

## HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday 6 August 2002

### ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

**Acting Chairman:**  
The Hon. R.B. Such

**Members:**

Ms F.E. Bedford  
Mrs L.R. Breuer  
Mr M.K. Brindal  
Ms V. Ciccarello  
Mrs J. Hall  
Mr G. Scalzi

*The Committee met at 11 a.m.*

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Department of Education and Children's Services  
and Department of Employment, Further Education,  
Science and Small Business, \$1 559 449 000  
Administered Items for Department of Employment,  
Further Education, Science and Small Business,  
\$120 780 000

**Witness:**

The Hon. S.W. Key, Minister for Social Justice and  
Minister for Youth.

**Departmental Advisers:**

Ms J. Taylor, Executive Director, Office of Employment,  
Office for Youth.  
Mr S. Blight, Coordinating Director, Office for Youth.  
Mr A. Story, Chief of Staff, Minister for Youth.  
Mr J. Rundle, Ministerial Liaison, Youth.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** I will outline the general operating procedures for the estimates committees. The estimates committees are a relatively informal procedure and as such there is no need to stand to ask or answer questions. The committee will determine an approximate time for the consideration of proposed payments to facilitate the change-over of departmental advisers. I ask the minister and lead speaker for the opposition whether they have agreed on a timetable for today's proceedings.

**Mr BRINDAL:** Yes.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** Changes to committee membership will be notified as they occur. Members should ensure that 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 of the House of Assembly by no later than Friday 23 August.

I propose to allow both the minister and the lead speaker for the opposition to make a brief opening statement. There will be a flexible approach to giving the call for asking questions, based on about three questions per member alternating each side. Supplementary questions will be the exception rather than the rule. A member who is not part of the committee may, at the discretion of the chair, ask a question. Questions must be based on lines of expenditure in the budget papers and must be identifiable or referenced. The

practice I have adopted is that members need not provide the fine detail of reference to the line of expenditure, unless they stray from our focus this morning, in which case I will draw them back.

Members unable to complete their questions during proceedings may submit them as questions on notice for inclusion in the assembly *Notice Paper*. There is no formal facility for the tabling of documents before the committee. However, documents can be supplied to the chair for distribution to the committee. Incorporation of material in *Hansard* is permitted on the same basis as applies in the house, that is, that it is purely statistical and limited to one page in length. All questions are to be directed to the minister and not to her advisers. The minister may refer questions to advisers for a response. I also advise that some freedom will be allowed for television coverage by allowing a short period of filming from the northern gallery.

I declare the proposed payments open for examination and refer members to appendix D, page 2 in the Budget Statement and part 7, pages 7.1 to 7.45, volume 2 of the Portfolio Statements. I invite the minister to make a brief opening statement if she wishes.

**The Hon. S.W. KEY:** This government recognises the unique and important contribution made by young people to the South Australian community and is committed to supporting and promoting those contributions by providing young people with opportunities for personal empowerment and community participation. To emphasise this commitment the new Office for Youth has been established as a separate portfolio to provide strategic advice to government for the development and implementation of policy and programs in relation to issues affecting young people. The new office will offer an integrated service under the banner of youth empowerment and will focus on providing expert state leadership on youth policy and youth programs. The office will work collaboratively with all levels of government, the private sector and other agencies in the community in providing high level leadership and service to its customers.

The government will extend its support to sector agencies such as the Youth Affairs Council of South Australia, the Multicultural Communities Council and the Migrant Resource Centre and will continue to strengthen partnerships with local government in expanding youth advisory committees in local communities. The new Office for Youth agenda will reflect the aims and objectives of the Social Inclusion Unit in pursuing the state government's social inclusion policy. Programs and policies will be premised on building young people's self-esteem, self confidence and sense of purpose. Through these policies and actions we seek to contribute to the government's objective of increasing retention rates in education and re-engaging young people in formal education and community activities. The office will provide a range of initiatives designed to:

- provide opportunities for active citizenship and the development of young people's awareness of their rights and responsibilities to the wider community;
- develop young people's skills and confidence to become actively involved in their local community;
- promote community recognition of young people as a resource;
- promote the positive image of young Australians;
- continue to attract young people to education and training and prevent societal alienation;
- provide young South Australians with comprehensive information resources;

- encourage young people to have a say in decision making processes on boards and committees;
- prepare an action plan which will provide a coordinated whole of government response to young people through the development of a South Australian youth action plan.

To underpin this process a holistic approach to youth issues will be the introduction of a whole of government South Australian youth action plan. This framework for young people will bring together key elements of employment and training, health, housing, community services, the arts, recreation and juvenile justice in collaboration with the non-government sector. It is my intent that this youth action plan targets key youth issues in South Australia and the range of factors contributing to them.

In turn, government responses, both existing and needed, can be identified and included in the plan. With this overview, new priorities and strategies for action will be identified in partnership with young people, government and non-government agencies. It is important to recognise that these responses will often extend beyond the domain of one portfolio area, that is, they need a whole of government response. For example, when tackling the insidious issue of youth suicide, the government intends to consider, among other things, responses to contributing factors such as the need for safe family environments; supportive schools; youth development opportunities; health and mental health education; additional help for special needs; access to mental health services; and access to drug and alcohol services. A critical consideration would also be supporting and enabling the community and non-government agencies to respond.

The youth action plan will identify these types of considerations for a variety of pressing youth issues and, at the same time, bring key players together to work together to address government responses. The plan will certainly assist to develop effective and informative whole of government responses to achieve better outcomes for young people. Paramount in all the work undertaken by the Office of Youth will be the implementation of the processes which engage and involve young people in shaping and responding to its work. To this end the office will build in consultative mechanisms, such as the Ministerial Council for Young South Australians, Youth Plus and Active8 Youth Voice. In addition, this government will explore consultative processes such as those arising from the expansion of youth advisory committees in local government areas.

Through the implementation of the strategies I have outlined today the government will implement measures that will provide a vehicle for young people in this state to take an active role in the decisions that affect their lives across a number of levels. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of the previous minister for youth—in fact, we have two previous ministers for youth here today. I think that emphasises their interest in the area. I know also that the acting chairman is another activist in this area. I have been to a number of functions and activities where the member for Hartley has been in attendance, so I think the opposition is very well represented. I also acknowledge the work that has been done by the members for Giles, Florey and Norwood in this area. They also have been very active in the youth portfolio area.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** Does the lead for the opposition wish to make a statement?

**Mr BRINDAL:** Yes, thank you. On behalf of my colleagues, youth and myself, I thank the minister for her gracious comments. I do not think that the minister realises

that the Hon. Bob Such is a previous Liberal minister for youth.

**The Hon. S.W. KEY:** I did acknowledge that.

**Mr BRINDAL:** Sorry. I was very interested in the minister's opening statement. I think I read the earliest draft, and I do not think it has altered much. I do not say that lightly because, if I were in charge of picking a Labor cabinet, I would not choose anyone other than the current minister to be Minister for Youth. If that is the kiss of death, I am sorry, but I believe it. Similarly, the Hon. Joan Hall, the Hon. Bob Such and I have every confidence in the minister's departmental officers. We think they are an exceptionally able group of people. I think the direction in which the minister intends to take the portfolio and which she has indicated in both her opening statement and since becoming minister is one that will find no real opposition anywhere in the parliament or in South Australia.

The only cautionary note I wish to engender is one which the minister herself raised. It is a matter of emphasis. Some years ago, it was my belief that the youth portfolio was too directed towards social justice. I am an advocate for social justice, but within the human services portfolio and within the minister's own social justice portfolio. The youth budget is limited which is why during the time of the former government the youth budget was directed—I think started by you, Mr Acting Chairman—more towards youth empowerment, youth self-confidence and self-esteem, and sense of purpose.

What the opposition will be watching in the next four years is not so much where the government is going—we think that where it is going is right—but we will be safeguarding against the minister's not deviating too much and getting captured by the extreme left that is known to lurk within her party and will take down the safety net. Again, I do not detract from the need for a safety net, but whether it is in this portfolio is another matter.

I am pleased that the minister indicates some willingness to take up the youth suicide issue. It is one on which parliament must have a little more courage, not just the youth minister but the entire parliament. A lot of it is about emergent sexuality issues and homogeneity in the country, and some of it is about the education services. In protecting our children, it was drawn to my attention when we were doing the youth web site that, if you looked up the word 'analytical' through the Department of Children's Services, you could not actually get an answer because 'analytical' has a rude word as part of it.

*Ms Ciccarello interjecting:*

**Mr BRINDAL:** 'Anal' is the word. The honourable member is looking perplexed.

**Ms CICCARELLO:** I never would have made that association.

**Mr BRINDAL:** Neither would most people, which is why the teachers pointed out to me that the filters are bizarre. If emergent sexuality, as is said by most writers, is an issue, it is something with which the parliament has to come to grips. If children or young people in the country have those concerns and cannot get any legitimate access to alternative points of view, then there is a problem; and the sooner this parliament, journalists, ministers and everyone starts talking about it for what it is the better. I think we have the highest degree of youth suicide anywhere in the world, and we have to address it. I so commend the minister for that. Finally, I am pleased that the minister has kept the same ministerial liaison officer that I had. If he serves her half as well as he served me, she will be very lucky indeed. My first question is: can

the minister explain why a cut of \$448 000 has been made to youth services?

**The Hon. S.W. KEY:** I am wondering whether the member for Unley could amplify from where he is getting that figure. It is not a figure of which I am aware.

**Mr BRINDAL:** My analysis of the budget papers is that youth services has been cut and there has been a reallocation of \$846 000 made to policy advice and support within the Education, Training and Employment portfolio.

**The Hon. S.W. KEY:** That is not the information I have. Now that we have a separate Office for Youth, a whole lot of processes have been put in place to separate, particularly after estimates, the office from employment and training so that it comes directly under the auspices of the Social Justice portfolio. There has been a reduction in resources which the honourable member identified. There has been a reduction in the base allocation for youth, which may be what the honourable member is referring to.

The net allocation for 2002-03 is represented by an increase. This is due to the increase of \$300 000; that is from \$1.2 million to \$1.5 million for the third year. That is mainly around the Active8 pilot, a pilot which is well known to the shadow minister.

**Mr BRINDAL:** One could use words such as 'stunningly successful'.

**The Hon. S.W. KEY:** I would be more than happy to use those words. I think that is probably an area on which the shadow minister and I agree.

**Mr BRINDAL:** Could the minister detail the areas where there have been specific cuts? Every government has an absolute right to allocate its budget. The minister, privately, may share my concerns. It is relatively easy to allocate one or two per cent off huge budgets, but when you get to one such as the youth budget it is very difficult. There is not much there; there is certainly no fat. I would like to know the extent of the cuts. I would argue with the Treasurer on behalf of the minister that they are unreasonable and unfair and that they victimise young people.

**The Hon. S.W. KEY:** The only cut is one that has gone across all portfolios to take into consideration the Treasurer's announced concern with the budget that we have inherited. So, we are trying to make sure that, where financial cuts have been made, we maximise the whole of government approach, which I know the previous government looked at. So, I understand the member for Unley's comments about having the Office for Youth not swallowed up by a huge department such as the Department of Human Services. I made very clear that, as with the Status of Women portfolio, I would expect the Office of Youth to continue to have its own identity. Particularly on issues such as youth suicide that you have mentioned, we have an opportunity to maximise the resources across the portfolios, particularly in DHS. Further, with the advent of the Social Inclusion Unit and with one of the priorities to look at suicide, particularly youth suicide, we can probably maximise the programs in that area. Like the member for Unley, I see that as being a priority area.

**Mr BRINDAL:** In respect of youth empowerment, the minister would know that at the end of last year I passed the operation of what was then called the South Australian Youth Parliament to a group of young people to run, and they are currently involved in their first program. Will the minister give me some information about how this is going? Is she happy with the results so far? How many participants in the program will there be this year? More importantly, it was a big risk to take it off the YMCA and give it to young people

to run; there will probably be some glitches with it this year. I would like the minister to give some assurance that one swallow does not make a summer and that she will persist in some way. It is very important that young people be given a chance to run things for themselves. Perhaps this year it will not be the roaring success it has been in the past, but I would like the minister's thoughts on the continuation of the program being run by young people.

**The Hon. S.W. KEY:** In particular, you are interested in the South Australian youth legislative program, which was known as the Youth Parliament. As minister the honourable member was the initiator of a youth organisation called Beyond Participation Incorporated which, as he would know, has been commissioned to deliver the youth legislature program in 2002. I think that, as has been the practice in the past, councils across South Australia have been invited to host regional teams in particular. So, there is a good network between local government in particular and also the schools and the program itself. At the moment, 14 councils are participating in the program, with an additional two councils providing a support role for the regional teams. A deed of variation has been arranged to extend the 2002 program, and that will expire on 1 December this year.

A management committee has been established to guide and steer the program for this year. Until I actually receive a report from Beyond Participation and we also do an acquittal of that program, I do not really want to make any pronouncements on that. The program is yet to come, so that is an exciting thing that we are waiting for. Once we have had that report and have gone through the acquittal, that will be the time when we look at what options exist for the future of that program. The parliamentary sitting days scheduled to take place at Parliament House are from 30 September to 4 October. After that program is finished we will have that review and look at the options for the future.

**Mr BRINDAL:** As a supplementary question: I accept what you said about not making a final assessment until you have a report; that is sensible. But you are not unhappy with the concept of young people running a program for young people? The gist of what concerns me is that this is a first opportunity for people under 25 to run a program for people under 25, and if possible I want your endorsement of that concept.

**The Hon. S.W. KEY:** From a philosophical position I endorse people having control of their own programs and destiny in a whole lot of areas but, as far as the program is concerned, the proof will be when it is actually being conducted. I understand that there have been some issues around securing the sitting days for the Youth Parliament; because the number of days we are sitting in parliament have been increased so significantly it has been very difficult to find a window of opportunity to have the youth legislative program. So, that is one of the reasons why it has been put off until that time. As I said, I would prefer to let the process happen, and then we can assess whether or not it has been successful and go through a financial acquittal process and look at the options. That is the process I am looking at. Obviously, on a philosophical basis I endorse people having control of their own destiny, so to speak.

**Mr BRINDAL:** I promised the minister that I would ask this question. It was a deal made before she won government, so it is long standing. Some time ago, when Youth Plus, which is the ministerial advisory council of young South Australians, was set up, the minister asked me to assure her that it would not become a semi-retirement home for

frustrated Young Liberals, and I assured her it would not be. I therefore assure the minister that when I left office there was not one card carrying Young Liberal there. I would like to know from the minister how many Young Labor and Young Democrats were on the ministerial council when I left office. If the minister is not sure of the answer, I will give it to her.

**The Hon. S.W. KEY:** As I understand it, in January some letters went out to some of the participants in Youth Plus, and their time on the Youth Plus advisory committee was confirmed by the minister. It seemed to me that it would be fairly mean spirited on my part, particularly understanding the excitement of the younger members of Youth Plus—the teenagers—if I then said, ‘No, you can’t be on the ministerial advisory committee, because I didn’t choose you.’ That was one of the reasons why no changes were made. The other reason was that it seemed to me on looking at the credentials of the young people that, given that they indicated an interest through the public registration process and/or had been put forward as likely youth representatives, not to mention the chair, who was an excellent choice, I saw no reason to change the committee in any way. Already I am very impressed with the work that has been done by that committee and the level of advice that I have received.

My only criticism of the committee is that it sounds like a brand of yogurt, and I have asked Youth Plus to perhaps reconsider its name and come up with a title that is a bit less yogurt-like. So, I have suggested that, while very early on I reinforced the fact that I thought that the choices that had been made by the previous minister were excellent and that I would be living up to those choices, my only criticism was that perhaps it could come up with an alternative name. As far as the political membership is concerned, I have not bothered to find out its complexion. I have taken the previous minister’s word on this when he said that he has come up with a balanced group of young people and that he considered their various skills and attributes in putting this committee together. So, I have not bothered to find that out, and I am not really interested.

**Mr BRINDAL:** There are three young Labor members and one young Democrat, and I have not found a young Liberal who has applied who is good enough to be on the council, so perhaps the minister can sort out that problem in the round of applications.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** I would like to ask a question from the chair. Whilst, no doubt, there have been improvements in some services and facilities for young people, in my area there are fewer services and fewer facilities. We used to have youth workers available 24 hours a day. I know they are not provided by your department, but I wonder whether your agency does an audit of services and facilities for young people across the state and, if not, whether you would consider such an audit to provide a benchmark so that we can see whether young people throughout the state are getting an improvement in services and facilities, and generally in regard to resources.

**The Hon. S.W. KEY:** Thankyou, Mr Acting Chairman, for the question. As far as this portfolio is concerned, an ongoing audit is conducted through the Office for Youth that is connected to the advisory committees and local government that I talked about in my opening address. It is an initiative of the previous government that we have taken on and it uses a network that is already in place throughout South Australia by virtue of the infrastructure of the councils. However, in relation to the Department of Human Services

I am not sure whether services for young people are audited. I believe that it happens but, whether it happens in the way that the Office for Youth carries out its audit, I am not sure. I am more than happy to provide that information through the Department of Human Services portfolio, and I would also be quite happy to talk to you about the perceived lack of services in the electorate that you represent.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** It is not just in my electorate. In recent years there has been a decline in regard to services such as 24 hour street workers and drop-in centres. As we know, young people do not have much political muscle, and there is a lot of rhetoric, in my view, about young people. I would not wish to see older people lose their senior citizens’ facilities, but there is no comparable provision for young people. I think it is time that the heat was turned up on the whole community—and I am not blaming your department or agency—to make sure that young people get a fair go.

**Mr BRINDAL:** Most councils think that the answer is to have a skate park.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** It is a very serious issue and we hear a lot of words, but I think that young people get frustrated at the decline in facilities in many areas. There are fewer drop-in centres and fewer places where they can hang out. I know that in the southern area some facilities have been closed down and that the youth workers now tend to work basic office hours. I highlight that as something that the minister might like to pursue.

**The Hon. S.W. KEY:** I respond by saying that the basic point is that the Office for Youth, by providing some services and having the Active8 program in particular as well as the advisory committees, is emphasising the empowerment and involvement of young people in decision-making. I do not want to take away from the point that you are making, Mr Acting Chairman, but I think that part of the challenge of being the Minister for Youth—and, as I said, there are four of us in the chamber—is to try to ensure that other departments take up the challenge of providing services for young people. So, I think that is the role that I have as an advocate for youth as well as the minister. Within the Department of Human Services, in particular, there is a number of workers who focus on young people and on those services but, as I said, I am not sure what sort of accountability or audit process takes place to ensure that there is an equitable distribution of those services.

The last point that I want to make is that there is now a Minister for the Southern Suburbs and there will also be an Office for the Southern Suburbs, as I understand it, and that seems to be a good opportunity to try to maximise and coordinate the services that are available in that area. The Minister for the Southern Suburbs has already made it quite clear that he intends to advocate for the southern suburbs. I think that focus will be helpful in working through the points that you have made, Mr Acting Chairman. I am reminded that the youth policy framework provides the opportunity that I was talking about to take a whole of government approach. Certainly, I am quite happy to take up the specific issues that the chair has raised, but the Office for Youth has a slightly different responsibility. However, that does not take away from the need.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** I appreciate that you are a catalyst for reform, but I think sometimes you need to put the wood on your colleagues as well as on local government. However, I have made the point that it is disappointing to hear about young people being our future and our present

when a lot of it is hollow rhetoric; and, when I see young people not being able to access services, I get quite angry. However, I have had my say.

**The Hon. S.W. KEY:** I think in the short time that we have left we should try to deal with opposition questions and see how we go before answering government questions.

**Mrs HALL:** Can the minister outline to the committee the long-term commitment of the government to implement some of the recommendations of the South Australian Drugs Summit, particularly recommendations concerning Aboriginal youth and drug use?

**The Hon. S.W. KEY:** As the honourable member will know, the recommendations from the Drugs Summit are currently being looked at. I understand that the Social Inclusion Unit in particular is spending considerable time working out the implementation of those recommendations and will be calling on the various relevant departments—mainly my colleague Lea Stevens and myself, I would say—to work out how we can ensure that we do not have a lot of recommendations that are good rhetoric but do not make changes. The Drugs Summit has been highly successful but we need to follow up: I think that is always the challenge.

There are a number of areas that the Office for Youth is looking at. I have already mentioned the youth advisory committees, of which there are 55, and we are looking at strengthening those committees to ensure that young people between the ages of 12 years and 25 years will have an opportunity to be actively involved in those committees. I am pleased to say that 33 of those committees are in rural and regional areas, and a lot of work has been done by the Office for Youth with regard to indigenous young people. Wherever possible, that connection is being made. The member for Unley, when he was minister, was very keen to ensure that, particularly in the rural and remote areas where services and infrastructure are not so readily available, we have an affirmative action program for indigenous young people.

While noting the problems of the Office for Youth not being swallowed up by the Department of Human Services and other big departments, considerable work has been done already in connecting the Aboriginal and indigenous services from DHS with different programs such as the status of women and programs in the youth area. I have also asked Youth Plus to look at this issue and give me advice on how it thinks we can better service the entire youth community, not just the ones who are tuned in—the usual suspects, I suppose—who are activists as young people. That is the program that we are currently looking at.

**Mrs HALL:** The minister mentioned Youth Plus, and I have to make a confession (although I used to think of this with some pride), given her concern about the name. As she would know, prior to the member for Unley becoming youth minister, I used to hold that position, and the name Youth Plus came from a number of weeks of contemplating a name for a youth council to a minister, and it struck me one morning under the shower, after I had resolved that, whilst it needed a name that reflected its advisory capacity, the plus component was, I hoped, to be the resources of mentors, whether they be within agencies or individuals. I recall trying it out on a number of young people and the yoghurt similarity was not pointed out to me at any stage. That is the background of the name.

The minister has already mentioned that there are 33 advisory committees in regional areas, so can she outline what she sees as the government's support for at risk young people in rural areas and the priorities that the government is

putting on that? Can the minister outline her view of what can be achieved for young people in remote and regional areas in terms of objectives?

**The Hon. S.W. KEY:** First, I probably need to say, as has already been acknowledged, that this is the second to smallest budget in government—it is only a bit larger than the budget of the Office for the Status of Women—and that has been a fact for a long time, so it is not peculiar to the Labor government. I must also say that this is one of those areas where I have a whole of government advocacy role, and we need to make sure that we follow up through the different agencies.

It would be dear to the heart of most people in this chamber to acknowledge that young people would be best served by having some dignity and self-respect through being able to access training, education and employment. One of the challenges for all of us is that we need to make sure that, just because a person lives in a rural or remote area, they do not miss out on access to training and education and, ultimately, if possible, work in the region that they want to stay in, which may be a country region. That is part of the link with the other portfolios, and I might say that is a very healthy link that has been maintained, despite the fact that the Rann Labor government believes that the Office for Youth needs to be a separate department and needs to be recognised as that.

In the more traditional areas of looking at youth at risk, a number of programs have been looked at. I have mentioned Active8, which is a very positive program which runs throughout the community. In recently visiting both the Cavan and Magill youth detention centres, I know that the young people were extremely excited about the programs connected with Active8. They are the sort of programs that develop self-confidence and dignity, and we really need to look at them. The other challenge is to deliver on what, in my view, are really basic entitlements—education, training and the ability to get a worthwhile job.

There is a real problem for people, particularly in remote and rural areas, in getting access to some services, and I know that there has been a big concentration on that through the regional development portfolio. My colleague the Hon. Terry Roberts is looking at connecting the regional development area with the youth advisory committees and also services for youth, so that again we do not have regional development just for a particular group of people, that we look at regional development as including the development of our youth, as well as everyone else in the area. Those connections are starting to be made, and some of them were already there, but we are trying to enhance them so that we can maximise the resources. As I said earlier, part of my role as Minister for Youth is to be an advocate for the whole of government concentration on young people.

One other scheme I will mention is that, through the Youth Conservation Corps, we have created some different opportunities for young people, particularly as many young people are very concerned about environmental issues. In conjunction with the apprenticeship and traineeship area, this presents an opportunity for people to break out of their situation or the area they are in and have access to some new opportunities. We are looking at a whole range of programs but, as far as the actual Office for Youth is concerned, those areas are limited to the programs that have been very successful in the past, and some of the new ones that we are looking at, probably under the Active8 umbrella, in particular.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** I accept that the role of the minister's office is one of advocacy. South Australia and Australia generally have one of the highest rates of teenage pregnancy and abortion in the developed world, and I pass no moral judgment about that. However, the major agencies do not seem to have come to grips with what has happened in Scandinavia and western Europe, which have quite sophisticated sex education programs, which are broader than the physiological perspective, and they have a far lower rate of teenage pregnancy and abortion. In her role as advocate, can the minister's office pursue that issue with some of the major agencies, because this notion that ignorance is an asset does not reflect very highly on our society. I think it is quite the opposite, yet we seem to have stubborn resistance by some of the bigger agencies to the view that enlightenment is a good thing and that knowledge and understanding are desirable, rather than ignorance. The minister may wish to put that to her colleagues.

**The Hon. S.W. KEY:** I was privileged recently to give out certificates to youth workers who, through Shine, had introduced a new aspect to becoming a youth worker, which was by way of a sexuality and sex education aspect to the training. I had the opportunity to meet the first crop of graduates some weeks ago. Some came from Corrections, some from the Department of Human Services and some of them were attached to councils, so it was a wide cross-section of people from government and the non-government area. One of the reasons why this course had been piloted was the statistics that the Acting Chairman mentioned, which are quite alarming.

The other point I would make is that part of the background to the Social Inclusion Unit being established was the work that had been pioneered by the Social Exclusion Unit in the United Kingdom, and one of the big areas of concern was teenage pregnancy. I know that considerable work was done with young people and it had some very good results as far as people understanding their sexuality. They were also given the opportunity to attend sex education and health education to learn about issues such as safe sex. I am reminded also that within the youth portfolio we have the baby simulator program—and the member for Norwood, the member for Unley and I particularly remember the launching of the baby simulator program and the various babies that we had for that short time. I am still pining for mine—

**Ms BEDFORD:** A simulated baby!

**The Hon. S.W. KEY:** A simulated baby, yes—not a real one. When I was conducting a recent committee meeting with some of the homeless youth groups it was interesting that one of these babies was crying in the background and we had to work out how to stop this baby from crying—

**Ms BEDFORD:** Yoghurt.

**The Hon. S.W. KEY:** Yes, yoghurt would probably be helpful. The baby was the one that I had the privilege of holding at the baby simulator program, so I got to meet the baby again—and the previous minister may wish to know that it had been well taken care of. I think the three of us had our photographs taken with our babies—

**Mr BRINDAL:** They probably have psychological problems given the number of parents they have had!

**The Hon. S.W. KEY:** That's right. This is one of the very positive programs within the youth portfolio. Certainly the response I have had from the school sector is that this has been a very useful educative tool with regard to child care and child rearing. I am also reminded of a couple of schools that I have visited recently where one of the challenges for us

will be to try to ensure that young women who are still at high school and who have babies have the opportunity to continue their schooling. This is one of the challenges that we have taken up both in the Office for the Status of Women and in the youth portfolio.

Just in closing, I point out that one of the challenges will be to try to have quality child care available at high schools so that we can encourage these young women to continue their schooling in a supportive environment. There are some great examples of that at Gepps Cross High School. The campaign is on for a child-care centre at that school as well as at other schools.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** Scandinavia and Germany have very low teenage pregnancies and very low teenage abortion rates. I think it is time that we moved into the modern era and mainstreamed sex education and stopped pandering to people who want to keep our young people ignorant.

**Mrs HALL:** Will the minister advise the committee whether the government intends to continue the youth leadership grants and the youth awards showcase and, if the answer to that is yes, what funds have been allocated towards each program?

