comfortable and satisfied that this blast furnace was able to withstand everything Gupta threw at it and is now operating appropriately and properly at full capacity.

Mr PATTERSON: A lot of money has had to be spent on this upgrade and the budget talks about providing a second tranche of money. So is there still money left of the first tranche for administration, or how long until that runs out and then the second tranche that is put in the budget needs to come in?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I refer you to page 11 of Budget Paper 5, Budget Measures Statement.

Mr PATTERSON: Yes.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Because we started six minutes late, I am going to give you a free kick. The Treasurer went through this which shows all the contingencies and the expenditure on Whyalla. So it is there for you.

Mr PATTERSON: Yes.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I deal with the DEM expenditure. This is across government. There is a cabinet committee of which I am a member that oversees this expenditure, but it is vested in the Treasurer. This line is not open, but I am just letting you know that if you want more details on the expenditure and the breakdown of it, it is on page 11 of Budget Measures.

Mr PATTERSON: No, thank you, and I did not know that, but I appreciate you going through that. So you are saying that is more the Treasurer. Okay, fair enough in terms of that. In terms of the administration process, there is a lot of money going in to fund the administration to get it up to scratch for sale, and then there will be a buyer who comes in who will buy it. How will the money work from the stabilisation process? Will that be recovered out of the sale proceeds before all the creditors, or is that effectively money just to get up to speed and then the sale proceeds will go to pay down all the creditors?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: We have paid the creditors—the ones in Whyalla. They have been paid for by the state government. We put the company into administration, so we had a responsibility to pay some of those creditors. The larger creditors, like Golding or NRW, are the ones that were dealing with Gupta and were not being paid, and they can look after themselves. I am not sure what the administrator will get, ultimately, for the steelworks. That is a matter for the administrator. Our recapitalisation money is not to pay down debt of ASX-listed companies based elsewhere; our money is to recapitalise Whyalla. I am not paying Golding's debt, is what I am telling you.

Mr PATTERSON: In terms of answering that question, I understand that, but that leads to a few questions. The creditors understand that the smaller South Australian companies have been paid. As part of their payments, were they paid the full amount owing, or was it a smaller amount and there is still more to come? Have they been fully paid what was owed?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: State Development are running that program, so I would refer you to Minister Szakacs's estimates, but the brief outline of it is: there is a \$50 million package to provide grants of up to \$5 million to support the continued operation of eligible South Australian businesses that have been directly impacted by OneSteel. There is \$7 million over two years to support local businesses in Whyalla impacted by the administration of the steelworks. This includes the provision of grants for eligible small businesses operating in Whyalla, financial advisory services and legal support services, as well as the deferral of 2024-25 state taxes and government charges for up to 12 months.

We have put money into the Whyalla surf club, \$30 million has gone into the Whyalla Airport upgrade, and \$100,000 has gone into the study and design of options for the Cuttlefish Cove experience, which I highly recommend. You might remember an article that a number of chief

executives went for a swim with the cuttlefish—not Mr Crafter, of course. He did not go, but others did. Mr Martyn did not go either. They were other chief executives.

Mr PATTERSON: In terms of the creditors, there was, I think, \$34 million of royalty payments owed to the Department for Energy and Mining by Mr Gupta. Has that been repaid as part of the creditors getting paid, or has it been paid at all?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Could you repeat the question, please? Sorry.

Mr PATTERSON: The royalty payments that were outstanding to the Department for Energy and Mining: have they been paid back?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: It is a debt that is owed and we will deal with that as part of the process.

Mr PATTERSON: So it is still an outstanding debt.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: But all royalties post-administration have been paid.

Mr PATTERSON: In terms of the long-term goal, which is to find a buyer, the administration process is going and money is being spent to upgrade the steelworks and stabilise it. What process has been undertaken so far to secure a buyer, and if you are at liberty, are you able to name potential interested parties?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: No, I do not want to name them.

Mr PATTERSON: Okay. Can you talk about the process?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: The administrator will decide, because the administrator is independent of the Corporations Act; however, a data room is open and 333 Capital, investment advisers, are basically building a prospectus book for potential buyers. The data room is open. There are a number of people in the data room. I will give you some general jurisdictions: Japan, Korea, United States, Europe, India—all world-class manufacturers of iron and steel. What we are looking for is reputation, transparency, investment history, and runs on the board.

The reason we have a say is that we have money for recapitalisation and reinvestment. That money is not a blank cheque for anyone who just turns up and they just get hold of that money. Obviously, we have criteria that we are working up. My ambition, the government's ambition is direct iron reduction with an electric arc furnace. An electric arc furnace on its own is insufficient. There is insufficient scrap in this country to maintain an adequate supply of steel.

The aim of Mr Playford who is pictured up there has always been to maintain a link between the mine and the steelworks: pit to port. It is in the indenture and it is genius and it underpins the state's prosperity plan: beneficiation of our own products into a higher value. I see you nodding, which is good, despite you criticising the prosperity plan.

The reason we are looking for trusted partners is that I do not want someone thinking that they can come along, purchase the steelworks and pocket \$2.4 billion. No. We are an investment partner and that partnership is about reinvesting and recapitalising the steelworks so we do not have to ever come back here again and do this again.

We believe that direct iron reduction, a one million, 1½ million, 2½ million tonnes, depending on who purchases it, what the fit is, electric arc furnace and an export plan are key. That is what we are looking at. That is the process. Everybody who comes to us through the front door we funnel through to 333 Capital, which is who we think they should go and talk to. We want them to be involved.

I have met with Danieli, who are a provider of infrastructure. He has advanced plans for Whyalla because Gupta obviously engaged him for an electric arc furnace and DRI plant and he is a trusted manufacturer and sales operative, OEM, globally, with some of the best products in the world. There is Mitsui. They have excellent products as well. There are other Japanese and Korean OEMs looking at this. All of it is being funnelled through 333 Capital so we can have an organised good outcome that is not based on sale price but based on recapitalisation and reinvestment to make

sure we have a long-term solution for Whyalla, because that will be in the better interests of the taxpayer in the long run.

If we do what the four Australian banks did last time and just take the highest bidder, there is no guarantee we get a good outcome at the end. Hopefully we get both: the highest bidder and the best outcome. But our focus is on the best investment opportunity for South Australia and the country. I hope that answers your question.

Mr PATTERSON: Just from the answer, and it is understandable, the government is ultimately going to be able to decide who the buyer is. I know usually it is the administrator, but with the government putting so much money in, it appears from your answer, minister, that the government will have maybe not 100 per cent of the say but a fair bit of the say in the final purchaser.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: When the data room is open, and the administrator decides to enter into a deed of company arrangement under the Corporations Act, whoever accesses the state government's money will obviously have an advantage. But in terms of us having a say, our say is not through the Corporations Act—our say is through the money we offer. Do you know what I mean?

Mr PATTERSON: Yes. Has the department looked at contingencies if no buyer can be found?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Sorry?

Mr PATTERSON: Is the department considering what is to be done if no buyer can be found, because obviously a lot of money has been put into stabilising it and redoing it?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: The government and I—all of us—are totally focused on getting the right outcome for South Australia. I do not think that eventuality will occur.

Mr PATTERSON: You have talked a lot about the port, the mine and the steelworks. Basically, just to reiterate: after we have had the legislation in there, there is no way that there would be a splitting up of the port, the mine and the steelworks as part of any package? That is what my question is around: the government having a say in the buyer.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I am not sure what your point is, and I am not being silly.

Mr PATTERSON: The whole of keeping the steelworks, the mine and the port all in the indenture—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: It is law—it is the law of South Australia. You cannot break it up, you cannot hive it off without the permission of the Minister for Energy and Mining. Former minister, Mr van Holst Pellekaan, did not give permission for the port to enter under new control or new operations, and as far as I am concerned I will honour the indenture.

Mr PATTERSON: In terms of the site itself, it is quite an old site and would probably have quite a lot of contamination in there. In terms of the remediation that potentially could be required, is there an issue with that with potential buyers: that when they come in, would they be taking on a liability of having to ultimately, at one stage, remediate the old plant and equipment if they are going to put in new DRIs, and what would be the cost of that?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: There are existing legal obligations under the EPA licensing, which means anyone purchasing it will have to take on those obligations. In terms of what the cost is I am not sure if we made that public, but that would be an EPA question.

Mr PATTERSON: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 104, key agency outputs. The ninth dot point talks about energy and the department's role, and opportunities for the control of their energy usage. We have just had the recent ESCOSA report handed down, and it showed that prices for the average household have increased—in fact, they have increased substantially over the three reports that have come out under the Labor government. In light of those increases, what work has your department undertaken in the last 12 months to help reduce power prices for households?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I have always found these questions interesting from opposition members, especially ones who support non-government ownership of energy assets who

then bemoan power prices going up. I say beware of politicians who tell you they can lower power prices. Beware of them because the most recent example is Mr Marshall—

Mr PATTERSON: What about Anthony Albanese?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: —a one-term premier who made a promise to reduce power prices by \$302. Lofty ambitions. The best he was able to do was reduce it by a dollar.

Mr PATTERSON: Actually \$421, I think.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: When you come to government and say, 'What have you done to reduce power prices?' I don't own AGL, I don't own Origin, I don't own Energy Australia, I don't own ENGIE, I don't own ATCO, I don't own SAPN, and I don't own ElectraNet. However, the person sitting in my chair in 1998 did own the assets of those companies in South Australia, and power prices were a lot cheaper. So what are we doing? We have done a lot of work trying to make sure that the regulatory impacts of cost to consumers from SA Power Networks' and ElectraNet's bids for more money are accurate, and we try to do our very best to minimise those.

We are doing our work to make sure that we can maintain locations for community batteries and partner with the commonwealth government to deliver community batteries for greater storage and shave off the peaks. We have introduced the FERM, which the member voted for, which will allow us to hold auctions to bring in and maintain gas-fired turbines and system security in the system, which should allow us the ability to have more contracting into the market. We offer a number of rebates to people who are vulnerable, and we are active in the energy ministerial committee, where we are attempting to bring about reforms that will lower prices.

The best way to lower prices is to create an overabundance of electrons. The best way to lower prices is to lower the cost of firming units. Those firming units run on gas. Gas is expensive because gas is scarce. Why is gas scarce? Gas is scarce because members opposite voted to ban something that has been occurring in Australia for over 50 years, which is fracture stimulation in one of the largest basins in the country.

So excuse me, while you point to the splinter in my eye, why not look at the log in yours? Before you come and complain to me about power prices, why don't you get a mirror out, have a look at it, and say to yourself, 'Why is gas so expensive in this country? Could it be'—this is not me, this is you thinking—that I voted to ban fracture stimulation in the South-East where some of the largest gas basins in the country are, which has stopped all investment in that area, despite there being a gas pipeline that runs right through the heart of it, despite there being Kimberly-Clark Australia, which is a big user of gas in this state and employs 400 people, despite the fact that gas is a key part of our energy security mix and sets the price of electricity?'

So, what I am doing is I am releasing more basins for exploration, I am putting out more tenements for gas exploration and I am encouraging more gas exploration. We are a pro-gas state that wants to see gas used because it can help us put more renewables in because renewables are the cheapest form of energy. That is what I am doing. In February we go into caretaker mode, in 2026. This is the pointy end of the term. Where is the compare and contrast that the public deserve on energy policy? I would like to know.

In the next term, the moratorium in the South-East comes to an end. Will members move to extend it, or will it end? Now, you are the shadow energy minister. You have an opportunity here to tell the nice people of South Australia and the South-East whether or not you will extend the moratorium past 2028 or whether you will let it lapse if you win. What is your answer? Silence. That is what I thought. No policies, nothing to say.

Mr PATTERSON: What is your answer to that, minister? I am the one asking questions. You are the minister sitting there. What will you do with fracking in the South-East?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: You will get my answer very soon.

Mr PATTERSON: There you go. Now the government has shelved your only energy policy from the previous state election where you said you would bring down wholesale prices by 8 per cent—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Wholesale prices have come down.

Mr PATTERSON: —what is the plan to reduce power prices then?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: As I said, our plan is to get more gas into the market, shave off the peaks, more community batteries and the FERM to make sure we have system reliability. We want more competition in the market. We are working through the energy ministers' council to bring about reforms that will see more storage, more firming, more renewables and more competition.

We are putting an extra 200 megawatts of generation into the system. Unlike what members opposite did when they privatised the generators, they did not make them offer commercial market offerings, they are just wholesalers. I want a retailer. I want someone who is going to go out there and compete with AGL, compete with Origin, compete with ENGIE, compete with Energy Australia and compete with people to offer more contracts into the market. That is what I am doing.

Members opposite had a policy to give people subsidies for batteries. I remember well your genius plan. Vince, you might want to remind me if I get any of this wrong, given your involvement in this plan. The plan was to offer a subsidy for batteries. The uptake was low on these batteries, so do you know what they did? They cut the subsidy. They lowered the subsidy.

They came into this room and I said, 'So is the strategy to get more batteries into the households that you said you would get by not offering more of a subsidy but to offer less?' The answer was, 'Yes. If we reduce the subsidy people will rush to get the battery before we reduce the subsidy.' Let me ask you a question. Do you think they did? No, they did not. They did not and it was a failure.

Mr PATTERSON: It got more storage than the actual policy was setting out to in the start, so how can that be classified as a failure?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: When we put out the large battery at Jamestown, members ridiculed storage as a tourist attraction or a big banana or pineapple that people would go past and take photographs next to. Grid-scale storage is now the norm. It is the default setting for grids around the world, pioneered here in South Australia.

My focus is on bidirectional vehicles. Let me give you just a small precis of my views on bidirectional vehicles. Tesla have a vehicle that has I think 75 kilowatt hours of battery. Their Powerwall I think is 14 kilowatt hours—75 and 14. The new Nissan Leaf that is being released has a 60 kilowatt battery, but they are only allowing three kilowatt hours for bidirectional use. The Lucid, which is a brand-new electric vehicle being made by an engineer who used to work at Tesla who started his own company, is allowing 19 kilowatt hours from their 75 kilowatt battery. That is a game changer.

If one in four households in South Australia came home with a vehicle that has a range of 600 kilometres and 65 to 70 kilowatt hour batteries and if for three or four hours in the peaks they plugged in their cars and went off grid, imagine what that would do to shave off the peaks in South Australia. It would be a dramatic impact. My focus and the commonwealth government's focus is to change fuel standards, which members opposite argued against, to get more electric vehicles into South Australia and Australia, to allow bidirectional charging, to facilitate more electric vehicles and to have more renewables rolled out, which will lower prices and shave off the peaks.

What is setting the price in this country is not our energy mix, it is the peaks. We have to build the transmission distribution networks to meet peak demand, but the peaks now are being met by gas. Gas is expensive because gas is scarce, and gas is scarce because of policies the member who is asking the questions voted for. That is a very simple equation. If you liberalise and allow more gas into the system, electricity prices will fall.

Mr PATTERSON: I noticed one of the highlights in the papers was the rollout of EV chargers, which started under the former Liberal government to help with those electric vehicles. Can the minister update the committee on what the current status of the energy transition plan is?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: That will be released before the next election.

Mr PATTERSON: What has the feedback been from industry associations to date on this paper?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: As a direct result of the consultation from the white paper, the biggest concern industry bodies had was for firming. This is exactly why we introduced the FERM as a policy, which is currently out for consultation on the regulations and the auction process. That was the biggest outcome of that consultation.

Mr PATTERSON: In Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 112 under policy and programs, can the minister provide detail on the progress of the critical minerals strategy?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: The critical minerals strategy is being progressed by the agency, but I am a big believer in 'don't look at what people say, look at what they do'. This government is spending a combined \$200 million on a prefeasibility for Northern Water. Northern Water is about unlocking the most critical mineral we have in this state, which is copper. We are spending a fortune on developing to build one of the largest desalination plants in the Southern Hemisphere—in the driest state in the driest continent in the world—to get water to the Gawler Craton to unlock the processing of copper. Copper is the ultimate critical mineral as far as I am concerned.

The critical minerals strategy is one thing; critical mineral policy and development and payment is another. We are doing it and we are getting on with it. If you look at what the government is spending and unlocking, we are doing more to unlock critical minerals than almost any other jurisdiction in the country. I am very proud of what the government is doing with our critical minerals work. The paper is complete and will be released in due time.

The CHAIR: Unfortunately we have reached that time. The allotted time having expired, I declare the examination of the Department for Energy and Mining and the proposed payments for the Department for Energy and Mining complete. I thank the minister, his advisers and members of the opposition.

Sitting suspended from 10:38 to 10:53.

DEPARTMENT FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORT, \$1,880,745,000
ADMINISTERED ITEMS FOR THE DEPARTMENT FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND
TRANSPORT, \$141,722,000

Membership:

Mr Pederick substituted for Mr Basham.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr J. Whelan, Chief Executive, Department for Infrastructure and Transport.

Mr A. Excell, Executive Director, Transport Strategy and Planning, Department for Infrastructure and Transport.