**The Hon. S.W. KEY:** Yes, the youth awards showcase is certainly alive and well, and I am hoping that we can build onto the excellent program that has been available in the past. Paradise Community Services has received triennial funding totalling some \$105 000. I have attended at least two of these community service programs and the awards are seen as being very successful. A number of sponsors have also supported the youth awards showcase: there were eight sponsored categories, three finalists per category, including the South Australian Government Young Person of the Year Award. Planning is also under way to look at 2003 and evaluate where we go with this particular program.

This has been a win-win program which really values the contribution of young people in a whole range of areas. Through the support of sponsors it actually spreads the word even further about what young people can do. Having met some of the sponsors, it is really encouraging to see the positive view that they have about young people and, to a certain extent, turns the tide against some of the negative views. The leadership grants will be continued basically in the same way as they have in the past. This is another good example of, if they are good programs, let us continue them. They will be given on a rolling basis rather than on the quarterly basis as they have been in the past. That is probably the only change. We will try to ensure that we respond on an ongoing basis.

**Mr SCALZI:** Will the minister say how the government aims to improve the capacity of agencies involved with young people and how it aims to encourage partnerships amongst communities, including those from culturally diverse backgrounds, to focus on supporting our youth?

**The Hon. S.W. KEY:** There are a number of different ways, as I said, with the small budget that we have to ensure that we do have an integrated strategy. I have mentioned them previously, but we have statewide initiatives including the youth advisory committee, youth in community grants and also the youth network grants. That is the way in which we are trying to ensure that we cast the widest net possible with the limited resources. One of the grants at which we looked recently was for the Multicultural Communities Council, the Youth Affairs Council and the Migrant Resource Centre. They will be looking at a whole program for young people.

I am pleased to say that that grant was released recently. There had been some controversy around how that particular program would work, but it certainly seems to me that, having met with the three parties in one room and speaking with them, there is a lot of commitment now between the Multicultural Communities Council, the Migrant Resource Centre and the Youth Affairs Council to look at those issues. I am advised by the multicultural communities and also by the department that there has been an initiative to set up a multicultural youth committee. When I was at a recent women's leadership course under the multicultural banner, I was really excited to hear that the next initiative will be this multicultural youth advisory committee.

I thank the member for Hartley for his support; I certainly see him at many of these functions and celebrations. It will be quite exciting to see the multicultural communities get together to talk about strategies for promoting youth in the appropriate cultural way. As I mentioned earlier in response to a question from the member for Morialta, at the moment a number of moves are also being looked at to have an identity for indigenous young people. That is happening with the support of minister Roberts and also some of the non-government organisations in that area. So, I feel very positive about the future.

As I said, there is also the Youth Action Plan, and that is being coordinated from the Office of Youth. I think I am really echoing the previous minister's words, but this is probably a good opportunity to say that this is a very impressive group of people who are very committed to empowering and advancing youth.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** I believe the member for Unley has his omnibus questions ready.

**Mr BRINDAL:** Yes, thank you. My questions are:

1. Minister, with respect to Active8, the opposition acknowledges your continuing support of the program. However, we notice that you will be spending less per participant on each young person this year, while increasing the numbers. We seek reassurance that you are not substituting quality for quantity.

2. Can you give us details as to the cost efficiencies and whether cost efficiency has contributed to the establishment of additional programs? What is the nature of the additional programs?

3. For Output Class 5 under 'targets', dot point 2, for 2002-03 on page 7.21 there is a suggestion that the delivery models for youth programs within the community are expected to result in increased youth participation in community initiatives. The opposition applauds this. Can the minister expand on these new and improved delivery models and how they will enable youth participation?

4. What specific youth policies and services is the government delivering in regional and rural areas? The minister may wish to contact some of her colleagues about that.

5. How much money is to be allocated to regional and rural areas compared with metropolitan South Australia?

6. The Liberal government made a strong commitment to providing support for young people in regional and rural areas. This included \$50 000 to support National Youth Week and \$1.5 million for the Active for Life strategy, which I believe is the responsibility of another minister, and funding of the Country Athlete awards. Is the government committed to the continuation of these programs? Have other programs being initiated?

7. Will the minister advise the committee which initiatives contained within the government's compact with the member for Hammond have been allocated to this portfolio? How much will they each cost? Will these costs be met by the new and existing funding?

8. With respect to the youth portfolio, will the minister identify which outputs and measures have been merged or redefined and the dollar values of these changes?

9. Will the minister advise the committee how many of the 600 jobs to be cut from the Public Service will be lost within the youth portfolio?

**The Hon. S.W. KEY:** But there are none to be cut, so I probably do not need to answer that one.

**Mr BRINDAL:** So you just answered it then. My questions continue:

10. Will the minister advise the committee how many reviews have been undertaken, or are scheduled to take place, within the portfolio since the government has been elected? To which matters do these reviews pertain?

**The Hon. S.W. KEY:** There are none, so I do not think we need to answer that one.

**Mr BRINDAL:** Thank you. I continue:

11. For all departments and agencies reporting to the minister, what is the share of the \$322 million underspending in 2001-02 claimed by the government? I hope you can answer that one and say none.

12. Additionally, what are the details of each proposal and project underspent and the details of any carryover expenditure of 2002-03 which has been approved?

13. Will the minister advise the committee of the number of positions attracting a total employment cost of \$100 000 or more within all departments and agencies reporting to the minister as at 30 June 2002 and estimates for—

**The Hon. S.W. KEY:** I do not think we have any.

**Mr BRINDAL:** I thought you had one. I am surprised.

**The Hon. S.W. KEY:** No, I do not believe we have any.

**Mr BRINDAL:** We obviously did not pay your head of department enough money.

**The Hon. S.W. KEY:** I am happy to change that answer, if that is the case, but perhaps if you could take it that we do not believe that we have anyone in that category.

**Mr BRINDAL:** The final question is:

14. For each year 2002-03, 2003-04, 2004-05 and 2005-06, from all departments and agencies reporting to the minister, what is the share of the total \$967 million savings strategy announced by the government and what are the details for each savings strategy?

**The Hon. S.W. KEY:** I will just clarify that last question. When you say 'all departments', I presume you are talking only about the Office for Youth, which is the only portfolio under examination.

**Mr BRINDAL:** The answer is yes, but I hope that the minister will be asked that question with respect to all departments and agencies. That is why it is an omnibus question.

**The Hon. S.W. KEY:** Certainly.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** We now move to consideration of the Minister for Education and Children's Services.

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**Witness:**

The Hon. P.L. White, Minister for Education and Children's Services.

**Additional Departmental Advisers:**

Mr B. Treloar, Executive Director, Corporate Services  
 Ms J. Riedstra, Director, Infrastructure, Corporate Services  
 Mr D. Travers, Executive Director, Executive Services  
 Ms H. Kolbe, Deputy Chief Executive, Department for Children's Services  
 Ms S. Page, Executive Director, Student and Professional Services

**Membership:**

Ms Chapman substituted for Mr Brindal  
 Ms Penfold substituted for Mrs Hall  
 The Hon. M.R. Buckley substituted for Mr Scalzi

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** Before inviting the minister to make a brief statement, if she wishes, and before she introduces her advisers I congratulate her on the birth of James and point out that the minister may have a potential conflict of interest in this next hour, having two youngsters who come within the age range of Children's Services. Minister, we have opened the lines, which are generic, and for this hour, according to the schedule, we are focusing on Children's Services until lunch. Does the minister wish to make a brief statement?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** I do. I am proud to be associated with a government that has brought down a budget which, in its first budget four months after coming to office, has honoured its commitment to make education a major priority in this state. The 2002-03 state budget handed down last month provides funding for all our election commitments in a comprehensive four year plan to revitalise public education and children's services in South Australia. I might add that some of our election commitments have been exceeded in the funding in this year's budget.

This government's key focus is to make sure that every child progresses well in their education. We are taking a very student focused approach in the decisions we make and in our directions for education. If we are to make a difference for our young people we need to focus on their differing needs and ensure we give schools the support to help meet those needs because there are very few things more important than ensuring that all young people have the opportunity to gain a sound education. It is important to their futures, to our futures and to the future of the state.

The 2002-03 state budget allows the government to deliver its clear and long held plan to improve public education in South Australia. We have set education on a clear path for the next four years. This government has demonstrated that it is true to its word. We have made some tough decisions in other areas across government to put education at the top of our agenda. The government has provided an extra \$156 million for the former education, training and employment portfolio than did the previous year's budget. The majority of this extra funding will go towards the new education and children's services portfolio, for which I am responsible as minister. The extra investment includes \$93 million of new initiatives in 2002-03. On top of this is \$42 million of additional expenditure that this current Labor government added to education in the last financial year, that is, the first four months after taking office, in order to plug the black hole left to us by the former Liberal government.

The 2002-03 state budget caters for the different levels of education. Education is a life long journey. However, to bring about that desire for a life of learning we need to plant the

seeds early in a young person's life. We need to set them on a sound educational footing—one that makes them understand and value the importance of education. With data showing high levels of absenteeism in some of our schools, and large numbers of children failing to complete school to year 12, it is clear we have some work to do. Our budget is designed to provide the support to schools, preschools, teachers and leaders to be able to better cater for all the varied needs of our young.

In particular, this budget provides a very strong focus on the early years of education. It is vital we get it right early on if we are to give every child the chance to progress well in their education. The needs of the primary sector are well known to South Australians. That sector's Hands Up for Primary Campaign last year highlighted a raft of challenges facing the sector. This state budget shows that Labor has listened. We have responded with a \$42.94 million package of support over four years, plus Labor has provided extra for primary in the new education enterprise agreement that has just been finalised—most quickly after Labor came to office, in contrast to the years of industrial dispute that went on under the previous administration.

From the start of the next school year there will be up to an extra 160 teachers in reception to year two classes. These teachers will enable schools to focus on reducing class size, particularly in schools with a high level of disadvantage amongst their students. This will allow a heightened focus on literacy and numeracy to ensure we have a greater chance of helping every child to progress well in their education. The funding is there. Now in the spirit of cohesion that will be a hallmark of this government we are working with union and principal representatives to turn this promise into reality and to deploy these extra teachers in the most effective way possible.

The budget provides extra school service officers to help teachers address learning difficulties in the classroom, particularly in the early years. There is more funding for speech pathology and behaviour management services also in the early years. This is in addition to funding provided in the health budget for those crucial early years in speech pathology and the like. Up to an extra 14 primary school counsellors' salaries will be provided to give up to 30 schools access to this valuable resource. The new enterprise agreement provides an increase in leadership and administration time for schools and preschools, plus extra SSO hours for every primary school.

All this together signals an unmistakable commitment to the needs of primary. It shows that this government is keen to make a difference early in a child's life. The benefits of such a focus will be seen for many years to come as coming cohorts of reception students gradually move through school. It is pointless to go about planning for education without recognising that the people who make it happen are teachers and the people who work in our schools and pre-schools are a vital cog in this government's plans for education reform. It is their professionalism and dedication that will make it happen.

Unfortunately, there has been little recognition given in the past to the contribution of our teachers and to the status of teaching. Their conditions have become more difficult with less certainty in their employment and protracted delays in having their wage increases finalised. This government works differently. We have quickly secured the support of teachers for a new enterprise agreement that delivers a 12 per cent pay rise over 27 months. We are working towards a commitment



of creating more permanent jobs for our teachers with a working party in place and we are supporting the work of teachers in the classroom through this state budget, with a focus on smaller class sizes in the early years, more school counsellors, greater support services to assist the work of teachers and a focus on professional development.

We have set aside \$4 million over four years to expand professional development opportunities that are targeted to the needs of students. We are spending a further \$4 million over four years to introduce information technology training that will ensure teachers are prepared for the rapid growth in technology use. We will be offering study grants to country based students who want to train as teachers and return to the country for their first appointment. Also we have introduced a new scheme of country incentives through the new enterprise agreement to ensure country schools can attract quality teachers. I intend to do all in my power as minister to make this government's appreciation and value in our teaching force known. Without them our efforts to make a difference for young people in South Australia are in vain.

The budget recognises the unique needs of secondary schools in dealing with the day-to-day changes faced by young adults and teens. It provides funding to support schools in addressing a number of areas that are common to all secondary schools and in some cases primary schools as well. These include student attendance and the retention of young people in school. While getting it right in the early years is important, it is also crucial that we get it right at the other end of school.

We want our young people to leave school after completing year 12 with a clear vision for their future as well as the educational footing to help them reach their goals. Crucial to this is regular attendance at school and preferably at least five years of secondary schooling. However, too many young people are opting out of school early. Labor has expressed its desire to improve student retention and attendance rates and we are now supporting that vision with a package of measures in this budget. The funding will support schools in addressing these vital areas as well as supporting our initiative to raise the school leaving age.

Legislation has been passed in parliament to bring about the new school leaving age. Up to \$8 million annually will accompany the initiative, providing secondary schools with extra funds to tailor learning programs for the students. This is more than three times the funding committed in our election promises before coming to office, in which we promised to add \$2.5 million annually. So, the \$28 million package over four years is a significant improvement, even on our election promise. These need to be complimentary if we are to have an impact on young people and ensure they stay focused and engaged in their education. A commitment of \$2 million over four years will support our plans to improve student attendance. We now have a task force, which is looking at the best ways to do this and ensure schools have adequate support to tackle the problem.

The maintenance and improvement of school facilities forms a major part of the overall budget picture for 2002-03. We have committed \$100 million to a program of works that will help bring our schools and preschools up to benchmark standards. The government has aligned its capital works and maintenance programs against asset management plans, which outline the improvements needed in sites. In light of changing priorities, we have reviewed the 2002-03 capital program committed to by the former government. As a result we have had to make tough decisions for the coming year

about which projects will proceed and which projects will wait. Some schools will be delighted and some will not, but at the end of the day we have come up with a plan that targets those schools and preschools with the most urgent requirements.

We will not be funding projects haphazardly into the future and without justification. We will begin \$42.7 million worth of new school and preschool capital works projects this year compared with the \$33.9 million total value of new works promised by the previous government. We have also committed new funds to tackle the most urgent maintenance priorities in our schools. This includes an extra \$8 million over four years for school maintenance projects and a \$17 million program over three years for urgent and targeted projects such as classroom and toilet upgrades. This is a significant increase in funding reflecting the priorities of the new government and responding to the cry from schools for more spending on maintenance.

We are also paying attention to school security, particularly in light of two severe arson attacks on our schools earlier this year. We will undertake an audit of existing security measures to find areas where security needs to be tightened with a commitment of \$4 million over the next four years. We have kept our promise to educate young people about the risks associated with gambling, and we have allocated \$800 000 over the next four years to introduce educational curriculum around gambling. The program will give our young people the knowledge, skills and strategies to make healthy and informed choices about gambling, with an emphasis on prevention and intervention. We have also set aside \$100 000 every two years to introduce an awards program that encourages authors of children's software to design and develop software that can be used in teaching in our schools. These additional programs will provide benefits for our schools and students.

This government is committed to helping every South Australian child progress at a good rate through their education. The future of our state rests with the investment we make today in our young people, and strong educational goals will be the driver for this government's investment in education. That concludes my opening statement.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** Does the lead for the opposition wish to make a brief statement?

**Ms CHAPMAN:** Thank you. First, I congratulate the minister for her recent maternity and birth of James. I also congratulate her in undertaking the important responsibility in respect of this portfolio. When I took over the shadow ministry, I was reminded of the wise words of the late Dame Roma Mitchell, with which I expect the minister would have no quarrel. Dame Roma Mitchell said:

Education is the key word to equality in national citizenship. Education will play a large part in the elimination of disease; education will lead to mutual understanding and trust; education will enable all Australians to partake in running the affairs of the nation.

I am reminded of those words when undertaking this task. I do not doubt for one moment that there is a commitment of the minister and the government toward education as a priority in the state. I do not doubt that we both support that education should be in that position. I expect it is from there that we are vastly different in how that should be undertaken.

I record the fact that I respect it is the minister's entitlement to determine how the chequebook funds are distributed, in association with negotiations between the Treasurer and cabinet. But I confirm that there are aspects in relation to this budget which fall short of undertaking and achieving the

goals. I place on the record, for continuity in this matter, the minister's repeated complaint under the previous administration that the annual budgets comprised less than 25 per cent of the total budget of the state. Those complaints are recorded in *Hansard*. I note for that purpose that, notwithstanding her complaint last year of 23.5 per cent, the budget achieved this year is still only 24 per cent.

The Labor government's commitment to education is represented by a small total increase, and I suggest that the funding increase, which is insufficient to cover CPI over the next four years, will provide a \$34 million deficit on existing projects, let alone the initiatives proposed by the government—which it is perfectly entitled to do, but we expected adequate provision to be made for them.

There is no specific additional funding for new projects, including the extra 160 primary teachers, the extra 14 counsellors, the country service scheme for teachers, and so on. Therefore, it is not surprising that we have seen a direct cut in services and capital works, which is clearly inevitable. The detailed reduction in the capital works is as yet undisclosed. The budget documents reveal a reduction in total capital works of over \$26 million in this financial year, together with a deferment of significant capital works from April 2002 in the previous financial year. They had been budgeted for and the government during the election campaign promised it would honour those commitments. The criteria for the review of those capital works programs and evaluation for the abandonment of some projects have not been disclosed, either in the budget or indeed to those who have had programs axed, deferred or reduced.

In relation to my first question, I start with a matter that covers preschool education. By the COAG agreement, child care is funded by the commonwealth government. Families receive means tested childcare assistance and pay a gap fee to attend community-based or private childcare centres for long day care. The state taxpayer-funded preschools provide long day care by providing extended hours, meals, and so on, without full cost recovery. It is a state government expense and at a cost to other education priorities. How will the government ensure that the state taxpayer-funded preschools do not become overburdened with families seeking long day care, and that children in metropolitan Adelaide are not diverted from the federally funded childcare sector to the state government funded preschool sector?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** First, I will address the honourable member's question on preschools. I will come back later in the day to the incorrect claims she made about a reduction in funding—which is an extraordinary claim given that the budget papers indicate \$34 million operational funding for education. I will also come back to address an issue that she referred to in terms of the capital works budget.

In relation to the question at hand, it is correct to say that the demand for child care of all types in this state outstrips supply. It is a matter I raised recently before parliament. Just after the federal budget came down, the state government was very disappointed to see that there were no additional funds to meet the increase in demand in this state for all children's services supply requirements. A recent survey of 21 per cent of our childcare centres showed that all were fully utilised, with only occasional morning or afternoon sessions available.

Childcare centres in South Australia, outside school hours care and family day care all have waiting lists. The 2002 federal budget provided no new places for outside school hours or family day care. While there is no limit on the supply of subsidised places in childcare centres, the common-

wealth does not provide capital to new centres. The sector relies on private capital investment to establish new centres.

We are particularly concerned that the state government play its part in trying to address the shortages and waiting lists with which the sector finds itself dealing. In particular, preschool participation has continued to follow demographic trends in recent years. As the population of preschool aged children has declined, so too has the number of four year olds participating in preschool. However, the percentage of four year old children attending government funded preschools remains constant at approximately 90 per cent. In 2000 a total of 18 216 children attended a departmental funded preschools. Of these, 16 729 were four year olds; that is 90 per cent of the total four year old population. The major issues impacting on childcare centres are the demand for childcare places, the shortage of qualified staff and the negative publicity regarding the impact of child care on young children.

The department has a new rural care program funded by the state and commonwealth governments to establish in 14 rural sites long day care for up to seven children at any one time, and care there is available for a maximum of 50 hours per week. Four services in Cleve, Lucindale, Bute and Tumbly Bay are due to commence in term 4, 2002. Capacity has also been reached in the out of school hours care sector. The total number of subsidised places has increased from 23 291 in 2001 to 25 085 in 2002. There is an extensive network of 284 before and after school and vacation care programs offered primarily by the departments, schools and other providers. Currently the demand for those places exceeds supply.

Since 2000, the state's contribution to the out of school hours care program has focused on maintaining services in disadvantaged communities and improving access for children with disabilities. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the strategy has maintained the viability of services to disadvantaged communities and improved the participation of children with a disability. A formal evaluation of our out of school hours care programs is in train within the department. The department is also at capacity in family day care with 5 374 places, and continues to provide quality home based child care statewide. Some 16 482 children use the service, including 5 222 children from rural areas.

I intend to make some announcements shortly about some new directions in providing services not only to the preschool sector but also to all sectors in the children's services area and how the state government will take the care industry forward in addressing some of the significant challenges that currently exist. The honourable member is right to say that funding for childcare places is a federal government responsibility, and the state government has made its protest over the lack of support from the federal government towards that sector, particularly in this last federal budget. However, we are addressing that need as a matter of priority, and some things are in train in the department, of which you will be hearing a little more in coming months, where the state government will be taking action to try to address some of the most pressing difficulties faced by the children's services sector in South Australia.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** Childcare centres, both community based and private, must comply with thorough regulations as well as the national accreditation scheme, at considerable cost of compliance. Less stringent arrangements apply to family day care. Will the government take action to ensure that all children are protected by common standards and at the same time provide a level playing field for proprietors? What plans

does the government have to ensure that the regulatory regime is equally stringent for family day care as for long day care and childcare centres?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** For a great many years there has been the argument from various sectors in the childcare industry that one sector is advantaged in a regulatory sense over another. The government highly values the contribution of each sector and recognises the need for provision in each sector to reflect parental choice. It recognises the need for high standards of care right across the industry. The honourable member reflects correctly that associations representing various sectors within the childcare industry believe that the current childcare centre regulations should apply equally to preschools, family day care and early childhood services in non-government schools.

The previous government's response to that concern was twofold. First, when issues were discussed in relation to regulations before the parliament on family day care, the previous government's response was to say, 'No, we won't deal with those issues at this time; we will deal with them when we review the Children's Services Act.' As members of this committee may remember, the former government held a review of the Education Act and the Children's Services Act which was to culminate in one new piece of legislation combining the two.

The government undertook many years of consultation, I believe dating back to about 1998, yet we did not see that legislation. So, for the last four years of the previous government's reign, there were promises that all these issues that the industry was raising would be addressed. Yet, at the end of that four years—or 4½ years as it turned out to be—we were yet to see a piece of legislation before the house, although in the dying days and under much pressure from the opposition a draft bill was released for consultation.

South Australia has adopted nationally agreed standards for centre based child care which are embedded in regulation and for family day care which are reflected in the approval system under the Children's Services Act. I mentioned that the former government's response was basically to stall. There is disagreement amongst the sector about that proposed legislation put forward by the former government, and I have given an undertaking to all interested parties in the sector that I will not proceed with changes to legislation until there is further consultation with those arguing that they have not satisfactorily had their points of view taken into consideration.

The non-government childcare sector, to which the childcare centre regulations apply, is of the view that the regulations should cover the operations of government preschools and those offered in non-government preschools. Crown Law advice to my department is that under the competition principles agreement the government has no obligation to regulate government preschools, as preschool provision is not a business activity and is clearly part of the government's community service obligation. As a matter of policy, the department builds new preschools to the same standard as licensed childcare centres. So, that has been a matter of policy but I point out that it is not a requirement of the government. I also point out that preschools operated by non-government schools are not currently regulated.

Representatives of South Australia's childcare centre licensees have called for the development of a consistent set of standards for all children's services in South Australia. They ask that the government takes into account the differential risk factors associated with centre- and home-based

settings, ratios of adults to children in various settings, the age groups of children in care and group sizes. The pitch is for consistency rather than the same standards.

So, as you can see, a range of views is put forward by various parts of the sector. There is a recognition by government that high standards must apply to the industry. There is also a commitment, at the request of the industry, for more consultation before legislative change in this regard is put before parliament.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** If the minister so highly values parental choice, as she stated, why have the words 'consumer choice' been eradicated from the strategic context of the portfolio vision in Budget Paper 4, volume 2, page 7.3? You will need last year's budget paper if you want to compare them.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** As I mentioned earlier, consumer choice—and I raised this in answer to a previous question by the member—is an important tenet of what the government wants to offer to parents and, thereby, the children of this state. I have already stated that that is an aim of government. From year to year, budget papers are rewritten and strategic contexts are rewritten and there is no import in those words being either in or out of this year's budget papers. As I stated in answer to a previous question, the government values choice for parents right across the education and care sectors, and it particularly recognises that when policy-making is orientated towards family friendliness it is a requirement that different types of children's services are available for the choice of parents.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** What are the government's plans for family day care funding? Will the government continue to fully operate family day care and underwrite the \$2.4 million shortfall in federal funding? How much of the total output revenue is used for the administration of family day care and how much is provided as subsidies to families? I will find that section in the budget papers if you wish, but it appears that there is a significant reduction in service and an increase in administration costs.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** Is that a question that the minister might like to take on notice?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** Can the member find the page that she is referring to? The detail of that question may require me to take it on notice.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** It is Output Class 2, pages 7.12 and 7.13.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** I will have to take that on notice. The member has asked for percentages regarding administration costs and I do not have that detail to hand. I will attempt to get that information before the end of the day or, certainly, within the time frame for answers to this committee.

**Ms CICCARELLO:** I refer to the Capital Investment Statement in Budget Paper 5, pages 30 to 35. Can the minister outline what provision has been made in the capital works program for preschool projects?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** A number of preschools are featured in the capital works program for 2002-03, either as a new project or one that is on-going from a previous year. The replacement of Marie Dunstan preschool at Brooklyn Park is a new program in the 2002-03 budget paper. The new facility will cater for 40 children and provide offices, kitchen, toilet facilities, activity space, withdrawal space and store area. A redesigned outdoor learning area and off-street car parking will also be provided and the former building demolished. Some time last year I visited the Marie Dunstan preschool and I have to say that it is one of the most appalling preschool facilities that I have come across in the state—and

I have visited a few. It is totally inadequate, and this government is pleased to be able to improve that facility for children in western metropolitan Adelaide.

The relocation of existing preschools is also proposed as part of the McLaren Vale Primary School and the Seaford Primary School redevelopments. Members may remember that the Seaford Primary School suffered a major fire and, as part of the restoration, the government will provide new preschool facilities. In the case of both the McLaren Vale and Seaford primary schools, the preschool facilities are currently not on-site—they are located off-site—and they will be incorporated into the existing schools.

Major preschool projects that will continue into 2001-02 include the relocation of the Elsie Ey preschool at Gawler to Hewett Primary School, the relocation of the preschool at Willunga and the construction of the new Two Wells-Mallala Children's Centre, which I approved quite recently. The existing facilities for the Elsie Ey and Willunga preschools are in leased accommodation on separate sites and fall short of the standards required. The new facilities will be purpose-built, complying with all standards and incorporated onto existing department school sites.

**Ms CICCARELLO:** I refer to Budget Paper 4, pages 7.3 and 7.6. The importance of the early years in a child's education is well documented. Can the minister outline how the government is supporting this important part of the learning journey?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** As I have already stated, there is really no doubt about the importance of the early years in setting the foundations for students to progress well in their education. It is a critical period, when learning and development can be maximised. If this early advantage is missed, learning and development can be slower, more difficult and, in the end, more expensive, not just in economic terms but also in social terms, if we are required to revisit that issue in later life. The government believes that an investment in the early years is a sound one. The benefits are lasting to our young children and to our society.

If a child fails to grasp literacy and numeracy concepts early, there is a real chance they will slip through the cracks, and arresting learning difficulties later in a child's education can be very much more complex. By that stage, the child may also be suffering other side effects of low achievement such as poor self-esteem or disengagement from learning. This government will be giving every young person the best chance at success in life by increasing its investment in the early years of education. We have funded a number of new initiatives in the 2002-03 state budget that we expect will have a major impact in our schools and preschools.

One of the major initiatives is a significant reduction in class sizes in disadvantaged schools through the placement of up to an extra 160 teachers. This is an important part of our strategy to improve students' learning, particularly in numeracy and literacy, because research shows that smaller class sizes in the early years have a significant impact on children's learning, and teachers acknowledge that as a major factor.