Ms P. Norman, Executive Director, North-South Corridor Program, Delivery Office, Department for Infrastructure and Transport.

Mr G. Jackson, Executive Director, People and Corporate Services, Department for Infrastructure and Transport.

Mr S. Morony, Executive Director, Infrastructure Delivery, Department for Infrastructure and Transport.

Mr B. Seidel, Director, Financial and Procurement Services, Department for Infrastructure and Transport.

The CHAIR: I open the proposed payments for the examination of the portfolio of Infrastructure Planning and Management and Roads and Marine. The minister appearing is the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport. Does the minister wish to make a statement? No. Would you like to introduce your advisers?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes, thank you.

The CHAIR: Then I will ask the lead speaker for the opposition to make a statement or just go straight into questions, as they wish.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: To my left is Mr Jon Whelan, Chief Executive of DIT. To my right is Mr Andrew Excell, Executive Director, Transport Strategy. Behind me are Ms Paula Norman, Executive Director, North-South Corridor Program and Mr Graeme Jackson, Executive Director, People and Corporate Services. Behind him are Mr Ben Seidel, Director, Financial and Procurement Services, and my most trusted adviser, Simon Morony, right at the back there. He does all of our building, exceptionally well.

The CHAIR: Who is leading this portion?

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I am handling this initially. If we can start on workforce, this is Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 143. I noticed that for 2023 there was an actual number of 2,227.7 FTEs. The estimated result for the 2024-25 year, the one nearly completed, is 2,444.2 staff, and then you have a budget for next year for 2,571 FTEs. Are you able to advise what skill sets have come into the department with that growth since 2023?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes, I can. They are train drivers. We have undone the privatisation you inflicted on South Australians when you promised you would not. You privatised our train network. We promised that we would undo that privatisation. That FTE increase represents us now employing train drivers again. I think it is fair to say that the process for undoing the privatisation of our public transport system has been exceptionally well received by the public.

It is something that the public endorsed at the 2022 state election when they ended the term of the previous government and voted for what we promised to do. We wrote to every bidder who was participating in the privatisation program of the Marshall government, saying, 'Buyer beware: there's an election in March 2022. If you purchase the operations of this train service, an incoming Labor government will cancel these contracts and bring these services back into public hands.' The member has allowed me to highlight that again.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: How many train drivers are there?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: When public transport is open, I will get you an accurate answer, but it is well over 100. It could be as much as 180, but I will check that in public transport.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: If I were to take your answer initially on face value, does that mean that we are 126.8 full-time drivers short at the moment and that is why there is going to be a growth in the FTEs next year?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: The member has also forgotten to mention that trams are coming back into public hands as well. The member voted to privatise our tram network as well.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Are there any additional staff other than people who are driving trams and trains? Are there another 126.8 people coming onto the payroll next year who are not driving trams or trains? Is there anybody in that group who is not driving trams or trains?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Just answering the first question first, if I can, the member asked: what is the increase in FTEs as opposed to the previous financial year?

The CHAIR: I would ask that the minister has an opportunity to answer before the member for Unley interrupts again, please.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: What we are doing is undoing a privatisation. In undoing that privatisation, those employees become government employees. We are still operating the same number of tram services and train services, but those employees now come onto our books. That is

what the accounting is for. If he is asking me to individually go through and identify the role of every single one of those 2,571 FTEs, that would be quite the task.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I am actually asking you to clarify. You made a statement that the increase of nearly 220 staff in 2024-25 compared to 2022-23 was because of train drivers. I have asked you whether the growth, the projected growth, for the next year of another 126 is also people in that category. You were very confident with your answer about the estimated result. So I am trying to get clarity as to whether the end result of the return to public management of the trams and trains will see that there are about 360 extra train drivers and bus drivers on the books. I think it is a pretty legitimate question.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I am confident about all my answers, and if the member is uncomfortable or doubts my answers there is an appropriate remedy he can move at any time he likes. And if he—

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I am just giving you my opinion.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I am giving you mine. I have complete confidence—

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: We are both very opinionated, Tom.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: We are. There has only been one example of a minister successfully being found guilty of misleading the parliament in my memory, and that was the former Deputy Premier who—

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Exonerated by the Ombudsman, I believe.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Not from misleading the parliament; no, she was not. She was found guilty and suspended and disgracefully had to leave the building because of her behaviour when the parliament sanctioned her, and the irony of that of course was there was a majority Liberal government in place at the time.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Can I call a point of order, sir, and just ask you to direct the minister back to the substance of the question? We only have an hour on this.

The CHAIR: He has actually stopped already, so I am not sure what I am supposed to be redirecting. Perhaps you need to ask the next question.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I am waiting for an answer, sir.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I have given my answer. You are just not satisfied.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I did not hear any numbers, I am sorry.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I have given you my answer. You are just not satisfied with it.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: There were no numbers in your answer. Am I correct then in assuming that there would be nearly 360 extra train and tram drivers by the end of the 2025-26 budget year in the Department for Transport?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Could you repeat your question?

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I will start again. Your actual numbers for 2023-24 were 2,227.7 FTEs. When I asked you about the growth of the estimated figure, which was for nearly 220 staff, you explained that by saying they were the train drivers coming back into public employment. Then when I asked what was the reason for the anticipated growth of another on top of that figure, another 120-odd staff for 2025, you said that they were tram drivers. So I have asked whether that means there is going to be an extra 330, 340, perhaps 350-odd extra tram drivers on top of the existing tram drivers by the end of 2025-26.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: On top of the existing tram drivers?

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Well, on top of your starting base from 2023-24 when there were no tram drivers according to your answer, because the government was not running the tram and train system at that time.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: So you want to account for the difference between 2,228.7 FTEs and 2,572 FTEs. Is that what you are asking me?

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Yes, and who are they basically? From the answer you have given me so far, I can only assume that they are train and bus drivers, and I am just asking for clarification if that is the case.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: They are tram and train drivers.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Tram and train drivers; is that it?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes, that is the advice I have.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Okay. Can you advise how many engineers are employed by the Department for Infrastructure and Transport?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Not enough. We need more.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Do you have a number?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I do not have that number.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Can you bring that back?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I will see if I can get it back to you by public transport when it is open.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I have some questions about retention. You might have to bring this back, minister: what is the number of employees with 10 years' experience in the department and the number with 20 years or more in the department who are on the payroll?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I do not mean to be difficult, but how does that assist in the budget estimates?

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: This is public money being spent on delivering infrastructure and transport. Obviously, you need a very skilled team in order to do that. The Hon. Ben Hood and I have spoken to people who were previously employed by the department and who are concerned as to whether there is enough engineering skill in the department because there appears to be a lot of consulting—and I am sure we will move into that later—so we are just trying to determine whether there are gaps and get an idea of the number of specific skills for your department that you have easy access to and that may help determine that outcome.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I am happy to answer that question this way: I have complete confidence in my agency that they deliver me the appropriate advice needed to deliver all the government's programs.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: The number of engineers: will you bring that back? Will we hear that later?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 144. This question is about the proportion of capital works delivered by local contractors in 2025-26. Do you have a target for that, and are you meeting the target?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Are we looking at the same page?

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Page 144.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes. What line are you talking about? Are you talking about Program 3: Delivery of Transport Projects?

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Volume 3, page 144.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: There is no mention there of local contractors, so I am just trying to understand. Are you talking about delivery of transport projects?

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Infrastructure planning and policy.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Obviously, contractors are required for delivering that policy.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I guess the question relates to the outcome of that policy.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Which policy are you talking about?

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: You have a policy, I believe, for local contractors to be engaged.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: We have a policy of 90 per cent of hours worked on projects to be South Australian labour.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Yes, and are you able to advise the committee as to whether you are meeting those targets?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: We are meeting those targets.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Do those targets also include employment of apprentices?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: The policy is if a project is over \$50 million, 20 per cent of the labour hours would be required to be apprenticeships, traineeships, long-term unemployed and Indigenous workforce. My advice is we are meeting all those targets.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Is the department itself employing apprentices?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: The department itself?

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Yes. And university graduates, do you have any numbers on those?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: We do not offer apprenticeships in the department.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Anymore? Okay. What about graduate programs?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: We have graduate programs for engineers. We have graduate programs for corporate: accounting, legal, managerial, managing contracts and we are always oversubscribed. I will get you the number of how many we employ each year.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Thank you, minister. This next question relates to the overall services summary of the department, which obviously includes the contracts that you let. Does the department comply fully with Premier and Cabinet Circular PC027—Disclosure of Government Contracts, where it stipulates that the contracts must be disclosed and include contract title—this is on the tender and contracts pages, I believe—full details of the contractor, including the name, address, phone number and contact officer, and the name of the authority?

My understanding is that, according to my reading of the circular, chief executive officers are responsible for ensuring that this happens. I have noticed that since the election of this government, the addresses of the successful tenderers have all been removed from the opening page of each contract, which I believe is not the intent of Premier and Cabinet Circular PC027. Can you assure this committee that your department is meeting all the requirements of Premier and Cabinet Circular PC027?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: My department obeys all Treasurer's Instructions and all Premier's circulars.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: They may be obeying but are they actually—if you perhaps ask one of your advisers to have a look at that tender and contract site—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I do not need to.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: —I think you will find that there are a number of contracts that are not displayed on that site and that certainly there is a breach of the requirement to have the address of the successful tenderer, which makes it quite a chore for duteous oppositions to ensure that locals are getting their fair share of contracts. There are some people in this place who have a little bit more leisure time these days and quite enjoy going through tenders and contracts pages and the *Gazette* and all that sort of stuff. It is a very exciting thing to do.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I always said you were the hardest working shadow minister they ever had. When it came to transport and infrastructure, you without a doubt were the hardest working shadow minister in the lead-up to the 2018 election. Can I put on the record before you retire: I thought you were an exceptional opposition spokesperson.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Don't stop.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I will not stop. I thought you were an exceptional opposition spokesperson, and when you were not given the portfolio of transport and infrastructure—

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I wanted apprenticeships.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: —and I know you would never complain—

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: And I doubled them.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I thought you said 'don't stop'. When you were not given that portfolio at the election, after you had done so much to elect the Marshall government and you were not given that spot it was completely unfair, and I said that to Steven Marshall myself.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: We will start talking about you now. We will get back to talking about you.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I told him I thought how he treated you was appalling.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Are we done? Did you need to bring something back to me on that question?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: As I said, my department is one of the best departments I have ever managed. My chief executive and his executive team are the best that I have ever had the opportunity to be minister for. They are exceptional at what they do. They fulfil every obligation they have under the Public Sector Management Act, and they fulfil all the requirements set out by the Premier and the Treasurer.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: What was the outcome of the review of probity programs that was referred to in the Auditor-General's Report?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Which Auditor-General's Report?

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: The Auditor-General's Report said that the Department for Infrastructure and Transport undertook a review of its priority processes to address the Auditor-General's concerns. I am asking what is the status of that and what is the outcome?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I am just trying to find the budget line that you are referring to.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: This refers to services, summary and contracts.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Where is that?

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: It is not specifically mentioned. The Auditor-General is not mentioned in your budget, it is a different process, but it is related to your budget because your budget is all about spending—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I find it difficult to answer questions that are not referenced in the budget, but I will say this: whatever reviews my department has undertaken at the request of the Auditor-General or otherwise, they have been done so professionally. I am supremely confident that they have executed every requirement to be able to offer the Auditor-General everything he needs to conduct an inquiry, and that we conduct ourselves in the very best traditions of the Westminster system.

The CHAIR: Does the member for Narungga wish to ask a question.

Mr ELLIS: If there is a quiet moment, I might take the opportunity.

The CHAIR: Yes, I am happy to exercise my discretion and allow you to ask a question.

Mr ELLIS: I turn to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 163. We have a list of the performance indicators with regard to road fatalities, specifically. Those targets appear not to be met or certainly be on track to be met. Do we have any idea what is not working? I do not know if it is on the rise but it does not appear that we are meeting our targets. I guess there is a codicil: is it accepted now that the decrease from 110 to 100 is either not working or having a negligible impact?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I am not really the minister responsible for this, but I will talk about road conditions, if I can, for a while. Road conditions play a role, especially wet conditions. The only good thing about the drought has been that the roads have remained in a relatively stable condition; that is, they have not deteriorated from where they were previously.

I am not going to lie, but the outsourcing contract of road maintenance in regional areas was a disaster by the previous government. They attempted to make dramatic savings on road maintenance, but they just were not real. How those contracts were let out is beyond me. We are going to need to do something pretty drastic about it. The worst part about it was, when they outsourced the contracts they burnt the road behind them. They sold all the equipment and we lost all the expertise to ensure that we could never undo it.

I am looking at those contracts. No doubt, if you are in the South-East and Yorke Peninsula—although Yorke Peninsula is getting a fair bit of an investment, given the advocacy of the local member—if you go down to the South-East, you will see the conditions of the roads there are appalling. We are doing our very best with what we have, but the contract we were left is terrible. I hate to think what this number would have been if we had more rain.

In the end, the police run excellent drink-driving campaigns and awareness campaigns on regional roads. There is a misnomer about people needing to be very careful on regional roads, no matter how familiar they are with them. Alcohol plays a role. Drugs play a role. Mental health plays a role.

We have done a bit of work with the national heavy vehicle licensing as well. I was very concerned about the automatic acceptance of international accreditation. Australian conditions are unique. Our regional roads are unique, and some of the loads and masses of our trucks are unique. To allow someone with a heavy vehicle licence who has only operated in the subcontinent or Europe to all of a sudden run heavy vehicle combinations in this state without accreditation or training is unfair and dangerous. Fatigue is also an issue, and fatigue management is important, so, no, we have not given up on it. The number we should be aiming for is zero.

Mr ELLIS: Has the 110 km/h to 100 km/h thing not had the effect that it was designed to have, though?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I could not answer that. I will have to refer you to the road safety minister.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Just on page 145, regarding the Adelaide metropolitan bus fleet decarbonisation planning, how many buses are still in the fleet that run on diesel?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: A vast majority would be diesel. Bus life, on average, is 25 years, so we are trying to cycle through them. A large majority are on diesel. We are moving to hybrid and hybrid electric.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Do you have a number of how many buses?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: An overwhelming majority would be still on diesel.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Have you purchased any second-hand buses recently?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Second-hand buses?

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Yes. There was a period, when the current Treasurer was in your role, where buses were purchased second-hand from Darwin.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I would not be surprised if throughout the entire life of this government we have purchased, and every government in the state since Diana Laidlaw's privatisation—

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I am asking whether in this term you have done it, and whether they are diesel buses or—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I would be in no doubt that we lease and hire buses as we need to, if we do not have the sufficient fleet. We flex up and down as we need to.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Are you able to provide a list of buses that were purchased second-hand in the last three years?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Sorry?

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Are you able to provide a list, or the number of buses that were purchased second-hand that are diesel?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I will check if I can.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: You will check if you can?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Will that be later in the session or will that be on notice?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Sine die.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: This refers to the planning. You are saying the planning will be complete by June 2026, not the process?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: What planning? Where?

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Adelaide metropolitan bus fleet decarbonisation planning.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: We are budgeted until June 2026. We have just made a completion of that process.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: The plan itself will not be completed until next year, and the process will not be completed for another 20 years; is that right?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: To give you some detail, federal and state governments have, on a fifty-fifty basis, worked to finalise a business case for bus depot infrastructure. The thing about decarbonising the public transport fleet is you have to actually plan for it. There was no work, that I am aware of, that was done by the previous government to decarbonise the bus fleet. We need to work to build infrastructure. That infrastructure may or may not include substations. There are 1,000 buses in the fleet. If you are working up on a 25-year rotation, questions we have to ask ourselves are: do you accelerate that? Do you use the existing timeframe for repurchasing?

As you bring buses on in cohorts of 25, 35, 45 or 50 buses, if they are all electric, charging those buses all at once and when you charge them—the logistics of rolling them through depots is complicated. What the department is doing is working through the planning on where the right locations are to do this, when it would be most beneficial to the grid to do this, the beneficiality of doing it when the grid needs it and whether it also works with the timetabling of buses. That is, do we charge our buses in the middle of the day or do we charge them at night?

These are very important questions for the grid and very important questions for the logistics of clock-face timetabling. The department is doing all that complicated work that had not been done by the previous government to make sure that we are in a position that, as we decarbonise our bus fleet, any amenity that our electric buses bring—and I cannot overstate the amenity improvements, especially in the CBD, of electric buses.