We are expecting that extra teachers will reduce class sizes by up to 30 per cent in some schools, depending on the complexity of student needs. It will create a greater opportunity for individual attention and tuition so that children's special needs, learning difficulties or talents can be identified and supported early, avoiding problems going unnoticed until years later. We have formed a working party, which includes union and principal representatives, to implement the

initiative so it has the greatest effect. That work is ongoing and we expect to see the results in our schools from the start of the 2003 school year.

Our other directions in the early years focus on providing support to teachers in the classroom. We are increasing the number of school services officers, and the hours that they are able to put into schools, through an allocation of \$4 million over four years. These extra school services officers will work with children who are identified as having special needs in their learning. It will ensure greater small group or one-on-one assistance for students, with a particular focus on the early years. There is also money in the budget to increase the number of school counsellors, up to 14 extra salaries, to be deployed across up to 30 schools from next year, to assist students with special needs and their families, bringing the total number of counsellors in our primary schools to 109.

The early years will also benefit from extra speech pathology and behaviour management services being provided through a \$3.2 million commitment over four years, and that is in addition to funding provided in the Department of Human Services' budget of an extra \$1 million annually to provide speech pathology and the like, intervention services, in the preschool and early years. These initiatives will help reduce the impact that challenging behaviours and communication difficulties can have on learning.

If we are really to make a difference at the other end of school and give our young people every opportunity for success, we need to start in the early years. This government recognises the importance of this period through its added commitment to those early years. The achievements and advancements made in the early years were recently showcased at an expo. Next year, the early years will be explored on a wider scale as Adelaide hosts the Our Children: The Future early childhood conference.

**The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY:** Would the minister advise the committee whether any additional accountability or reporting procedures are required by non-P21 preschools, which now enjoy the additional resources that were given to the P21 preschools under the former government, or have they been given the resources with no additional reporting or requirement for achievement of better educational outcomes?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** It is an expectation of government that all our schools and preschools are accountable for the government moneys that they are given to spend on students. That includes spending those moneys for the current cohort of students, and that is an issue to which I am addressing significant attention to ensure that the moneys we put into schools and preschools are actually spent on the priorities that are relevant to improve the educational and care outcomes for children in those schools and preschools.

There are requirements of accountability, right across the sector. The former minister draws a distinction between Partnerships 21 sites and non-Partnerships 21 sites. It is a requirement of all sites that they comply with accountability expectations from government. One of the changes, however, that this government is keen to promote right throughout the department and throughout our school and preschool sites is that we do not overly and unrealistically burden our sites with our reporting and accounting requirements. It is a requirement of government that schools and preschools report in a timely and understandable way to parents on the achievements and progress of their children, but we do not want to be overly bureaucratic, requiring information that we may not really need or use, and put undue administrative burden on our schools and preschools. That has been one of the facets that

has come out strongly from our schools and preschools about the burden of meeting government's reporting and accountability requirements. A balance must be adequately reached between the requirements of reporting to the system, to make sure that moneys are spent appropriately, and the requirements of reporting to school communities and parents.

As to the moneys that the government has released to non-Partnerships 21 preschools and schools—and I am glad that the former minister raised this issue—they will be accounted for in the normal financial statements, but this point really highlights a significant difference between the approach of the former Liberal government and that of the new Labor government. The former Liberal government was quite prepared to use funding as a stick to punish schools and preschools that decided not to join the Partnerships 21 scheme. In the preschool area, they did that by denying access to laptop computers and per capita funding moneys. Similarly in the school sector, which, I anticipate, we will talk about later, the government denied access to certain project moneys and student funding.

That approach has been soundly rejected by the current government. Our approach is to treat schools and preschools on their funding needs and merits and not to arbitrarily punish schools and preschools that decided not to join the government's Partnerships 21 scheme, that is, the local management scheme instituted a couple of years ago by the former government.

The member for Bragg asked a question which I said I would take on notice. However, I need some clarification on what the question was exactly. I ask the member to revisit her question. I understand that the member asked for a percentage of the administration costs spent on family day care. I am not quite sure how the member has extrapolated the breakdown of administration costs versus the provision of costs from these figures.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** I did not use the word 'percentage' at all. In relation to the general question, I asked: how much is provided as subsidies to families? I went on to comment and referred to the budget paper, but I will give some more detail on that to make it clear. In relation to planning and support in child care—the minister has the reference—there has been a noticeable increase from \$1.091 million to \$1.352 million. There has been some increase to family day care and out of school care areas and so on (which the minister has seen) but, overall, there is a significant reduction of moneys to services but increased surveillance, we say, by the government in administrative funds.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** I thank the member for Bragg for clarifying her question and I will provide an answer within the required time.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** That concludes consideration of children services.

*[Sitting suspended from 1.03 to 2.05 p.m.]*

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** Order! We resume with the Minister for Education and Children's Services and, according to the schedule, we are now considering schools, metropolitan, country and vocational education. I gather the earlier statement, minister, was your statement for the day.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** Yes, sir, it was.

**The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY:** The opposition notes changes to the school choice program in respect of the placement of teachers. Clearly the AEU has acknowledged that this is an affirmative action for agreed categories of teachers and its

placements process being not merit selection. I would like the minister to clarify the following. If I am a teacher in the country and I have served my four years (or whatever the time period), I am then eligible to come back to the metropolitan area and to apply for positions of school choice in the metropolitan area. Do I have priority over other metropolitan teachers who are applying for that same position because I am coming back from the country and, if that is the case, does the school then have to take me on as the teacher rather than one of its choice because I have priority under this changed school placement situation?

**Ms BEDFORD:** Is this a hypothetical?

**The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY:** No, it's not; I have teachers who are in this position.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** Or you're going to be a teacher.

**The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY:** I have already taught.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** The member raises a very important issue; that is, the changes this government has made to improve the teacher placement exercise that the department goes through every year and to improve employment stability for teachers and employment options for teachers in our work force. This is particularly important because the former government left us with some significant challenges to address in terms of meeting the requirements that we have for our teacher work force in terms of supply. One of those challenges arises because of a very deliberate policy by the former government to employ teachers on a contractual basis. This was a very deliberate policy of the previous government and, if members study *Hansard* over the previous term of the former Liberal government, they will find quite deliberate statements by a former Liberal minister for education (Hon. Rob Lucas) setting out the changes in education policy that biased employment towards contract employment for teachers.

The new Labor government has quite a different policy in terms of the employment of teachers, and one of those important differences is a recognition of the need to provide stability for individual teachers who find themselves on the teacher placement roundabout—and I am referring to contract teachers and teachers who do not have permanent work within our system. It was a difficult aspect of the former Liberal government's policy for those individuals because they were unable to prove, for example, stability of employment to financiers in order to get loans and they could not plan their own personal lives and careers because from year to year or even from term to term they did not know where they were to be placed. Of course, the impact on students was that at the beginning of each year the placement exercise policies of the former government meant that there was unnecessary movement of classroom teachers.

One of the ways in which the new Labor government seeks to improve the situation is by reducing the department's reliance on the contract employment of teachers. The changes that have been made this year to the school choice placement processes are largely driven by the necessity to provide our schools with stable employment patterns. That is also very important to our service to the individuals involved because we were losing quite a number of our contract teachers to the private sector or, even worse, from the teaching profession totally, many of whom, I might say, were excellent teachers and who were performing extremely well with children in classrooms. The changes that have been made this year were negotiated with the Australian Education Union through the enterprise bargain which the state government struck with the teachers' union just recently and which was aimed at

providing more flexibility and more choice for teachers, more stability for schools, and more access to stable employment positions within our department for some contract and non-permanent teachers.

There are a number of changes to the school choice placement process. The first change is that teachers will now be able to see the full range of positions available for school choice; previously, that was not the case. More positions will be available through the school choice process. Another change is that there will be now two rounds of school choice, whereas previously there had been one.

So, teachers will have greater opportunities in terms of the number of vacancies. Those teachers who were on the placement merry-go-round—contract and permanent teachers—will have a greater chance of finding permanent employment in our department. That is very important, because over the next five to 10 years, given that the average age of our teaching force is creeping up towards the 50 year age limit—it is certainly exceeding 45 years of age—the bulk of our teachers in that age group will be retiring. It is incredibly important that we keep good teachers in our system.

On 25 July, we advertised for the first round of the school choice process. In recent weeks we have advertised through the normal mechanism, which is our internal publication *Express*. The full range of positions can be found on our web site. The first round is available to permanent teachers only for metropolitan vacancies and, this year, there is an increase to 939 vacancies. There are 172 country vacancies, which are available to permanent and employable teachers; and there are 55 open metropolitan vacancies, which are available to permanent and employable teachers. So, those vacancies have just been advertised. In round two, at the end of term two, consequential vacancies and those not filled in round one will be re-advertised. The vacancies not filled through rounds one and two school choice will be filled through the central placement exercise in term four.

The major changes are that there are two rounds instead of one and that all A vacancies, which are the ongoing vacancies, are advertised. There is quite a potential for growth in those vacancies—from 860 last year to 939 vacancies which we have advertised in the past couple of weeks. The category one schools—and by category one I refer to the index of disadvantage categorisation, which means the schools in the most disadvantaged aspect—will be able to participate in an open school choice process. This means these vacancies are able to be accessed by permanent and non-permanent teachers. Any unfilled or consequential vacancy arising from placements in the first round, category two schools, are able to be filled through the open school choice process. The tenure of those is generally seven to 10 years in the metropolitan schools but is open ended in country schools.

In his question, I think the member referred to an affirmative plan for approximately 250 teachers through a banding process who are in appropriate placement and still hold a country to metropolitan guarantee. That refers to a scheme that had been in existence in the past in the department: those teachers who have been in appropriate temporary positions for at least four years; those teachers who have been in the country for an extended period—that is, four or five years, depending on remoteness; and those teachers who have been in category one schools in the metropolitan area for at least four years.

As you can see from the number of vacancies that I have outlined that have just been advertised—I think the figure is approximately 1 170, but if that is not correct I will correct the record—of those, a relatively small number are placed via the mechanism to which the member refers. This is a significant change in policy by the new government to address what has been a fundamental problem in our schools in terms of reaching some of those teachers who, if you do not look after them, inevitably leave the system to go to private schools, or they leave the system completely and they are lost to teaching. In the main, they are very good teachers, and they are a resource that this government does not want to lose, particularly given that we are going to need these teachers to staff our schools as retirements kick in over coming years. It is a deliberate change in policy and it is 180 degrees in the opposite direction of the former government, whose policy was deliberately aimed at casualising the work force.

Why do you want to casualise the work force? The former government talked about introducing flexibility into the employment of teachers. Members of the committee should read that as an easy way to get rid of staff. Contract and non-permanent staff are employed on essentially the same salary as permanent staff, the difference being that they do not have to be paid out if you want to get rid of them. This government has very different plans to the former government. It is not about reducing teaching numbers; in fact, I am proud to say that a major portion of our first budget is directed at the additional teachers that we will put into classrooms—160 junior primary teachers for the start of the new school year in 2003.

**The ACTING CHAIRPERSON (Mrs Breuer):** I am sure that the member for Light will show the same rapt enthusiasm and enlightenment that he did when he heard the answer to the last question.

**The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY:** I can see that you also are riveted to your chair, Madam Chairperson. I have a supplementary to that question, because the minister has not answered my question at all. As I said, if I am a country teacher who has been in that position for more than four years and, therefore, under this scheme of school choice I apply for a position in the metropolitan area, is the school in the school choice position for which I have applied forced to take me on because I am categorised as a priority, coming back from the country, even though I may not be the first choice of the school for the position?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** Can I get back to you on that one? I believe the answer to the question is yes, but I would just like to clarify that with one of our officers.

**The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY:** That is yes that the school would have to take me on? I accept that the minister will clarify that, but is it the minister's feeling that the school would be forced to take me on?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** I would like to take that question on notice and clarify that with one of our officers who has been intimately involved in the enterprise bargaining negotiations because, as you would appreciate, the changes to school choice that we are now talking about came out of recent enterprise bargaining negotiations between the Australian Education Union and the department.

**The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY:** On 11 July 2002, the minister forwarded a personally addressed letter enclosing a document entitled 'Message from the Minister' to the home address of each of the teaching staff. Will the minister advise what policy guidelines have been altered to facilitate the minister's

forwarding correspondence to the teaching staff at their home addresses, and what possible justification can be given for not forwarding the correspondence to schools, as is the usual practice?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** I am advised that the document that you might be referring to is the budget document—the document that the department put out informing people of the budget measures. I am advised that this document was forwarded to principals only on the day of the budget, or just after the budget, and I am advised that that was done because it was during the school holiday period.

**The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY:** My question is: have the policy guidelines changed, because I am advised that this was sent to staff home addresses—

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** Principals?

**The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY:** No. To staff home addresses. Under my administration, school holidays were never an excuse to send this sort of information to home addresses.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** I will have to investigate within my department as to where the document you are referring to was sent. If you are referring to the Education and Children's Services Budget Summary, then I am advised that that went to principals' home addresses only. If you are saying to me that it was sent further, I will have to seek further clarification from my department because I do not know.

**Ms CICCARELLO:** My question is with regard to Investing Summary Statement, Budget Paper 4, volume 2, page 7.25. Can the minister explain what the government is doing to maintain and improve the standard of school facilities?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** In response to this question, I think a pretty important point to make is to point to the failure by the previous Liberal government to adequately address school and preschool maintenance requirements which has left the department with a significant backlog of work. There are projects worth millions of dollars listed in school asset management plans and in backlog maintenance lists to bring sites up to benchmarks of condition capacity and suitability.

While the former government tinkered about the edges, their overall haphazard approach to capital works and maintenance really did not lead to any great impact on facility standards in many schools. Indeed, the budget situation we have been left with by the previous government does not leave the new government (in this first budget) a lot of room to move. But, indeed, we have done a significantly better job for schools and preschools than did the previous government.

The schools and the department have gone to a lot of effort to produce these asset management plans. So the new government says, 'Let's put them to good use'. There has, in the past, been little correlation between such lists of work to be done and whether or not a school got onto the capital works program. This government has reviewed the capital works program to bring it into line with statewide priorities, and it is also targeting maintenance funds and priority projects listed in asset management plans, or their equivalent.

In the 2002-03 budget, members will see a significant bias towards increasing maintenance moneys for schools. This comes about in response to the call from schools and preschools around the state about, firstly, dissatisfaction with the way the major capital works program had been managed—schools described it as a bit of a lottery as to whether you managed to get on or not; and, secondly, a call for improved funding for general maintenance and work that needs to be done at their schools.

When I took office as Minister for Education, I found that the previous government had not only significantly cut asset funding for 2002 by more than half but also had not intended to fund, nor had made any provision for funding, non-P21 schools with any asset funds for their maintenance requirements. This is just another example of the former Liberal government's priorities and its punishment of schools. Schools were funded not on the basis of need or any other criteria (except that the schools had not participated in its agenda), instead, they were punished by not receiving any funding under what was called the 'back to schools fund'.

Immediately on coming to government, I rectified that situation so that those schools which had not received money (those non-P21 schools which represented at that time, and still represent, approximately 10 per cent of our schools) did receive a comparable grant to that which the Partnerships 21 schools had received.

We have in this budget increased the maintenance moneys available to schools. We have increased by \$2 million (or a 20 per cent increase) the funding for asset management to provide schools with the capacity to address priority projects that have already been identified in their asset planning processes. As well, we have introduced an additional \$17 million for a 3-year program for more specific projects of a maintenance nature. This money will go to schools with the greatest need for upgrades of, for example, toilet blocks and administration areas.

One of the driving factors in upgrading administration areas is the seriousness with which the new government takes the call by schools in terms of occupational, health and safety requirements, workload issues of administrative SSOs and the like. I am sure all members recognise that administration areas in schools are some of the busiest traffic areas in a school, where you have children coming in and out to see the principal; parents coming in and out to see teachers; and sick room traffic is often through the administration area.

They tend to be very busy parts of a school, and with some work we can address some of the workload issues and some of the occupational health and safety areas to do with space requirements and the operation of equipment in the administrative areas. The money will also be used for upgrading hard play areas, and we have allocated an equal amount of money—\$1.5 million—each to country and metropolitan schools, as well as creating better classroom space. Some of that money will be used for structural changes to increase space for students. It will also be used to remove used or unwanted buildings. Sometimes there are buildings—for example, an old toilet block down the back of an oval—that impinge on children's play space and create a bit of a problem for the school because after hours or at any time these unused buildings can be used as a meeting place for undesirable visitors. The money is a very practical targeted program for some of the problems in asset maintenance that schools are raising as being among their top priorities. It is spread across the state and is aimed at those schools with the highest priority.

This government is committed to addressing urgent problems in our schools by improving standards of hygiene (and I am referring to the work we will be doing on toilets), occupational health and safety and creating better spaces for students. The previous Liberal Government received a damning report on its occupational health, safety and welfare record on sites. Some of those problems undoubtedly have arisen through inadequate facilities requirements. This government takes seriously its responsibility to our work

force and students and to our commitment to supporting schools and preschools in providing the mechanisms by which they can adequately address those occupational health, safety and welfare problems.

We recognise that our school buildings and associated facilities represent an important investment in our future and need to be well maintained and managed. We cannot ignore these needs and we must use more money for school maintenance. We could always use more money for school maintenance requirements, but the purpose of the government's budget was to direct the available resources into helping address the most pressing needs on a statewide basis and to those schools most in need of that work.

When the member for Bragg made her opening address earlier this morning she claimed that we had not disclosed to schools changes in the capital works program that we have put forward in the 2002-03 budget. That is not correct. Every school affected by the major works component of the capital works program has been notified, and that disclosure came and those letters were written to those schools on budget day, so immediately those schools were notified if there had been changes—changes of bringing projects forward, the deferment of projects or changes to—

**Ms CHAPMAN:** Disclosure of criteria—you are answering the wrong question.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** I understand that the member for Bragg said that those disclosures were not made. I am saying to this committee that those schools did receive letters outlining the changes that had been made. In that same breath the member for Bragg said that there had been a \$26 million reduction in the capital works budget from last year's budget—an interesting assertion given the assertion she made on the operating side of the ledger where she quite conveniently fails to do the budget to budget comparison.

I point out to the committee in reference to the capital works side of the ledger that the former Liberal government in its forward estimates for this year, 2002-03, included only a \$61 million program for 2002-03. That is \$10 million less in major works than this government has put forward. I put that clearly on the record. So, there is quite a bit of hypocrisy coming from the opposition when referring to its budget in terms of capital works, given that the budget that has been put to parliament for this year by the Labor government is in fact an increase on the forward estimated budget of the former Liberal government.

**Ms CICCARELLO:** I refer to the 2002-03 target to support student learning and school management by focusing on ICT—Budget Paper 4, volume 2, page 7.6. I refer also to the strategic IT program in the same volume, page 7.25. Will the minister explain how the government is catering for the increasing use of information and communication technologies in student learning?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** The use of learning and information technologies has the potential to enhance learning for all students in our schools and pre-schools. The state government has recognised the role of information technology through a funding injection of \$8 million over four years to improve the level and standard of computer technology in our schools. This is in addition to the \$15 million already provided annually by the former government for information technology. This year we will be conducting an audit of schools to determine the level of IT and associated software as well as its use.

There is currently an average ratio across the department of one computer for every five students across South

Australian public schools. However, in reality the level and age of technology can vary dramatically between schools, which have been left largely by the former government to raise much of that money from their communities to meet that shortfall from the subsidies provided by the previous government. That has led to gaps in technology levels, both in age and the number of computers, between those schools with significantly better fundraising abilities and those without. Our audit will identify high priority schools in terms of their use and capacity in technology IT to help us to target our resources accordingly.

In addition to that \$8 million increase in the budget to ICT we have also identified the need for teachers to be able to access appropriate training in the use of IT, and to support that we have set aside an additional \$4 million to introduce IT training programs that will ensure teachers can use information technology with confidence. So, we have quite a significant increase in information technology funding into schools under this government—\$2 million a year annually on top of the \$15 million IT program, which is a significant increase, and an additional \$1 million on top of that for teacher training. There is no doubt that our schools are doing some very good things in the information technology area but, as a government, we need to ensure that they are well equipped to build on this into the future.

**Ms CICCARELLO:** Can the minister explain how the government is going about its commitment to openness and inclusiveness and how the culture of the department will change as a result of this?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** One of the real changes that this government is implementing is a change in the culture and practice of the department. When we came to government four months ago, people from a number of schools right across the system raised with us the tenor and the environment in which the previous government used bullying tactics to bully compliance with policy decisions. The former government operated under a shroud of secrecy, and consultation was scarce. An example of that failure to consult adequately and meaningfully with people was the failure to meet and talk with teachers' representatives, that is, the unions representing teachers. Of course, the consequences of that for the state were a protracted enterprise bargaining exercise and industrial disputation under the former government.

I am very pleased that this government was able to reach agreement quite quickly on coming to office as a result of goodwill and a process of genuine consultation and negotiation in good faith. The teacher bashing and bashing of the teachers' union (the teachers' representative) engaged in by the former minister, and hence the former government, in parliament and in the media, did not do well for the teachers of this state. I think the largest volume of correspondence I have received since coming to government has been congratulatory letters to this government from teachers in schools and preschools who were pleased that this government was not going to allow the teachers—nor was the teachers' union I might add—to go through the protracted disputation that had occurred in the past.

This is a new government that is making every attempt to be open and inclusive from day one. We are changing practices and modes of operation from the previous government's instructions. We are meeting and consulting with unions and associations to recognise that we have the best interests of students at heart. The feedback from those groups has been very positive. John Gregory, President of the



Australian Education Union, in a media release of 12 June this year said:

We have avoided the protracted and costly delays in disputation that was a hallmark of the previous government. . . Members are clearly pleased with the efforts of the AEU to get the government to listen and settle this matter after months of delay by the Liberals, the election and the uncertainty that followed. . . At last we have a government we can talk to, to get positive answers on issues essential to public education in South Australia.

The principals' representatives have also given praise to this government for its change of culture and practice within the department. Leonie Trimper, President of the South Australian Primary Principals Association, in her association's newsletter on 25 July, said:

I am still heartened at the direction our system is heading in, and particularly the development of a culture based on collaboration and cooperation.

Bob Heath, President of the Secondary Principals Association, in his association's newsletter, said:

We have a new minister who is a strong advocate for public education. There is no doubt that she is listening to the field and walks the talk.

This is a change in outcome for levels of consultation and comes about because this government is determined to reorientate our department and schools, and everything we do, towards one simple goal, that is, making sure students in school classrooms progress well in their education. To do that we need to be rowing in the same direction. The teachers' representatives, the principals' representatives and the parents' representatives all have valuable contributions to make to the education of our children. Our new agenda is to harness those contributions effectively, not indulge in the lip service of the previous government whose consultations, which would be had when a clear agenda was in mind, were cursory in nature. We intend to truly harness the contributions to be made from all those key stakeholders.

**Mrs PENFOLD:** My question relates to the allocation of the 160 new teachers or counsellors. Can the minister advise by what percentage the announced allocation of 160 more teachers and counsellors will reduce the actual class size of primary schools across the state in the 2003 academic year; and how many of these teachers and counsellors will be placed in country schools?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** I cannot give that final detail at this time because a working party has been established to come up with the most effective way in which to deploy these teachers. At this time, teachers have not been allocated to individual schools, nor have primary school counsellors, which is the extra resource to which the honourable member is referring.

A group is also looking at the best way in which to employ the primary school counsellors. That group is the same group that has been established with representatives from parents' associations, teachers' representatives, departmental representatives, and the like, that has previously made those allocations so that group is tasked with most effectively allocating that resource. The 160 junior primary teachers will be allocated in the most effective way possible. The working party will provide recommendations on that. Those teachers will be in place for the start of the 2003 year. The allocation method is currently being developed, so it will be ready in time for schools to finalise their enrolments for 2003. Of course, we need to have some idea about enrolments before decisions can be made as to which schools get how many teachers. The package is for \$31.8 million, or 160 teachers,

over the next four years. So, until some of that work has progressed further, I cannot give you a direct answer about the schools to which this will apply.

**Mrs PENFOLD:** As a supplementary question: does the minister then stand by the election advertising? I saw a television advertisement after the budget that there would be a 30 per cent reduction in class sizes.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** It was 'up to 30 per cent'. These teachers will be going into classrooms, and therefore there will be a change in class sizes in the schools at which they are deployed. The mechanism by which they will be deployed, which is being negotiated at this time through the working party, will be on a needs basis.

**Mrs PENFOLD:** Again, my question relates to the allocation of the 160 new teachers and counsellors. What are the criteria for a school to be eligible to apply for an extra teacher or counsellor; what provision has been made for the schools that will be allocated one of these teachers or counsellors in resources and services for that placement; and how will that be calculated?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** Again, a working party is working through a number of these issues. What is important is that the government has stood by its election commitment, that the funding—the cold, hard cash—is there in the budget and that this measure will be put in place for the start of the school year. With regard to the increase in primary school counsellors, again, the distribution will be based on the level of disadvantage in a school community. That is measured by the index of disadvantage, which is a mechanism that has been used for the allocation of primary school counsellors in the past. They will be allocated according to that index.

**Mrs PENFOLD:** My question relates to the increase in school age. How many students have been identified who need to be provided for in the 2003 academic year and each year thereafter, and what appropriate and suitable curriculum will be provided for students who do not want to stay at school but who will be under 16 years of age as at 1 January 2003?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** I thank you for your question, because it gives me an opportunity to talk about something that I am particularly passionate about, and that is the provision of high quality educational and training options for the higher end of schooling. You referred to the numbers of students who will be affected by this historic policy change. I say that it is historic, because I understand that the legislation to raise the school leaving age from 15 to 16 was the first piece of legislation to be passed by the new government. It is a change in policy, and the exact numbers of students who will find themselves in schools, in training programs or in a combination of both is yet to be determined. Obviously, that is something that you find out after the event, so it is difficult to determine precisely. That is something that the former minister sitting here in this chamber knows all too well because, when he was in government, the future intentions of students who might otherwise have chosen to leave school he found to be a bit of a guessing game and, in fact, he changed his estimates several times.

In opposition, Labor predicted that the cost of raising the school leaving age to 16 would be \$2.5 million a year. That costing was based on estimates given by the former minister for education and on figures provided by the former chief executive of the department which assumed a teaching salary level of \$58 140. There has been a slight change in that, with the agreement that the government has reached with the union under the enterprise bargaining process and the pay increase

that has been awarded as at 1 July. Certainly, when in opposition the government promised to increase funding for that purpose by \$2.5 million.

The former liberal minister started out by guessing a figure of 800. He later revised that figure down to 400, which was the basis of the costing of \$2.5 million that the then opposition took to the election. In debating this measure before the house, the member for Gordon said that he had been told by the former minister for education that the figure was 300 students. Later, the former minister for education went on to say that the figure was so insignificant that his government would not be putting any additional resources into supporting students, schools or teachers affected by the increased school leaving age. So, when it came to the election policy platforms and documents of the two major parties, while Labor stood by its commitment to increase funding by \$2.5 million based on the former minister's calculations, the Liberal Party assigned no funding to this measure, I presume on the basis of the former minister's statements that the number would be insignificant.

In this budget the new government has far exceeded our election promise of \$2.5 million annually and has allocated a package of \$8.1 million annually for the new strategy, with a little less in the first year, because it is not a full financial year. So, it is a \$28 million package for a new strategy based on targeted programs designed to encourage and motivate students to remain at school, to be engaged in their learning and to promote pathways that are real options for students. I will be very excited to announce the details of that strategy quite shortly.

Our consultation with stakeholders has indicated that a targeted program model designed to meet specific student needs is the most appropriate model to pursue, and my government will be saying a little more about that into the future. I do understand the difficulty that the former minister had in putting a figure on exactly what this policy change would mean, because it is not just a matter that if these students are in school then they are in public schools. Of course, some students are in the non-government sector, and in recent years we have seen a drift to the non-government sector. It does not mean that if these students are not at school they are nowhere; some of them will be in training programs, either in TAFE colleges or with private training providers, and some will be doing part-time schooling and pursuing other part-time options.

Until the policy is changed, it is very difficult to predict exactly what proportion of students will be going into one pathway or another. I do understand the difficulty that the former minister had, but I am sure that you are delighted, as I am, at the significant funding that has been put aside in this 2002-03 budget to support these students, starting from the next calendar year. It far exceeds our election commitment, and the package that has been put together is quite exciting.

**Ms BEDFORD:** Can the minister indicate whether the government has included any new capital works projects in this year's program and whether any projects have been brought forward?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** Yes, I can. Some projects have been deferred, and there has been a bit of media coverage about that, but many have been brought forward or are new to the capital works program. The latter category includes:

- Blackwood High School, a \$730 000 project for a new visual arts teaching facility to replace high liability buildings;

- Christie Downs school, a \$2 million project to rationalise and refurbish facilities and improve the suitability of the site;
- \$2.5 million allocated to the Kilparrin-Townsend House project, which is currently in leased accommodation and has been asked to vacate the premises;
- LeFevre High School, a \$2 million project, including structural work to solid buildings, and that is urgent work;
- the Mannum schools project, a \$2 million project to consolidate educational facilities;
- the McLaren Vale Primary School, a \$2 million project involving redevelopment and upgrade to address enrolment pressure and site suitability issues;
- Playford Primary School, a \$600 000 project which involves the provision of essential site works, including pedestrian and vehicle access;
- the Port Lincoln schools—where there is an educational review—which have been allocated \$4 million to address significant enrolment pressure in the town and some backlog maintenance;
- Salisbury High School, a \$1 million project involving extra accommodation due to enrolment pressure from higher retention rates in senior years; and
- Sturt Primary School, a \$2 million project involving upgrade and redevelopment of existing facilities.

The government reviewed the capital works program to bring it into line with current state-wide priorities. It is true that some projects have been deferred. However, as a result of that review a number of projects and forward planning projects have been included and brought forward into the 2002 capital works program. The projects brought forward are: the \$730 000 Blackwood High School project; Christie Downs school; Kilparrin-Townsend House; LeFevre High School; Mannum schools; McLaren Vale Primary School; Playford Primary School; Port Lincoln schools; and Salisbury High School. Sturt Primary School is a new project.

I have some further detail that I believe the honourable member for Bragg requested about the 2002-03 capital works program. There are a number of works in progress from previous years.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** Is this a full list?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** Yes. The Australian Science and Maths School, a \$14 million project: in 2002-03 we have allocated \$11.05 million—

**Ms CHAPMAN:** Mr Acting Chairman, in the interests of time, if the minister is reading from a list I ask that it be provided. I am happy to have it included completely if that is the list that was applicable at the date of handing down the budget.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** I will go through it for the member. This is a complete list of expenditure in 2002-03—

**Ms CHAPMAN:** I ask that it be tabled.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** It has to be read into *Hansard*.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** It is up to the minister to answer in the manner she thinks fit. Statistical tables can be incorporated into *Hansard*, but this is not purely statistical.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** For the record, Mr Acting Chairman, as the minister said, this is the list that I sought. I sought the complete list that totalled the capital works as published in the budget as at the date that the budget was handed down. If that is the list, I am happy for it to be tabled or the minister can read it, but I want that to be clear.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** I will go through each project.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** Is this the list that adds up to \$70 million?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** That is right. The list is as follows:

- The Australian Science and Maths School, a \$14 million project, and in this financial year the government has allocated \$11.05 million. That had an original start date of July 2000. It was to be completed by November 2002. However, it was not started until December 2001 and now has a revised completion date of January 2003.
  - East Torrens Primary School, a \$550 000 project. The government has allocated \$350 000 in this financial year. That again has slipped. That project was due to start in October last year and be completed in June this year. However, that was not started by the previous government and it will now start in this financial year in August and be completed in December this financial year.
  - The Gordon Education Centre, a \$1.3 million project. This government has allocated \$815 000 to be spent this financial year. That was to start in April 2000 and be completed by the previous government in August 2000, but it started in February 2002 and is scheduled to be completed in August 2002.
  - Heathfield Primary School, a \$1.267 million project which was originally to begin in October 1999 and completed in August 2000. It began in October 1999 as scheduled, but it was not completed in August 2000—it was completed in January 2002.
  - Loxton High School. You may be aware that there was a significant fire at Loxton High School. That is a \$3.9 million project. This government has allocated \$756 000. That project was due to commence in March 2002 and be completed in December 2003. It was started under this government in April 2002 and will be completed in February 2004.
  - Marryatville High School, a \$2.86 million project. An amount of \$950 000 has been allocated to that project in this financial year. That was to commence in March 2000 and be completed in December 2000. However, it had a revised start date of February 2002 and it will be completed by July 2003.
  - Melaleuca Primary School, a \$1 million project, on which this financial year \$655 000 will be spent. The original start date was supposed to be May 2000 for completion by December 2000. However, it was started under this government in May 2002 and is scheduled to be completed in September 2002.
  - Moonta Area School, which is a \$3.9 million project, of which \$2.219 million has been allocated this financial year. That was due to start in January 2001 and be completed in January 2002. It was started in November 2001 and is due to be completed in December this year.
  - North Adelaide Primary School, a \$2.092 million project, of which \$438 000 is being spent this year. That was supposed to begin in May 2000 and be completed in November 2000. Instead, it was commenced in September 2001 and will now be completed in November 2002.
  - Ocean View College, a \$3.5 million project, of which \$2.9 million will be spent this financial year. That was due to begin in January 2001 and be completed in January 2002. Instead, that slipped a year. It was commenced in January 2002 and is scheduled for completion in 2003.
  - Playford Primary School, Stage 3, a \$5.584 million project, of which \$688 000 will be spent in this financial year. That will begin in June 2002 and be completed in August 2002.
  - Port Pirie Special School, a \$1.5 million project, of which \$1 million is allocated this financial year. That was due to begin in November 2001 and be completed in June 2002. Instead, that was started under the Labor government in April 2002 and is scheduled for completion in October 2002.
  - Two Wells-Mallala Integrated Service, a \$1.24 million project, of which \$691 000 has been allocated this financial year. That was due to be completed in October 1999. It has not commenced. I gave approval for it to commence in July 2002 and that is due to be completed in November 2002.
  - Yankalilla Area School, another school affected by fire. That is a \$1.42 million project, of which \$425 000 is allocated for expenditure in this financial year. I gave approval for that to begin in April 2002. It is to be completed in March 2003.
- They are the major works in progress, and \$44 million worth of works are listed. Of that, \$22.98 million is being spent in this financial year. Works yet to commence, which are not on the 2002-03 new works program, are:
- Adelaide High School, a \$2.123 million project, of which \$500 000 has been allocated for expenditure this year. That was due to start in August 2001 and be completed in October 2002. That has slipped. The revised start date is August 2002 with completion in October 2003.
  - The Fregon Anangu School, a \$600 000 project, of which \$499 000 is to be spent in this year. That was supposed to start in May 2000 and be completed in August 2000. We are waiting for advice on a completion date for that.
  - Booleroo Centre Schools, a \$2 million project, of which \$500 000 is to be spent in this financial year. That was due to begin in May 2002 and be completed in August 2003. That will now begin in September 2002 and be completed in November 2003.
  - Ceduna Area School, a \$3.9 million project, of which \$500 000 is allocated in this budget. That was due to commence in June 2002 and be completed in September 2003. That will now commence in December this year.
  - The Education Centre, a large project of \$12.338 million, of which \$4.5 million is due to be spent this year. There was no announcement of a commencement date for that. That work is due to commence in September this year and be completed in December 2004.
  - Elsie Ey Preschool, a \$1.2 million project, of which \$900 000 will be spent this year. That was due to commence in January this year and be completed in June. It will now commence in August and is due to be completed in April 2003.
  - The Mawson Lakes School, a \$7.6 million project, of which \$2.16 million has been allocated for this financial year. That was due to begin in November 2001 and be completed in June 2005. That was not commenced. It will now commence in September 2002 and be completed in June 2005. The land has been purchased, so that expenditure has been made, and I think I approved that expenditure a couple of months ago.
  - One Tree Hill Primary School, again this is a school that has had a fire. It is a \$1.275 million project, of which \$925 000 has been allocated this year. That was due to commence in January 2002 and be completed in June 2002. That will now begin in September 2002.
  - Roxby Downs Area School, a \$1.478 million project, of which \$1 million has been allocated this financial year. That was due to begin in July 2000 and be completed in

February 2001. That will now begin in September 2002 and be completed in July 2003.

- Smithfield Plains High School, a \$1 million project, of which \$880 000 has been allocated in this financial year. That was due to commence in October last year and be completed in June this year. Work commenced in July 2002 and the scheduled completion date is February 2003.
- Stirling East Primary School, a \$3.17 million project, of which \$500 000 has been allocated in this budget. That was due to commence in February this year and be completed in September 2003. That will now commence in January 2003.
- Willunga Preschool, an \$850 000 project, on which \$700 000 will be spent this financial year. That was due to begin in May 2002 and be completed in May 2003. That will now begin in September 2002 and be completed in July 2003.

So, for works still to commence, there is a total of \$37.54 million, and in this financial year \$13.563 million has been allocated.

The complete list for new works for 2002-03 is as follows: targeted asset funding, \$17 million; \$6.679 million has been allocated to this budget; Blackwood High School, a \$730 000 project, with \$100 000 to commence in September 2002; Burton Primary School, a \$1 million project, with \$250 000 of that for this financial year; Christies Down schools, a \$2 million project, with \$200 000 allocated to this financial year; Kilparrin-Townsend House, a \$2.5 million project, with \$500 000 allocated to this financial year; Le Fevre High School, a \$2 million project, with \$250 000 allocated to this financial year; Mannum schools, a \$2 million project, with \$250 000 allocated to this financial year; Marie Dunstan Pre-school, a \$525 000 project, and all of that will be expended this financial year; McLaren Vale Primary School, a \$2 million project, with \$150 000 allocated this financial year; Modbury Special School, a \$2.215 million project—

*Ms Bedford interjecting:*

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:**—with \$215 000 allocated this financial year—I can see that was a diversionary tactic by the member for Florey in whose electorate Modbury Special School is—Playford Primary School, stage 4, \$600 000, and all of that will be spent this financial year; Port Lincoln schools, \$4 million, and \$250 000 of that will be spent in this financial year—as the local member would know, they are schools under review—Salisbury High School, a \$1 million project, and \$250 000 will be spent in this financial year; Southern Fleurieu Education Review, an allocation of \$500 000; Sturt Street Primary School, a \$2 million project, and \$500 000 of that will be spent in this financial year; and Woodville Special School, a \$2.675 million project, and \$350 000 of that will be spent in this financial year. That is \$42.745 million of new works in the 2002-03 budget. They are the total project costs, with \$11.569 million allocated to this financial year, 2002-03.

On top of that, there is information technology for the schooling sector of \$7.157 million; and that is separate from the annual provisions which increased amounts. The schooling sector capital comes to a total of \$114.997 million. On top of that, of course, we have TAFE capital and IT bringing the total capital program to \$138.843 million and that, I might add, is almost \$16 million more than the former Liberal government included in its forward estimates—that total was \$123 million. Of course the balance of that is the annual provisions, and I have talked about the asset funding under which buses and so on come.

I want to make a couple of comments about capital expenditure because some significant claims have been made by the opposition about that expenditure. I draw attention—and it should be obvious from the list that I have just read out—to the fact that, in relation to major works (which came to a total of \$48 million to be expended this financial year), the bulk of the \$36 million works in programs and works yet to commence from previous capital programs is slippage from the former government. This new government has had to deal with the Liberal backlog. I will take members through some of that to point out exactly how that occurs—

**Ms CHAPMAN:** Mr Acting Chairman, I have a point of order before the minister proceeds. I have called for a document to be provided—and it has been agreed that it will be provided—which confirms the \$71.324 million total delivered on budget day. That is the document that has been read out, and I ask that it be supplied.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** Yes, certainly.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** Once again the minister can answer how she wishes: she does not have to take it on notice if she does not want to.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** With respect, Mr Acting Chairman, I was not challenging that at all. I was asking for the document to be provided which the minister has indicated she will produce.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** This is the total program—everything that comes into the expenditure for 2002-03.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** I refer to this again, Mr Acting Chairman, because the minister identified that it would be produced; that is, the document I called for that applied as at the date of delivery of the budget which represented a total of \$71.324 million. I ask that that be produced and, if it has other information in it, so be it.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** I have just expanded on that. The relevant page of the budget papers is 7.27, which shows the investing summary statement and gives the member the total figures. I must point out one difference in what I read out, and it relates to the presentation. The total is the same, that is, the targeted asset funding of \$17 million, but part of that is on the recurrent side of the capital program and part is on the other side, and that accounts for the difference in the new works bottom line. The figure in the budget paper is \$10.819 million, and the figure I have just given the member is \$11.569 million. The only reason that that is different is for presentation reasons. The \$17 million is reflected all in one place, but the total bottom line is the same and the member will note that. I am quite happy to provide that document.

I need to point out exactly what has been the case in terms of capital works—and quite a bit of hypocrisy has come from the opposition—particularly given where this new government is increasing funding on what the previous government had budgeted in its forward estimates. Additionally—and members might be surprised at this figure—there was \$124 million of underspending by the previous Liberal government on capital works. That is an extraordinary amount of money. That could pay for so much in this state. Let me prove it—

*Ms Chapman interjecting:*

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** The member for Bragg asked me to confirm the figure of \$124 million and I will.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** Minister, we are close to recess time, to use school language. In fairness to the catering staff, we will resume at 3.50 p.m., when you can continue your answer.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** Certainly. It has not been the practice in past years in this particular portfolio, but I extend an invitation to you, sir, and to all members of the committee to join us in the lounge next door for some tea and coffee.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** Thank you. I hope that does not blow the budget, but thank you for your kind invitation. Minister, do you want to add anything to that answer?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** Yes. There was an interjection from the member for Bragg asking me to justify the figure of \$124 million in underspending by the previous Liberal government. I will address that question. I apologise—I have lost the piece of paper with which I was going to justify that.

In the meantime, earlier the member for Light asked me a question regarding school choice, and I said I would confirm that with staff. School choice is decided upon three things: first, the match with the position advertised; secondly, the bands within which a teacher fits, which we were talking about earlier and to which the member referred; and, thirdly, referee reports. The bands are: band 1, the guarantees; band 2, priority; and band 3, ordinary transfers.

Regarding the honourable member's question about a teacher being placed in the country with a guarantee under the old scheme—and I point out that there was a four-year guarantee policy in place which ceased in 1995—the answer is that, yes, that is a pre-given right. That teacher could have priority over another with the same skills match. Equally, if a teacher were placed in the country after 1995, that is, after the four-year guarantee policy ceased, that teacher might not have priority over another with the same skills match—for example, where a teacher is inappropriately placed and has been in permanent against temporary (PAT) positions for up to their fifth year.

Overall, the school choice process, of course, is aimed at giving significant choice to schools. So, in the changes that have been made by the government in the new placement processes, we see a very much expanded number of positions advertised in this way. Whilst there are some guarantees, they affect a relatively small proportion of the overall number of places. I will come back to that other issue a little later on.

**Ms BEDFORD:** Can the minister inform the committee of the government's plans for the reopening of the former Sturt Street Primary School?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** The state government promised during the election campaign to reopen the Sturt Street Primary School, which had been closed under the previous government in 1996. We have provisioned for that work in the 2002-03 budget.

It is unfortunate, however, that we had to set back our plans a little after learning about the condition of the site, which came about through neglect under the previous governments in the years since the doors of the school were closed in 1996. There has been some quite serious deterioration of the assets in terms of the structural integrity of the building.

A recent architectural and engineering survey report identified serious architectural and soil problems with the site. Before the building can once again be used for educational purposes, there does need to be significant work undertaken on the site for the safety of staff and students. This means that we will not see the Sturt Street Primary School reopened before the start of the 2004 school year. However, we are moving ahead with our plans for the site, and options have been prepared for the delivery of educational services from Sturt Street. There is a consultation

process proceeding with key interested parties about the best way to move forward in providing a school in a central part of the city district.

**Ms BEDFORD:** When in opposition, the government was clearly opposed to many aspects of the Partnerships 21 model of local management and governance. Now that a review of P21 has been instigated, could the minister explain how this is progressing and what it will mean for schools next year?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** One of the key election promises of the then opposition was to review the local management scheme of schools, Partnerships 21. On coming to government we put into place an independent review chaired by retired professor, Ian Cox, with representation on that steering group from parent bodies, teacher representatives, staff representatives, principal organisations and departmental representatives. Addressing the inequities associated with the scheme and instigating a review were among my first priorities upon taking office, with around 90 per cent of schools and preschools in the state already in the scheme. It is a scheme that has been going now for three years, and it is an opportune time to look closely at what has been working well and what has not. Doing so will enable us to make enhancements and changes as we move local governance and management of schools forward into the future.

It was essential that the government implemented the review quickly to ensure that schools were not left wondering what happens in 2003, and a widely representative group was put together on the committee as well as the Australian Education Union, which represents teachers. The committee was furnished with the P21-related submissions which had been available to the select committee inquiry of the previous parliament, and sought extensive feedback from schools, preschools, associations and the wider community. That committee has been particularly active in making sure that all voices are being heard on the matters of reference before the committee. A number of issues have been raised frequently by the broad education community. These include equity; financial accounting processes, in schools and preschools as well as in the state office; the composition and function of governing councils; asset management and funding; and opportunities for flexible staffing. Professor Cox is due to present his report and recommendations to me towards the end of this month and then decisions can be made well in time for implementation at the start of the next school year.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** I do not have the document that I was advised would be tabled during the afternoon tea break, and I just call for that to be produced. In the meantime, I will proceed with the next question. Yesterday, the minister issued a press release under the heading 'Schools given more power to recruit staff by gender'. The opposition welcomes a flexible approach to the Equal Opportunity Act and we are delighted that the volleyball players at Brighton Secondary School will be able to build on their great reputation. I ask the minister to put on record the ground rules which will apply to this new interpretation of section 34(2) of the Equal Opportunity Act. The second paragraph of the news release states:

The option is only open to schools if they prove that such an appointment is necessary to meet the needs of all students.

The second to last paragraph states that schools must:

... provide documentation.

My questions are:

1. How is it envisaged that the schools will be able to prove that the appointment is necessary, and what documentation will be required?

2. Will the department issue guidelines to enable the schools to benefit from this new measure?

3. Will the new interpretation apply to schools, sports and other community organisations which serve the needs of children?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** This refers to section 34(2) of the Equal Opportunity Act SA (1984), and I will just read that to the committee. Section 2 states:

This division does not apply to discrimination on the ground of sex in relation to employment for which it is a genuine occupational requirement that a person be of a particular sex.

A circular, signed by Steve Kelton, Executive Director of Human Services, was sent out to all district superintendents and principals a couple of weeks ago, and I think it addresses many of the issues that the honourable member is raising.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** I have the letter and it does not address any of it.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** I am happy to read the contents of the letter into the record for the benefit of members. It was addressed to all district superintendents and principals. The letter states:

Until the end of 1997 the department implemented a 'scheme or undertaking' within the meaning of section 47 of the Equal Opportunity Act SA (1984) to redress the past educational disadvantage of girls.

Within this 'scheme or undertaking' schools were able to advertise designated positions to women only in the first instance where it could be demonstrated that there would be improved outcomes for female students in areas where they had been traditionally under-represented, such as science, mathematics and technology. The scheme could also be applied to school leadership positions in instances where less than 40 per cent of senior leadership positions were held by women.

The discontinuation of the section 47 scheme has resulted in practical difficulties for some schools, especially secondary schools, in ensuring that the needs of all students are addressed, particularly in areas such as physical education and the provision of a counselling service that is appropriate for both male and female students.

Advice has recently been sought from the Crown Solicitor's Office regarding circumstances whereby the appointment of a staff member of a particular gender is necessary to enable students of both genders to fully participate in specific areas of the curriculum. One such example is the mix of physical education teachers in secondary schools, where the absence of female teachers can result in girls being unable to participate in interstate sporting competitions, as well as routine practical difficulties in the supervision of change-rooms.

The advice from the Crown Solicitor's Office indicates that in such instances schools may wish to apply for the appointment of a staff member of a particular gender within the provisions of section 34(2) of the Equal Opportunity Act. This section enables such an appointment to be made where 'it is a genuine occupational requirement that a person be the particular sex'. In these circumstances the principal will need to be able to provide documentation outlining the particular circumstances and clearly stating the requirements of the position which deem the appointment of a staff member of a particular gender to be necessary.

Any application for a section 34(2) appointment must be first discussed with the Personnel Advisory Committee and then forwarded to Barry Thompson, A/Superintendent, Human Resources, who will assess the specific circumstances within the context of the school's staffing and student profile. Careful consideration will need to be given to the balance between meeting the educational needs of particular groups of students and legislative requirements to avoid any discriminatory practices in employment.

It goes on with further details. Essentially the first step, if a school wants to take advantage of this provision under the Equal Opportunity Act is to discuss the proposal with the personnel advisory committee. From there it goes to central office, the human resources directorate, which will assess this

on a case by case basis on the specific circumstances of the school, the staffing and the student mix. That is the process by which schools have been advised they should proceed on this matter.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** Your position then is that the application will go to a representative in the department? The decision will be made by a member of the department?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** I understand that to be the case, but I will ask for clarification from the Deputy Chief Executive. The Chief Executive would have the final sign off on this. First, it would go to human resources and ultimately sign off will come from the Chief Executive, which is a fairly standard procedure for a number of practices within the department.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** With the same right of appeal to the minister?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** There are grievance appeal processes within the department, and I anticipate that they will be applicable in a similar way in these cases. Is there a concern that the member has?

**Ms CHAPMAN:** It is a whole new process—you have set the rules, and we just want to know what they are. You have bypassed the Equal Opportunity Tribunal procedure under the act and I want to be clear about the new procedure that you have created, allegedly on crown advice.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** If there is a concern and the member does not support this change in policy, I invite her to write to the Chief Executive or to me with her concern and we will certainly see whether there are any grounds for her concern and address them. This move has been welcomed by schools and school principals and will overcome a difficulty a number of them have experienced in being able to have their entire student cohort participate in the full range of curriculum activities a school wants to offer.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** I will proceed to questions on capital works if the document I called for is ready. I was addressing that to you, Madam Acting Chair. You indicated that you have made an inquiry and the document is not yet here. Concerns have been expressed about what will happen to the current reviews being conducted by the office of review. Will the minister confirm that there will continue to be resource commitment to improve quality and accountability, with sufficient numbers of high level educational leaders? In particular, I refer to the leaked document from the department. Will the minister confirm concerns in relation to staff from the office of the review team having approached the occupational health and safety representative expressing significant concern about the current working environment with the strategic planning and information directorate? It has been seen to be essential that no transition will be finalised until the issues surrounding this have been resolved. Will the minister give that commitment?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** The member has picked up on the fact that it was broadcast widely to every school and preschool in the state—not once but possibly twice by the department, and to at least one, possibly both, of the representative unions—that we are restructuring some sections of the department. The new government is particularly keen to make sure that our central agency in education is very clearly focused on outcomes for students in schools in everything we do towards ensuring that children's education comes first in all our thinking, planning and policies surrounding their education.

We are particularly concerned that we take a student focused approach to policy making. There has been signifi-

cant change with the advent of an incoming Labor government. Our priorities are very different to the priorities of the former Liberal government, as evidenced in the 2002 budget. These priorities are clearly stated. That requires a reorientation of the department to Labor's governmental priorities for education, and that means some change within the department.

Significantly and perhaps ironically, with the advent of local school management we have seen a growth in the number of directorates inside the Education Department. Some of those have been built up around Liberal government priorities. The office of review was but one of those. It is natural, and in the government's view necessary, to realign functions within the department to match our educational priorities, and that is exactly what is being done. To talk about leaked documents is a little irrelevant in this context since the process has been so open.

These changes were communicated on budget day by the Chief Executive to every school and preschool in the state. At least twice the Chief Executive has met with representatives of the Public Service Association and with the Australian Education Union to discuss the changed process, which will be implemented in the most appropriate way. This has come about partly at this time with the new budget cycle. The old education, training and employment department has been split into two portfolios, with my portfolio being the Department of Education and Children's Services. My portfolio is the Department of Education and Children's Services. Coincidentally, there has been some movement at the senior executive level—indeed, the executive director level—which has opened up some opportunity for restructuring to gain greater efficiencies in the provision of our service.

As I said earlier in answer to another honourable member's question, one of the key changes that this government is implementing within the department is a change of culture and a change in practice. That requires a total reorientation through the whole central agency to ensure that activities are aligned with support for schools and preschools; hence, the changes to which the honourable member has referred. The unions are being consulted, which is appropriate and which the department is required to do. It is my strong wish that that consultation be effective and supportive of our employees, because the new government does see our employees as our most valuable resource in delivering education to children in schools and preschools.

There will be some movement, as a consequence. The Office of Review is being collapsed and its functions disseminated between other directorates of the department. Similarly, the functions of the Office of Change Management are being disseminated between the existing directorates. The metropolitan and country directorates of schools and children's services are being amalgamated. There will be one executive director in charge of that function in the future. This is about tuning the organisation to the whole reason for its being, that is, to service schools and preschools.

The honourable member raised some concerns about occupational health and safety in shifting from the Office of Review to strategic planning and information. I personally am not aware of those details, but I am advised that those concerns are being addressed. Any changes will involve consultation with unions and staff to ensure that change is done in a productive, fair and appropriate way. I do instruct the chief executive to ensure that all the occupational health, safety and welfare issues, and all other issues of staff, are addressed. As I mentioned earlier, it is a focus of this new

government to ensure that the department in the future has a better record in occupational health and safety than it has had in the past.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** Will the minister confirm whether the new 5 per cent levy for internal transfer will be implemented for all reviews or evaluations of major DECS programs and policy initiatives, as published in the document in relation to the Office of Review transition plan to which the minister has referred?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** I am not aware of what the honourable member is talking about, so I cannot comment on it. Obviously, I have not seen the document to which the honourable member is referring.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** The paragraph states:

Responsibility for all reviews or evaluations of major DECS programs or policy initiatives: this function could be funded by a 5 per cent levy on the total cost of the program being reviewed... Office of Review transition plan, Department of Education and Children's Services.

Is the minister with me yet?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** I have not seen that particular document.

**The ACTING CHAIRPERSON (Ms BEDFORD):** Is this part of the budget papers?

**Ms CHAPMAN:** Yes, and I am happy to show the minister.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** I have not seen exactly what the honourable member is talking about. She is talking about a transition plan. I understand that the chief executive asked executive directors in the affected directorates of the department to prepare transition plans. They have not been endorsed by the corporate board or the chief executive. They are working documents that have been put forward by executive directors. To the best of my knowledge, it is a document coming from one person in the department. They are not endorsed documents. Indeed, I expect that the chief transition plans could possibly be quite contradictory. The process, as I understand it, has gone no further than the chief executive asking for them to be supplied.