When you walk out into the CBD, because of the nature of the buildings, the reverberation of diesel buses starting and stopping in Adelaide creates a lot of noise and noise pollution. The ability for us to decarbonise our fleet also quietens the City of Adelaide. It is a body of work that we are very passionate about and we are getting on with it. We adopted our net zero climate-ready strategy in 2024, and it includes commitments to transition our Metro rail and buses to zero emissions and to assess the practicality of doing all that by 2040. Zero emissions for public transport is critical to us. We have a number of plans in place for battery electric buses, and I will have more to say about that in the coming weeks and months.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Is the minister able to advise if all of the projects that are listed under 'Investing expenditure summary' on page 145 are fully funded for completion in the forward estimates?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes, they are budgeted for, that is why they are here.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: But they are funded for completion through the forward estimates? That is the question.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I am not following you because that is not how—

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Is all the money that is required to complete the projects in the forward estimates?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: It depends on when the projects are scheduled to complete.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Can you identify which are not covered in the forward estimates for completion?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: It says the completion date, right? So, if it is to be completed by December 2025, like the Aquatic Centre, all the money is in the forward estimates. If any of the completion dates are outside the forward estimates then the money is not in the forward estimates. It is a pretty easy table to follow.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Can you then perhaps talk me through public transport security. There appears to be \$1.5 million in there. Is that amount there for the entire forward estimates period?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Which one are you talking about?

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: This is under new projects, minister. It is the last project to appear, public transport security. Is that for capital works or is that for physical weekly paid contractors or staff?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: That is for capital.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: And that is a one-off, is it?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: We announced an upgrade of our CCTV cameras that could use artificial intelligence to monitor antisocial behaviour. We have brought in a whole series of measures to try to deal with antisocial behaviour on public transport. The most important one of those is the barring orders, which allows us for the first time in public transport to ban people who are caught graffitiing, who do not pay fares, who are antisocial or commit acts of violence on our buses, trains, etc. Unfortunately, the Liberal opposition has moved to stop us from using those barring orders, which is very disappointing.

Nicola Centofanti and Mr Gardner joined up on the Legislative Review Committee, when a Labor member was ill and not able to be paired, to use their numbers on that committee to pass a resolution to defer those regulations. Those regulations are vital for the good order of our public transport system and are doing what the Leader of the Opposition called on us to do, so I do not know what was going through the heads of John Gardner and Nicola Centofanti when they moved and seconded this proposition to stop these barring orders from becoming law. The only people now who can be blamed when there is continuous graffiti, antisocial behaviour and violence on our public transport system are the members who sit to my right.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Are any additional physical security officers being placed on public transport over the next year or the forward estimates?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: On 31 May I issued a press release called 'Budget boost to keep your commute safe'. A new security task force to combat antisocial and violent behaviour across the Adelaide Metro network will be established as part of a \$9.6 million state budget investment strategy. Over the forward estimates, a new Transit Compliance Team will be created to increase the security presence across the network. The unit will see 19 dedicated officers recruited and deployed across services, boosting the overall number of prescribed officers of the department to around 200. These are the officers who would take advantage of the barring orders members in the Liberal Party blocked and are attempting to stop becoming law.

As well as providing passengers with peace of mind, the highly visible compliance officers will also act as a deterrent against antisocial behaviour, helping defuse situations before they arise. Unfortunately, you have taken the teeth out of these tigers and I do not know why you have done that.

Afternoon security patrols across Adelaide's south, outer north and outer north-east bus network were recently extended to provide greater coverage and increase passenger safety. Security officers are also present on board evening train and tram services. Additionally, \$1.5 million will be spent in 2025-26, as we just spoke about, on new artificial intelligence cameras at key interchanges and stations. The smart cameras are being trialled at Flinders University: you know where the statue of—

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Yes, we will cover that. I am actually specifically asking about the number of security staff.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: 200, I told you.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Did you? Alright, thank you.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: But I have more to say. Dedicated safety operations in Adelaide Metro will also continue. They will crack down on disorderly behaviour and fare evasion on routes with known hotspots. What we do is target areas. We receive complaints about fare evasion, graffiti and antisocial behaviour, so we are able to target these officers. We are able to put the cameras up at interchanges where we think there is trouble, and we can go in and bar them.

Unfortunately, this strategy now has been weakened by members of the Liberal Party who think that public transport officers should not have the ability to bar people who graffiti, who spit or who threaten other people. They do not want us to stop them on public transport because they are worried about their civil liberties.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Thank you, minister. Now—

The CHAIR: The member for Elizabeth has the call.

Mr ODENWALDER: I do have a question; thank you for the call. I take the minister to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 155. Can the minister provide an update on the Mount Barker and Verdun interchange upgrades, please?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: We have awarded contracts for the \$150 million upgrades of the Mount Barker and Verdun interchanges, with construction to begin in late 2025. Bardavcol, a great South Australian company, has been awarded the contract for the upgrade of the Mount Barker interchange, while a joint venture between BMD and Leed will undertake the Verdun interchange upgrade.

Bardavcol has 45 years' experience in civil infrastructure, including doing the works on the Marion Road and Sir Donald Bradman Drive intersection upgrade. They previously did safety upgrades in Cherry Gardens as part of the Adelaide Hills Productivity and Road Safety Package that the member for Waite would be very familiar with.

BMD is an Australian engineering, construction and urban development business that has worked with DIT on projects, including the South Eastern Freeway, managed motorways between Crafrers and Stirling in 2021 and delivering the upcoming River Road junction improvements that are very important.

What we want to do, for the member for Elizabeth's benefit, is to improve connectivity to the South Eastern Freeway and improve the capacity of interchanges in response to population growth in Mount Barker and the Adelaide Hills. Upgrading both those interchanges on the South Eastern Freeway will improve safety and traffic flow for thousands of motorists who travel every day between the city and the Hills from communities, including Mount Barker.

About 31,000 vehicles travel along the freeway between the Mount Barker and Verdun interchanges each day, with 46,000 vehicles travelling from Verdun to the city and approximately 31,200 vehicles travelling across Mount Barker interchanges between Littlehampton and Mount Barker.

The current Mount Barker interchange is subject to a lot of traffic congestion and queueing, with about 43 crashes between 2019 and 2023. It is going to be upgraded to include:

- a new three-lane bridge across the South Eastern Freeway for northbound traffic;
- the conversion of the existing bridge to accommodate three lanes of southbound traffic;
- a new shared use path to improve connectivity and improve ramp capacity; and
- new traffic lights to improve safety.

We are also upgrading the pavement and safety upgrades like smart lighting, which is very, very important.

The Verdun interchange will be upgraded to a full interchange, allowing access to and from the South Eastern Freeway in both directions to improve connectivity and traffic flow. It is going to have an eastbound entry ramp towards Mount Barker and a new westbound exit ramp that will cross under the existing westbound entry ramp and connect with a new roundabout at Mount Barker Road, adjacent to Silver Road, which I am sure the member for Elizabeth is very familiar with.

The upgrade also includes pavement rehabilitation and traffic barriers on the existing Adelaide-bound entry ramp and bridge pier protection on Mount Barker Road. On the Verdun interchange there were eleven reported crashes between the same period I spoke of earlier.

The total project cost to upgrade Mount Barker and Verdun is \$150 million, with the Australian government committing \$120 million and the state government committing \$30 million. It is a great 80:20 project. It is a very important ratio that the government is keen on doing.

It is going to support 260 full-time equivalent jobs per year during the construction period. It will begin late this year and hopefully will be finished on time and on budget by 2027, as I have been assured by my chief executive.

Mr PEDERICK: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 145, in relation to the High Productivity Vehicle Network. Are you confident of being able to deliver the HPV end project in full, given the funding that has currently been committed falls \$400 million short of the \$1.05 billion project cost as outlined by Infrastructure Australia?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: We believe that this project should be funded on an 80:20 basis to complete all of it. The beneficiaries of this project are not just South Australians but the nation.

If I look at Bruce Highway, which is a \$7 billion piece of infrastructure, that has been funded on an 80:20 basis. I am not sure why South Australians should accept anything less than 80:20. What I will be saying to the commonwealth government is that we will match their current funding on an 80:20 basis and get on with either the duplication of the Swanport Bridge or the work in Truro and some of the work around Halfway House Road, which no doubt the member for Hammond is well aware of.

The previous government was planning to send more trucks down both Portrush Road and Cross Road by a massive upgrade to the intersection of Fullarton and Cross, and they were planning massive upgrades at intersections along Cross Road, along with very large grade separations. They worked on Portrush Road and Magill Road, which was designed to get more trucks and improve freight efficiency through there, as well as working on Fullarton Road to try to get more trucks onto Fullarton Road and Portrush Road.

The previous government had a plan of getting more trucks onto Portrush Road and Cross Road. We have a plan to try to get those trucks off those roads. The funding we have in place now will do segments of the HPVN, but to complete all of it, the commonwealth government would need to increase its contributions, as would the South Australian government.

Mr PEDERICK: So you are \$400 million short. You have your federal Labor mates in power. What parts of stage 1 of the High Productivity Vehicle Network will remain unfunded if the additional 30 per cent cannot be secured?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I will answer that question in the stages it was asked. It is true: federal Labor is in power, winning 94 seats, indeed winning every seat in metropolitan Adelaide. How about we name them? We hold now the seat of Sturt, which is a remarkable achievement for a Labor government. On a two-party preferred basis, excluding the Independent, Labor wins Mayo. Labor wins Hindmarsh. Labor wins Boothby.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Mr Chair, point of order.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I am answering the question; you said that we are in office.

The CHAIR: There is a point of order.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I ask the minister to return to the substance of the question. We only have an hour for this important portfolio, and I do not think there is enough time for boasting in that process.

The CHAIR: You were happy when he was complimenting you on your abilities.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I asked him to stop, sir. That is on the record.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: No, you said, 'Don't stop.' Do not mislead the parliament.

The CHAIR: I heard, 'Please don't stop. Continue.' You said, 'Don't stop,' the record shows.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Do not join Vickie.

Mr Pederick: This is about the HPVN, Tom. Come on.

The CHAIR: Yes. Minister, can you add any information for the member for Hammond?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Let me be clear: they are our friends in Canberra, and I am glad they won. I voted for them. But it does not mean that we will not stand up to them. We are prepared to say to the feds that fifty-fifty is unacceptable. I cannot think of a single time members in the Liberal Party ever stood up to the Morrison government and said their funding was inadequate—not once. We will, and we have, and we will continue to do it. Until you can show me an example of when you put out a public statement attacking a federal Liberal government for their funding, do not ask me these questions, because you have no right to.

Mr Pederick: I want to keep asking some questions about the HPVN, Tom. We ask the questions from opposition. If you want to be in opposition, you are welcome to it.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I have done it twice, and that is enough.

The CHAIR: Member for Hammond—

Mr Pederick: Hang on.

The CHAIR: Let me finish. Do not interrupt me. First of all, you will refer to 'the minister', not 'Tom'. Secondly, you talked about the funding of this project, and the minister was responding to the funding complexities of the project. Continue.

Mr Pederick: In regard to the stages of the project, there are essentially, as I see it, at least three stages: there is the Swanport Bridge, there are around 100 kilometres in the middle—including potential bypasses, which I hope are in the plan, around Cambrai and Sedan—and there is the Truro freight bypass. Which project will be started first? Which end of the project, or is it the middle piece of the project that is going to be commenced first? Surely, there is some planning underway about where you are going to commence this project.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: We are doing detailed planning. It is an important job, the duplication of the Swanport Bridge. I do not think it was mentioned once by the member before this project. It was all about Truro and the duplication of Truro—it was not even a duplication that they had planned. It was a single-lane bypass on the Sturt Highway that would have benefited the Riverland and freight, not freight going through the member for Hammond's electorate.

I have looked at the Swanport Bridge. To duplicate the Swanport Bridge is an initiative of this government. As far as I am concerned, when you look at this holistically, the only way the HPVN works is to do it sequentially. If you want to get large combination vehicles using South Australian

roads to get to the port of Adelaide or to travel through South Australia, the first roadblock is the Swanport Bridge. Currently, on the single-lane Swanport Bridge, what is the largest truck that can go across?

Mr PEDERICK: Two-trailer road trains can go across it.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: PBS level 3 is what we want, which is why we want to duplicate it. Then I want to go through Sedan and up to Truro, then create a dual-lane bypass, not a single-lane bypass that was proposed by the shadow minister and his friends when he was in office, to be able to get the proper number of PBS level 3 road trains going through the entire state and open up the entire network, with some augmenting works in Port Adelaide that will get us to the Port of Adelaide. PBS level 4, sorry, is what I am attempting to get through the Swanport Bridge.

Members opposite have been calling me to get on with Truro. I think the priority is in the member for Hammond's electorate, despite him calling for me to do it somewhere else first. I think that money should be spent at Swanport Bridge. Truro is much more advanced. So the honest answer is that we are working through the detailed engineering to work out what should be first. An early win could be Truro. That will not get a single truck off Portrush Road. It will not get single truck off Cross Road—not one. Duplicating Swanport Bridge might, until we do the work in between.

I am pushing the agency to see how quickly we can develop the plans at Swanport Bridge for the duplication. There is sufficient funding to do a lot of the works with the current allocation. The question for us is whether we can get more out of the commonwealth government, which is what I am pushing for.

Mr PEDERICK: So the \$656 million will duplicate the Swanport Bridge and get us part way to Truro; is that correct?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I think we can get a long way to Truro, but I will wait for the detailed engineering before I make promises I cannot keep, like, say, GlobeLink.

Mr PEDERICK: From your answer, I assume Swanport Bridge will be duplicated first?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: No, I have said my preference is to duplicate Swanport Bridge first, despite members asking me to spend money in Truro rather than in Hammond. I would rather spend the money in Hammond. I do not know why you want me to spend it in Truro first.

Mr PEDERICK: I am happy to get the whole project done, because we were going to fund it—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: No, you were not.

Mr PEDERICK: Yes, we were. We had the policies going into the last election.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Okay, so the member said on the record he released a policy to duplicate the Swanport Bridge. Did you?

Mr PEDERICK: It is all part of the program.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Right, so why did you start at Truro?

Mr PEDERICK: If you build the Swanport Bridge, Truro misses out; is that right?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: No. Why did you start at Truro? Why did you not prioritise your own electorate?

Mr PEDERICK: Let's go to Torrens to Darlington: Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 144. What is the total estimated cost of the Torrens to Darlington segment of the north-south corridor?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: \$15.4 billion.

Mr PEDERICK: And that is going to stay on budget?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes.

Mr PEDERICK: Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 147: has the Torrens to Darlington project experienced any procurement delays due to market capacity?

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

Mr PEDERICK: Same budget line: can the minister provide the value of land acquisitions as part of the Torrens to Darlington project?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: No government provides those figures.

Mr PEDERICK: Are some of these acquisitions still awaiting mediation of agreement payment?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes.

Mr PEDERICK: Can you tell me how many?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: No.

Mr PEDERICK: Can you get it?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: No.

Mr PEDERICK: So we go to Paper 4, Volume 3, page 147. It is also linked to page 156. When was the decision to create the slip-lane exit loops from Anzac Highway to South Road made?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: It was made during detailed design work.

Mr PEDERICK: What specific traffic modelling was undertaken to support the implementation of loop ramps at the Anzac Highway-South Road interchange?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: The traffic modelling the government always does when it is building new infrastructure.

Mr PEDERICK: In regard to the same project, were any alternative designs considered such as a full overpass or a diverging diamond interchange, and why were they not selected?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: We chose the best outcome for the people of South Australia. On reflecting on that, I remember what the opposition put to the people of South Australia, which was to ban right-hand turns from Anzac Highway onto the north-south corridor. The right-hand turn from South Road onto Anzac Highway was going to be an elevated single lane coming down in the median strip with traffic merging to the left, which would have been a disaster. It would have caused queuing in the tunnels and would have been a massive road safety risk and a huge eyesore.

What we have done is an elegant design that has overruled the previous government's stubbornness about allowing right-hand turns onto South Road from Anzac Highway. We have done that because members opposite chose to deny that community access to key services like getting to supermarkets and doctors and schools, so we have made it workable.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Has the minister modelled the expected queue lengths on each approach, particularly the left turn from Anzac Highway into South Road northbound?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I do not accept that there will be queue lengths.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: You have done modelling to confirm that, have you?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: The government has done modelling and we think it is safe.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: You have done modelling, did you say?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: The government has done modelling. Of course, they have done traffic modelling. That is what they do.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: When you say that you do not think there will be queue lengths, is that what the modelling has delivered?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: From what I have seen and what the department has advised me, it will work efficiently, safely, minimising queues and will give the people of South Australia the ability to turn right from Anzac Highway onto South Road—something members opposite denied them, and I do not know why he did that.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Will there be real-time monitoring of adaptive signalling at the surface level to mitigate merging issues?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: All our traffic lights are monitored in real time.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Sorry?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: All of our traffic lights are monitored in real time.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Okay, for that purpose?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Well, for safety and making sure the network works, yes.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Does that include the City of Adelaide as well or is that the City of Adelaide's responsibility?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: The City of Adelaide issue us with the signalling routine but we still monitor the traffic.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Has the minister spoken directly with the proprietors of Allegro Music?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Sorry?

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Has the minister spoken directly to the proprietors—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Me?

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: —of Allegro Music? Yes.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Personally?