At the end of the day, from my point of view, the criterion that must be applied is that change is driven by ramping-up our service to schools, preschools and students. That is the whole driver in making any changes at all.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** My question was not whether there will be changes; that will be for the minister to determine. My question is whether the minister will confirm whether or not a new 5 per cent levy will be applied. The minister quite fairly said, 'On the information on which you are relying it is still under consideration.' Is that what I am hearing at the moment?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** This paper has no status at all. Quite frankly, across-the-board type levies are not particularly sensible initiatives, no matter what they are about.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** I am happy with that answer.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** In fact, that was the tool applied by the former government, that is, percentage cuts right across the board in education. They just never made sense to me.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** I am happy with that answer.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** If change is not driven by policy, then why do it? I will interrupt at this point. Earlier the member for Light asked me about publications being sent to staff at their home addresses and about the department's policy. He referred to a post budget publication which the chief executive had sent to all principals (I might say I was

unaware of this) at their home address, the reason being that it was school holidays. Last year a similar budget document was faxed to all staff at schools. For the information of this committee I indicate that, under the former government's administration, the original offer of the 1999 enterprise agreement was sent to the home addresses of all staff in the department. So, the honourable member's assertion that things being sent to the home address of staff is a change in policy is clearly not correct.

**Ms BREUER:** As the chair of the ERD Committee, this particularly interests me. Will the minister outline how the ecologically sustainable development project will work this year? I refer to Budget Paper 4, volume 2, page 7.25.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** The ecologically sustainable development grant is a good initiative and one that the former government introduced, so I give credit to the former government. This government will continue to support that initiative; however, it will be applied in quite a different way from that of the former government. We will not be making it a selective program based on a school or preschool's involvement in Partnerships 21 as the former government did. The former government chose to exclude sites that had not joined P21; we will not be doing the same. In fact, this year for the first time all schools and preschools will have an opportunity to apply for a grant, and today a circular has gone to all sites inviting their applications.

Last year 32 sites received funding for individual initiatives and 146 sites were supported to install Micromet water conservation technology. In the previous year, funding was approved for 71 projects such as water recycling, aquifer storage and recharge, creek zone restoration, land care and energy efficiency. Project proposals will be assessed by a panel and must meet certain criteria such as demonstrated curriculum linkages, student learning outcomes and action, and community involvement.

The ESD program has a strong educational and action component, with its focus on student involvement and learning outcomes and teaching young people to care for the environment. In recent months South Australian public schools have attracted much attention for their environmental practices. For example, Playford Primary School was awarded a Royal Australian Institute of Architects award earlier this year for its innovative, environmentally friendly design. The school features specially selected building materials that maintain constant temperatures, natural lighting is maximised and energy use is minimised. The new Mawson Lakes school will be modelled along similar principles. I am very proud to say that Urrbrae High School's land care initiatives are on display on the front page of the 2002-03 *White Pages* telephone directory. That school offers a certificate in environmental studies and was recognised for its commitment to water and energy conservation and its waste management system.

**Ms BREUER:** The second area that particularly interests me is the issue of recruitment to country schools. The difficulties faced by South Australian country schools in attracting and retaining quality teachers is well known, and I have done a lot of work on this myself recently. I am aware that in the past some positions have been advertised repeatedly to attract teachers. Will the minister explain how the government is now addressing this issue?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** This government is very aware of the difficulties faced by some schools in attracting suitable staff. I point out that these problems exist not only in country schools; other schools across the state, including areas of

metropolitan Adelaide, can find attracting teachers very difficult. The Department of Education and Children's Services has more than 6 500 teachers seeking work this year, including 4 600 looking for contract or permanent positions, and nearly 2 000 looking for temporary relief work. So, there are teachers around, but the difficulty is in attracting them to specific schools, and that has been a challenge for a long time. For example, a teacher living in southern metropolitan Adelaide may not want or be able to move to Port Augusta to take up an available teaching position.

It was quite obvious to this government that a package of new incentives was needed to attract quality teachers to our country schools. As a result, we have come up with an extensive country incentive scheme as part of the new enterprise agreement successfully negotiated between the government and the unions. It works by grouping country schools into zones according to their location and their level of disadvantage. Each zone carries cash incentives that are paid to teachers during their first five years of service in the country. These incentives range up to \$6 200 annually in the most remote schools. The government has also recognised the importance of enabling country towns to retain their young people, because it is often the case that a young person has to move away from their country base to take up study beyond school, and that can bring with it a quite considerable financial burden through the cost of travel, accommodation and general living expenses.

Under a new grant scheme for country based students, the government has just announced in this budget that we will provide study grants to support these young people through their study and return to the country upon its completion. Students who want to train as teachers and return to the country for their first teaching appointment will be eligible for the grants, which will help with the costs associated with studying away from home. Those students will be guaranteed a placement once they successfully finish their course in the country.

The department is also in the second year of a very successful scheme designed to attract graduate teachers to teaching positions in the country at an early stage. This gives our best graduates the security of winning a permanent position before they finish their studies and also ensures that we do not lose them to other school sectors—and I am talking here about interstate and international sectors. The quality of our teachers in South Australia is well known, and that makes them attractive to interstate departments and internationally as well.

It also gives our country schools a chance to fill positions that may otherwise have been difficult to staff. Last year 18 graduates were recruited and this year the department has offered 48 positions through the scheme. The majority of people accepted within days, all for permanent positions within the department, although some of the graduates will not be appointed to an actual position until term 4, as schools finalise their vacancies for next year. So far, there have been a number of appointments to positions at a number of schools. These include Coober Pedy Area School where three positions have been made, two appointments at John Pirie Secondary School, Gladstone High School, Clare High School, Minlaton District School, Murray Bridge South Primary School, Port Augusta Secondary School, Port Lincoln High School, Port Wakefield Primary School and Roxby Downs Area School. A number of the positions are in specialty fields such as maths, science, English, chemistry and languages. Another benefit of this program is that



graduates have the chance to familiarise themselves with the schools, meet the staff and undergo induction programs before they start teaching.

I was asked earlier to justify a figure of \$124 million in underspending of capital works by the previous government. I now have that justification and I wonder whether now would be an appropriate time to give that information.

**The ACTING CHAIRPERSON:** Are members happy with that? The member for Bragg?

**Ms CHAPMAN:** I am happy with that.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** In 1993 expenditure was under budget by \$10.834 million; in 1994-95 expenditure was under budget by \$27.951 million; in 1995-96 expenditure was below budget by \$4.094 million; in 1996-97—and members might note that that was a pre-election year budget—the outcome reflected the expenditure at levels consistent with the budget, so there was no underspending in that particular year, which was, as I say, an election year; in 1997-98 there was underspending of \$8.823 million; in 1998-99 the budget was underspent by \$11.03 million; in 1999-2000 the figure was \$1.696 million over budget; in 2000-01 the expenditure was \$31.722 million under budget; and in 2001-02 the expenditure was \$32.029 million under budget. For this year—

**Ms CHAPMAN:** Shame on your government!

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** ‘Shame’ is a good word, too—

**Ms CHAPMAN:** Shame on your government!

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** Shame on our government? I do not know how the member for Bragg can talk about the years that her party was in government and say to the Labor Party, which has been in government for four months, that it is our fault. That is an extraordinary claim, and probably aimed at diverting attention from the fact that in the current financial year the new government has budgeted to spend \$138.843 million in total, which is almost \$16 million more than her party, when in government, allowed for capital works in the budget forward estimates. There has been a lot of hypocrisy publicly from the former government in regard to capital works. The former government was in power for eight years and it underspent the capital budget by \$124 million. Do I need to remind the opposition what it would mean if we had had \$124 million spent on schools? It is an incredible amount of money which would have alleviated the situation that the new Labor government found itself in of having to address a significant under funding of capital works by the previous Liberal government.

I would like to address a rather extraordinary claim which was made publicly by the opposition about federal funding for our capital works program. There has been talk publicly, and there has been quite a bit of politicking between the federal Liberal government and the state Liberal government, about commitments of the state Liberal government in terms of commonwealth funding. The state opposition has been talking about the deferment of certain projects in this budget and trying to give the impression that all was rosy under its administration. For the record, I would like to correct some of what has been said and also to point out the hypocrisy of the statements made by the opposition.

It was claimed that acquittals of commonwealth funding of state capital works were somehow done differently this year than was the case in the past. I point to a few examples of past practice by the former Liberal government in this regard. First, the Fregon Anangu school, which is a \$600 000 project of which \$450 000 is commonwealth funding, was reported to the commonwealth by the former Liberal

government as commencing in September 2000. It has yet to commence. So, contrary to the opposition’s politicking on this matter, the record of its government tells the real story—there has been a two-year delay, in fact, on that project.

The next point may be of electoral interest to the member for Bragg. The \$2.86 million Marryatville High School project, of which \$1 million is federal funding, was due to commence in September 2000. It did not commence under the former Liberal government. In fact, it commenced in February 2002—again, a significant deferment of that project.

The Melaleuca school (the old Mount Gambier East school), a \$1 million project of which \$490 000 is commonwealth funding, was due to commence in December 2000. That project commenced with the Labor government’s coming to power in May 2002. The North Adelaide Primary School project, a \$2.09 million project, of which \$800 000 is commonwealth funds, was due to commence in June 2000 but it commenced in September 2001.

So, the opposition can grandstand and say that the Labor government, which has been in power for four months, has somehow diddled the state on capital works, but the opposition’s record of underspending by \$124 million on capital works in its term, and significant slippage—in some cases of two years—in projects involving federal funds shows the hypocrisy with which this government will try to defuse its reputation for past poor management in education.

The previous government took the unprecedented decision last year to announce in advance this year’s capital works program. That is not usual practice, but it must be considered that it was an election year for both the federal government and the state Liberal government. It was a proposed program; yet the former government wrote to each of the schools allocated funds on that proposed program, not telling them how much was allocated for this year but giving them the impression that their works would proceed. Despite doing that, it then failed to take action to be in a position to spend any of that funding in this current financial year.

That was the unhappy situation that the new Labor government found itself in. Given the underfunding in the forward estimates by the former Liberal government, the new Labor government had to put an extra \$16 million into the capital program, on top of what it had promised, plus deal with very high expectations by a number of schools around the state that they would be funded, when clearly there was no way that some of those projects would be in a position to proceed.

The Liberals clearly failed to adequately fund education. They were aware that in 2001-02 there was a shortfall in their funding, but they refused to acknowledge it. They short-changed education. Submissions were prepared for the minister to take to cabinet to address that situation, but it was not addressed; it was left for the new, incoming government to find the black hole in education. Instead, in May last year the former minister instructed the department not to pay its accounts in order to get through the previous financial year without its expenditure black hole showing up. Of course, it was an election year. Now the opposition comes into this place and says that we are underfunding education!

Let me point out to this committee that the expenditure in the previous financial year was boosted not by the Liberal government but by the new Labor government. The new Labor government had to plug the black hole left by minister Buckby and his government. The new Labor government had to inject an additional \$42 million into the 2001-02 financial year to cover costs, to pay the bills. It would have been very

easy for the new government to do what the previous government did and inject that money into the 2002-03 budget, inject it on 1 July. In that way we could have bolstered our books by \$84 million. That is not what happened.

This government bumped up the expenditure in the previous financial year by \$42 million and then, after all that, the opposition has the hide to talk about cuts to education. Although the budget papers reveal clearly the additional expenditure from Treasury for all our fully funded election commitments, the opposition is now trying to play fannies with the budget figures. On a budget to budget comparison, last financial year the budget was \$1 803 285 000. The 2002-03 budget for education spending is \$1 959 767 000, an increase of \$156 482 000. I am advised that this represents a nominal growth of 8.7 per cent and a real growth of 6 per cent.

The opposition tries to say, 'Well, if you compare expenditure in 2001-02 with the budget of 2002-03, there is only a \$20 million increase.' The opposition is comparing the Labor budget with the increased expenditure that the new government put into 2001-02, that extra \$42 million that bumped up the expenditure in 2001-02. There is also an unusual expenditure in 2001-02, and that is the targeted voluntary separation packages. The former government spent \$44.16 million on targeted separation packages in 2001-02. Once we take that out of the equation, the figure for 2002-03 becomes a \$58 million increase in real terms, not nominal terms.

So, let us not hear any more about this fictitious cut to education, which just has no credibility. I do not think that anybody is listening. What did we get for that \$44.16 million? For 2001-02, there were 292 TVSPs. If we look over the term of the previous Liberal government, since 1993 more than 2 800 Education Act employees were separated from the department, that is teachers and principals. Let us put an end to this scaremongering and manipulation of budget figures. I will supply the member for Bragg with the document that she requested.

**Ms BREUER:** I was pleased to hear in the answer to my last question the initiatives that are in this current budget, and I am sure that the member for Flinders also noted with interest what is being done, because we have some of the state's most remote schools in our electorates and we share the problem of getting teachers. When there is a six or seven hour drive back to Adelaide, it is very difficult to attract them, so I will follow those initiatives with interest because we are at crisis point in some of those remote schools and I will be interested to see further initiatives in the next budget.

I acknowledge that we are trying this time and I hope that the previous minister acknowledges it as well because, when it was pointed out to him, he always told us that there was not a shortage of teachers, that there were 4 500 on the list; yet if you spoke to the principals of the schools in somewhere like Coober Pedy, they despaired at those 4 500 teachers on the list, because they could not access any of them.

My next question concerns school security. Elizabeth Park Primary School was the target of an extremely damaging arson attack earlier this year. The effect of such an attack on a school is untold and often means the loss of years of work, the loss of resources and the loss of familiarity for students. Can the minister explain what the government is doing to prevent further attacks of this nature on our schools?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** There have been a couple of very distressing and severe arson attacks this year that have

brought this very concerning issue to the fore for this government. I visited Elizabeth Park Primary School, to which the honourable member referred in her question, the following day, in the wake of the fire, and experienced first-hand the devastation and the heartbreak that a community really experiences after such an incident.

I might just say on that note that the Elizabeth Park Primary School community has galvanised together very well to support one another and to work through this. I pay tribute to the principal, the school council, the volunteers, the mums and dads and the caregivers at the school who have gone to great lengths to minimise the devastation for the children and to work towards a positive future for that school.

However, deliberately lit fires and vandalism in schools carry a significant cost. They result in an outlay from the department's risk fund of millions of dollars every year. In 2001-02 alone school vandalism, arson and theft cost taxpayers an estimated \$12.5 million. While we cannot make our schools fortresses and completely inaccessible to the wider community, we can do a number of things to lessen the likelihood of arson and vandalism attacks occurring. This government has announced an extra \$4 million over four years to undertake a security audit to determine where greater security measures are needed and to provide capital grants of up to \$50 000 to schools for the upgrade of physical security measures, which includes lighting, inner fencing and security cameras.

We already have security patrols of schools in place in a number of country and metropolitan locations. As well, the majority of sites that are considered to be high or medium risk have security alarms or other measures in place. Tightening security even further is part of our commitment to doing everything we can to try to prevent these senseless acts and the wider harm they cause. This government is very serious about protecting our schools. However, that does remind me of something that I would like to bring to the attention of the committee, and it relates to this question and my response to the former question about the underspending of capital works money by the former Liberal government.

If I have counted correctly, in this budget we have provisioned funding to address the backlog in fire reinstatement work for 45 schools. Four of the fires on that list occurred in April and May, that is, since the new government took power, but 45 schools dating back to the beginning of the year 2000 are still awaiting work to be done. That is a considerable backlog left to this government by the former Liberal government and its associated price tag in the millions of dollars. We undertake to try to do that work as quickly as possible.

We undertake to attempt to ensure that projects put on our capital works list generally do not slip; that is, that we spend the moneys that we say we will spend in the financial year that they are allocated, because to do otherwise really short changes students in all schools in South Australia.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** I want to record on the transcript that two pages of a document dated 6 August 2002 (which is today's date, and I presume the date it was faxed) have been provided to me. I want to record on the transcript that what has been produced is the complete list of the investment summary statement consistent with the total investment for the year 2002-03 of \$71.234 million as published in the budget papers and was the complete list of approved projects, including those specified in this list, as at the date of the budget, which was 11 July 2002. This is the document that I requested be produced on 12 July and then confirmed in

correspondence on 31 July 2002 as the document relevant to that day. Will the minister identify whether or not there has been a change—because I think she indicated there may have been—and, if there has been, what it is?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** From the list I read into *Hansard*?

**Ms CHAPMAN:** From 11 July 2002.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** The only changes that would be applicable would be adjustments in cash flows as at the end of July. That is done every month.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** I do not have a cash flow statement. Has the minister seen what has been handed to me?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** Yes.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** All I have is a budget for the next three consecutive years of proposed works under the categories of new works, new works carried forward, works in progress and some minor works. There is no cash flow statement in what I have.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** Which is the estimated cash flow for the 2002-03 year.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** 'Estimated budget' is what it says here.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** And cash flow.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** What has changed? I missed that bit.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** At the end of each month, the department updates what the current cash flow state of play is.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** I appreciate that, but I am asking that this document be identified as the document that applied as at 11 July 2002.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** I believe so; that is the advice I am given.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** First, will the minister confirm the criteria used to assess the introduction of new works and the deferral of old works previously approved and budgeted for in the 2001-02 year; and, secondly, was any regional impact statement undertaken prior to the letters of deferral and notice of the new works respectively?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** I will answer those questions individually. No formula is applied to the management of the capital program. What will apply in the future, as I mentioned earlier today in answer to another question, is that it is important to the government to ensure that all schools have asset management plans or their equivalent—not all schools have asset management plans, but, by the end of this year, we expect all schools to have asset management plans—to ensure that there is a clear link between the work done and the work identified. The intention is to move away from a rather ad hoc approach to the planning of capital infrastructure in state schools. It is important for schools and school communities to understand that there is fairness in the capital program.

However, the new government did review the capital program as presented to it when it took office. It was a capital program not pertaining to last year's budget: it had been changed since last year's budget. Being a federal and state election year, I guess that is no surprise. A number of schools had been advised that they were on the capital program for this financial year. This is not usual practice and presented this government with a challenge. As an election promise, all these schools had been advised that they would be on the next government's capital works program, whether it was to be a Liberal or a Labor government. That is not the usual practice. The schools were not advised how much of their project would be done in this financial year, so expectations were quite high amongst nearly all of them that all the work would be done in this financial year. Many of the schools had not

even had the scope defined within the department, so the work was not done. From that time, which I believe was about September—

**Ms CHAPMAN:** Was that 2001?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** No, that was the budget. These announcements were made subsequently, in about September 2001, I believe.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** To assist the minister, I am referring to the projects which had been budgeted and which were abandoned from the 2001 year. I am not talking about subsequent announcements.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** You did not make that clear.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** I apologise. Is that clear now—the ones that were published in the 2001 budget for the 2001-02 year that were abandoned, the new capital works and the criteria for both.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** They were various—government priorities, projects not in a position to proceed. For example, Gawler Primary School was due to begin construction in November 2001. When we got into government, we found that the land had not even been acquired. The significance of this is that the whole design for that school was predicated upon acquiring the neighbouring land to that school. That had not been acquired.

As it turns out, it was not to be a purchase but a compulsory acquisition of land authorised by the previous minister. As the then minister knows, because he was in power at the time, the landowner objected to that compulsory acquisition. The previous government, under the stewardship of the former minister, had not resolved the issue of the acquisition of the land when the new government was elected.

So, we had a project on the capital works schedule in 2001-02 that today is still not ready to proceed. For that particular project, we have to go back to the drawing board and look at other options for a different design in order to accommodate the space capacity requirements for that particular school because that land is not available. That was something beyond our control.

Schools have been deferred and schools have been brought forward. In most cases, it comes down to planning; in others, it comes down to priorities. There is a set bucket of money. This particular bucket of money is more than the previous Liberal government left for us in the forward estimates, and the exercise has been one of trying to accommodate as many schools as possible in the fairest way, given the stage to which those projects had progressed. In some cases, just not enough planning has been done to proceed.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** Will the minister confirm that the allocation for teaching staff will still be assessed for year 10 students on the basis of the number of students enrolling at the commencement of the academic year and not an averaging of the number who commence enrolment and conclude at the end of the academic year, as currently applies to years 11 and 12? If this is to be changed, what is the justification for doing so, as this will have a direct result in reducing the number of teachers allocated for year 10 students?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** The staffing formula has not changed and, as at the start of January 2003, it will remain so this year. The minimum number of teachers deployed for the number of year 10 students in a particular school will not change. However, I anticipate that additional teaching resources will be allocated, and I advise members that they will be hearing more about the programs that this government will be putting in place at the start of the next financial year. The funding for the range of measures for the raising of the

school leaving age is clearly in the budget, and it comes down to \$8.1 million per annum.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** Moving on to the next level.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** I refer to an issue that was raised recently in relation to Loreto College and the proposed slip-road being established on the grounds of the college at Marryatville as part of the Portrush Road redevelopment funded by the federal government, a project being administered by Transport SA, which is under your colleague minister Wright. As a result of a blow-out in costings on the project, Loreto has been advised that the slip-road funding of \$1 million is under threat and, in fact, has already been cut. All interested parties have met and have requested that a reinstatement be made, together with an extra \$300 000 from Transport SA to effect this—

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** That is expenditure in the transport portfolio.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** I am coming to the question. I am giving you the background, in case you are not aware of it. The traffic hazards are obvious. With the anticipated increase in traffic, the whole community remains concerned. As the minister may be aware, one child has already been killed on Portrush Road outside the college.

*An honourable member interjecting:*

**Ms CHAPMAN:** It does not have a slip road, yet—they apparently have been cut out. Will the minister confirm her support to assist this project and consider the allocation of funding, if necessary, in the 2002-03 year for this project, given the priority and given that the Portrush Road redevelopment, as the minister may not be aware, is already up to the precincts of the Loreto College?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** This is clearly something that is the responsibility of the Minister for Transport. I do not have the details of the Minister for Transport's budget, so I cannot comment on the progress, feasibility or otherwise of the topic that you are referring to. What I do suggest to the honourable member, with respect, is that she write to the Minister for Transport and express her concerns. The Minister for Transport has a keen interest in schools (certainly in his own electorate) so I am sure that he will deal with her concern and her request with compassion and within the bounds of his responsibility.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** Do I take that as a no?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** You have asked a question that is outside my portfolio responsibility. I do not have responsibility for roads.

**Ms CICCARELLO:** My question relates broadly to children with disabilities, which is a line in Outputs 1.1 and 1.2, Budget Paper 4, volume 2, pages 7.7 and 7.8. Can the minister explain how the state government is supporting the Conductive Education Program?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** On 16 July, the member for Colton, in another place, spoke about the excellent programs offered at Kidman Park Primary School for children with special needs. Indeed, I met a number of those children at a function not so long ago and I am quite aware of their circumstances, some of their needs and of the excellent work being done by teachers at the school.

I do concur with the statements made in another place by the member for Colton, and I would like to add that that school is the only one in the state to offer a Conductive Education Program. The future of this program, however, was in doubt because long-term funding had not been assured by the previous Liberal government. I am pleased to announce

to members of this committee that the government has turned that situation around. We have agreed to provide \$143 000 a year in ongoing funding to restore the program and allow it to expand.

This commitment will strengthen the program and improve the capacity of the school to recruit a suitable conductive educator. Additional funding is also provided and will support an expansion of the program so that the benefits of conductive education can be spread across the state. There will be more opportunity for professional development to support the integration of conductive education principles in schools and preschools. As well, schools and preschools will have access to consultancy and advisory services. Conductive education is a special program for children with motor disorders which teaches them simple movements and exercises to give them the skills and motivation they need to overcome problems of movement encountered in everyday living and learning.

**Ms CICCARELLO:** Can the minister explain how growth in languages education is being supported?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** It is important that we give young people the chance to experience the languages of different cultures. Certainly, in a multicultural society like ours, a person who can communicate in a language other than English is advantaged. At every level in the work force people are dealing with culturally and linguistically diverse groups of people, so the bilingual person can understand and relate to people irrespective of their background or indeed their accent.

It is also important that we preserve languages, particularly indigenous languages, which are a part of our unique linguistic history and heritage. They exist nowhere else in the world. At present there are more than 4 000 students learning an Aboriginal language in more than 57 schools in South Australia. Our schools are doing a very good job at providing quality languages education. In 2000 there were more than 114 800 students studying languages in government primary and secondary schools alone—eight in every 10 government schools offer at least one language.

As well as Aboriginal languages, many other languages, such as Chinese, French, German, Greek, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Spanish and Vietnamese are taught in our schools. The Multicultural Education Committee (MEC) recently staged a Languages and Cultures on Campus Program for year 10 students to encourage them to continue language studies into their final years of school. Young people from various schooling sectors attended this year's two-day program and were told about the many benefits of learning a language. These can include an advantage in working and living in a global community; a better chance of gaining employment; improved communication and understanding between the diverse communities in multicultural Australia; and new experiences, opportunities and ways of thinking.

I am also happy to announce that the program will continue next year through MEC, with funding provided from my office. This is the only such language program in Australia and it continues to provide a unique base for the promotion and delivery of languages in South Australian schools and universities. I was pleased and very impressed to attend the graduation celebration, if you like, of this year's program, which was very well attended. Some very dedicated language teachers in this state, in both the public and non-government schooling sectors, are doing wonderful and innovative things in teaching language in their schools.

**Ms CICCARELLO:** On the same issue of languages, can the minister outline the future of funding for the National Asian Languages and Studies of Asia Strategy?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** The commonwealth currently provides funding to South Australian schools for that program—the National Asian Languages and Studies of Asia Strategy. However, the commonwealth indicated in its federal budget that funding will not be provided beyond 2002; that is in spite of the fact that the strategy has been recognised and evaluated to be a highly successful initiative, achieving outstanding outcomes for Australian students and for the community.

At a recent meeting of state and territory education ministers, it was agreed that the commonwealth should maintain a commitment to the delivery of Asian languages and studies of Asia by identifying an alternative funding source from 2003-06. The original report to the Council of Australian Governments states:

Projections suggest that if implementation were to begin with year 3 in 1996, a program would not be finally implemented until 2006. Typically, over the 10-year implementation period of the program, individual jurisdictions could move from year 3 to year 12 with progressively increasing numbers of students being involved as qualified teachers become available.

The decision by the federal Liberal government also breaches its own new agenda for multicultural Australia, which states that the government will give 'high priority to the teaching of languages other than English'. Indeed, the federal coalition's response to a report in May 1999 by the National Multicultural Advisory Council, which recommended continuation of NALSAS, was one of support.

Since the strategy was introduced in 1995 there has been significant growth in the number of students learning an Asian language and engaging in Asian studies in South Australian schools. We now have more than 54 000 South Australian students studying either Chinese, Indonesian or Japanese, and nearly half of all South Australian public schools offer at least one Asian language. There has also been significant growth in the Studies of Asia program, with 460 Access Asia schools currently in South Australian schools.

The NALSAS strategy supports both government and non-government schools and it has been implemented to improve participation and proficiency levels in language learning in four targeted Asian languages—Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese and Korean—and to introduce and maintain Asian studies content in all areas of the curriculum. South Australia receives \$1.6 million a year in funding for this strategy. The reality for South Australia is that the premature cessation of this funding will limit the long-term development of languages and cultural programs in our public, Catholic and independent schools.

The ongoing program of Asian languages and cultural studies was program based on the 10 years of commonwealth funding, which has now disappeared. That jeopardises the continuation of improved learning outcomes for students in South Australian schools. It will restrict the state's capacity to deliver quality Asian language programs and studies of Asian languages to young people because the continued delivery of language and cultural studies programs to all South Australian students is an essential support to our curriculum framework and our focus on equity, social justice, social harmony, tolerance, multiculturalism, cultural and linguistic diversity, reconciliation and countering racism in our schools; it is very important for all of that.

These programs enhance our educational advantage nationally, locally and globally as clearly described in Labor's platform for education. I have written to the federal government with my concerns about the decision to end this funding. These concerns are shared by the independent and Catholic schools sectors, which are also being affected by the funding cessation. It is particularly important that growth continues in this area because without it the ability for our teachers and young people to build cultural and linguistic diversity and understanding of our Asian neighbours will be severely restricted. This is yet another example of the federal Liberal government abrogating its national responsibility for the funding of education and in particular this very valuable Asian language and cultural education program in South Australia.