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Yes.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: No.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: No, okay.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: My department has and my office has. I think they have been detailed—

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Your ministerial office has?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: My ministerial office has, my chief executive has, the designers have. We have set out multiple meetings, multiple assistance. This is one of those very sad occasions when people do not want to part with their property. I completely understand the emotion attached to it.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Amazing story, those two women.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: They are amazing individuals.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: To be able to make a living in the creative industries is pretty tough.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes, it is very tough. But hopefully they can restart somewhere else. We will do everything we can to help them. Business is not about the building, it is about the people in it. I am pretty sure that, given their entrepreneurialism and their unique skills, we can assist them to start again somewhere else. I feel very sorry for those two sisters. They are lovely people from what I have seen. They are just very, very sad about what has happened to a property they have become very attached to. But this is a story I have had to encounter along the entire north-south corridor. No-one wants to lose their home. No-one wants to give up their home.

I remember in the previous government, Mr Wingard dealing with people who were very emotional about this. It is very difficult to take someone out of their home. In fact, other than imprisoning someone, the ability to compulsorily acquire you out of your house is a very remarkable power that the state has to build infrastructure. And we should do so gently and compassionately, and we are doing that. But the greater good requires us to act. We have to get this done.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: In general terms, I am not asking you to comment specifically on this particular case, but is it policy that—

The CHAIR: Excuse me, member for Unley. The time allocated for this examination has expired. I declare the examination of Infrastructure Planning and Management complete.

Membership:

Ms Thompson substituted for Mr Odenwalder.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr J. Whelan, Chief Executive, Department for Infrastructure and Transport.

Mr M. Lorenz, Director, Road Maintenance, Department for Infrastructure and Transport.

Ms E. Kokar, Executive Director, Transport Policy and Regulation, Department for Infrastructure and Transport.

Mr M. Shotton, Acting Executive Director, Road and Marine Services, Department for Infrastructure and Transport.

Mr G. Jackson, Executive Director, People and Corporate Services, Department for Infrastructure and Transport.

Mr B. Seidel, Director, Financial and Procurement Services, Department for Infrastructure and Transport.

The CHAIR: We now move on to Roads and Marine. I assume you may have some new advisers. I assume the minister does not want to make a statement; he might just introduce his advisers and then we will go to the opposition.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I will just introduce my new advisers, if I may. Mr Whelan remains but we lose Andy. We get Mick Lorenz, who is retiring at the end of the year, and we wish him all the very best for his retirement. The other changes, of course, are Emma Kokar, who is the Executive Director, Transport Policy and Regulation, and Mark Shotton, Executive Director, Road and Marine Services.

Mr PEDERICK: I want to refer to regional infrastructure and road maintenance, Budget Paper 3, page 31. How much of the estimated \$2.45 billion in infrastructure and transport expenditure was invested in our regional roads during 2024-25?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Did you say 133?

Mr PEDERICK: Budget Paper 3, page 31.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Page 31?

Mr PEDERICK: Yes.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Sorry. Budget Paper 3, the Budget Statement?

Mr PEDERICK: Budget Paper 3.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: In Budget Paper 3, which is the Budget Statement, page 33 is about taxation. Are you talking about Volume 3, Budget Paper 4?

Mr PEDERICK: We can try that.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: We will try that one.

Mr PEDERICK: Let's go with that one.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Okay, let's go with that one. Page 33?

Mr PEDERICK: Page 144.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Page 144, key agency outputs; is that what you are after?

Mr PEDERICK: Yes.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Or are you after net program services summary?

Mr PEDERICK: We can go to the net programs. How much of the estimated \$2.45 billion in infrastructure and transport expenditure was invested in our regional roads during 2024-25?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Which line are you talking about there?

Mr PEDERICK: If we are going to keep arguing about the lines—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: No, when you say \$2.4 billion, is it—

Members interjecting:

The CHAIR: Order, please! It is not a question of arguing.

Mr PEDERICK: Let's just go with the headline, minister.

An honourable member interjecting:

The CHAIR: Member for Kavel, you are a visitor to this committee.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Which one is it? The reason I ask is that you said \$2.4 billion.

Mr PEDERICK: Yes.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: There is \$1.4 billion delivery of transport projects, Roads and Marine. I am trying to find the number you are talking about so that I can give you an answer.

Mr PEDERICK: We can come back to that. Referring to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 144, what criteria does DIT use to prioritise projects under the \$143.9 million regional road maintenance program?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: There are road engineers who go out and assess road projects on the basis of a scale that they have internally, and they go out and upgrade roads. Of course, advocacy always helps. When the member for Kavel and the member for Narungga write in, the government listens because they write in constantly. Advocacy plays a big role, as does the road condition.

Mr PEDERICK: In the Budget Statement at page 31 there is a line—going back to the previous question—on the \$2.45 billion in infrastructure and transport spending.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes.

Mr PEDERICK: Then you go down to infrastructure and transport under Green Industries. How much of that expenditure goes into regional roads during 2024-25?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Do you want me to break down the Infrastructure and Transport capital investment by agency into regional roads?

Mr PEDERICK: That is what I was asking before, yes, and that is what I am asking now.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: The breakdown is: \$365 million on the Port Augusta duplication; Strez was \$215 million; Sturt Highway was \$87 million—there are a lot.

Mr PEDERICK: Do you have a total number that you can quickly grab? I am happy to wait.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I will try to grab it for you.

Mr PEDERICK: Okay, thanks. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 144. What is the total road maintenance backlog estimated to be currently?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Well, you left us a big one. When we left office in 2018, the maintenance backlog was \$750 million; when we got back into office in 2022, it had blown out to \$2 billion. So that road maintenance backlog has grown and we are trying to catch up.

As I said earlier, members on my right voted to privatise road maintenance services in the South-East and when they did, they salted the earth behind them. They sold all our equipment and I think they even sold our depots, so we could not bring it back into public hands. They accepted a tender that was way too low and unable to achieve the outcomes the proponent had promised, causing us to have to put extra money into the South-East to try to meet basic standards. Quite frankly, it was the worst case of maladministration I had ever seen in my political career. I declared a review, as you might remember, of that contract that you supported being outsourced to a private operator in the South-East.

So when you are driving down to the South-East to Mount Gambier or Naracoorte, two seats that you do not hold, to try to win them back you could explain to the locals there about the road maintenance that you inflicted on them. I am shocked when I look at it. You inherited a \$750 million road maintenance backlog that grew three times within one term, so asking me now is a bit rich.

Mr PEDERICK: You have had three years. What is your state government plan for addressing the road maintenance backlog, noting that much of that backlog is in regional areas?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I do not think it is all in regional areas; that is unfair to say.

Mr PEDERICK: I said 'much'.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: We have increased road maintenance funding every year since we came to office. We spent \$189.7 million last year and we are spending \$220.3 million this year, so we are substantially spending a lot more, and you will see that there is an additional road safety maintenance application in 2027 of a further \$10 million on top of extra money that was put in the budget last year for road maintenance. So we are doing more than you ever did.

Mr PEDERICK: In regard to that road maintenance funding, is that actual work on the road surface, or does that include some of the safety works: barriers, wire rope, etc?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: It includes rubbish removal. It includes mowing lawns. It includes replacing signs. It includes remedying potholes. It includes resealing. It includes the whole gamut of works that you need to do to maintain a functional road network. It is not just money on the pavement. Imagine rest areas with bins overflowing with waste. Truck drivers rely on these areas. We have a responsibility to keep them clean. We have to mow lawns to protect farmers from bushfires—to make sure there is not overgrown verge that can carry fire along roads. So there is lots of work to be done.

Mr PEDERICK: So do you have the actual amount that is spent on the road surface, minister?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: We will give you a holistic number, but that would be too—

Mr PEDERICK: Can you find that number?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: No, it would be too difficult to break down.

Mr PEDERICK: Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 144: what measures are in place to monitor contract to performance in regional roadworks? I reflect on the Mallee Highway, which has just been upgraded between Geranium and Tailem Bend.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Could I ask you a non-partisan question? In your personal view has that upgrade been done well?

Mr PEDERICK: I don't think it has been done well. I think the surface is still uneven on quite a bit of it.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: So you think the base needed to be redone as well?

Mr PEDERICK: I think there are sections of it that can be fixed up, yes, absolutely.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: We have a team led by Mick who oversee road maintenance and the contracts. It is fair to say the most recent briefing I had was pretty hard reading given the contract in the South-East. That contract is appalling. The idea that the previous government thought that you could do \$12 million worth of work for five is ridiculous.

Mr PEDERICK: But the Mallee Highway was a standalone project, minister, is what I am saying.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: If you are unhappy with that work I will ask the department to go look at it.

Mr PEDERICK: Okay. Thank you.

Mr ELLIS: I have only two questions, and with the committee's grace I will ask them successively. The first one is on Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 147, specifically the line about the SA Jetties Renewal Program, which is \$20 million over the four years. Can the minister advise how that has been rolled out and what jetties were beneficiaries initially and what are forthcoming?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: This is a tough program, because we need councils to co-invest with us, and a lot of the councils are finding it difficult to co-invest with us. We are doing our very best to help them. What we will do now is we will just keep on adding \$5 million over the forward estimates as we go to keep this program ongoing. So it is \$20 million over four years, but we keep on adding the \$5 million. My next ask will be to have that fund grow.

We have allocated \$4.9 million in grants by the end of the 2024-25 financial year for councils to undertake work. To participate in the program councils are expected to co-contribute and will be required to continue maintaining that jetty that we are contributing to for a further 15 years.

We have spent so far \$6.1 million on refurbishment, which is capital payments, and \$1.3 million on maintenance on state-owned jetties up to 30 May 2025. There are 75 jetties and wharves across the state. Many of those are timber assets that are over 100 years old. This is a big problem coming at us hard and fast. Most of them are at the end of their life with risks of closure. Thirty-five were divested to relevant local councils in the late 1990s, with those lease terms between 25 and 99 years.

With respect to the lease terms, the council that has the lease is responsible for repair, maintenance and operation of the jetty and wharf and to keep it at all times—I will quote under the contract:

...a structural standard of at least 30 per cent of the original pile axial strength and other structural members to the loading equivalent of 4 kilopascals—

and is required to—

return the asset in good and tenable repair.

So we are not asking for councils to keep these things in the condition that they were the day they received them. We are asking them to keep them in a condition where we can receive them back, where they can be redeemed. If councils cannot return them to us in this condition, there are legal consequences that we will take.

Mr ELLIS: What jetties have benefited from the initial outlay?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Well, Port Elliot jetty, \$174,000; Port Vincent's Fisherman's jetty, \$197,000; Port Hughes jetty, half a million dollars; Kingston jetty, \$2.87 million; Tumby Bay was offered \$2.4 million, which they have refused; and Yorke Peninsula piling program at Edithburgh, \$3.5 million. So it seems to me you have done exceptionally well.

Mr ELLIS: My second question, with the committee's grace, relates to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 152, which explains the objective of the department in the roads and marine section, which is, of course, the effective and efficient maintenance operation and delivery of marine infrastructure. I imagine a key part of that, with regard to boat ramps specifically, is the better boating facilities fund?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes.

Mr ELLIS: Can the government advise how much goes into that fund annually from the levy and how much is expended from it?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: This is the one question we have not prepared a brief on. I undertake to come to you with an answer either by the end of the day or on notice and as quickly as possible.

Mr ELLIS: Much appreciated.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Referring to the Budget Statement, Budget Paper 3, page 31, under the heading 'General government capital investment by agency,' for Premier and Cabinet for 2024-25 there is over \$200 million and out to the forward estimates there are amounts allocated that vary. Is that funding for projects that have already been announced by the government?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: If you are asking about Premier and Cabinet, that estimates was yesterday.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: But you are managing the portfolio.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I do not manage Premier and Cabinet, no.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: You are not managing any of the infrastructure?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I manage infrastructure. I do not manage Premier and Cabinet

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: This actually refers to infrastructure, general government capital investment.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I have given you my answer.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: So you cannot answer that question; is that what you are saying?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: That is a question for Premier and Cabinet, not for me.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Are you able then to advise whether the Premier's Delivery Unit has worked in any capacity with your department?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Of course.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: And in what capacity?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: In project delivery.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Can you advise which particular—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: The Premier's Delivery Unit is there to monitor to make sure we keep our election commitments and they monitor its delivery.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Which projects? Are they involved in the Torrens to Darlington?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I would imagine, yes.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Have you met with them about Torrens to Darlington?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I meet with them regularly.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: About Torrens to Darlington?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: About—

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Okay, you meet with them regularly. What projects have you met with them about?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: All my projects.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: All of them?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: You have met with them about all of the projects in your department?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Everything that we have promised to do.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: So what role do they play with your department?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I am going to buy you a calendar. Premier and cabinet was yesterday. If you have questions about the Premier's Delivery Unit, you ask them. My role—

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: No, I am asking about your interaction with the Premier's Delivery Unit.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: My interactions with them are that we give them updates on where we are on projects to make sure that we can deliver the Premier's commitments.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Have they raised any concern about delivery? Have they assisted with any massaging of messages with your department?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Massaging messages?

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Yes, which I believe is a term that the Premier used yesterday in describing one of the purposes of including the Premier's Delivery Unit in delivery of promises.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I am focused on what I am doing. I do not know what massaging you are talking about.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Well, you might want to have that discussion with the Premier.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: You are the one talking about massaging.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: So no massaging for you; is that what you are saying? You are toned up and ready to go on your own?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: No-one wants to see me without a top on, mate.

Mr PEDERICK: I will go to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 144. What is the timeline for completion of the Strzelecki Track sealing works that are funded in 2025-26?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: That is a tough question to answer, given the rains and what they have done to us, member for Hammond. I am not going to pretend that I can give you a hard and fast date. It is going to be hard to mobilise and get back up there. We have done a lot of work trying to open it up where we can for the Cooper Basin. They are tough conditions—very, very tough conditions. The weather is not helping us.

Mr PEDERICK: I get it: it is tough access, and I understand the Della Road section is one that is not far. It may have been put out for contract; I am not sure. But that used to be almost an outback highway years ago and it is now more or less a farm track. Has the minister's department done an overview and estimated timelines, considering the amount of flood damage that has happened up north?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I have just been handed this by the chief executive. I have just been advised that roadworks have been completed on the Strez Creek crossing on the northern approach (the Moomba side) to establish a single lane for access for essential services. That was reopened on 12 June. As for your other question, these photographs of the crossing's water volumes are just huge, so it is going to be tough for us.

Mr PEDERICK: The estimated result for the Strzelecki Track in that line is \$13 million less than what was budgeted. Is that due to the same reason?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I would say so, member for Hammond; I would say it is the weather events.

Mr PEDERICK: I refer you to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 144. What portion of the Strzelecki Track remains unsealed as of June 2025?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: A lot more since the rain and floodwaters washed it away. About 40 per cent is sealed.

Mr PEDERICK: Do you have an understanding of how much damage to those bitumised sections has happened with those floods?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Lots, but I will not have an answer for a while.

Mr PEDERICK: I will go to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 146, line 6. Last year's budget listed the total project cost for the ex-Tropical Cyclone Tiffany severe weather event road repairs as \$60.9 million, but the current budget has dropped that figure to \$38.5 million. It is quite a discrepancy. Can you explain the discrepancy please?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Sorry, repeat the reference?

Mr PEDERICK: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 146, line 6. It is the direct budget line, not the bit at the top.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Ex-Tropical Cyclone Tiffany severe weather event road repairs?

Mr PEDERICK: That is the one.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: And you say the total project cost is 38.5 million and we budgeted \$18.9 million?

Mr PEDERICK: No, it was \$60.9 million previously.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: This is just an accounting treatment with our annual programs.

Mr PEDERICK: What was that again, sorry?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: This is an accounting treatment about the way we move money around—using our annual programs to spend money on some of these repair works—so you do not double count it.

Mr PEDERICK: But it is quite a move.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: If you use your annual programs that are already budgeted for to spend money on other things, and you get an allocation of money outside of your annual programs so you do not double count, we show them differently. It is an accounting treatment.

Mr PEDERICK: On the same line, can you provide a breakdown of ex-Tropical Cyclone Tiffany severe weather event road repairs project and how it compares to the \$25 million betterment of state road infrastructure, ex-Tropical Cyclone Tiffany severe weather event project? Are there differences in those two events seeing that they are on different budget lines?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: My advice is that some of the money is for capital, some of the money is for repair works. There are two different projects: one is for culvert repair, which is in a difficult area, and one is for disaster recovery.

Mr PEDERICK: What roads are involved, minister, in this betterment mix?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: What roads? Well, there is the Outback Highway, Sturt Highway, Birdseye Highway, Birdsville Track, William Creek Road, Oodnadatta Track, Muloorina Road and Borefield Road.

Mr PEDERICK: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 146, line 7. Is the Fleurieu Connections project still on track to completed by June 2026?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes.

Mr PEDERICK: In relation to the same project, what is the reason for the additional \$45 million that was spent on the Fleurieu Connections project, compared to what was budgeted in 2024-25?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: The budget has not increased by \$45 million, it is just that we are doing more works faster because there has been less rain.

Mr PEDERICK: So there have just been works pushed forward up the budget?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes.

Mr PEDERICK: Thank you.