#### **Additional Departmental Adviser:**

Ms M. Klass, Liaison Adviser, Minister for Education and Children's Services.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** Margaret Klass is from my office. She is responsible for policy work associated with administering this line.

**The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY:** I refer to Budget Paper 4, volume 2, page 7.41. I notice that under the Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia the budget last year was \$9.024 million and this year it has been reduced to \$8.705 million. What is the reason for this reduction? For that same organisation, the supplies and services budget on the same page has increased from \$1.953 million to \$2.3 million—a 17 per cent increase.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** The SSABSA budget was increased from \$8.166 million in 2000-01 to \$10.066 million in 2001-02, which is a very substantial increase in funding. This was due to the approval of an additional \$1.375 million, which reduced to \$1 million per annum thereafter. SSABSA has been asked to achieve a savings target of \$104 000 in 2002-03 with a full year target from 2003-04 of \$209 000. SSABSA has indicated that it will balance the targets with an increase in income generated by services provided to students in the Northern Territory and overseas and it has also advised me that the current level of service to South Australian students will be maintained.

**The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY:** By way of a supplementary question, as I mentioned in the question, supplies and services to SSABSA have gone up by 17 per cent. What constitutes that 17 per cent increase in supplies and services?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** I am advised that that is part of its own planning and we have not been advised of that detail. I will certainly take that question on notice and request the information.

**The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY:** Since SSABSA was formed in 1985, there has been no review of SSABSA or the SACE certificate since that time. Running up to the election this year the Liberal government announced that it would review SSABSA. Is the Minister intending—and I would support such review—to undertake a review of SSABSA and the SACE certificate?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** Clearly it is our intention to review the SACE certificate. It has been Labor Party policy now for two elections that we would do that, and further details will be given shortly on what form that review will take. As the honourable member rightly points out, it is 17 years since the certificate was introduced. A lot has happened. I do not know whether revolutionary is the word, but

it was quite a step forward in South Australian education at the time, but things have moved on and it is time to ask whether it is serving our students well enough in modern times.

I note the honourable member's suggestion that he will support the review of the senior certificate and I thank him and hope that that is an indication of support from the opposition for that move. There is a call from parents and students that it is time to look at whether we could sharpen up what we offer to young people. That cuts across a number of issues. Clearly, looking at curriculum offering in the senior years forms part of the focus the new government has in relation to improving senior retention rates—that is a particular focus.

An examination of retention rates and addressing a decline in our retention rates is the first reference to the Premier's Social Inclusion Unit, which is tasked with coming up with linked-up solutions to complex social problems. It is a unit that is, from my point of view, a mechanism by which problems that are not solely cited within the education department's realm can be addressed in a whole-of-government way. It is a very important mechanism in order to drive the sorts of changes that the new government is looking at in terms of encouraging and assisting our young people to complete their high school. The review of the senior certificate is something that is a little overdue. It will be a focus for the government. We will be conducting a review and we will be making announcements in the coming months about the form that review will take.

**The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY:** I have a supplementary question. Will the minister consider within that process a review of the structure of the board of SSABSA and all the various committees that are made up within that board's structure?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** I am so tempted to ask for the honourable member's personal opinion on that because the tone with which that question was asked suggested that there might be one. I do note that the former minister renewed the tenure of the SSABSA board on a yearly basis for the past two appointments. I do note that the former minister did not instigate any change.

**The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY:** We had a lot of discussion about it, though.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** Certainly, when I attended the first SSABSA board meeting after taking on the role of Minister for Education members of the board did disclose to me that they were under review by the former minister; hence, I am sure that led to a sharpened performance by the board in its activities. Part of reviewing the senior certificate will involve consideration of the way in which it is arranged in this state. Recently, I made appointments to the SSABSA board because its term did expire at the end of June, but I am conscious of perhaps the motivation of the former minister in instigating that review and considering similar issues.

**The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY:** One of the issues that concerned me for a long time when I was minister was the SACE certificate and the way in which it deals with students with disabilities, particularly in reporting satisfactory completion of year 12 subjects. Will the minister include in the process a review of the reporting and assessment procedures of disabled students?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** I grin at the proposition of members of the opposition asking me to hold reviews, given recent publicity—

**The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY:** This is one I support fully.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** I am pleased you do support it, because I think the review of the SACE certificate is very important. I understand the point that the former minister is making. I do not want to pre-empt an announcement that will be made in coming months about the review. However, the whole focus of this government is to ensure that the programs that we offer young people specifically match their needs. The former minister has highlighted a particular need with that group of disabled students that is not being well met under current arrangements. I take on board the honourable member's suggestion. He can be guaranteed there will be further discussion in the context of the SACE review about the suggestion he has made.

**Ms CICCARELLO:** Could the minister advise on the level of educational services that the state government is providing to minors who have temporary protection visas?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** This is an important question. Since the release of children in detention into the South Australian community from early 2000 about 250 students have been enrolled in the new arrivals program. Currently, there are about 160 students with temporary protection visas in the new arrivals unit. The total anticipated enrolment in department schools or new arrival units for 2002-03 is estimated to be 265 students. The state government believes that this group of students needs to be accommodated appropriately. It is quite unfortunate that the commonwealth leaves the state to carry much of the financial cost associated with educating these young people.

The recent commonwealth budget did announce some funding for additional resources for children with temporary protection visas, but the one-off grant of \$3 997 per student will not cover the full cost of educating these students. The state does supplement the cost of education for permanent residents and provides for the full cost of temporary residents. The full cost of education for holders of temporary protection visas should remain the responsibility of the commonwealth. However, given the budget pressure that this puts on the South Australian budget, there is an allocation in the 2003 budget of additional funding to meet this cost pressure. That can be found, along with the list of new initiatives, in chapter 3 of the budget.

**Ms CICCARELLO:** Can the minister outline the government's plans for the Australian Science and Mathematics School, which was an initiative of the previous government?

**Ms CHAPMAN:** Mr Acting Chairman, I raise a point of order because it was identified earlier, when you were not chairing, that there would be a number of questions to record into the transcript. I am happy to sit past 6 o'clock, but others may not be. At 5.50 p.m. we were to read in the questions.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** I am happy, if it is the wish of the honourable member, to allow her to do that. I was not aware of that commitment.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** I have five minutes left, so I can ask another question. Are you happy to do that? We have a few to get through. I indicated earlier that there were a number of general questions, and I will read through them. Will the minister advise the committee how many reviews have been undertaken or are scheduled to take place within the portfolio since the government was elected, and which matters do these reviews pertain to? Which consultant or consultant organisation has been hired to undertake the work and what is the total cost of these contracts? What is the total amount of money paid or allocated to be paid in the financial year ending 30 June 2002 and the commencement and completion

dates of those reviews? Will the minister advise the committee how many of the 600 jobs to be cut from the Public Service will be lost from within the portfolio? Which initiatives contained within the government's compact with the member for Hammond have been allocated to this portfolio, how much will they cost each and will these costs be met by new or existing funding? In particular, I request details as to the transport of schoolchildren who are resident in the district of Hammond to private schools.

Will the minister advise the committee of the number of positions attracting a total employment cost of \$100 000 within all departments and agencies reporting to the minister as at 30 June 2000 and estimates for 30 June 2003, and for each year: 2002-03, 2003-04, 2004-05 and 2005-06? From all departments and agencies reporting to the minister within this portfolio, what is the share of the total \$967 million savings strategy announced by the government, and what is the detail of each savings strategy? I request further that this answer include any revenue raising item. For all departments and agencies reporting to the minister, what is the share of the \$322 million underspending in 2001-02 claimed by government, and what is the detail of each proposal and project underspent? What is the detail of any carry-on expenditure to 2002-03 which has been approved? I note the minister's answer to one of our other questions that \$32.029 million was underspent in respect of capital works, but clearly there may be others.

Will the minister advise how many country teacher scholarship grants are proposed to be available in the 2002-03 year, noting that 50 per year at \$10 000 each have been announced? Will existing student teachers who have commenced their course be eligible to apply? I also note that we are in August already, so if there are any less for this year I would like to know. Further, what action will be taken for any student who is unable—as distinct from unwilling—to undertake country service at the expiration of study, such as forfeiture of funding? How many of the new 160 teachers and counsellors will be placed in country schools?

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** That question has already been asked.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** A question has been asked as to where they would be placed; this is a different question, so could you take that on notice? Does the minister acknowledge that special and culturally appropriate programs are required to ensure that some Aboriginal students benefit from the increased school age of 16 years? If so, who in the Aboriginal community is assisting with the development of the appropriate programs and what funding has been allocated? When will all the culturally appropriate programs be ready and what is the expected cost? I note that no Aboriginal boys are undertaking year 10 studies or beyond in the regional council area of Wangka Willurrar.

Has provision been made for kindergarten children in country regions to travel on school buses if all students must stay at school until the age of 16 years, the minister being aware that it is only an optional entitlement if there is room; and will further funding be provided for larger buses in country regions if children are obliged to stay at school? The government invested considerable support in facilitating the Drugs Summit 2002 in which I was proud to participate. The minister may be aware that a letter sent from DEET to all—

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** Are these the omnibus questions? There seems an extraordinary number of them.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** No; I am entitled to read in my number of questions.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** Omnibus questions refer to portfolio areas, do they not? I thought there were only four of them.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** It is possible to put on notice—

**Ms CHAPMAN:** Any number of questions I wish.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** Are we talking strictly omnibus questions?

**Ms CHAPMAN:** I did not suggest they were omnibus questions: I said they included them, with respect, Mr Acting Chairman. I have a number of them; I understood that that is why 10 minutes were allowed to cover them.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** If the honourable member is going to ask so many questions, there are limits on the time in which I am meant to answer them. I understand that four have been asked in every other committee as omnibus questions. The opposition needs to acknowledge that it might take a little time to answer all these questions.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** When I have completed the list, I will be happy to hear the minister's indication that some of these might take a longer time.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** The minister may choose to answer these in a way she thinks is appropriate. If the member outlines the important questions, they can be put on notice.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** With respect Mr Acting Chairman, they are all important, but I think you are saying that there are three minutes left and I have three minutes to ask questions.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** We can go beyond 6 p.m., where normal practice is to ask omnibus questions, but in effect you are asking a whole lot of questions on notice which go beyond that. The member should just proceed quickly to ask the questions and ultimately it is up to the committee as to whether we extend the time beyond 6 p.m.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** The Department of Human Services has allowed the Alcohol and Drug Information Service to be used for the SNAP program via the ARK Foundation. I think I referred to the fact that DEET had forwarded a letter to all principals, superintendents and site managers saying that there would be no funding. Will the minister confirm that there has been no funding or approval to participate in this important campaign given the Drugs Summit Outcome and recommendations? Will the minister assure the committee that country schools which must offer open access in order to provide the curriculum guarantee to senior school students will not be financially disadvantaged?

In respect of the Isolated Children's Parents Association and its concern as to the consolidation of directorates proposed under your restructure, will the minister give a commitment to ensure that services will not be reduced by this proposal and that ICPA will continue to have direct access to personnel with whom it is familiar and has an excellent working relationship? Will the minister advise what work, including any reviews, has been undertaken for the proposed upgrading and redevelopment of the Sturt Street Primary School and provide a copy of the same, if it has been done? I note that you gave an answer earlier—

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** I have already answered that question.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** With respect, Mr Acting Chairman, we had a question in relation to capital works.

**Ms CICCARELLO:** On a point of order, I would say that these questions are entirely out of order.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** Order! It is up to the minister as to how she responds in due course.

**Ms CICCARELLO:** It is up to you, Mr Acting Chairman, as to how you conduct the committee.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** Order! The minister can respond in a manner she feels appropriate before 23 August, so if she chooses to give a planned answer or reply as previously answered that is up to her.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** This is a question I have already addressed.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** No question has been asked about Sturt Street.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** Yes, a question has been asked about Sturt Street.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** The minister took it upon herself in answer to another question to raise issues about Sturt Street.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** Order! If the minister believes she has already answered, she can refer the honourable member to that answer.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** Since this question has been asked, I am quite happy to give the answer again, if that would assist the honourable member. The Labor government has made a commitment to reopen Sturt Street Primary School. As I said earlier, the former government closed it in 1996. In the current budget year we have allocated \$2 million towards the total project cost, and that redevelopment is intended to allow the site to become a truly integrated part of the Adelaide city precinct and the community. It was a school that was particularly valued by the community, as evidenced by the strong lobbying that took place after the announcement that it was to close and which has, indeed, persisted during the years until now.

*Mr Brindal interjecting:*

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** Order! The member for Unley is out of order.

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** Government officers have assessed the structure of the building. An independent surveyor reported in June of this year that there has been much neglect of the building which has had a seriously detrimental effect on the structure. It is a heritage listed building and the condition of the site is a significant factor in what has happened in the intervening years since it was closed in 1996. That means that significant regeneration work must be done, particularly on stabilising the building, before it can be used.

However, there is a strong commitment by the new government to reopening a school that has a lot of history associated with it. Indeed, the only other public primary school in the city precinct, the Gilles Street school, still has some teachers who were at Sturt Street before its closure in 1996. Sturt Street had a particular focus on cultural and linguistic diversity and a very strong languages program. It has been sorely missed by several groups in the community, which is demonstrated by the strong sentiment that has continued in the intervening years, and that has been reported in the media. There is even an associated 'save our school' group—Save Sturt Street, I think it is called—that has survived during the intervening years. So the will of the community to have the beautiful heritage listed building reinstated as a primary school is certainly present.

*Mr Brindal interjecting:*

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** Order, the member for Unley!

**The Hon. P.L. WHITE:** Given that the time is now past 6 p.m., perhaps that will suffice as an answer to the member's question.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** I point out again to the member for Bragg, who is a new member, that the tradition with omnibus questions is that similar questions are asked in each portfolio area, but there has been a practice of, in effect, putting questions on notice during estimates committees. There are no clear, specific rules under standing orders relating to how this is to be handled but, in fairness, the member for Bragg has put a lot of questions on notice and can continue to do so through the normal procedures of the House of Assembly. Our time frame here is until 6 p.m., and I point out that the minister can give answers to questions, as long as they are truthful, in whichever way she wishes. The time frame for responding to these questions is the 23rd of this month, which is not very long. The member for Bragg might consider putting the same questions on notice through the house, for which there is no set time.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** I suggest that I have an entitlement to put questions on notice. They must be in writing, and I can provide them in writing. The standing orders do not limit the number of questions that I can put on notice. However, I appreciate that the minister may say that resources are such that she may not be able to answer a number of questions within the time required. I can indicate that one other is a general question and the rest relate to specific schools and yes or no answers may suffice. I am happy to read through them, and I seek to do so.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** I think the member should put them on notice through the normal process of the house, otherwise we will have this problem within every time frame that has been agreed on. I put to the member for Bragg that she should put her questions on notice through the normal procedure of the house and the minister can respond in the ordinary way.

*[Sitting suspended from 6.07 to 7.30 p.m.]*

#### **Witness:**

The Hon. J.D. Lomax-Smith, Minister for Employment, Training and Further Education.

#### **Additional Departmental Advisers:**

Mr G. Black, Acting Chief Executive, Department of Employment, Further Education, Science and Small Business.

Dr G. Wood, Executive Director, Office of Vocational Education and Training.

Ms J. Taylor, Executive Director, Office of Employment.

Mr R. Bos, Director, Finance, Department of Education and Children's Services.

Mr I. Proctor, Acting Deputy Chief Executive, Department of Employment, Further Education, Science and Small Business.

Mr G. Dodd, Manager, Executive Support, Department of Education and Children's Services.

#### **Membership:**

Mr Brindal substituted for Ms Chapman.

**Mr BRINDAL:** This morning I understood that Ms Taylor was introduced to us as the Executive Director of the Office for Youth. Can the minister clarify that?

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** She is multiskilled. I do not know whether she would like to clarify her position further.

**Ms TAYLOR:** At this time I am also the Executive Director of the Office for Youth, and I appeared in that



capacity this morning. I am here as Executive Director of the Office of Employment this evening.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** Does the minister wish to make a brief opening statement?

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** Thank you. The 21st century is very different from the days when many of us set out on our first career after leaving school. It was not unusual for many of us who were adults last century to spend our working lives in one career or one field of work. Today there are occupations, industries and careers that did not exist last century. Tomorrow's world and the rapidly developing information economy will no doubt create even more jobs and avenues of work that do not currently exist. Whilst we cannot predict what some of the trades, careers and industries might be in the future, we do know that the demand for more people who are highly trained, have skills that are adaptable and can respond to the need for lifelong education and training will grow.

We know that in a competitive global environment, a highly skilled community has both a social and an economic advantage. Importantly, we recognise that market forces alone will not create the structures and systems required to develop skilled people and prepare them for rewarding work and lives. Government does have an important role to play. The development by government of sound policies and strategies to promote education, training and employment are inextricably linked to our social and economic future. As a friend of the Premier, the writer and thinker John Ralston Saul, has said:

Government is the only organised mechanism that makes possible that level of shared disinterest known as the public good.

We have seen that. A competitive approach to delivering education and training services in South Australia has promoted competition rather than a commitment to work together, fragmentation in service delivery, potential for waste through loss of economies of scale, a lack of overall direction and strategy, and a potential for duplication of services and programs.

As Minister for Employment, Training and Further Education my approach will be collaborative. We will foster partnerships between public and private educators, trainers, industry, unions, students, community groups and others in the development of policies and practices that strengthen education, training and employment opportunities for all South Australians. Government alone cannot solve all the problems. Strengthening our education, training and employment capacities will require careful planning, cooperation and support between the post compulsory education sector and the state and commonwealth governments.

We certainly have a long way to go. South Australia has the highest proportion (49.1 per cent) of Australians who do not have post school qualifications. The South Australian TAFE system was once regarded as the best in Australia, but now its leadership has declined. South Australia has had the highest TAFE fees of any Australian state, although action has recently been taken in the state budget to remedy this issue. In addition, while total employment in South Australia has continued to rise, with 695 800 South Australians being employed as at June this year, the concern is that much of that growth has been in part-time and casual jobs. In addition, youth unemployment remains unacceptably high. Mature age unemployment is often hidden, but again that continues to grow.

The budget outlines a range of strategies and directions that are among the first steps being taken to address these and other issues within the portfolio area. Underlying these actions is a commitment by government to work with others to develop rewarding jobs, particularly for young people, an economy that is internationally competitive and an economy that is underpinned by a well educated and highly skilled work force, and a state whose skills base is sufficiently broad to match labour market requirements. In acknowledging the reality that we are part of the global economy, our strategic approach will be on developing a skilled work force and working smarter through innovation and technology, and building on our infrastructure base.

Of course, South Australia's greatest asset is its people, and education and training is a fundamental investment that our community makes to support both economic and social development. In a world of increasingly mobile capital, investment goes to those areas with high skills and a strong education and training system. It is therefore imperative we work to ensure that we have a strong system. Jobs growth is increasingly coming from working smarter. That means innovation, technology, research and development, not merely low costs or taxpayer funded subsidies.

My other portfolio areas of science, information economy, small business and tourism offer opportunities to interweave policies and strategies across a wide range of areas for the benefit of all South Australians. In turn, this will provide an enhanced environment for attracting jobs and investments. Clearly, however, there needs to be a sound foundation of vocational education and training support for people seeking jobs and to enhance the skills of people already in the work force.

The government values vocational education and training as being vital to the economic and social future of South Australia. There is clear evidence that young people with vocational qualifications have a dramatically improved chance of gaining employment. It is self-evident in today's world that a low skilled work force will leave the state's economy exposed and vulnerable to global economic forces. That is why the state government is committed to supporting apprenticeship and traineeship programs. In doing so, we recognise the value of working in partnership with industry and training organisations to ensure apprenticeships are available to a wide range of industries, people gain practical work-based training, and we help strengthen the state's skill base.

This government believes that a publicly owned TAFE system can provide leadership to the vocational education and training system in the state, and that is why the government is supporting the TAFE system through three key initiatives. First, by halting the corporatisation of TAFE. The previous government began the process to corporatise the institutes, and we have stopped this process since the election. I am currently assessing how best we can address governance issues within the TAFE system to ensure there is an efficient, equitable and more accountable system to serve South Australia.

In order to improve morale and deal equitably with a grossly casualised work force, we have already begun the process of implementing our election commitment to make more TAFE staff permanent. The government recognises the relationship between learning outcomes for students and the quality and morale of the staff teaching them. Education unions, associations and TAFE institutes are working together to develop plans to reduce the use of contracts of

employment and increase the percentage of permanent employees.

In relation to accessibility for the community, we are making further education more affordable by increasing TAFE concession rates and capping annual student fees at \$1 200. The fee cap will help approximately 3 500 students from more than 40 TAFE courses, whilst the increase in concession rates from 40¢ to 50¢ per curriculum hour will assist approximately 10 500 students. These initiatives are designed to encourage people, particularly the battlers who face financial hardship, to continue their further education and give South Australia the skilled work force it needs. We are also continuing and maintaining vocational education programs at the community and regional levels. This includes adult and community education as well as training which meets the specific needs of regional areas through the Regional Training Fund.

In relation to employment, the government continues to give its commitment to the South Australian community being unashamedly pro jobs and pro economic development. Our focus continues to be, as the Premier has stated, jobs, jobs, jobs. Our young people will be a key target in a range of employment and training initiatives for the year, and at the same time we will develop strategies to tackle the growing incidence of mature age unemployment. Our employment initiatives will take a strategic direction by also supporting programs that assist environment and conservation programs and people in regional areas.

Across the state, employment programs funded in the 2002-03 budget will also assist people who are disadvantaged in the labour market, including unemployed people in regional and city communities, and particularly unemployed people in indigenous communities. Youth unemployment also is a significant issue facing South Australia's labour market. Initiatives for this year are designed to support young people to make the successful transition to employment through initiatives that include, firstly, the Government Youth Traineeship Scheme, which will help 500 young people to gain skills and work experience through traineeships in public sector agencies. This \$5 million initiative gives priority to young people in regional South Australia and disadvantaged youth. In addition, the South Australian Youth Conservation Corp program will be funded for \$3.5 million over four years, enabling young long-term unemployed people to work on conservation projects such as revegetation, water quality and mangrove rehabilitation. This financial year, \$0.5 million will support young people in that project.

A range of other programs will assist hundreds of unemployed people across South Australia through funds provided in the budget. These programs include YEP (Youth Employment Program), which assists young people aged 15 to 24 in regions of high unemployment. These funds target community organisations to provide support to young people. In addition, the Regional Employment Strategy will support unemployed people, industry bodies and businesses in regional South Australia. These funds will go particularly to regional development boards which will deliver the initiatives. In addition, we will support DOME (Don't Overlook Mature Age Expertise), a community organisation which specialises in supporting mature aged unemployed people.

We will also support the Community Employment Assistance Program with funds for community organisations to assist vulnerable job seekers into employment and to provide incentives to employers who employ program participants. In addition, the Private Sector Employment

Program will provide a financial incentive to employers who employ unemployed people, including mature aged and indigenous people. While these programs are wide ranging, the government will assess them individually and as a whole to ensure that they are achieving real employment and training outcomes.

We are aware that there is always more that needs to be done in developing employment opportunities for South Australians, and action to address the wide ranging challenges are most effectively undertaken through partnerships. It is critical that South Australia concentrates on obtaining employment growth from every effort that is made in growing the economy. In this context, it is important that the Economic Development Board is recognised as a catalyst to allow an overarching strategy to be developed, with the board providing leadership and a collaborative approach to developing a big picture strategy across the state's economy. Together with the specific initiatives within the portfolio area that we discuss this evening, the board's work will be towards setting a strategic direction for the state's economy and highlighting the importance (as it goes) of employment as a fundamental issue for all South Australians.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** Does the lead speaker for the opposition wish to make a statement?

**Mr BRINDAL:** Yes, sir. In this place, and I have been here for 13 years, nothing makes me angrier than cant and hypocrisy, and if this government in one area is guilty of cant and hypocrisy, it is in the area of jobs and employment. Mr Acting Chairman—

*Ms Ciccarello interjecting:*

**Mr BRINDAL:** The member for Norwood, I will explain in detail.

**Ms CICCARELLO:** Sure you will.

**Mr BRINDAL:** I will.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** Order!

**Mr BRINDAL:** The minister says that at the beginning of the 21st century this state is different. Indeed it was. I point out to the minister that, at the close of the last century, we had a leader of the opposition who in their own words tonight quoted 'jobs, jobs, jobs' as the absolute goal of a Labor government, yet we see a budget where very little, apart from verbiage, is directed at jobs. We have the unedifying spectacle of a government that announced and passed off in the Sunday newspaper 500 traineeships as a new government initiative, yet some years ago those 500 traineeships were criticised because it was a reduction of 1 200 in its peak under Liberals and in fact last year numbered 613.

The truth of this budget is that government traineeships have been cut by 113 places and the government announced it as a new initiative. If any member opposite can tell me that is not hypocritical—and I would use the word 'dishonest'—then let them say so in their questions. But more, as the minister said, we had a TAFE system which, we were told for four years, was the most expensive in this nation. And so, their huge government initiative is not only to cut 113 traineeships but to take it to keeping fees capped. That does not mean reducing fees; it means keeping them capped. This is a government that for four years, when it was in opposition, bleated and whined about the expense of TAFE and comes in here with a budget saying that jobs, jobs, jobs are the most important thing for South Australians, yet it is not reducing the fees—it is simply capping them. Again there is a word for it in the dictionary and that word is 'hypocrisy'.

The minister said that the leadership of the TAFE system was somehow in decline. I would point out to the minister

that in the last nine years graduates—and the minister's advisers know this—increasingly had to go to the TAFE system to get employment. Many graduates leaving the University of Adelaide, the University of South Australia and Flinders have absolutely embarrassed those universities by being unemployable until they went to TAFE and got a TAFE qualification. I do not think that is a system in decline. The executive directors of TAFE were all, I believe, backing the corporatisation, but we hear a government that is going back to the trendy old days of the 1970s where it will create a TAFE, I presume, in an anachronistic coffee lounge club where the results of TAFE will be completely disjointed from either community needs or the needs of industry, and we will return, I would predict within four years, to a system where TAFE graduates are as little employable as they were before we came to office. Mr Acting Chairman, if I am getting a bit excited about this, I apologise—

*Members interjecting:*

**Mr BRINDAL:** —to the members opposite, but I did believe that the party opposite, if it stood for one thing, actually stood for a fair go for battlers. I hate in this place in my own party, or in any party, hearing people say that they stand up for the battlers, yet, any way you look at these figures, there is nothing to help the battlers. This will not help youth unemployment. This will not help any additional places in TAFE at all. It might make a few more TAFE lecturers a bit more comfortable but it is a sell-out. It is a sell-out to the young people of South Australia; it is a sell-out to the unemployed in South Australia; and it is a sell-out to the skilled employment base of South Australia, and we will ask questions accordingly.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** The member for Unley.

**Mr BRINDAL:** Thank you, I will now ask my questions.

*Members interjecting:*

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** Order! The member has an entitlement to have his say. He has had his say.

*Members interjecting:*

**Mr BRINDAL:** No, it wasn't rehearsed. They're the notes.

*Members interjecting:*

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** Order!

**Mr BRINDAL:** I will point out to members opposite—and I will ask the minister whether she is prepared to do the same—that I offered, if unemployment went over 10 per cent, to resign my ministry and tender my resignation to the Premier. I hope this minister will be equally honourable and offer the same thing. We got unemployment down to within 0.1 of the national average. I hope this minister will keep the same record, then we will have little criticism of her—

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** The member should put his question.