The Hon. D.R. CREGAN: I take the committee to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 147, the investing expenditure summary. Can the minister provide information on the obligations of the contractor to manage vegetation within the South-Eastern Freeway corridor?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes. The contractor is obliged to maintain vegetation clearance via trimming as required by the relevant defined clearance envelope and required sight distances and sign visibility and undertake a herbicidal contract of all broadleaf weeds, woody weeds and other environmental weeds, including some grasses, followed by a brush cutting of all weeds and exotic grasses and undertake one mow of grassed area, fence-line boundary fence to boundary fence line, prior to the fire season and any additional cuts during the year directed by the department.

The Hon. D.R. CREGAN: I do understand there is some pressure on time, but I do have a further question. Can the minister outline to the committee the scope and timing of ongoing works in the South-Eastern Freeway corridor? I understand there was a question earlier with respect to the Mount Barker interchange and Verdun interchange. I welcome any additional comments, of course, that the minister might have with respect to that, but the corridor overall is the one that I am concerned about.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I am very sad that the member has announced his departure from the seat of Kavel, because he has been able to deliver for them some extraordinary pieces of infrastructure works. He is overseeing a great Labor initiative with the Mount Barker Hospital, which he has welcomed.

He worked very hard to make sure the Adelaide Road and the Mount Barker interchanges were returned after the commonwealth government paused that investment. We have an 80:20 investment fund. He worked diligently to make sure that the tunnels on the South Eastern Freeway were refurbished and the monitoring schemes put in place. I do not think we will see his likes again. He has delivered for his community, including the work on the Heysen Boulevard, small but symbolic, with \$5 million in a partnership with Mount Barker council—\$2.5 million each—to open a road that looked like bureaucratic madness gone wrong. Had it not been for the member for Kavel, that would not have occurred.

Can I also say, like many of my Labor colleagues who take me for car rides, when the member for Kavel takes me for a car ride the doors lock and the trip is over when he says it is done. There is a dog in the back looking at me, and we drive around in the Ford, and he shows me every bit of infrastructure he thinks needs upgrading. We have gone a long way in doing a lot of those works. I am very sad that this is his last budget and his last estimates. He is a good and decent man, and I know he will have a very prosperous career, no matter what he does afterwards. He will be a loss to this parliament.

The Hon. D.R. CREGAN: That is far too kind and a little embarrassing. I regret that I was not able to invite Peds to go for a ride in Foster the Ford, but I am not sure that Nixon would have approved. The matters that I had specifically in mind, of course, were timing and scope in relation to the Mount Barker freeway interchange itself.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes, okay. Work will begin by the end of this year. We are spending \$150 million on Mount Barker and Verdun. It is going to create 260 full-time jobs and major construction will be completed by 2027. Importantly for you, member for Kavel, the Mount Barker interchange work has been won by Bardavcol, a great South Australian company with good knowledge of that interchange. There have been 43 crashes at that site, which you have made me well aware of, between 2019 and 2023.

It is going to be upgraded, with a new three-lane bridge across the South Eastern Freeway. There will be southbound traffic and eastbound traffic. Northbound traffic will have three lanes to

improve safety and there will be new traffic signals. There will also be new pavement on the existing bridge to make sure that everyone knows the work has been done on both sides, including upgrades like smart lighting, which I know you fought very hard for to make sure that the lighting was in place as well to maintain connectivity and a sense of safety in the area.

It will feature an eastbound entry ramp towards Mount Barker and a new westbound exit ramp, which will cross under the existing westbound entry ramp and connect with a new roundabout at Mount Barker Road, adjacent to Silver Road. The upgrades, as I said, include pavement rehabilitation and also upgrades to traffic barriers on the existing Adelaide Road entry ramp bridge, pier protection, and on Mount Barker Road.

A lot of work is going into all these. There are 46,000 vehicles that travel each day from Verdun into the city and 31,000 from Mount Barker to Littlehampton, so we are talking big numbers of vehicles here, and your advocacy was invaluable, along with the federal member for Mayo, who I know you coordinated with.

The Hon. D.R. CREGAN: Mr Chair, I beg your indulgence: in terms of the timing of construction works for the Verdun portion, although of course, as members know, that is outside of my electorate, but just in terms of my overall understanding of the progress of those works?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Same timeframes, is my understanding. Verdun and Mount Barker will begin in 2025 and be completed by late 2027. I hope you can come back for the opening, because you deserve to be there.

Mr PEDERICK: Going to marine, Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 147: when will the refurbishment works on the Penneshaw and Cape Jervis ports be completed?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: We will finish in July this year, but the works that are left to be done are the works that SeaLink needs to do. We have done our bit, and now it is up to them.

Mr PEDERICK: Do you have any idea, minister, how long that work will take with SeaLink?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: You would have to ask SeaLink. I do not have an answer.

Mr PEDERICK: I will go to the new SeaLink ferries in Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 152. Are the new SeaLink ferries being built capable of handling the stock crate height for livestock transport? I am talking about four-deck sheep crates.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: This is not a contract that we signed. This is a contract the previous government agreed to, and the parameters for that were agreed to by Corey Wingard, Stephan Knoll and SeaLink. I would have to go away and look at that and come back to you, but I would forward your questions to SeaLink, and maybe ring up Stephan or Corey and find out what they agreed to.

Mr PEDERICK: Thank you.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: These ferries were commissioned in 2024.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: With contracts signed by the previous government.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: For new ferries? It was a new service, not new ferries.

Mr PEDERICK: So you will have a look to see if there are any issues? The question was raised with me as there are some carriers concerned about what could happen at low tide as the trucks pull off the boat.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes, it is a problem.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Did the department have any input in the design of the new ferries at all.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: No, we don't build boats.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: There was no consultation with—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Well, I will check with Stephan and Corey and ask.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: The commissioning of these boats was not until 2024.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: You know full well that this contract was dreamt up by the previous government, not us.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: No, it is the service, the renewal of the service. The service was renewed, which you would have done if you were in office. This is about the new ferries. The question is: did the department have any input in the design of those new ferries and, if the answer is no, why not, considering it is the only road link to Kangaroo Island?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Maybe you should have thought about that before you gave them a new service contract.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I am sorry, but you are managing the contract, and the new ferries were commissioned two years into your reign.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I am not going to be lectured about you signing a contract that you say is bad and then complain about the outcome of that contract.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Well, you are managing a contract.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: This is what people hate about politics. We lose an election, you win, you are in government. While in government you sign a new service contract with SeaLink, and then you complain about the outcomes of that contract and you blame us. This is just crazy. It is beyond ridiculous.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: No, I am asking what input you had, not in that contract but in the building of the new ferries.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: You have taken Kangaroo Island for granted for years. You signed a contract—

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: What impact have you had, or have you just taken it for granted?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: You told the people of South Australia the upgrade of the port facilities would be only \$10 million or \$15 million.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: No, the question was about the ferries, minister. The question was about the ferries.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: You guys are covered in mud and slime on this.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I think that people would be interested to know whether the department gave any advice or inquired about what was being purchased.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: You want us to change the design? Those discussions need to be had when you are signing a service agreement.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: No, not the design of the ferries.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Sure, okay.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: The design of the ferries is surely of interest to the Minister for Transport?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: You would think so.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: On a major—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: You would think so, but it turns out that your Minister for Transport—

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: So you are able to put a whole lot of resources into overturning a—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Maybe if they had not sacked you and made you the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure it may not have happened, but they did, and the people they put in place agreed to whatever they wanted.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Maybe if you put less effort into overturning the train and tram contract—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I can't overturn a contract.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: —and had a look at this contract, and took some interest in these new ferries, you would be able to answer this question.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: You want me to overturn this contract?

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: No, I am asking you to give us information about the contract—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I have given you my answer.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: —and what input your department has had in the building of these ferries.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I find it grossly hypocritical to have this type of revisionism about the way you conducted yourself when you were in government. You were in cabinet. You knew what they were doing. Did you ask these questions of the then cabinet when they brought the submission to extend the service? Did you talk to them about the boats? Did you ask those questions? No, you did not, but you are asking them now. You are asking these questions at the wrong time and you know it.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: No, it is the right time because these were commissioned under your watch.

Mr PEDERICK: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 145. Can the minister outline what works will be completed in 2025-26 as part of the \$12.3 million upgrade works allocated for the Port Augusta wharf?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I do not know if you have been to the Port Augusta wharf, but it is fenced off now; it is unsafe. When I announced the duplication of the Joy Baluch Bridge in my final budget in 2017 and got the funding allocation for it, the incoming government did not spend any money on the wharf project. There were surplus funds at the end of that, so what I was able to do was convince the commonwealth government to reallocate some of that money towards upgrading the wharf.

The upgrade will involve installing new decking, girders, cross heads, cross bracing and approximately 80 new steel pipes. We are going to start in the middle of this year, which is very soon, and complete it by 2026. The council has been very keen for us to do this work. I want to thank Catherine King for allowing us to use some of the money, as part of the Labor initiative of the Joy Baluch Bridge duplication, to allow that work to open up that wharf area, which is vitally important for the social cohesion of Port Augusta. It is a beautiful spot and I cannot wait for it to be open.

Mr PEDERICK: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 152, regarding the repair of jetties leased by the state government to local councils. How does the state government propose to address the large gap between the cost of these required repairs and the funds allocated in the budget for that purpose?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I already answered that question, didn't I, with the member for Narungga?

Mr PEDERICK: You may have. In regard to particular jetties that have needed works done recently, namely Streaky Bay and Port Germein, have there been any discussions with the local councils re works on those jetties?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes, the local member has been on at me about Port Germein for a long time. It is a beautiful jetty. It is one of the longest wooden jetties in the world, I think, or the longest in the Southern Hemisphere. We are looking at it, but of course it requires co-investment with the council.

Mr PEDERICK: What level of co-investment from council are you looking at?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: We want fifty-fifty, ultimately. You also asked me about Streaky Bay. We have begun remediation works, which I announced in October last year. We began remediation works in Streaky Bay to improve the structural integrity of the jetty. It has new berthing and mooring structures to accommodate vessels up to 70 tonnes, ensuring the jetty meets the requirements of marine standards. The increased structural integrity will also allow authorised vehicles up to 4½ tonnes to drive onto the jetty to service the berthing of vessels.

New safety ladders will be installed to make it easy for boat users to board and disembark from their vessels, as well as hand rails to assist users walking along the jetty. Benches will be installed on the jetty near the existing shelter so that locals, fishers and tourists can relax and soak up the pristine views of a beautiful coastline. I caught my first-ever fish on the Streaky Bay jetty when I was a kid. The jetty will be temporarily closed during that construction period, but sections of the jetty would have been reopened for the public as the project progressed. We are finishing in July and 11 full-time jobs were created. I want to attribute something to the Mayor of Streaky Bay, Travis Barber. He says:

I am pleased to acknowledge the State Government's commitment to undertaking essential remediation works at the Streaky Bay Jetty.

The need for vehicle access on our jetty to support our local industry is particularly appreciated, and we are grateful that the State Government has listened to and acted on our concerns.

Council fully supports these works and looks forward to seeing the jetty continue to serve our district into the future, ensuring it remains a vital asset for our community and economy.

That is a pretty good endorsement, I would have thought.

Mr PEDERICK: Some of the jetties leased by councils have been deemed by the Essential Services Commission of South Australia to be unsustainable or potentially unsustainable. Is there a risk that the cost of repairs to a jetty or, in the case of some councils, many jetties, could threaten the financial sustainability of some South Australian councils?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Only if those councils have been mismanaged financially by mayors in the past who have been financially inept at managing these councils. I am very concerned about Tumby Bay and its previous leadership. That council has written to me saying that they are unable to sustain the jetty. That is interesting, given that the former mayor is now the current shadow treasurer.

I read out the requirements of a contract about what the strength and load needs to be on jetties for regular maintenance. I suspect that the former mayor of Tumby Bay, the current shadow treasurer, has left the financial state of that council in a way that has been so poorly managed that his ineptitude at financial management could cause these jetties to close. The councils want to return these jetties to—

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I have not heard you say this outside of the parliament. I have not heard you make these allegations outside the parliament. Are you are prepared to do that?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes, I have. Of course I have.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Are you prepared to do that?

The CHAIR: The member for Unley, unless you have a point of order, I suggest you listen.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: He is financially incompetent. He is your future Treasurer.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I invite you to say that outside the parliament.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Sure, okay; no problem.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: At lunchtime?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Sure.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: In front of a camera?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes, absolutely; organise one.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Alright, okay.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I will go on and say what I also think about him. I think he's poorly—

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Don't forget all the details to back up your statement when you make it outside of the chamber.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes, okay. Under the divested lease terms, while mayor he had to make sure that he was responsible for the repair, maintenance and operation of the jetty and wharf, to keep it at all times:

...a structural standard of at least 30 per cent of original pile axial strength and other structural members to the loading equivalent of 4 kilopascals—

and is required to—

return the asset in good and tenable repair.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: The council has written to me saying they cannot do it. Well, he was mayor of the council. Was he not carrying out his financial duties as per the contract? This is the man you want to be the Treasurer of South Australia. It says a lot about him.

Mr PEDERICK: Minister, in regard to the hundreds of millions of dollars—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I have an update for you. The new SeaLink vessels can carry four-deck livestock trucks. I do not have an answer for you about the unloading at low tide, whether the ramps will be sufficient for the trucks to get off, but I will find out for you.

Mr PEDERICK: Thank you, I appreciate it.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: And an answer about the consultation, whether the department was consulted?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I will go back again, right? You were in cabinet when the service agreements were extended. Did you ask these questions of the then minister? You did not.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: These were commissioned in 2024, when you were in government.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: In the service agreement, it is my understanding that they are also talking about new vessels. Did you have the curiosity in cabinet to ask the questions you are asking me now, when you had leverage?

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: So the answer is no?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: When you had leverage; you have no leverage.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: So you had no input?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Exactly, that is my point.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: No input, okay. That's alright. That's fine.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I understand why they did not give you the job.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: You have answered that. Thank you, minister.

Mr PEDERICK: I refer to the same budget line, minister. Does the South Australian government accept that these jetties are state-owned assets and remain the responsibility of the state and that without ongoing financial assistance regional communities will be forced to impose unrealistic rate increases to fund their maintenance?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: What you are asking me to do is to give you a statement that says councils are not required to meet the lease requirements that Diana Laidlaw made them sign up to. You want me to release the councils of their legal obligations and have the taxpayers of South Australia pick up their mismanagement? That is just what you are telling me. The answer to that question is no.

Mr PEDERICK: I am asking about ongoing financial assistance.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: We have a \$20 million fund that is ongoing that we are ready to co-invest with councils—very simple.

Mr PEDERICK: I go to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 152. In relation to Tumby Bay, what is the government's response to the intention of the District Council of Tumby Bay to hand back their jetty on 27 June this year, and is the government prepared to commit the funding required to make that jetty safe and restore and reopen the full length of the jetty to residents and visitors?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: If the council does want to return it, they will meet the requirements that they have signed up to. If they cannot, they will be liable for those costs. I am very disappointed that the mayor has taken this course of action. I hope he reconsiders. I am about to write to him to ask him to reconsider. Our offer is on the table; we can help. It seems to me that he and the former CE there played politics with this, hoping that they could try to pin this on a Labor government, but they have an obligation to return these jetties to us in a condition.

I do accept that jetties are the lifeblood of regional communities and that they are very important to regional communities. That is why I cannot understand why any council would let them go to such rack and ruin. How can they?

Mr PEDERICK: I go to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 152. Have any of the funds apportioned to the Jetties Renewal Program been spent on jetties that are not leased to local councils and, if so, where have these funds been allocated?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes. I said that to you in an earlier answer where I said we spent money on government-owned jetties.

Mr PEDERICK: Have you done a full list of jetties requiring works under the SA Jetties Renewal Program on page 147?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I had to start this work again because the former government did a jetties strategy that they took to cabinet and locked and will not release for me to see. So I cannot see it but it will become available soon, in 10 years. It was done at the end of their term so there is not long to go now. We will find out exactly what your jetties strategy was.

I know you have kept it hidden, but if you like you can publicly say now you will release that jetties strategy and Cabinet Office will make it public, then people can see what your plans were for Tumby Bay, Port Neill, all these jetties on Yorke Peninsula. We will see what they were. But you have been asked to release the strategy and you have refused. I accept that you have the right to refuse, because it is a cabinet document. Yes, we are looking at all of our jetties, but these jetties are leased and controlled by councils so they are under their care and control and we rely on them to give us information.

Mr PEDERICK: In referring to jetty ownership in Budget Paper 3 on page 99, how many jetties in South Australia are owned by the government and how many are owned by local councils?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I think I answered that question earlier. But I will give you an update on the question you asked earlier about engineers. In 2022 we took on 31 graduates, 17 were engineers; in 2023 we took on 29 graduates, 12 were engineers; in 2024 we took on 30 graduates, eight were engineers; and in 2025 we took on 37 graduates, 17 were engineers. The state government owns 75 jetties and wharves across the state. This is what I read out earlier, so I will read it out to you again.

Mr PEDERICK: Yes, I get that: 75.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Most of them are timber, over 100 years old and at end of life. Of the state-owned jetties and wharves, 35 were divested to relevant councils in the late 1990s by a previous Liberal government with the terms that your governments set out in leases between 25 and 99 years. This government will hold each of those councils tight to the letter of that lease.

Mr PEDERICK: I refer to Budget Paper 3, page 99. With the SA Jetties Renewal Program, how many years will it take to repair the jetties on the department's current list?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: To what standard?

Mr PEDERICK: Full length, fully operation for recreational and commercial fishers.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: That would be too hard to assess.

Mr PEDERICK: Too hard to assess?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I asked you what standard and you said 'full length'. What does that mean?

Mr PEDERICK: There are jetties that have had—as Port Germein years ago was decreased in length by about 300 metres.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Is it about length?

Mr PEDERICK: We have had storm damage recently. They might obviously need flooring upgrades, pylon upgrades.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: It depends on what criteria you use. Are you using strength, kilopascals, weight on timber jetties? It is a question that is too vague for me to be able to answer.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Can I take you to page 152 of Volume 3, Agency Statements, roads and marine targets. Under your first dot point for 2025-26, how many government driving instructors are now employed to deliver the reforms in the practical driving tests changes for the issuing of C-Class drivers' licences?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: We estimate we will need 20 to 50 drivers and these reforms are over a two-year period.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: The question was how many do you have now?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: The reform has not started yet. This will not start for another year and a bit, so we do not have anyone yet.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: You do not have anybody yet, did you say?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: No. Why would we have anyone? We are not doing the testing now.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Sorry?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Do you want me to employ FTEs to sit and do nothing? The reform is a two-year process. We are giving people time to adapt to the changes, so the process will be completed by 2026-27. We will start hiring FTEs as we get closer to that point.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Is it going to happen overnight like grade 7 in high school. Is it going to be one day they are private providers and the next day they are not, or is it going to be phased?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: We will come back to the house with a proper transition plan that the department is developing. The first stage is to pass the legislation. I do note that legislation failed when the Liberal Party had a majority in the House of Assembly but was passed when Labor had a majority in the House of Assembly. Once that legislation passed, it passed the upper house despite some efforts to try to stop it, which really failed. Once we passed those reforms we said we wanted a period of time to implement them. What I want to do is make sure that the department has plenty of time to get that right. This is really important.

One of the main reasons we have done this reform is that I was very concerned about the safety of young people learning to drive and I was getting very concerned about the financial burden on families. The cost of getting a driver's licence was spiralling out of control in this state because of the current method.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Minister, will the staff be permanent public servants or will they be contractors, or will they be casual?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: We will determine that as we get closer.

The CHAIR: This will be your last question.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I can add to that, the member for Hammond. We have 310 engineers in the department. We have a combined number of 627 staff with 10 years' experience and 673 with over 20 years' experience in government.

Mr PEDERICK: I refer to Budget Paper 3, page 111, line 21. In September 2022 the government announced it was upgrading Port Bonython jetty at a cost of \$32.7 million, yet in this year's budget the total cost is \$77.1 million. Can you explain the difference?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: What was the reference?

Mr PEDERICK: Budget Paper 3, page 111, line 21.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Budget Paper 3?

Mr PEDERICK: That is what I have here.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Volume 3 or Budget Paper 3?

Mr PEDERICK: Budget Paper 3.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Page 111. I cannot find the reference you are talking about. Page 111 is Port Bonython refurbishment.

Mr PEDERICK: Yes.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: With \$77.176 million, yes.

Mr PEDERICK: It was previously budgeted at \$32.7 million.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Are you saying the cost has gone up to \$77 million?

Mr PEDERICK: In this year's budget, the total cost is \$77.1 million. I am just asking what the difference is.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: You are saying that the total project cost has gone up?

Mr PEDERICK: In this year's budget, the total cost has gone to \$77.1 million.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: What do you say it was previously?

Mr PEDERICK: In September 2022, you announced you were upgrading the Port Bonython jetty at a cost of \$32.7 million.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: The advice I have received is that the commonwealth has made an extra allocation to us.

Mr PEDERICK: So has it gone out of scope?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: No, my understanding is they are doing extra things.

Mr PEDERICK: Can you explain any of the works or why it needed that?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Port Bonython jetty is one of the most important structural assets we have in the state. It is one of our major export facilities for liquids. The member for Morphett wanted to export hydrogen and ammonia off Port Bonython Jetty. We spent a lot of money, time and effort with the commonwealth government working out how to put new lines on there. We put new dolphins on there.

We have done a lot of work on whether we can take some streams out and put new lines in to take ammonia, because he had this plan that he was going to export. He was going to freeze hydrogen to -253° Celsius, put it on a ship at Port Bonython and send it out, yet he thought that storage of hydrogen was unrealistic. It is an amazing come-to-Jesus moment.

Members interjecting:

The CHAIR: Order! I advise members that the time allocated has expired. I declare the examination of Roads and Marine complete. Further examination of the proposed payments for the Department for Infrastructure and Transport and Administered Items for the Department for Infrastructure and Transport will continue after the lunch break.

Sitting suspended from 12:57 to 13:45.

Membership:

Mr Basham substituted for Mr Pederick.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr J. Whelan, Chief Executive, Department for Infrastructure and Transport.

Ms E. Kokar, Executive Director, Transport Policy and Regulation, Department for Infrastructure and Transport.

Mr G. Jackson, Executive Director, People and Corporate Services, Department for Infrastructure and Transport.

Ms T. Foresto, Director, Service SA, Department for Infrastructure and Transport.

Mr B. Seidel, Director, Financial and Procurement Services, Department for Infrastructure and Transport.

Mr J. O'Grady, Senior Manager, Service Delivery, Service SA, Department for Infrastructure and Transport.

The CHAIR: I open the payments for examination for Service SA. The minister appearing is the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport. I invite the minister to introduce his advisers, then I will go to the opposition.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: To my right is Emma Kokar, Executive Director, Transport Policy and Regulation. Sitting behind me is Graeme Jackson, Executive Director, People and Corporate Services. Alongside him is Tess Foresto, Director, Service SA. Behind them is Ben Seidel, Director, Financial and Procurement Services, and alongside him is James O'Grady, Senior Manager, Service Delivery, Service SA. As always, on my left, is Jon Whelan, Chief Executive.

Mr BASHAM: I will read the omnibus questions straightaway, which are:

1. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, how many executive appointments have been made since 1 July 2024 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 2024 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 2024?
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 2024, 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 2025-26 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 or agency reporting to the minister, how many surplus employees are there in June 2025, and for each surplus employee, what is the title or classification of the position and the total annual employment cost?

7. 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?

8. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, what savings targets have been set for 2025-26 and each year of the forward estimates, and what is the estimated FTE impact of these measures?

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

- (a) What was the actual FTE count at June 2025 and what is the projected actual FTE account for the end of each year of the forward estimates?
- (b) What is the budgeted total employment cost for each year of the forward estimates?
- (c) 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?

10. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, how much is budgeted to be spent on goods and services for 2025-26 and for each year of the forward estimates?

11. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, how many FTEs are budgeted to provide communication and promotion activities in 2025-26 and each year of the forward estimates and what is their estimated employment cost?

12. 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 2025-26?

13. 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 2024 and budgeted expenditure for 2025-26, 2026-27 and 2027-28.

14. For each grant program or fund the minister is responsible for, please provide the following information for the 2025-26, 2026-27 and 2027-28 financial years:

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

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

- (a) Is the agency confident that you will meet your expenditure targets in 2025-26? Have any budget decisions been made between the delivery of the budget on 5 June 2025 and today that might impact on the numbers presented in the budget papers which we are examining today?
- (b) Are you expecting any reallocations across your agencies' budget lines during 2025-26; if so, what is the nature of the reallocation?

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

- (a) What South Australian businesses will be used in procurement for your agencies in 2025-26?
- (b) What percentage of total procurement spend for your agencies does this represent?
- (c) How does this compare to last year?

17. 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?

18. How many procurements have been undertaken by the department this FY. How many have been awarded to interstate businesses? How many of those were signed off by the CE?

19. 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?

20. How many and what percentage of staff who undertake procurement activities have undertaken training on participation policies and local industry participants this FY?

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Minister, I refer you to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 154, performance indicators, predominantly transactions with Service SA. Are you able to advise how many transactions with Service SA are now conducted online and whether they are unique transactions or repeat customers? I do not know whether you have both numbers.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Sorry, could you say that last part again?

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Are you able to provide the numbers of transactions and unique customers in that answer?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: What do you mean by 'unique'?

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: How many people. There are obviously people who use online who will use it multiple times. I am also interested in the number of people who actually use it. Whether they use it once or whether they use it five times. Does that make sense?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: The advice I have is that from July 2024 to May 2025, there were 29.6 million transactions across all Service SA channels.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Was that online? Are you referring to online now?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: No, I am just reading this answer. This equates to 77.2 per cent being processed using digital services compared with 70 per cent using digital services for the period previously. These numbers include inquiries and I am not sure transactions. Service SA handled 7.9 million transactions where a payment was made or an official document used. Seventy per cent of those were conducted online, 22.4 per cent at a Service SA centre, 3.71 per cent at a service agent, including Australia Post, 0.65 per cent through customer support and 2.3 per cent through the contact centre.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: So it is a specific question about the number of unique—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: We cannot do that.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: You cannot do that. You do not have the ability. Are you able to advise what service is provided the most online? Is it a registration renewal, for example?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: My advice is registration renewal is the largest transaction we conduct online.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Are registration renewals for expired vehicles able to be done online?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: My advice is yes.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Are you able to advise how many registrations are reregistered after they have expired per annum or say for last year?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: That is not a number we normally calculate.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: You do not have any way of measuring that?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I do not know. I will check.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: You will bring back an answer?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: No, I will go away and check if that is something we can do.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: And if you can—will you advise whether you can do it or not?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I am not sure what benefit that adds to the estimates committee.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I think that is an indication of cost of living if we are seeing that there are a number of vehicles that are being registered after they have expired or, alternatively, people who may be driving unregistered vehicles on the road, which is a risk, obviously, to anyone who may receive personal injury from those vehicles. It is a pretty important statistic, I would have thought.

The other question I have is: does your system enable you to measure how many of those registration renewals are for three months and how many of them are for 12 months? I think they are the two categories, are they not?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: There is a third where you can do it monthly by direct debit.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Can I have those numbers?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: We do not break it down by that type of frequency.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Sorry?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: We do not break it down by that level. That is not how we record.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: So your software does not do that?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: It serves no purpose.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Well, you can't manage what you don't measure.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Registration is for 12 months. Now, whether you register that 12-month period over four quarters, or you do it monthly or you do it all at once is a matter for consumers. It is an individual choice. I would have thought the party of individual choices would not have wanted to—

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Are monthly registrations done through direct debit? Is that the only way to pay them?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I am advised direct debit, yes.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Is that arrangement also available for three months and 12 months of automatic direct debit?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: My advice is yes.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: How many people have made arrangements for direct debits for their registration payments?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I am advised 186,000.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Is there any action in place when vehicle registration is not renewed? Is the risk that somebody might be driving a vehicle or even leaving it parked on the street an issue for Service SA? I understand it is illegal to have unregistered vehicles on the street. What is the remedy for trying to anticipate, or are people told through an automatic system that they have not renewed their registration and may be driving an unregistered vehicle?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: There are multiple ways people are reminded that their registration has expired. I start off by saying, first and foremost, it is the personal responsibility of the motor vehicle owner to ensure that their vehicle is registered at all times while it is on the road. They are sent reminders online and in the post.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: But there is no mechanism if that is ignored; there is nothing that Service SA do to follow up, is that what you are saying?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I just told you we send out reminders.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: They continually get reminders to pay, do they, or they say they no longer own it?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: That is a matter for the individual. Some people have vehicles they wish not to register; they just sit in the garage.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Yes, and some people drive unregistered vehicles. So the department does not have any estimate as to how many unregistered vehicles—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: It is a crime.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: How many unregistered vehicles are in South Australia? Is that a question you can answer?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: No.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: You cannot answer that question? How many vehicles do not reregister every year? There is a question for you.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I get the sense that the shadow minister is fishing for questions.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: No, I am not at all.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: There is some sort of privatisation agenda.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Not at all, no. I am very concerned—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I know you planned to close a whole series of Service SA centres when you were last in office.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I am very concerned about people.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I would like to answer the question. I get the sense that you are fishing for cost of service—

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: No. I am very concerned about people.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: —you are fishing for transaction numbers on the basis of an agenda to privatise Service SA.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I am not going to tolerate the minister suggesting—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: This is really concerning. I know that when you were last in office, you closed Service SA. We have extended the hours of operation. It seems to me that what you are fishing for is what else you can take and put online.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: No, my question is about the safety of people who use our roads.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Okay.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Our insurance system serves two purposes. It—

The CHAIR: Member for Unley, which point are you referring to in the budget lines, please? Just remind me.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Page 154, performance indicators, and there is a clear reference to transactions, and registration is a transaction of Service SA. Obviously there is an interest in people's safety—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: If you are interested in people's safety you would not have opposed our barring orders.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: —but registration comes with insurance.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: If you cared about people's safety, you would not have voted to stop the department having the ability to ban people from public transport services. I do not believe you care about people's personal safety.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: That is the interest there, and also the fact that it is a serious criminal offence.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: It is. It is a serious criminal offence to drive an unregistered vehicle.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I would be very concerned if that was not of interest to the department to try to monitor that and reduce the risk to the public.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I have just said to you, we send out reminder notices, we have legislated that it is a crime, we have passed laws, police can check vehicle registrations. If people are on the road and they are caught driving unregistered, there are serious consequences. People get reminders in the mail and they get reminders electronically, but what you are asking me to do is to account for people who move vehicles interstate and do not re-register them here. You are asking me to put a regulatory burden on the agency that serves no purpose.

You are fishing for information because you have no questions written, I am assuming, and you are just trying to expand on questions that are meaningless. I am sorry, but if you are asking me about our service performance, it is detailed here. If you want to know about how long it takes to get served in a Service SA centre, I will give you the answer. If you want to know about how many transactions are online, I will give you the answer, but this ridiculous—

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: That is in the budget. We have that covered. I am asking questions that are not in the budget. I am asking questions that are not in the budget paper. The other question I have for you is: through the registration process are you able to advise how many electric vehicles were registered last year for the first time, and how many are there in total?

The CHAIR: Member for Unley, correct me if I am wrong, but I heard you say you are asking questions which are not in the budget papers? That is what you are asking him?

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: The answers are not in the budget papers. There are plenty of questions arising from the budget papers.

The CHAIR: No. Let's make it very clear. You are asking questions about details which are not in the budget, so they are out order.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: No.

The CHAIR: No, you do not make the rulings.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I am asking questions about transactions that are referenced in the budget here.

The CHAIR: The transactions in the budget—

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Transactions. Registrations are transactions.

The CHAIR: First of all, can I suggest you do not raise your voice?

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I suggest you read the budget papers.

The CHAIR: I actually have them in front of me, and I make the rulings. You do not.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Yes, but they have to be correct.

The CHAIR: All my rulings are correct.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Member for Unley, you can still be named when we go back to parliament. You are behaving appallingly.

The CHAIR: We have not quite got to—

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I just do not understand what is so difficult about answering these questions. What is so difficult about answering any of these questions?

The CHAIR: Member for Unley, if I do make a ruling about being disorderly, I will suspend the chamber and it will be your time that gets used up. It is your choice.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: No, we do not record that for statistical purposes.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: The number of electric vehicles?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Fuel types of vehicles on the road—the system would require a major upgrade to be able to report that statistically. We do not have that with the current system we inherited.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Isn't that information on the EzyReg site? When you look up a car on EzyReg it tells you the colour.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: If you know the answer, why are you asking me?

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I am asking whether—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I am trying to explain it to you, but you keep interrupting because you have run out of questions.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I am not going to sit here and look up every registered vehicle on EzyReg. I don't have that much time.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: You have moved your omnibus questions in the middle of Service SA to take up time because you have no questions, and now you are asking me questions, and when I attempt to answer you just interject on me, so do you want me to answer, or do you just want to—

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Yes, please.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Okay. I have just given you the answer. So the fuel type data that you were asking us about is not something statistically we keep.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: How many staff work across all Service SA sites? I would like the FTE equivalent, please.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: It is 330.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Regarding the impact of opening centres on Saturdays, are you able to advise how many transactions happen on Saturdays throughout the system?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I am advised that the numbers have increased again this year. In the first year of operation we had 700 people come into centres on Saturdays. That is up to 1,100 this financial year.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: How many centres open on a Saturday?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Five.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: And 1,100 for 52 Saturdays?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Is that something that you think you can rationalise again?