**Mr BRINDAL:** Thank you, sir. Many people were the beneficiaries of the employment and training programs administered by the Office of Employment and Youth in 2001-02. How many programs will be in existence in this next financial year, 2002-03; and what is the precise number of job outcomes which the minister is predicting as a result of those programs?

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** Mr Acting Chairman, I cannot let the diatribe by the excitable member for Unley go unanswered. I think he should recognise that the TAFEs—

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** You can, but you do not have to.

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** Thank you, sir. I think anyone with any reasonable insight into the TAFE institutes

in this state would realise that they had been starved of cash, demoralised and undervalued for many years. It is quite clear that the level of casualisation and the way in which the employees, the staff and teachers were handled was unacceptable. It goes without saying that, if members look at the deficits that were accrued and the financial situation across the institutes, with deficits of around \$4.18 million and rising, something had to be done. It is worth noting that TAFEBis had a deficit of \$1.186 million and that, if members look at our organisations, the operating deficit and the operating result was such that—and I will give members the figures—the deficit for TAFE institutes and TAFEBis at 31 December 2001 was \$3.73 million. The deficit increased by \$3.15 million in 2001 from an aggregated deficit of \$0.58 million in the year 2000.

There was a decline in the centrally held funds for minor works and equipment. Generally, it is worth noting that many of the changes that were made in the organisation were such that they increased the degree of competition, reduced the level of collaboration, and many of the actions, such as outsourcing arrangements, tended to leave an enormous financial strain. In addition, it appears that many of the TAFEs were unable to run their financial affairs accurately, and some of the costings for the fee for services they provide were below the rate at which the services were delivered. I think any reasonable person would look at our TAFE organisations and say that they were in crisis. I think perhaps if the member for Unley looked at them more carefully he would see this to be the case.

In relation to his specific question regarding the total number of programs to be supplied in the coming year, it is true that all of our programs will be assessed to see how effective they are. I do not think the number of programs is the useful figure to give. Certainly, a number of the smaller programs have been amalgamated into larger, more focused programs to achieve better outcomes—for instance, the youth training grants have been combined with the youth employment programs. However, we expect the total number of job outcomes will be very similar to those last year, if not slightly higher.

**Mr BRINDAL:** I point out to the minister, however, I was not elected to this place to justify or to perpetrate this TAFE system. The only reason I am here, and I hope the minister is at the table, is to serve the needs of South Australians. Insofar as TAFE may serve the needs of South Australians, it is a good system; insofar as it does not, this parliament has a right to question and to overhaul the system. In that respect, the minister talked about the vocational skills base and specifically mentioned, or implied, in her address the lack of suitable skills in many areas, and that is generally acknowledged.

Minister, I believe that from 1 January next year you are going to halve the state government funding to enterprise-based RTOs. Enterprise-based RTOs are organisations such as the Fishing Academy, the Motor Trades Association and Coles Myer. In other words, I believe that for the very employers who train people to achieve a real skills base your government is going to halve user funding. Is that an accurate statement? If it is, minister, why are you halving user choice funds to the very groups that provide the major skills base and the most needed skills base in this state?

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** From the 2002-03 year we will indeed be trying to contain the costs of user choice. As you know, it has blown out dramatically over the past three years. We will reduce the state government training

subsidy paid to enterprises for their own training of apprentices and trainees by 50 per cent. We will also cease the exemption for government apprentices and trainees from the training fee.

**Mr BRINDAL:** Minister, user choice is subject to a federal-state agreement. As I understand it, the state guaranteed that it would match commonwealth funds. How can you, minister, reduce the funds by 50 per cent without the commonwealth reducing its funds? Will it be a cost-cutting exercise of 25 per cent, or will it be a cost-cutting exercise of 50 per cent, and I hope the *Advertiser* is listening to all this.

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** I think you misunderstand. We are cutting the rate per hour to the enterprise training organisations, not the subsidy to the whole of the user choice programs.

**Mr BRINDAL:** As a supplementary question: how is that not a cut to training? If you cut the rate per hour I am not sure what they will do, whether they will have fewer hours or employ fewer qualified people. But if you cut the rate per hour you simply will not be able to have the same number of hours or the same quality of people, surely.

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** I think this is a subsidy to employers to train their staff, and there might be an argument that they get a benefit from having the training done within their organisation and in their own workplace.

**Mr BRINDAL:** Enterprise-based RTOs are not necessarily just employer organisations. One of your preferred providers is the fishing academy, which trains people for the seafood industry. Perhaps the automotive industries and also the Construction Industry Training Board would all be classed under RTOS. Incidentally, whilst Dr Wood is giving you notes he may also give you a note about whether the subsidy will be cut that is paid to the TAFE system with respect to the training of government trainees. In fact, with respect to government trainees the TAFE system itself would qualify as an enterprise-based RTO. If a cut is made to the fishing academy, will it also be made to the TAFE system in respect of government traineeship?

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** You do not seem to understand. We are not talking about the fishing academy. Perhaps I could try again. This impacts on small numbers of organisations, such as petrol stations, fast food outlets and some manufacturing industries while they train within the enterprise. I am not talking about the RTOs generally.

**The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY:** In her opening speech, the minister advised the committee that there would be a reduction in the number of contract staff or temporary staff within TAFE, and obviously an increase in the number of permanent employees given the outcome of the enterprise agreement. What impact will this have on programs offered by TAFE and how will these increases in costs be funded by the institutes?

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** At the moment we are going through a process of assessing those employees and working through their work records. You may not realise, but the TAFEs do not have any centralised employment records, or any records within OVET. It is a matter of extraordinary forensic irritation to have to go through the records which are disparately kept and have no ability to trace linearly through an individual's work record. So, the first problem we are facing is the difficulty in finding out when people were employed. You will appreciate that when they were employed sometimes it was at one level, sometimes as a part-time, sometimes as a casual staff member, sometimes on contract, sometimes in one TAFE and sometimes in another institute.

We do not have any system for going through those records. It is quite time consuming.

We have been working through a permanency working party system with the AEU and management trying to work out the best form of fair and equitable assessment of people's work records. We have identified 135 employees who have greater than seven years continuous contract employment, and we are looking at how those contracts might be made permanent. Thirty-seven of those 135 are funded from non-recurrent sources. We are anxious to treat people equitably but have a work force that can provide the needs of the TAFE institutes.

When we have dealt with the first tranche of permanency we will work through the needs of the TAFEs. It may be necessary to have some of the staff work across the sector so that they might work in more than one institute. Obviously, that will require some organisational changes. We are also involving the Commissioner for Public Employment regarding the process of conversion, but we hope to fund this from state recurrent funds and a range of non-recurrent funded activities—for example, the contestable funds and fee-for-service activities of the institutes.

**The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY:** Supplementary to that, does the minister have an estimated cost of this particular measure?

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** We do not at the moment. I do not know whether we have got any closer as we have worked through the program. Could I ask Dr Wood.

**Dr WOOD:** There is no reason in principle why, at least in the short term, it should cost any more. The question will arise some years down the track if there is a need for variability in the program, and the question of separation packages and so on will then arise but, at the moment, there is no reason in principle why it should cost more if people are getting paid the same but they are on a permanency basis rather than a contract basis.

**The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY:** I have a point of clarification. Is the minister responsible for the administration of the FarmBis program, or does that come under the Minister for Agriculture and Primary Resources?

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** It is administered through the TAFE in so much as the courses are run by TAFE; but the funding actually comes through PIRSA.

**The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY:** So, who is responsible for answering questions on that? Is it you?

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** We are providers, and they purchase from us.

**The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY:** I will run the questions and we will see how we go. The FarmBis program under this particular budget has suffered a significant cut. Can the minister outline the magnitude of the reduction in funding for the FarmBis program? Mr Acting Chairman, I have been advised that FarmBis funding has been cut by between 50 and 75 per cent.

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** I understand that the program has been reduced for this year, but it is not in my budget. I do not know the details as it is run through PIRSA. I can take the question on notice and get the details for you. I believe it is several million dollars, but I do not know the exact amount.

**The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY:** Fifty per cent is what I understood. Given that cut in funding, has the minister envisaged any training programs to be delivered by TAFE for young farmers or farmers throughout South Australia to ensure that our young farmers and those wishing to improve

their qualifications in farming have access to it through the TAFE organisation?

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** Clearly, there are issues in skills attainment for regional and rural South Australia. This matter was decided by PIRSA. I, of course, am interested in opportunities for people in the bush in terms of employment. We are just beginning to understand where those impacts will affect the service delivery that has mainly been through the TAFE institutes. Clearly, there are areas of skills shortages—I understand that there is a shortage of shearers—and a lot of the training which relates to occupational, health and safety for general farm activities will be impacted upon; but we have to work through that in discussions with PIRSA.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** The member for Light is entitled to half a question.

**The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY:** According to Budget Paper 4, volume 2, Output 3.1, the government will reduce its funding support by \$617 000 to organisations which deliver employment programs. This represents a 5.54 per cent reduction in spending not adjusted for inflation. In the last financial year inflation was 2.8 per cent, which means a total loss of spending power of 8.3 per cent. Can the minister please provide me with a breakdown of the organisations which receive funding and the amount of funding each one receives?

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** The minister can take that question on notice if she wishes.

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** I may have to take that on notice, sir, as I cannot give an accurate response on that budget line at the moment. I do not have the names of all the organisations. I apologise.

**Mr BRINDAL:** I just want to return briefly to the minister's last answer in the series of questions from me. The minister said quite clearly at the end that I had been confused and 'it did not apply to enterprise-based RTOs', that it applied to people like service station owners and such like. The minister said clearly that user choice funds are blowing out and that you need to claw in the costs—I actually understand that.

I just want the minister to reiterate her answer and absolutely assure me that it does not apply to enterprise-based RTOs because, if it is just service station owners and a few odd people like that, I cannot see how it will contain the cost. I will be very satisfied with the answers if I get the minister's assurance, because the minister can rest assured that she will be accused of misleading the house if she makes a mistake.

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** This budget line will produce a saving of \$600 000.

**Mr BRINDAL:** From service station owners and deli owners?

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** Absolutely. Not deli owners. If I can just get the list from Dr Wood. I think I have explained it as best I can. It is the enterprises that train their staff on the job. It is not the RTOs, the other 800, that are out—

**Mr BRINDAL:** Will it include the fishing academy at Port Adelaide?

**Dr WOOD:** The seafood academy is not an enterprise-based RTO, as the term is being used here. For the purpose of tonight's debate you could say that there are three things: first, a public provider—the TAFE; secondly, private RTOS, of which the seafood academy is one; and, thirdly, business enterprises, which are training their own staff with their own people. There are examples, but I am not sure that it would

be proper for me to name them. They include organisations such as the big people in the retail industry and the fast food industry who use their own staff to train their own staff and, in some cases, are now accessing public money to do things which they were doing with their own money before. The fishing academy is a standard private RTO, and funding to it and other similar organisations will not be cut in this budget.

**Mr BRINDAL:** But funding to Coles Myer and Woolworths obviously will, because they are in the sort of category that you are talking about.

**Dr WOOD:** I would not comment about individual organisations.

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** There are many organisations in this category.

**Mr BRINDAL:** I am quite sure that within a month we will have a very public list. Minister, my next question is: I understand that this year the government will spend \$9.973 million less on providing employment programs for individuals and organisations—and I take that from the budget heading—in the 2002-03 financial year than the government allowed in the 2001-02 budget. Can the minister explain this drop in funding and, specifically, will the minister be providing fewer opportunities or will the minister simply be offering less per capita?

Minister, if the Liberal government had spent \$25.44 million on obtaining, according to your departmental figures which have been released, 2 535 participants, can we therefore assume that if this number is reduced by 40 per cent we will have 40 per cent fewer participants, and how can this be justified? I take my question from Budget Paper 4, volume 2, Output 3.2, page 7.19. It appears to me that you are spending 40 per cent less, so you will either have 40 per cent fewer outcomes or you are doing it on the cheap.

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** On page 7.19, do you refer to the \$15.467 million?

**Mr BRINDAL:** Yes, which is \$9.973 million less than the previous government spent in the same Output Class.

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** Yes, there is a simple explanation for this. The variation is approximately \$13 million in total, and that is the difference between the 2001-02 budget expenses, and the 2001-02 portfolio statement, and the 2001-02 end of year estimated result. The 2001-02 budget expenses were overstated because they included \$12.9 million in carryover from the year before, and it was anticipated at the end of preparation of the 2001-02 budget papers in early 2001. The carryover requirements reflect forward commitments to programs and future reimbursements to government agencies in the private sector.

They have not been factored into the budget for 2002-03 at this time. Any required carryover commitments arising during the year will be considered at that time. Had the carryover not been included in the 2001-02 budget, the budget would have been in the order of \$25 million compared with \$23.9 million now. It seems to be a tiny issue. In addition, the 2001-02 employment services budget was reduced by \$5 million to reflect required cash flow savings. The \$5 million was reinstated on 1 July 2002.

**Mr BRINDAL:** Even if it is \$2 million, it does represent something like 200 job outcomes, so I do not think for those 200 unemployed people it could be described as a 'tiny issue', nevertheless.

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** It is to do with programs not being completed at the end of the year, so it

appears that it is a funding issue. I am sure there is no difference.

**Mr BRINDAL:** Minister, far be it from me to tell you that, when I was minister, my department always had its programs finished at the end of the year.

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** You were a paragon.

**Mr BRINDAL:** They did; they made a point of doing it.

*Members interjecting:*

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** Order!

**Mr BRINDAL:** On the subject of the general education grant to ACE this year, can the minister provide a breakdown of the various programs which have received funding?

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** The member for Unley has spoken to me about this matter. As he knows well, this funding is for general adult education and language, literacy and numeracy programs. During his time as minister, there was a reassessment of the efficacy of the way in which this program operated. A broad consultation occurred whereby all the providers took part in an assessment of how the system worked. Several pieces of advice were given about the way in which funding worked; how much and how large the programs were; and, in particular, it was noted that some geographical areas had a complete absence of any programs whatsoever.

Subsequent to this huge survey and public information and consultation process, the number of applications went up dramatically. Essentially, for a program worth just over \$1.1 million, there was \$3.5 million worth of applicants. Clearly, the competitiveness was much higher than it had been before. The decisions, I suspect, were very difficult to make. There has been no cut in funding. The \$1.117 million for the total ACE program comprises \$900 000 for community-based delivery; \$47 000 for professional development and promotional activities; and a \$170 000 ACE concession subsidy for the TAFE sector. So, the aggregate of that is \$1.117 million. The state government's component is \$971 000, and the remaining \$146 000 comes from the commonwealth contribution for language, literacy and numeracy programs.

Clearly, the ACE program is an effective way of spending money. It works well, but the problems resolved at the funding round were in the geographical distribution and criteria for funding. Clearly, it is a popular program and the former minister should be commended for the action he took in making it more equitable. There were 177 applications, compared with only 154 the year before his consultation program; there was a 120 per cent increase in the dollar value of the submissions; 62 organisations received funding; 30 that had previously been funded did not receive funding; and 28 new organisations did receive funding including:

- Aberfoyle Community Centre
- Adelaide Central Mission
- Aldinga Community Centre Inc.
- ASK Employment and Training Services at Angle Park, Gilles Plains and Whyalla
- Avon Art and Craft Guild
- Bagster Community House Inc.
- Bowden Brompton Community Group Inc.
- Burton Park Community House
- Cheltenham Community Centre
- Christie Downs Community House
- Eastwood Community Centre
- Encounter Centre Inc.
- Far West Enterprise Learning Alliance
- Findon Community Centre Inc.

- Hackham West Community Centre
- Ingle Farm Women's Communication Group
- Junction Community Centre Inc.
- Kilburn Blair Athol Community Action Group
- Marra Murranga Kumagka Inc.
- Mid Murray Community Support Service
- Midway Community House Inc.
- Migrant Resource Centre
- Mitchell Park Neighbourhood Centre
- Morella Community House
- Mount Barker Family House
- Mount Gambier Mature Expertise Association
- Mount Gambier Community House Inc.
- Neighbourhood Support Centre
- Northern Area Community and Youth Services Inc.
- Paddocks Neighbourhood House Inc.
- Paralowie R-12 Parent Community Drop-in Centre
- Payneham Community Centre
- Pooraka Farm Neighbourhood House Inc.
- Reedbeds Community Centre Inc.
- Reynella Neighbourhood Centre Inc.
- Seaford/Moana Neighbourhood Centre
- Southern Goyder Telecommunications Network Inc.
- St Patricks Community
- T and C Plus
- Tailem Bend Community Centre
- Taperoo Family Centre
- The Barossa Council (Barossa Leisure Options)
- Overseas Chinese Association of SA Inc.
- Thebarton Neighbourhood House
- Trott Park Neighbourhood Centre Inc.
- Vietnamese Community in Australia SA Inc.
- Woodcroft Morphett Vale Neighbourhood Centre
- Yunta Telecentre
- YWCA Adelaide Inc.

**Mr BRINDAL:** I thank the minister for her acknowledgment. I remain disappointed, though, at some of the provisions of this. I know that the minister has a difficult Treasurer but we would argue, and were arguing, for additional funds for ACE over and above those which we put in last year. I am disappointed that there is not a further increase, because this is one of the state's best educational programs. I am disappointed that there has been a loss of literacy programs at, at least, 12 community centres. They were long-term ones. I acknowledge that there are 30 new ones, but it particularly concerns me, because I believe it is a gross injustice to those centres which have lost the program. It is fine to put on 30 new ones; I acknowledge that it is more competitive.

There are two areas in my own electorate that have had good programs for 12 years: now they have no programs at all. People in Goodwood, who are not financially advantaged, and some of whom are from non-English speaking or other backgrounds, simply cannot now access the service. This represents a problem. It is important for the minister to understand that for an electorate with 14 per cent of its residents from non-English speaking backgrounds this decision can be hurtful, and it reflects a complete lack of insight and good judgment on behalf of the government. Can the minister tell me who comprised the assessment panel—and I may well have appointed them—and what criteria were used to select the panel members; what community and neighbourhood houses, centres and associations were represented on the panel; and what criteria were used in the grant selection process?

All sorts of rumours—and I hope these are ridiculous rumours—have been bandied about, including the suggestion that postcodes of disadvantaged areas were used to determine grant recipients. I sincerely hope that was not the case, although the list—

*Ms Ciccarello interjecting:*

**Mr BRINDAL:** No—

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** Order!

**Mr BRINDAL:** The list that the minister read out seemed to predominate in southern and northern areas, I must admit. What is the reason behind the decision for wholesale cuts of ACE programs at Grange, Camden, Glandore, Goodwood, Fullarton, Burnside, Prospect, Stepney, Hillcrest, Surrey Downs, Wynnvale, Greenwith, Salisbury, Salisbury East and Blakeview?

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** I think there are about eight questions there.

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** The member for Unley is correct to express a mea culpa because it is indeed his committee and his program and his decision.

**Mr BRINDAL:** No: it was your decision. I might have formed the committee but you made the decision.

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** The program was changed and the people who administered it comprised some officers of the department, but there were also ex-ACE council members. I suppose some ministers may well have tinkered with the decision once those priorities had been developed, but the priorities were to expand adult learning opportunities in equity areas and for disadvantaged groups; to provide support for providers who may not otherwise have access to relevant funding; and to facilitate collaborations and partnerships to extend learning opportunities.

The priorities were that we should identify the people who needed to develop the necessary language, literacy and numeracy skills; the people whose needs cannot be readily met in other forms of education and training provision; the people in the community with a pathway that could benefit from the pursuit of further education, training and/or employment; the people who are isolated or disabled; and the people seeking a second chance at education. Some of the other criteria added by the ACE Council were that creative programs should be delivered by community organisations to meet local and regional needs and that innovative programs should be offered by community-based providers.

I think the process of selection had integrity and was transparent and quite proper. I can understand the hurt that some people felt when they received the notification, and I acknowledge that, because clearly it is very difficult to be funded on an ongoing basis and then have it stopped. That is one of the problems of grant funding, in that it is not committed in perpetuity but is given only on a one, two or three year cycle and a further application has to be made. I can understand that the member for Unley might be disappointed by the program he initiated.

**Mrs PENFOLD:** What training programs has the government in place for regional areas to meet our skills shortages, how much funding has been allocated to these programs and how many places have been made available?

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** One of the opportunities we have developed is through the Office of Vocational Education and Training's Regional Training Program. This program utilises the existing Regional Development Board networked to broker training at a regional level to meet identified skill shortages in line with training priority areas identified in the state's strategic plan. This program enables

local training brokers to subcontract both TAFE and registered private training providers to deliver accredited training programs. Some of these programs relate to those out of the Onkaparinga TAFE, but the Spencer TAFE also provides specific programs in regional areas. I can give you a list of all the funding for each of these and take those details on notice.

**Mrs PENFOLD:** Thank you; I appreciate that. Further to that question, it has come to my attention that the government is looking at cutting the funding to the Agriculture and Horticultural Training Council in South Australia. If this is correct, it will mean that courses such as the shearing and shed handling course may be terminated, leaving many people in rural areas without the necessary qualifications to gain employment. The wool industry is desperate for more workers. Apparently, attendance at these courses is low. However, with increasing advertising perhaps they could become more popular and enhance the ability of rural people to gain jobs in the rural areas. Will the minister please clarify the situation for me?

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** I think that the two matters described are entangled. The organisation described by the honourable member is an ITAB. The industry training advisory bodies do not provide the training: they tend to be mechanisms by which educationalists, employers and unions can work together to recognise areas of skills shortage and need in that particular industry sector. Previously, funding has been two-thirds from the federal government and one-third from the state government. Our funding remains unchanged, but unilaterally the federal government announced at the end of June that its funding for ITABs would be stopped.

That put many of the ITABs in a very difficult position because they had expected ongoing funding. Some of them had long-term leases and accommodation and had employed staff with entitlements. The federal government recognised the inequity of a sudden withdrawal of funding and gave interim funding, which is expected to last until about September. Our response to this situation was to recognise that we could not continue funding and pick up the slack from the federal government but would continue to provide the level of funding we had given previously.

We have asked the chairpersons of the ITABs to work on a review to determine how best we can have tripartite advice from employers, employees and government and, within budgetary parameters, how we might get that advice in ITAB-like form. We suspect that it might be with a smaller number of ITABs combined. We are expecting a discussion paper with key stakeholder consultation to be returned by 9 August. We hope that the new arrangements will be in place on 1 September, because we are committed to continuing this form of consultation as a way of our developing skills and the necessary training for the work force.

**Mrs PENFOLD:** I understand that the government has reduced the number of public sector traineeship placements from 613 to 500. Given the success of this scheme and the excellent employment results (I think that I have had six now) for these young people, I find it hard to reconcile the government's decision on this matter. Will the minister please explain the reason?

*Mr Brindal interjecting:*

**Mrs PENFOLD:** Yes, they have—very successful.

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** We have committed \$5 million to continuing the government's Youth Traineeship Scheme, and this will make at least 500 places available in

2002-03. The placements will be offered to young people between 17 to 24 and will focus on the most disadvantaged groups, ensuring that 40 per cent of placements are in regional South Australia. We expect the vocations affected to be information technology, office administration, tourism and water-industry operations. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, young people with a declared disability or the long-term unemployed (all of whom have been under the guardianship of the Minister for Human Services) have been afforded some special opportunities by, in their cases, increasing the eligibility age to 28.

The 2000-01 budget allocation was \$4 million; in 2001-02 it was \$5 million; and in 2002-03 the government has allocated \$10 million. In fact, this includes the \$5 million for the South Australian government's Youth Traineeship Scheme and \$5 million allocated to the public sector traineeship scheme.

**Mrs PENFOLD:** I want assurance on this. I believe that, over the next year, 30 placements have been made available for the Aboriginal Apprenticeship Program. As the minister is aware, some of these young people are the most disadvantaged job seekers in our labour market. Will the minister please tell the committee what she plans for this program?

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** We are committed to improving employment opportunities and outcomes for Aboriginal people in South Australia. In addition to ensuring that Aboriginal people are supported within the government's broad range of employment initiatives, the Aboriginal Apprenticeship Program has also been continued, with 30 apprenticeship placements to be made in 2002-03. We are aware that this program, having been operating for only two years, cannot be effectively evaluated until the first round of apprentices complete their apprenticeships.

Continuation of the program will enable the assessment of its outcomes, such as retention rates and its impact on participants' long-term employment prospects. However, we will ensure that the trade apprenticeships' funding, through the Aboriginal Apprenticeship Program, in 2002-03 will be more strategically targeted at skills shortage areas and areas of high indigenous unemployment, particularly in regional South Australia.

The government is also keen to develop placement opportunities with large corporate enterprises engaged in the new major infrastructure projects in the state. These measures will ensure that once apprentices have completed their three to four year contracts of training they will be well placed to obtain on-going employment. The Aboriginal Apprenticeship Program will also provide more support to apprentices through the development of a mentoring program. It is envisaged that the provision of mentors who are role models in their community will enhance retention rates and contribute to successful training and employment outcomes for apprentices. There will also be opportunities in the government training scheme because we will give priority to indigenous people. We expect that 11 per cent of apprentices in the government training scheme will be indigenous people.

**Mr BRINDAL:** I note that one of the centrepieces of your government's budget announcement was the Youth Conservation Corps program. I note previously that your party has been very enamoured of work for the dole programs but it seems now to be enamoured of one that is called by another name. But my question specifically is: while I applaud the type of work to be undertaken—the sorts of environmental projects that will be undertaken—what fields of endeavour does the minister believe it will lead to in long-term employ-

ment? I have heard the minister's own party, I think rightly, criticise the federal government because many of the work for the dole programs—which they have described as tokenistic—are detrimental to the self-worth and well-being of a young person in that they raise a false expectation which is completely dashed because a young person is given a skill set and an expectation of employment but goes on to find that the skill set simply does not match any employment area.

So I specifically ask the minister: as laudable as the Youth Conservation Corps program might be, specifically what skill set will it give to unemployed young people such that they might be confident to go into long-term employment? The minister has heard that three people on this bench have had 16 people in the government youth traineeship scheme, and those 16 people have all been long-term unemployed—and I am sure that government members can attest to a similar thing. Our Youth Traineeship Scheme has a 70 per cent long-term success rate, and not all in government service. I hope that the Youth Conservation Corps will, therefore, at least aim at the 70 per cent achieved by the Liberal government's scheme, otherwise the money could simply go into increasing the government scheme. That is the basis for my question.

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** I thank the member for Unley. I think that he would recognise from his experience the major advances that can be made in an individual's life by having any training and any employment. I recall one of the programs that his government funded in 1998, I think, in conjunction with the Adelaide City Council involving training swimming pool lifeguard attendants. It was an extraordinary program whereby the state government and the city council funded the training of 15 young people as pool attendants, and an accredited course was developed in not only lifesaving but also occupational health and safety, management, chemical usage and resuscitation. What was interesting was that some of these young people could barely swim the length of a swimming pool, but at the end of the six month program they could all swim a kilometre and had got into very creditable work patterns. I am not sure that I, or even the member for Unley, could do it: they started at 4.30 every morning at the swimming pool and after six months they had a very fine record of employment.

I think that many training schemes are not likely to be in the line in which people find employment for the next 40 years. In fact, I think it is true that most people these days when they train do not expect to be in a line of employment for more than 10 years or 15 years, and sometimes much less. But that first job, that first training experience, that first experience of order and the satisfaction of acquiring real skills, is enough to give them a step on the ladder that will allow them to continue through another vocational training course and perhaps pathways to university and an ability to have a future.

So, when this program is finally up and running, I am hoping that the outcomes will be that those young people will have the satisfaction of being involved in an important area, because many young people are committed to the environment and environmental management. They see it as the only hope for our community. However, on top of that, they will have real skills that will give them self-esteem and self-respect. Therefore for their next job application they will have a CV and experience and will be employable—and that skill alone would be something that we should value.