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I am just doing the maths in my head. As I said to you earlier, I quite enjoy reading tenders and contracts, the *Gazette* and all this other sort of stuff. My mind works a bit differently.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I will give you the number. The total number of customers who visited Service SA centres on a Saturday—sorry, I may have misled you inadvertently. From the 6 May 2023, the opening hours of Service SA centres at Marion, Seaford Meadows, Prospect, Modbury and Elizabeth were extended to Saturday. For the period 1 July 2024 to 31 May 2025, 51,108 customers visited a Service SA centre on a Saturday, compared to 44,406 for the first period.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: We established earlier that online transactions were predominantly registrations. Can you advise what the situation is for drivers' licences? How many are online and how many are in person?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I think that would depend on what stage you are of the renewal of your photograph as well, so I will check with the Service SA staff. People like me who like to keep their photograph as long as possible—

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Yes, we have noticed that. They are even in black and white.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes, I try to recycle and save the planet. People who have come to the end of the period for their photograph, which needs to be renewed, must attend in person; others can renew online.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Are there statistics available for the difference per capita of local populations based on regional and city visits? I am just trying to establish whether there is a different culture, if you like, in different regions for using online services.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: There are some services we cannot offer online that need to be done in person, and there are some cohorts of people in certain industries who need to attend Service SA centres in person, so it is horses for courses. I do not think it is a cultural issue. I think it is an issue based on need and work type or what their arrangements are. If we could have all transactions online we would, but it is this parliament that passes laws that require people to attend Service SA centres in person.

There are security measures in place that require people to attend in person. There are some things that need to be done in person and some things we can do online. We would love everyone to be able to do everything online. That would be more convenient for everyone, especially in regional communities where they have to drive large distances to get to a Service SA centre. We do what we can, but I do not think it is a cultural issue.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I have one more question before we move off this topic. In your performance indicators, you have seen an increase in the percentage of calls answered in five minutes and the papers tell us:

The...Target reflects an increase in the complexity of enquiries as online services are increasingly used to resolve simple transactions.

Are inquiries more complex? Has that been identified as to why? Where is the complexity?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Everyone has complex issues with Service SA. There can be some very complex matters that they have to sort out. So, yes, I am sure there are, but it could be just a spike. It is random.

The issues via the telephone line that are complex are things like: add EzyReg account authorised person; add licence viewer; add plate incident; add plate(s); add vehicle defect; add/amend joint client; add/maintain auditable item; add/maintain delegation; add/maintain subrange cancellation; add/remove blocked word; add/remove boat trade plate; add/view CEDs for client; allocate boat trade plate; book licence test; cancel operator accreditation; cancel registration; change plate number/slogan; clear vehicle incident; delete registration concession; delete transaction; enter vehicle inspection details; issue new disability parking permit; issue overseas disability parking permit; issue notice serial numbers; issue permanent operator accreditation; issue permanent overseas licence holder; issue provisional licence; issue safer driver agreement licence; issue taxi plate lease; issue taxi plate licence; issue temporary operator accreditation; licence transfer; maintain driving permit; maintain licence suspension; maintain motor vehicle club member; maintain operator accreditation; maintain primary delegate; maintain test result; MDI applicant payment; MDI licence renewal payment; modify accreditation; modify remittance details; new accreditation; new body corporate client; new council client; new individual delegate; new inspection booking; new learner's permit; new owner boat reregistration; new owner reregistration; new person; new primary delegate; new temporary accreditation; new vehicle registration; pay inspection booking; PERMITS new permit application; PERMITS payment; PERMITS renew vehicle permit; process write-off; record a HIN; record an annual instalment payment; record interim boat code certificate; record outer area concession application; record new plate issue; register a new boat; reinstate registration on direct debit scheme; remove registration from direct debit scheme; renew accreditation; renew operator accreditation; replace accreditation; replace MDI licence; replace operator accreditation; replace permit/licence; reprint MDI licence renewal; restore registration onto direct debit scheme; reverse transaction; Service SA agency payment; surrender operator accreditation; suspend operator accreditation; transfer boat registration; transfer registration; and update licence expiry.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: So the specialty plates play a role in the complexity?

The CHAIR: Member for Unley, the time allocated for the examination of this line has expired. We will now go to the next one, Public Transport.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr J. Whelan, Chief Executive, Department for Infrastructure and Transport.

Ms E. Kokar, Executive Director, Transport Policy and Regulation, Department for Infrastructure and Transport.

Mr G. Jackson, Executive Director, People and Corporate Services, Department for Infrastructure and Transport.

Mr B. Seidel, Director, Financial and Procurement Services, Department for Infrastructure and Transport.

Mr Q. Swann, Acting Executive Director, South Australian Public Transport Authority.

Ms M. Spagnoletti, Deputy Director, Service Planning and Customer Experience, South Australian Public Transport Authority.

The CHAIR: Minister, would you like to introduce your advisers please?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: To my right is Quinton Swann. He is the Acting Executive Director, South Australian Public Transport Authority. Michelle Spagnoletti is the Deputy Director, Service Planning and Customer Experience, South Australian Public Transport Authority.

The CHAIR: No opening remarks, minister?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: No.

The CHAIR: Members of the opposition, who would like to take the call?

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 149. Is the minister able to give a breakdown for how many assaults on passengers and assaults on staff have occurred in the 2024-25 financial year?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I have no idea why that would concern anyone in the Liberal opposition after what you guys did yesterday in the Legislative Review Committee.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Can you answer the question please?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: How can you sit here with a straight face and ask me about your concern for assaults on public transport, when you moved—

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Point of order, sir: I have asked a specific question about the number of assaults.

The CHAIR: The minister will try to get back to the question, please.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: There were 220 assaults on public transport, which would have meant that, if my regulations I wanted passed, I could have banned 220 people potentially from being on public transport, offenders that members opposite cry for.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: How many of those assaults led to charges?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: That is a matter for South Australia Police.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: How many of them were referred to the police?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I think we refer as many as we can to police, depending on when we can catch them, but we want to be able to ban people, but you will not let us.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: So how many were actually caught?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I have to say the hypocrisy—

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: It is not hypocrisy, it is—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: —with this line of questioning is staggering.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: This goes to questions of bus security.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Your leader in the upper house moved, and your former deputy leader in the lower house seconded the resolution—

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Point of order, sir: I have asked a specific question about numbers—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I will give you numbers. A vote in the Legislative Review Committee yesterday.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: —and I would appreciate it if the minister would answer that question.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I just think the opposition here is lost at sea.

The CHAIR: I am more than happy for the minister to provide a fulsome answer, but can he also address the other parts of the question.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: As the member would know, police are the only ones who have the discretion to charge people.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I understand that, yes. They usually make charges after inquiries that are brought to their attention, often after they are investigated.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Police decide who to charge, not the South Australian public transport services. What we want to be able to do is decide who we can ban, and the opposition is stopping us from banning people.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: The other question I have—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: You need to stop interrupting me, because you are not letting me answer the questions. I know you do not like the fact—

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: You are not answering the questions, you are just using the opportunity—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I know you do not like the fact that the opposition are soft on—

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: You are just using the opportunity—

The CHAIR: The member for Unley!

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: They are more interested in offenders' civil liberties than they are in the public who catch public transport. But I am not going to let you shy away from your responsibilities towards what all of you support; all of you support this.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Point of order, sir: I have asked a question on numbers and I am not getting that answer.

The CHAIR: The minister has also already responded—perhaps you were not listening at the time—that the discretion to charge and take action is by the police. It is not for the department. That should be in a question for the police minister and the police commissioner, because they take the action.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: So, this is page 150, and it refers to fare evasion. Do you have estimates of what fare evasion may have been in the last financial year?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I just want to give a snapshot to the chamber of the type of behaviour we are trying to stop, and the opposition will not let us.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Point of order, sir: my question was about fare evasion.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I am about to do that now. I am about to tell you now. So on buses there were 589 examples of fare evasion for which I would like to issue temporary bans for

fare evasion. The opposition voted to stop that. On trains, there were 67 cases of fare evasion, for which I would like to issue bans, yet the opposition blocked me from issuing those bans. There were 36 people on trams who were guilty of fare evading, who I would like to ban from public transport, but the opposition will not let me. It is disorderly behaviour.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Are those numbers for the whole year or one day?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Can I finish my answer, please? I know you do not like the answer, but I am going to give it to you.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: It is not a fulsome answer.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: It is a fulsome answer. Abuse of another passenger: on buses, 274. Those people should have been banned. The opposition will not let me because they are worried about the offenders' civil liberties. On trains, 152 people were abusing other passengers on our trains. I want to ban them, but the opposition will not let me. On trams, there were 46 cases of people abusing other passengers, who I want to ban and the opposition will not let me.

Abuse of staff on buses: there were 142 cases, therefore there were 142 instances where we would have issued a ban but the opposition will not allow us. On trains, there were 15 examples of abuse of staff for which we would have issued bans, but the opposition will not allow us. On trams, there were six. We would have issued bans on those people, but the opposition will not allow us. On graffiti and vandalism—

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Point of order: I think the minister is straying from the substance of the question, which is the numbers in regard to patronage and fare evaders.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: You cannot silence this, mate. Stand by your votes.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I have a supplementary question—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: You guys are on the side of offenders—

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: —about those fare evaders.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: —and we are on the side of the public.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Are you able to—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: On buses, there were 90 examples of people who were caught graffitiing and vandalising. We would like to issue bans; members opposite are stopping us from issuing those bans. On trains, there were 72 examples of graffiti and vandalism for which we would like to ban those people, but members of the opposition support the vandals. On our trams, there were 10 examples of people guilty of graffiti and vandalism, who we would like to ban, and members opposite support those offenders' rights of not being banned.

In terms of smoking on public transport, there were 68 occasions of people reported smoking on public transport, on buses. We would like to ban them, but members opposite support their right to offend on our buses. On our trains, there were 86 examples of people smoking illegally on our trains. We want to ban them, but members opposite are on the side of the people breaking the rules. On our trams, there were 21 examples of people who were smoking on our trams illegally. We want to ban them, and members opposite are on the side of the offenders.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Mr Chair, my question was about fare evaders. I think the minister has certainly drifted into other areas.

The CHAIR: The minister did address fare evasion. He also was actually providing more information about an earlier question.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I have not asked for more information.

The CHAIR: Let me finish. Do not interrupt me. He also has provided additional information about an earlier question regarding offences on public transport. He was providing you that information. You asked a question, you opened the door; he has the right to close it.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I have some more answers. What I have read out are complaints made by the public to us, people who want something done about this behaviour. From our assessments, currently patronage is about 2.4 per cent lower than in May of last year but still 9.9 per cent down based on pre-COVID numbers. In terms of the numbers that we have for fare evasion, in July of 2024-25, there were 1,011 formal cautions, 59 expiation notices and 12 prosecutions. In August, there were 841 formal cautions, 66 expiation notices and 13 prosecutions. In October, there were 574 formal cautions, 51 expiation notices and six prosecutions.

In November, there were 600 formal cautions, 56 expiation notices and seven prosecutions. In December, there were 314 formal cautions, 24 expiation notices and 12 prosecutions. In January, there were 460 formal cautions, 79 expiation notices and 38 prosecutions. In February, there were 516 formal cautions, 91 expiation notices, 15 prosecutions. In March, there were 357 formal cautions, 43 expiation notices, 15 prosecutions. In April, there were 342 formal cautions, 22 expiation notices issued and 16 prosecutions.

What we want in our reforms is the ability: with formal cautions, if the SA Transport officer issuing the formal caution deems it necessary, to be able to issue a temporary ban; with the expiation notices to issue a ban; and with the prosecutions potentially permanent bans. Do you know who is standing in our way? The Liberal opposition who, in the upper house with the Independents, are moving a disallowance motion to get themselves and the Greens and the other Independents to vote against this to stop us from having these people banned, these people who have been prosecuted, who have expiation offences or have been issued formal cautions for disorderly, unruly, antisocial behaviour on our public transport systems. They want them to have their civil liberties.

Anyone else who wants to catch a bus, train or tram and just be able to get to work unhindered, unmolested, uninterfered with has us on their side. But the Liberals are on the side of these people here who are the offenders, and I think it is disgraceful.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: You mentioned there were 36 fare evasions on trams very early, I think immediately after I asked this question. Was that an annual figure? Now you have all those other figures in front of you.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: No. You misheard me. That was the public reports.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: No, before you had that in front of you.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes, there were 36 examples on trams of fare evasions from the public making reports to us, people ringing up.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: 36 all year?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: For the whole year? 36?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: You are not listening to me. These are public reports, people ringing in, dobbing someone in.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Okay, well, the question is: how many people were caught, of the fare evasions on trams?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Within these numbers are the fare evasions and the expiation notices.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I am specifically asking for trams because I reckon I see 36 every time I use them.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I do not have that breakdown.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Can you bring that back?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I will have a look.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: You will have a look, if you can find them or you will have a look if you can bring them back?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I will look if I can bring it back.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Alright, thank you. Does the government's announcement to make the Mount Barker Keoride trial permanent indicate a level of confidence in the model, and if so what other locations are being investigated to roll out similar versions of the model more widely? Would a model like this be considered for some other rural settings such as Mount Gambier, for example?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I like the idea of a Keoride. The problem I think with public transport in Mount Gambier is the mayor in the City of Mount Gambier—well, I will talk about Keoride first and the trial in Mount Barker that has now been made permanent. It is very successful because there has been record investment by the government in the Adelaide Hills on transport services. We have a lot more bus fleets in there, so the Keoride is feeding the terminal and it is helping people who might not be able to get a car park get to the terminal, so it works quite well.

There were two trials conducted by the previous government on the Keoride model in the Barossa Valley, which did not work. So I do not think you can use this as a cookie cutter example, where you picked this up and put it in a regional setting and make it work. So I will talk about Mount Gambier, for example. In Mount Gambier, we do not have a partner in the council who is prepared to make the investments necessary or put in the incentives necessary to get people onto public transport. It is not their fault, it is just that there is so much parking available in Mount Gambier. Regional people generally drive. The bus services are generally available for people who are either immobile and unable to use a vehicle, or are from very low socio-economic circumstances. So it is not a traditional public transport mass transit system.

It is fair to say that I think the current contract in Mount Gambier is insufficient for the needs there, but the idea that if we changed it, there would be a mass movement onto public transport is probably not accurate. I think most people in regional areas drive to work. I would love for them to catch buses. It would be cheaper for them and we could provide the service, but I suspect that in regional areas there is a different cohort looking for it to work.

In Mount Barker, what we have is people who are going to work on buses and who do not want to leave their cars in the car park there, and they are using Keoride and it is working quite well. In the Barossa, it failed. Whether it can be successful or not elsewhere, I do not know. I did issue a regional public transport review as part of a previous budget where we spent \$100,000 a year, which is indexed, to undertake a review into the opportunities to better integrate public transport services in regional areas, because what we were left with—and to be entirely frank, what was there previously, even with the previous Labor government—was insufficient to meet the needs of regional communities. I accept that.

It is very difficult to make the incentive big enough for regional people to get them onto public transport unless they are a particular cohort. We are looking at it and we are analysing each region in particular. I know that elected members in some of these areas really think bus services will work; I fear they will not, but we will look at a system. I do like the idea of the on-demand services; I think they work exceptionally well and can work well. Gawler would be a good example.

The CHAIR: Gawler pioneered it.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Gawler are pioneers, yes. There could be many other examples, especially potentially in Ngadjuri—who knows? Who knows where these trials will expand into in regional areas, but I am very keen on them.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Is there any money in the budget for them to be expanded?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: No. What we have done is turn this trial in Mount Barker into a permanent funding solution, so that is quite a considerable allocation of money. We will deal with that and then we will move on with the study and find out where we put it next.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: In possible future budgets; is that what you are suggesting?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: We will wait and see.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Okay. In relation to access cabs, have there been any unintended consequences that have resulted from the government's decision to scrap the preferred access cab drivers?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: What did you say? To scrap—

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: To scrap the preferred access cab drivers.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes. It gets rid of fraud. It stops potential illegal behaviour. What is occurring is some very disturbing behaviour that has been uncovered by my agency and the central booking service of coercion: in some cases, allegedly, coercion to the point of being close to criminal.

I think the abuse by some in the access industry of the vulnerable people who access those services is reprehensible. Banning preferencing is a way of (a) stopping that behaviour and (b) making sure that access cab jobs are distributed on the basis of not who you can coerce to preference you but on the closest possible available taxi. There are some access cabs that are earning hundreds of thousands of dollars in government subsidies alone. This behaviour shows clear fraud, where lifting fees are being charged when the client is not even leaving the vehicle and where there are burner phones being used to make false bookings.

I understand there are a number of drivers who will face accreditation challenges with the new standards that we have put in place through the legislative reforms. I am very keen for the government, through our passenger standards board, to enforce the letter of the law in full. That goes as far as me writing to all drivers, which I have done recently, informing them that unless their vehicles are available through the prescribed hours they may not be entitled to the \$100,000 buyback scheme.

There are some drivers who are doing as little as a few hours a day in these taxis, despite being required by law to not reject work issued by the central booking service. There are a number of concerns that I have about the access industry, the way they conduct themselves. There are a vast majority of drivers who do absolutely the right thing.

I had Diana Laidlaw come see me at a Playford Trust event and she gave me one of the many examples of the fraud and abuse that is occurring. There was one young disabled girl who caught an access cab during the prescribed hours to a concert and then after the concert was unable to get home. That young girl had to be taken to a hospital by an ambulance where she had to wait until morning to get an access cab to come and get her.

So we have these two opposing concepts that some access cab drivers will have you believe that there is insufficient work for them to make any money, yet we get story after story after story of passengers unable to get an access cab because demand is so high. Those two statements cannot stand alongside each other. What we know is that there are a number of access cab drivers who are making considerable, vast amounts of money from government subsidies alone and are not working any other hours.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: What happens in this situation: I just refer to my late mother's situation. She was not using an access cab but she had the taxi driver's number and she knew the taxi driver and she felt safe with the taxi driver. He would wait for her when she had short appointments. Through this shake-up, is there still an ability for people with disabilities to have that same relationship?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Absolutely. I am glad you brought up the example of your late mother. It is absolutely right, there are some people in our community who know someone they trust, they are vulnerable, so it is important that they can maintain a relationship with individual drivers. There are a few things that I want to check out before we approve those. One is that there is no coercion in place; that is, it is the passenger who wants the preferencing, not the other way round. I have had examples come to my office—

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: What if it is their carer who wants the preference because the passenger is maybe not able to make that decision themselves?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: We will take all of these on a case-by-case basis. There are language barriers for some people, which I am very cognisant of. There are some neurodivergent

people who require familiarity, which I am very cognisant of, and there are other people who, for social and cultural reasons, require familiarity. I am up for that.

What I am not up for is people being called and told, 'You are going shopping today at 3 o'clock, whether you want to or not,' then turning up and using a burner phone making the booking preferencing themselves and telling the poor, unsuspecting individual, 'This is the time you can go shopping.' What we are seeing are examples of people being coerced into taxis not at a time of their choosing but at a time of the driver's choosing.

I make this warning to those drivers right now: I know who they are. We are making complaints and investigations and I will be using every extent of the Public Transport Act to enforce my full authority in this matter because they are taking advantage of the most vulnerable people in our community and this government will not let it stand.

People like your late mother need to feel safe in taxis. I want my daughters to be safe in taxis. I want everyone to feel safe and secure in a taxi. What I do not want is what I am hearing about people being told when they are going out and about because it suits the driver at that time rather than the other way round. This is an on-demand service, not the other way round. Drivers do not get to choose when they do the jobs—the patrons do. That abuse has to stop, and I am going to make it stop.

The example of that young boy from Queensland who came down for surgery—when a truck had to take that person to the hospital—was the straw that broke the camel's back for me. The idea that there was not one access cab available to do that job is ridiculous; of course there were. They just did not want to do it because it was small; it was not a very large job, so it did not interest them. That has to stop. If you refuse a job because it is not big enough the same penalties that apply to every other taxi in the fleet about time off the air will apply to access cabs. If there is abuse, you will be prosecuted.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: For the driver only, not the cab itself?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: The driver, yes. If you are a taxi, and you are given a job, and you refuse it because it is too small, the operator has the ability to take you off the air for a period of time. That did not apply to access cabs. We have now made that apply. We are instituting the same rules that apply to the general taxi fleet onto access cabs. I want access cab drivers to know we will reward the good drivers and punish the bad ones, because this has to stop.

It is something that has perplexed government after government. I am not saying I have the solution to it, but I am not having people work a couple of hours, make \$400 and then park their access cab in the driveway. That is not what they have signed up to do. If they want to do that, they can drive a taxi. An access cab is required by law to be operational between certain prescribed hours, and they should be doing it.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I refer to the same budget paper, same volume, same page. How much of each Adelaide Oval ticket is subsidised by the department's football express fund?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Our arrangement is with Adelaide Oval Stadium Management Authority and the two AFL teams, and they partially offset the operational cost of the service. What is the individual subsidy in the ticket? I do not know how much of the operational profits the SMA use or whether they push all those costs onto the clubs. These are questions for the SMA. There is a considerable expense in providing that service each and every year. How the clubs apportion that and cost recover it is a matter for them with the SMA.

So I do not know, but buying a beer and chips at the football is not cheap. I suspect there is plenty of profit in there for the SMA and the clubs, but I do not know how much extra they charge in their season tickets and I do not know how they compare with an MCG ticket or a Marvel Stadium ticket, or a ticket at the SCG or the new Perth stadium. So I cannot give you a comparison or analysis other than to say that it is partially offset by the clubs and the Stadium Management Authority. How much of that they charge back to their members through ticket sales is something you will have to ask them. I do not know.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: How much then does it cost the department annually?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I am reluctant to make our contribution public in our negotiations with the AFL and the SMA, so you will excuse me if I decline to give you a fulsome answer, other than to say that the service is fully funded. There are no overruns or overcosts. The Stadium Management Authority through its ticket sales, beverage sales and corporate hospitality makes a contribution, and we fully fund this service but, in the interests of the taxpayer, I am reluctant to make that number public.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Is it more or less than the \$8.7 million which is the figure you have budgeted for free travel for students?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Honestly, I am not interested in giving the SMA a bigger free kick than they already have.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I just ask any question and all you can say is no.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Sorry?

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I can ask any question, and all you can say is no, if you do not want to answer it.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: That is right. That is how it works.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: There are no consequences to asking the question. Are you able to explain why in the bus fleet replacement program there is no information available for the total cost of the program or the estimated completion?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: BusTech went into administration, and they were unable to provide us with their services. The history here, and correct me if I am wrong, was a tender was conducted by the previous Labor government, where Scania was successful. That tender was then halted and a new tender was conducted again. BusTech were the successful subcontractor. BusTech provided local coach building services here. They went into administration and stopped providing the state with buses. We have gone back to our provider Scania, and Scania are now providing buses again.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: On Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 147, what is the projected uptake of the student Metrocard? I was looking at some history. I think when you were still wearing short pants, minister, the Bannon government announced free public transport to—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes, I was one of the beneficiaries of that.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Were you really?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes. I remember it. I used to have my bus pass and did not need it anymore.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I am sure you were not one of the people who were using it to go to the eastern suburbs and break into people's homes, as was alleged at the time, which caused a change in the hours from 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to daytime hours only. According to a news article from 18 October 1991, Frank Blevins, then Treasurer, said the state government would be introducing a means test because it had blown out so much in costs, and about three-quarters of the state's students would no longer be able to get free transport. It was restricted to students on School Card after that. What guarantees do you have that this is a permanent program and that there will not be any means testing or other rolling back of this commitment that is made just before an election?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I am not sure the state has the ability to means test. We do not have access to income tax receipts, so I am not sure how the transport agency would enforce a means test.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: The method that was used at the time was students who received the School Card were the only students who had access to the free transport.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: No, we are not issuing free transport, we are issuing—

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Yes, I know you are introducing a discount of 25¢ fares.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: That is right. It is a cost-of-living measure. I hope the uptake is huge. I hope that we exceed what we have budgeted and it costs us more. That would be a good thing. Getting kids onto public transport means parents can save time and money in the morning. This is a good initiative. I think it has been overwhelmingly popular and supported by the public, and mums and dads are saving \$18.60 a month.

We think it is going to cost us \$20 million over the forward estimates, but the other chance is that you get more people taking up the offer and you could see revenue actually increase. Whether or not we can make up the difference, I am not quite sure, but I think it is a good outcome. I am not interested in means testing it. I do not think South Australian children are poorly behaved and they are going to wreak a crime wave across eastern Adelaide, but luckily you represent southern Adelaide. I am not sure why—

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: We are lumped in with the eastern suburbs? We are very different, but I have often heard the term 'Unley' in eastern Adelaide—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Last time I checked, you are south of the GPO, not east.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: —or the 'eastern suburbs of Unley'.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: East of what, Goodwood?

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: East of Goodwood, yes, quite possibly.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes, but you are south of the GPO.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: But that is not my term. That is what you hear in the public, 'The leafy suburbs of Unley,' but I know parts of your electorate that are very leafy, the plane trees down Burbridge Road.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Actually, I will give you a stat that you will be very happy with. Of the two polling booths the Liberal Party won at the last federal election across the entire metropolitan Adelaide, Unley Park was one of them.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I was on that all day.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I am telling you, you are a wasted resource. Do you know what the other booth was? The other booth the Liberal Party won in metropolitan Adelaide was One Tree Hill.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Getting back to the estimates process, minister, will the tickets work by tapping on and tapping off? How do you measure the use?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: You will have to follow me here. It cannot be done with tap on with your credit card yet. You will need your Adelaide Metrocard.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Yes, I understand that.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: With your Adelaide Metrocard, the discount will only be on the 28-day purchase, so not for a single-day use. You have to purchase the 28-day card.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Yes, I understand that, but do you have to tap that card on?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: When you get off again or just on?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Not off, just on.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Is that data then used to evaluate the success or otherwise of the program, or when students are using it?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Are they using it to get to school or are they using it on weekends?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Ultimately, I would like to be able to calculate some sort of system where we can go full digital, have an app and allow the phone app to charge—

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: It does in Victoria. In Victoria, it is all on the phone.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes, I think it is a very good system. I am looking at all that, but right now you need to tap on with the Adelaide Metrocard. Yes, we can measure the data and measure its success and/or failure.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: There is another question I have on that. We are aware that regional school students, particularly private school students, are charged up to \$1,200 a year for bus services. Does the government have any plans to extend the support for regional students who use particularly SA or LinkSA buses? Is the government considering extending, or will they actually extend the program so that those students can also benefit from this major cost-saving initiative that you have described?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: That is something we are considering as part of our regional review.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Finally on this, were you briefed about the first version of this with the free public transport, prior to formulating the policy, about what happened in 1989, 1990 and 1991?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I was an active member of Young Labor at the time when the Bannon government—

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: No, but were you briefed as minister before announcing this?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I was an active member of Young Labor when the Bannon government made free public transport an issue in 1981, or 1985; I cannot remember when it was.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: It was a 1989 election commitment.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: That is right.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: But by the budget of 1991, it was restricted.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: So in 1989, yes, I remember it and I remember moving a motion in Young Labor at South Terrace condemning the then Treasurer for attempting to change the election commitment.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: With all those comrades?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: We did not use terminology like 'comrades'. That was other groupings. We used terms like 'mate', 'digger', and first names. We did not engage in that type of language. But yes, I remember it, so I did not need to be briefed about any potential social consequences. But times are different.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Is there anything that has been done to mitigate any risk of a rogue—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I do not think South Australian children are dangerous.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: So what was the budget for security guard wages or contracts for the last financial year? This is in reference to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 145.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: When you say 'security guards', what do you mean?

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: People who are either on stations—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Are you talking about the Wilson's contract, or are you talking about security guards engaged by the contractors who are standing outside projects?

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: No, I am talking about those specifically to protect people on public transport.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Keolis Downer still manages security for our trains, so I do not have that budget. That will come back in at a later stage.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Do you have a budget for the coming financial year for that?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: What I will do is I will undertake to get that to you.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: This is the same page of the budget paper: do you have total boarding numbers for the Port Dock station since its opening?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: It is 70,000 since August.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: That is over what period of time?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Since August.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Since August last year, August 2024?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Are you able to advise how many buses in the Metro fleet will be zero emissions by 2030?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: No, but as many as possible, I hope.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Has that been interrupted by the administration of the bus contractor?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: It has made it very complex and difficult given the inability to provide us with buses.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: What progress has been made on finding another manufacturer?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: That is Scania's responsibility. That is who the contract is with. I am assured that we can get sufficient electric buses to try to meet a maximum level of penetration. My biggest concern, as I said earlier, is not the electric buses: it is the infrastructure that comes along with them. It is the charging facilities that I am concerned about. It is the logistics of charging. Refuelling is very easy to do. Charging, however, is a completely different kettle of fish.

The first thing is we are trying to understand exactly what locations have existing infrastructure and spare capacity in nearby substations, working with my other agency to work out the most opportune times to charge and then trying to calculate to make sure we are not interfering with timetabling. That is the main concern that I have about electric buses and how fast we can roll them out. You can buy 1,000 electric buses tomorrow. You need the infrastructure to charge them, and you need to understand exactly how long it takes to charge and at what rate we are charging them. That is the part we are working through as we speak.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Will the buses, with the new manufacturer, still be made in South Australia?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I am not sure that Scania has a manufacturing plant in South Australia. The contract we inherited from the former Liberal government was that the chassis, engines and most of the smarts were manufactured abroad and the only part of the bus that was made in South Australia was some of the coach lining. I cannot improve on that because I have a contract I inherited—

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: What about Australia?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Again, the chassis and engines that the former government signed up to in their contract are all foreign. I would have to tear up that contract.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: They are not made here. Chassis and engines are not made here and never have been for buses, not for a very long time, but a lot of the work was done here.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I do not think it would make sense to buy ongoing large-scale European buses that have to be converted or Asian buses that have to be converted. You would need to manufacture them—

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: They make them right-hand drive before they send them over.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: But we have a contract for chassis and engines. What do I do with that contract?

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: That is the question.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I do not think it is feasible to import buses. We have a contract for the chassis. We need to do the coach building here. But like you said, there are no buses made from scratch in Australia, so you are asking me a question I cannot fulfil.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Alright. What is the annual budget for service and repairs of the bus fleet?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: As part of the operational contracts we have with the private operators of the bus services, within that is a maintenance payment. It is impossible to strip that out. They are liable for the maintenance on our buses.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: That is the full responsibility of the contractors?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes, that is the advice I have.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Are there any operating costs that are with the state government for the bus system?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: We pay some additional security costs.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: At the depots?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: These are security costs outside the customer service offices that are required and the ticket inspectors that they do, which we top up because of the government's plan to try to make our bus, trains and trams safer. We add additional security services.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: So not at the depots for overnight storage?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: No, we are talking about—

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: This is for passengers, is it?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Passengers, yes.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: How many of the government-owned buses remain without the protective driver screens?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: We have a program to replace our bus screens. So far, as of May, we have fitted 173 government-owned buses with the new bus security screens. We are doing that now over two locations—sorry, today's number is 200, not 173—and we should be completed for the bus screens by end of 2026.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Sorry?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: End of 2026.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: The end of 26. How many buses will that be in total?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: 940.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: How many of those buses are close to the end of their life that this will be fitted to?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: One twenty-fifth.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: One twenty-fifth. There is a reference to the Outer Harbor electrification project. What will be achieved in 2025-26 on that project?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: What page is that?

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Well, I am advised that it is page 145.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Is that the Adelaide metropolitan rail fleet decarbonisation planning?

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I would say so.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: There is no program to electrify the Outer Harbor line.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: So that is not on the government agenda?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: No.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Is that a misunderstanding of the budget?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: No, I love all my children equally and I do want to decarbonise our entire rail fleet. I suppose the work we are doing is a lot of planning work to have a look at a couple of things. The first thing we are looking at is with AUKUS; 5,000 employees need to work at—

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Let's hope.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Sorry?

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Let's hope it is still there for us with Mr Trump.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: No, I think one way or another Australia is building submarines. AUKUS having 5,000 employees attempting to drive to Outer Harbor will not work. So the question for us is: can we electrify that line to that destination? There are some key requirements. You cannot have a public transport system go through the facility because of security issues. So, that would mean we are doing planning about costs, substations, looking at it all. We are also looking at the Belair line.

We constantly do work across all of our network to see how we can decarbonise. There is also rail corridor preservation work that we are doing to make sure we maintain those rail corridors where we can operate rail lines if needed to get workers to and from Osborne. So it is a big body of work. We have preserved corridors down south and up north as well to try to make sure we can get those corridors there. There is no specific budget to electrify the Outer Harbor line or the Belair line, but we are always looking.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: So I guess it would be premature for me to ask when it will be finished.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes, it would be premature for you to ask when it will be finished given that it is not funded.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Is there an aspirational date? I mean, I think we are going to be building them by 2032, aren't we?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: The rail line is already there.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Yes, the rail line will be there. So we have either no change in 2032 or we have electrification but we have not been able to establish that today.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Governments make planning changes. This is something that would need to be funded with the commonwealth government. We have a lot on our plate right now. We have a very large aspiration for infrastructure and that is taking up a lot of our capacity. We are watching our metrics very, very closely and we are interested in making sure that we can meet those metrics and we do not want to take on more than we can chew. So let's just finish the north-south corridor first, get the nonstop South Road done, build the Women's and Children's Hospital, finish the infrastructure projects over the next four years, and then we work to go on to the next cohort.

The CHAIR: On that note, the allotted time having expired I declare the examination of the public transport portfolio completed. The examination for the proposed payments for the Department for Infrastructure and Transport and Administered Items for the Department for Infrastructure and Transport are referred to committee B. I would like to thank the minister, opposition spokesperson, the advisers to the minister and all the members of the committee for their participation today.

At 15:16 the committee adjourned to Monday 23 June 2025 at 09:00.