**Mr BRINDAL:** When the Whitlam government established the schools commission, among educators there was a fierce debate for disadvantaged people, many of whom are



represented by members opposite. The debate went as follows: if you empower people and give them a sense of self-worth, they will break free from their chains and seek their own destiny. One of the problems with that debate is that, even if the self-worth of those people increases, if they have the sorts of speech patterns that simply are not conducive to working in a bank, in government service or in a number of other areas, you have very empowered, self-confident people with a low linguistic skill base who, despite their wish to do so, cannot break free from their shackles. I say that in the context of accepting what the minister has said. However, the limitation is that, if you just give them a sense of self-worth and empowerment without giving them relevant skills, it will still not be possible for them to find long-term, meaningful employment.

Members of this house, members of the government and the Public Service should be able to achieve a 70 per cent long-term outcome for government youth traineeships. If after the year's trial the youth conservation core does not achieve 70 per cent youth outcomes, will the minister abandon the scheme and put the money into a scheme that achieves better, long-term results for full-time employment for our young people?

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** I am not of the opinion that you should cling to the wreckage of a policy if it clearly does not work. It would be appropriate for us to have quantifiable outcomes through every program on which we spend public money. One of the areas in which I have been very keen to engage the department is in making sure that we do not keep programs going just because they have been there forever. Each one should be assessed properly, and if it does not work we should give it up and do something different. Certainly, we would want to assess any new program critically as it evolved.

The most important issue is the challenge of dealing with those young people who to date have left school very early with few skills, have fallen out of training, have no prospect of employment and who are disengaged by the training system. They currently are the people who are at risk. Clearly, some of the issues which the honourable member raised are to do with literacy, numeracy and linguistic skills—and they should be inculcated by the education system. My colleague, minister White, will endeavour to improve the outcomes for young people not only by keeping them at school but by having appropriate programs to guarantee that they are job ready and life ready when they leave school.

**Mr BRINDAL:** That is a good answer, minister. We will keep that answer as an excellent example. With regard to skills bases, why has the government abandoned the youth graduate induction program for the Public Service? We had a program of taking young graduates into the Public Service. I thought we might want intelligent people coming into the Public Service. However, we have apparently abandoned the youth graduate induction program. Minister, that came under the Premier and cabinet previously; perhaps it needed your protection.

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** The member for Unley is absolutely right, yet again. It is under the control of the Premier and cabinet. I do not have any specific details about the program but I will be very happy to pass the request to the Premier on notice.

**Mr BRINDAL:** As far as the minister knows, is it still there?

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** I would have to ask Ms Taylor.

**Ms TAYLOR:** I understand that the graduate program is continuing in some form, but it is administered by the Commissioner for Public Employment. I am certainly happy to provide details that we can obtain from him.

**Mr BRINDAL:** I offer gratuitously that it is an absolute disgrace because, if you are the Minister for Employment, you, not the Premier and cabinet, should control the program. It is an ongoing fight that I had and never won; perhaps the minister can win it.

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** I think the Premier and cabinet are singing from the same song sheet and working together, so I am sure we can collaborate on that program.

**Mr BRINDAL:** So were we, but sometimes the Premier's ministers can do things better than the Premier.

*Members interjecting:*

**Mr BRINDAL:** They can because they have more time. Under the Liberal government, the Private Sector Employment Program was introduced to support employment growth by providing incentives and advice to employers in key employment areas. The Liberal government committed \$3 million per year over a four-year term. Can the minister advise me how much this government has committed to the program this financial year and the government's intentions for the next two years? Additionally, how many jobs have been created as a direct result of the Private Sector Employment Program?

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** The program that the member for Unley describes began on 1 January 2001. It was to support employment growth in the South Australian economy by providing incentives to employers within strategic employment growth areas to create sustainable jobs. The industry sectors eligible for the program were retail, tourism, hospitality, arts, cultural, recreational, personal services, property and business services, manufacturing, community services, health and education. It assisted disadvantaged job seekers facing barriers to accessing employment in these industries.

The barriers particularly existed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a declared disability, people with limited education levels, self-disclosed ex-offenders and people with limited levels of literacy and numeracy. At this stage, 714 job seekers are registered for the incentive and 218 employers have employed an eligible job seeker. There was a slower uptake for this program than planned for the first nine months of its operation. However, recent interest by employers has seen the number of job outcomes increase.

It is anticipated that, in 2002-03, the program will achieve a minimum of 300 employment outcomes for these people, who face the most difficulties in gaining employment. Although reductions have been made to this program to the level of \$2.5 million as opposed to the original estimate of \$3 million, we expect that the overall outcome in employment opportunities will be the same or slightly higher.

**Mr BRINDAL:** I am very pleased that the minister is keeping the program on, but as she read out they are the core group that Labor sticks up for. If ever there was a group of battlers that a Labor government says it represents, the minister has just read it out. Why has the government dropped half a million dollars in what is a \$3 million budget?

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** It is an incentive to employ and, if people do not take it, we cannot force them to employ people.

**Mr BRINDAL:** What the minister is saying to me is that all the government can spend in a year is \$2.5 million.

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** That was our view.

**Mr BRINDAL:** If the demand rises to \$3 million, the government will put in \$3 million?

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** I will have to see. Ms Taylor, do you believe that we can get more than 300 people in jobs?

**Ms TAYLOR:** The uptake was extremely slow at the start of this program and, while we have seen some increase in the uptake, I believe that the original estimates still cannot be met in a full year based on our experience of it at this stage.

**Mr BRINDAL:** At 300? The original estimate was 350, was it not?

**Ms TAYLOR:** Yes, it was around 350.

**Mr BRINDAL:** Will you get to 350, or will it go around 300?

**Ms TAYLOR:** I think 300 is the most realistic figure. As the program is new, we are still reviewing the outcomes and reviewing the way in which the program operates. As I said before, we have not seen the greatest uptake of this program by employers, so we really want to look at the outcomes in a full year and take the opportunity to see whether that is the best use of that funding or whether it should be further targeted. But we estimate that 300 would be the maximum.

**Mr BRINDAL:** On that same topic, there are a number of what the media sometimes describe as 'tough love' programs in South Australia that have had difficulty finding a home. One is the *One and All*, in its capacity as a training ship, and another probably better known to most members of this place is Operation Flinders, which achieved some remarkable results taking very difficult young people away for a week and putting them through an extremely strenuous exercise. It has really had some remarkable turnaround results. Its limitation has always been that, while it was a valuable exercise in itself, often the young people came back into the milieu from which they had emerged—difficult schooling and all sorts of things—so the success rate long term was not quite what we would like because—'recidivism' is not quite the right word—there is a falling off.

A number of industries, in particular the seafood industry, are interested in partnering with enterprises such as Operation Flinders and offering employment outcomes to people who successfully complete that sort of course. In particular, in New Zealand at Westport the entire fishing industry, I believe, takes nothing but graduate deck hands from Westport school, and the Westport school will not take anyone unless they have a criminal record as long as your arm. I commend it to the minister: I hope she will go there and have a look. It is an amazing program that achieves remarkable results.

Is the minister prepared as Minister for Employment to talk to the Minister for Youth and whichever other ministers are involved to get some of these programs under some sort of logical ministerial fiat, because they have always sort of floated round and everyone says, 'Isn't it wonderful, but it's not quite our job to fund them,' and to get them under some logical ministerial base and develop them to the point where they become a pathway to legitimate employment outcomes rather than just a bit of a self-help program for people who are on the wrong side of the tracks at a particular time?

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** I thank the member for Unley for his keen observations: he obviously has a passion for this area, and we are very happy to take his advice now we are in government. I think that the interesting point here is that clearly the matter did fall between portfolio areas. I perceive that one of the major advantages of my aggregated ministerial responsibilities is that I do have opportunities to

work across portfolios, between for instance small business and employment and also with tourism, where there are huge opportunities for employment. The program that most closely relates to the member for Unley's interests will be Active8, but I am not entirely au fait with that program because it is in the Minister for Youth's portfolio.

I would be very keen to work with the Minister for Youth together with minister White to try to find programs that transcend those ministerial boundaries, because the most critical group—apart, of course, from the mature aged unemployed—for our community and the future of the state is those children aged from 15 to 20 who have to date left school and are out of school, out of jobs, out of training and who have no hope.

Where they have criminal records, where they have become marginalised or involved with drug taking or have been in dysfunctional family units, the prospects for that group are very grim. Certainly, New Zealand has some innovative programs, some of which I saw in schools when I was in New Zealand recently.

If we can obtain any experience instead of re-creating the wheel and if we can obtain any ideas from other jurisdictions to try to find ways of making a program that will fit our needs and our state, then we should try it. I would be very keen to work with the other ministers to put together a strategy that will deal with those probably 5 000 to 10 000 young people who are at risk, at risk whether or not they have criminal records or whether or not they have taken drugs, but are generally at risk because they are not job ready and they are not ready for life. They are the ones with whom we have the greatest responsibility to work.

**The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY:** I refer the minister to Budget Paper 4, volume 2, page 7.10. Under Output 1.3, I note a reduction in the number of student hours from \$21.2 million to \$21 million for this financial year. Could the minister explain where that reduction will occur?

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** We are talking about a 1 per cent reduction in hours. Some of the changes in VET activity may well relate, I suspect, to the falling number of apprentices and trainees whom we expect to see going through the system. This is to do with the flow, because there was a peak about 1½ to two years ago, and there has been a subsequent falling off in the numbers as the groups pass through the system. The actual make-up of the number of hours and how they will change, I suspect, will depend on the training needs and the skills shortages. We will be assessing that to try to work out a program to most fit the state's needs, but I cannot give the member any more of a specific answer than that.

**The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY:** On the same page, I notice that the cost per curriculum hour has risen or is estimated to rise from \$12.20 in the year 2001-02 to \$13 per curriculum hour in 2002-03. Is this as a result of the enterprise agreement and the increased wage commitment by the government to teachers and TAFE lecturers?

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** Some of it is to do with enterprise bargaining but otherwise inflation. We have not kept up with the rising costs of the service.

**The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY:** On the following page, 7.11, I notice that the number of courses and training packages approved last year was 28 and this year it is estimated to be 40. Could the minister advise me which additional training packages will be approved this year?

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** I am afraid I cannot give the member all those details. I will take the question on notice and get back to the member.

**Mr BRINDAL:** With TAFE, as I understand it, senior lecturers at present do not lecture. At present, senior lecturers have the job of coordinating courses, and in coordinating courses they contract people in to lecture in those courses. That has been a long established principle in TAFE. Earlier the minister talked about the demoralisation in TAFE and the fact that all these people are being employed on a casual basis to teach courses. As senior lecturers were the ones who developed courses—and for some reason which I cannot quite understand they cannot teach—they have to contract other people to do the teaching for them and, because we will have this new regime where everyone is not demoralised any more and they are not under contract, does this mean that senior lecturers will now be required to recommence teaching and that they will be required to get all their expertise from within TAFE? That is, they will be limited in their ability to contract relevant lecturers with relevant expertise from industry.

If we are to have a greatly rearmoured TAFE where people will all be on full-time employment, not on contracts, will this not reduce the flexibility of TAFE? Will it not put demands on those poor senior lecturers who have not had to teach for years who will now have to go back and do some teaching, and what will be the consequent standards for the students?

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** We were not proposing that every member of the teaching staff should become a full-time, permanent employee. We were saying that they should have permanency. There may well also be part-time employment. One of the issues as I understand it, from speaking to staff, is that when a person is casualised or contracted there is a problem in obtaining mortgages and loans because they do not have the commitment for regular income. That is one of the issues about which they feel most strongly. The future of the program in terms of how the staff will be given permanency I do not think will revolve around making the senior lecturers teach any more than they do now. I do not understand that that is how the issue will be resolved.

If there are no permanent staff and there are hourly paid staff, the problem of curriculum development and rostering is one that cannot be taken on board by those people in the same way. Clearly, there will still be hourly paid staff, because there are some people who work within the TAFE sector who provide services that have a very low requirement in terms of hours. Even if they work across several institutes there will not be enough work to give them a permanent package that will be manageable, and we will have to make sure that the teaching staff have the skill sets required by the training pupils. So, we are not planning to make everyone permanent or full time.

**Mr BRINDAL:** One of the greatest needs in South Australia at present and one of the most profound skill shortages is the shortage of underwater divers, because to contract an hourly paid diving instructor costs a lot of money. The minister has said that these people want permanency so they can get bank loans. Does that mean that the minister is guaranteeing that the TAFE system will institute a proper course in the underwater skills necessary for the burgeoning aquaculture industry, that those people will be permanent and will be paid commensurate salaries such that they could get diving on oil rigs and other things—because you will have some remarkably well paid permanent staff? I ask the minister to clarify that.

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** As I said, not every member of staff will be permanent and full-time. The diving instructors are employed on the open training market and funded by the open training market. They are in a different category.

**Mr BRINDAL:** One of the problems is that they have not been employed lately, and they have not been training anyone. Will this government make sure that that skills shortage is filled in South Australia?

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** As I said in my opening statements, we have decided that we should develop a strategic plan for the state which would incorporate the needs of the economy, business and the manufacturing sector, and which will look at the possibilities and opportunities for state development. When the Economic Development Board has produced an overall strategic plan, we would mesh that in with our assessment of skills requirements. It is quite apparent that, once one notices that there is a shortage of divers or spot welders or nurses or electronics technicians, we are in trouble. The trick, if we could achieve the outcome, would be to recognise skills shortages ahead of time so that we can plan and train people for the future. Some of the areas where there have been skills shortages have been identified through the TAFE sector. For instance, there was an innovative course in laboratory technicians for the biotech industry, which was a creative way of recognising a skills shortage in the future.

When one considers that the number of biotech companies has increased, I think, from 15 to 22 over the course of a year, it is quite apparent that the skill sets required are both specific and difficult to acquire in the short term. So, those training courses, I think, have been imaginative, creative and opportune in their timing. The challenge for us is to make sure that the skills required match the business and the economic opportunities in the future. If we can get it right, we will be cooking with gas.

**Mr BRINDAL:** I enjoy debating with the minister because she has a remarkably good grasp of the issues. She would be aware, because she made statements a few weeks ago—in fact, twice since she has been minister—that a skills shortage of about a thousand workers has been identified in regional South Australia. In fact, regional South Australia, particularly the area represented by the member for Flinders, is crying out for jobs, so the skills shortages are there—perhaps we are a bit late because they are already evident, so we do not have that part of the trick.

The minister also said that she does not believe in the ‘Bringing them back home’ campaign. There is, therefore, an urgent need in regional South Australia. At least a thousand jobs are going begging because we do not have the skills. The minister has ruled out bringing them back home from interstate. The minister also said in her last statement that it takes time to train people with these sets of skills for the jobs.

I ask the minister: if there are a thousand jobs going begging in regional South Australia and if it will take time to train people but we are not going to bother to bring anybody in from outside, how will we fill these jobs in the foreseeable future? Will we have to wait for the return of a Liberal government to fix up the mess?

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** I hope that in the fullness of time—at the end of two or three more decades, when you next come to power—we will have left the state in a better condition than we found it. I think that you must be confused. I believe it was the Premier who was commenting

on the 'Bringing them back home' policy. I do not think that I have been particularly scathing about it.

The issue of regional skills shortages is important to address in the short term. It seems to me that there are three issues: a skills shortage, which damages economic opportunity; an unemployment issue, which damages the future of young people because they are not skilled; and a population issue, in that, unless those two groups can be matched up, there is outward migration of populations, which leads then to ongoing damage to the fabric of communities because there are no young people to refresh the community. So, those issues have to be dealt with.

I think one of the best opportunities for regional and rural South Australia is, of course, via the agricultural industries, because those primary industries are important. The major growth area in the future will be, undoubtedly, through tourism. Overseas visitors particularly want the Outback experience, ecotourism and Aboriginal experiences from a trip to South Australia. Those, combined with wine tourism, are the real opportunities.

Many farming and leasehold properties have diversified into tourism opportunities, and it is a clear way of evening out the peaks and troughs in an economy—by making sure that there is another income stream for people in regional and rural areas. So, tourism is a huge opportunity.

If you look at the 11 non-urban regions around South Australia, the growth in tourism is spectacular. People who twenty years ago would never have imagined that tourism was a real business are now flocking to add rooms to their farms and to offer bed & breakfast, farm tours and a whole range of opportunities.

I am very keen that in training we also identify those tourist opportunities, particularly for indigenous people, because European and North American travellers particularly want to have an authentic experience in the bush. I think that that is a huge opportunity for South Australia, if we can produce the skills and the ability to provide that tourism product for visitors. I apologise—I have strayed off the point.

**Mr BRINDAL:** I do not in any way detract from what the member for Adelaide has said about the tourism industry, but I would hope that, in the multiplicity of her portfolios, she does not perhaps concentrate on one to the exclusion of others. Whilst I do not disagree with what the minister says, I point out that in the member for Flinders' area aquaculture is growing at something like 20 per cent a year and is confidently predicted, as with the wine industry, to exceed \$1 billion within a few very short years.

In labour terms it is reasonably primitive in that it is back where farming was 100 years ago because it needs lots of people to do things. It is an employer of skilled labour. It is also—and I am not playing one against the other—more solidly based than even the tourism industry because, unlike even the wine industry, the one thing that people will never not need is food. Seafood is a basic commodity which is in huge demand throughout Asia and, given our coastline in South Australia and the unique environmental benefits of our seas that are contacted only by Antarctica to the south (they are the least polluted seas in the world), a clean, green industry based on aquaculture in the member for Flinders' area has probably got to be the greatest single growth potential possible of any aquaculture type industry in the nation—and the member for Flinders knows that.

Having said that, the skill sets implicit in aquaculture I think are pivotal to the development of the state through both the Fisheries Academy and the Spencer Institute of TAFE in

the member for Flinders' electorate. I ask the minister whether in doing as she is—which is waxing very forthrightly on the tourism industry—she will give her assurance that the aquaculture industry and other important segments will not be neglected in the development of skill sets?

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** Absolutely. I think we put \$2 million into the Spencer TAFE and the Fisheries Academy. It is clearly a growth industry with huge export potential. I understand that the skill sets you need for aquaculture are actually not fishing but more like farming—a primary industry skill set. It is clear that this industry is very important because it keeps young people in the regions. It gives them a reason to stay at home, get married and have a family and revive areas that might otherwise decline. So, it has an important social impact as well.

We should never underestimate the requirement for an IT enabled rural sector, because the impact of some federal policies on training in regional areas has been quite dramatic. The recent increase in IT awareness and internet use in the bush is quite stunning. Providers can now give a much better internet connection, so many farmers and primary producers do a lot of business online and are able to access banking and information about a whole range of issues. So, the information economy is not just something for the city; it is something that is very important for the bush.

**The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY:** I am sorry to labour this point, but I would like something clarified. I take the point that the minister made earlier that it is quite a job to go through a register of employees in TAFE and see who is on contract and who is casual. I know of a number of accountants who do a small amount of lecturing in TAFE. Will the minister clarify whether those sorts of people will be offered permanent employment or just what classification of people will be offered permanent employment?

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** It is difficult to be sure which teachers will want permanency or to say that some would or some would not. One cannot generalise or make judgments, but I doubt whether people who have other full-time employment but who give small numbers of hours to course delivery at night—it is not their sole source of income—will want permanency. However, I would not like to prejudge their ability to do so. If they teach accountancy only, they might wish to be part of that process. We are working through the criteria and trying with some difficulty even to find their records. I had not realised how difficult it would be to find the records of those staff.

**The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY:** I have a supplementary question to that. I understand what the minister is saying, but I just wonder that, if I am an accountant who has been lecturing for a couple of hours at night over a period of six or seven years, there might be the possibility of having a claim, because I register for the amount of time that is under the enterprise agreement, and could be offered a contract under the new enterprise agreement and therefore would have to be employed as a full-time permanent person.

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** My gut feeling is that possibly those people would not be the ones who would seek permanency, but I do not know. We have to go through a case-by-case study and the working parties working through all the staff records and all the information. The other thing that is important is whether people want permanency. There may be people who want the flexibility of working part-time and to be casual. There may be some of those people, and we have to work through all of those processes and make sure that the long-term staff, some of them nearly full-time but

casual, are the ones who have the most pressing need at the beginning.

**Mr BRINDAL:** So, you are not quite sure who all these disgruntled people are?

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** I am saying that we have a complex and multi-layered system, and there are individuals who I understand have full-time jobs, who earn a little bit of pin money on the side, and they do not appear to be the people who we are talking about in this permanency issue.

**The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY:** I raise that question because I just wonder how you would stand legally in respect of the enterprise agreement if one of those people were to take advantage of the situation. I understand that you cannot answer the question—and I would not expect a lot of people to take it up—but I just wonder whether that might be an outcome if somebody wanted to take it down that line.

A couple of years ago my wife broke her Achilles tendon and I went to visit her in hospital. While there, I took the opportunity to have a discussion about retraining with some of the nurses who were there, and one of the issues that was put to me by three or four different people who I spoke to on subsequent visits was the fact that our nurses are currently being trained in a full-time tertiary institution and not receiving training within the hospitals.

As a result of that, when they finally get a job in a hospital they are then lasting about three months because they do not consider that they have been trained to empty bedpans, change beds and a range of other issues. As a result of that, many of those people whom we are training and whom we desperately need in the hospitals as trained nurses are leaving the profession and going elsewhere.

I realise that it is early on in your ministry, but have you had any thoughts about what options might be available there, so that young people who undertake training in the area of nursing actually get on-the-job experience during their studies, so that the culture shock when they get into the wards is not as great, and if they are going to drop out that they drop out before they finish their degree rather than once they have fully completed it?

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** I think the member for Light has struck on a very important issue. I think it is clearly very difficult for people to imagine what the life of a nurse is like when they get exposed to only a few weeks of actual ward training in the early years of studying for their degrees. I suspect that if the program was jiggled in a slightly different way, so that they received up-front real life experience when they worked, there may be a different outcome. I think the other issue with nursing training is that it is physically very hard work. People talk often about the short life of the spot welder, in that previously people would get into a trade and stay there for 40-odd years.

Apparently spot welders last only 10 to 12 years now because it is hard work. It is tough and they move on to other administrative jobs. So the issue is that, increasingly, you end up training someone three or four times for a lifetime of work. That is obviously costly for the community but it is even worse if the person being trained does not really get a real-life experience until they reach the end of their degree.

The other issue is the globalisation of the workplace in that our nurses are being lured, along with our teachers, to the UK. We are luring other people from either South-east Asia or South Africa, so that staff are constantly mobile and we might end up training people who will never work in our country because they will be economic migrants, if you like,

to other places. So the skills shortages we face are very complex. Certainly some of them might be affected by better criteria for admissions into courses, so people knew what they were really doing; and being a nurse is not all glamour: it is jolly hard work, just as is being a spot welder. As government we have to recognise that we need to ensure that people get into the right courses.

I think it interesting to look at the NCVER data out of User Choice, in that there appears to be a very high drop-out rate from some of those apprenticeship courses, but one of the mysteries of the NCVER data is that the identification numbers people are given when they enter an apprenticeship are different each time. So, if they trade up to a different course or a higher paid course, they come up with a different number on the computer and you cannot follow them in a linear way. So, the drop-out rate is very significant in terms of understanding how apprenticeships work but also in understanding how university courses work, because there is really quite a high drop-out rate from universities. The issue may be one of recruitment and a transparent process where people actually understand what they are doing. If there were any process by which we could make sure the right people got into the right courses, and therefore provided a longer period of service in that profession, we would be more effective because we would save money, heartbreak and misery, and there would be better outcomes for the community. But I think getting to that point is going to be quite challenging.

**The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY:** Do you have any plans to have any discussions with the universities about the matter of nurse training and whether some sort of practical experience might be—

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** We will have to get into discussing how that works because it is an area that obviously is of great significance. I know there has been talk recently about attracting overseas nurses which is really a short term issue, when we need a long term strategy. But I am very interested in working with the universities on their drop-out rate and the way we make sure that young people get into the right courses, because I think some of the drop-out rate from university might well be the issue that has been raised by Brendan Nelson, where he talks about people feeling compelled to go to university when they might be more successful in other courses. The community pressure on people is to go to university and we may be channelling young people into the wrong training schemes.

**Mr BRINDAL:** I will just ask a final question and then we will go to the omnibus question because rigor mortis seems to be setting in on the other side.

**Ms CICCARELLO:** We have been very generous to you.

**Mr BRINDAL:** I know. You have been very good. Minister, we have talked a fair bit tonight about the seafood industry. You alluded to the \$800 000 which has been made available over the next four years for the development of aquaculture. I seek your assurance that that \$800 000 is going to youth for training, because I heard a disquieting rumour that the \$800 000 is, in fact, mainly going down to PIRSA for the purpose of PIRSA building another little empire that will actually be fisheries inspection, which will then turn around and more greatly regulate the industry which is an emerging industry. It was announced in the budget as a developmental issue for the industry and I just want your assurance that it does come under your portfolio and that it is money that will be applied to training, not money that is going to be siphoned off for policing and restricting it.

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** I have no knowledge of the funding that you are talking about. We will not be putting any of our funds into policing or PIRSA. I am not quite sure to which budget line the honourable member refers.

**Mr BRINDAL:** Neither am I, but \$800 000 was to be made available over the next four years for the emerging aquaculture industry. As we are examining the appropriations for the Minister for Employment and Training, if that money is to be applied for the employment and training of the aquaculture industry I think it should be in this budget line. If it is not in this budget line—

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** No.

**Mr BRINDAL:** Then I shall take up the matter with the Premier, because it sounds as though it will be used for marine police.

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** There might be something in another portfolio. We have put about \$2 million into aquaculture-fishery type training. At the moment the fisheries academy is going through a review process. We have continued funding of \$617 500, as well as \$158 000 for user choice funding. The Australian fisheries academy—which of course was started by the Hon. Dr Bob Such—also earns income from fee-for-service courses, as well as international operations. That sum is about the \$800 000 amount you are talking about, but I do not think that is what you are alluding to. I cannot match up your numbers with our detail.

**Mr BRINDAL:** I will question the Premier at another time on that matter.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** The member for Unley has his omnibus questions.

**Mr BRINDAL:** Will the minister advise the committee how many of the 600 jobs to be cut from the Public Service will be lost within the employment, training and further education portfolio? Will the minister advise the committee which initiatives contained within the government's compact with the member for Hammond have been allocated to this

portfolio? How much will they cost, and will these costs be met by new or existing funding? Will the minister identify, with respect to her portfolio, which outputs and measures have been merged or redefined, and the dollar value of the changes? Will the minister advise the committee how many reviews have been undertaken or scheduled to take place within the portfolio since the government was elected—other than reviews that I asked for, because I do not want to know about them—and to which matters do these reviews pertain? Additionally, which consultants or consultancy organisations have been hired to undertake this work?

What is the total cost of these contracts for all departments and agencies reporting to the minister? What is the share of \$322 million underspending in 2001-02 claimed by the government? I am hoping that in this portfolio it will be nothing. Additionally, what are the details of each proposal and project underspent, and the details of any carryover expenditure to 2002-03 which has been approved by the minister? Will the minister advise the committee of the number of positions attracting the total employment cost of \$100 000 or more within all departments and agencies reporting to the minister as at 30 June 2002, and estimates for 30 June 2003?

There is a question which I do not want to ask the minister and which concerns the Accreditation and Registration Council's Dispute Resolution Committee in a matter relating to an employer at Whyalla. I would rather see the minister personally, take the member for Giles with me and talk about it privately.

**The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH:** I will be very happy to discuss that matter privately with the honourable member and the member for Giles.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** There being no further questions, I declare the examination of the votes completed.

#### ADJOURNMENT

At 9.25 p.m. the committee adjourned until Wednesday 7 August at 11 a.m.