

**HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY****Friday 22 June 2012****ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B****Chair:**

Hon. M.J. Wright

**Members:**

Ms F.E. Bedford

Dr S.E. Close

Mr J.A.W. Gardner

Mr D.G. Pisoni

Ms R. Sanderson

Mr A.J. Sibbons

*The committee met at 09:00***DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT, \$2,633,800,000  
ADMINISTERED ITEMS FOR THE DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND CHILD  
DEVELOPMENT, \$220,355,000****Witness:**

Hon. G. Portolesi, Minister for Education and Child Development.

**Departmental Advisers:**

Mr K. Bartley, Chief Executive, Department for Education and Child Development.

Ms. J. Riedstra, Chief Financial Officer, Department for Education and Child Development.

Mr G. DeGennaro, Deputy Chief Executive, Chief Operating Officer, Department for Education and Child Development.

Mr G. Costello, Head of Schools, Department for Education and Child Development.

Mr P. O'Loughlin, Executive Director, Human Resources and Workforce Development, Department for Education and Child Development.

Mr C. Bernardi, Director, Finance and Investing, Department for Education and Child Development.

**The CHAIR:** I have some preliminaries to go through. 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 consideration of proposed payments to facilitate changeover of departmental advisers. Changes to committee membership will be notified as they occur. Members should ensure the chair is provided with a completed request to be discharged form. If the minister undertakes to supply information at a later date, it must be submitted to the committee secretary by no later than Friday 21 September.

I propose to allow both the minister and the lead speaker for the opposition to make opening statements. There will be a flexible approach to giving the call for asking questions based on about three questions per member, alternating from side to side. 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. Members unable to complete their questions during the proceedings may submit them as questions on notice for inclusion in the House of 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. The incorporation of material in *Hansard* is permitted on the same basis as applies in the house. All questions are to be directed to the minister, not the minister's advisers. The minister may refer questions to advisers for a response.

I also advise that for the purposes of the committee, television coverage will be allowed for filming from both the northern and southern galleries. I will now proceed to open the following lines for the portfolio, Education and Child Development. I declare the proposed payment open for examination and refer members to Portfolio Statements Volume 1. We are now going into School Education from 9am until 10.30am. I invite the minister to make her opening statement.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** My opening statement broadly covers our education and child development services, including the SACE Board and non-government areas, early childhood development, school education, and the care and protection of children. However, I would also like to take this opportunity to put this budget for 2012-13 into a wider policy context.

This is, in a very real and practical sense, an historic time of reform and innovation in the development of services for children and families in South Australia. As members will be aware, South Australia has quite a proud history of leadership, particularly in the early childhood development area and in our support for children and families, especially for those who are among the most vulnerable in our community.

If we look back over the past 100 years or so, we see social and educational reformers such as Catherine Helen Spence, Dr Helen Mayo and Lillian DeLissa and countless other leaders and innovators in the fields of education, early childhood development, and child and family health. There are so many people across our government and non-government services and organisations who have had a profound and positive influence on the health and wellbeing of generations of South Australian children.

If we fast forward to more recent times, we see that South Australia is taking a national leadership role in the development of early childhood services. In so many respects we have led the way to focus on the very early years of a child's development. We have done so with support from internationally recognised leaders in the field, such as the late Dr Fraser Mustard, and with the increasing awareness and support of research into the early brain development of children.

We have more evidence and understanding of the effect those very early years have on the lifelong health, educational development and wellbeing of young children and people. With this knowledge and insight and experience of people at the front line of our service delivery, we have taken a strong leadership role in developing services that recognise that health, wellbeing and education are not separate elements in the overall development of children.

We have therefore brought together a number of our health, family and education services to meet the needs of young children and their families. Our children's centres, as flagships for this approach, have attracted interest both internationally and from other states. I am pleased that we are establishing more of these integrated services for children and families during this coming financial year. South Australia has also played a leading role in the development of the Early Years Learning Framework which is now central to the delivery of quality preschool education across the nation.

At the other end of the spectrum, our commitment to creating better opportunities for all young people to achieve their potential means that we have a broader range of opportunities for senior secondary school students. This is enabling more young people to choose from both academic studies and vocational education and training courses as they progress through school and look toward further training, university and rewarding jobs.

Among the state government initiatives is our network of Trade Schools for the Future, the collaborative work that has involved the SACE Board and all school sectors in providing the SACE, and our national partnerships with the federal government, which includes new trade training centres for our young people. We have also worked in collaboration with industry and business to ensure that students gain relevant skills and qualifications for further study, future careers and trades.

This has been a massive investment in recent years to improve our schools and preschools as a result of commitments by both the state and federal Labor governments. For example, there has been investment of more than \$1.6 billion in school capital works, maintenance and asset funding since the 2002-03 state budget. The federal and state partnership has also seen an investment of more than \$1 billion in our schools, which includes new gymnasiums, classrooms and learning areas to support science, language and the provision of computers and other technology.

New and ongoing investment in our school infrastructure will continue in this financial year. I am pleased that this includes work being started on a \$7 million project at Salisbury High School

and a \$4.22 million project at Windsor Gardens Vocational College. We will also see the remaining two of our six Better Behaviour centres being established at Port Lincoln High School and at Elizabeth East Primary School. These will help to address behaviour problems by stepping in early to get students back on track with their learning, and also support classroom teachers.

We will continue to deliver on our range of capital works commitments. These include the \$60 million expansion of four of our most popular high schools. The ongoing investments provide new school buses, particularly for the benefit of regional students, and our \$55.8 million commitment to renew and relocate six of our special schools to mainstream schools. We are also investing \$1 million to improve a number of regional preschool facilities while also continuing our investment in new and redeveloped preschools to support children and families in regional communities.

However, in a broader sense, I believe this budget marks an historic new opportunity for us to improve opportunities in life for every child in our community. Our provision of more than \$3.016 billion for education and child development reflects the state Labor government's commitment to children and families. Indeed, one of our major government priorities is early childhood development. To support this commitment we have brought together a range of services under the umbrella of the new agency.

In this first full financial year of the new department, I believe our investment in people and resources provides a real opportunity for the whole South Australian community to support the education, care and protection of our children. I am sure each and every one of us on this committee today wants the very best for our children. However, as members are well aware from our own experience in working within our communities, not every child has the best start in life.

There is a great diversity of family and social circumstances that mean there are children who are vulnerable and at risk. Supporting our most vulnerable children often involves very complex challenges for families, carers and the many skilled professionals who work at the front line of our service delivery. Our objectives must be to support and enable safe nurturing and positive home and learning environments for all our children. We must especially support children whose circumstances mean they are at risk of not achieving their full potential.

That is why I am particularly pleased that this budget provides extra support for children and families who are most vulnerable. This support will be provided through a range of new and ongoing initiatives. Where children are not able to remain safely with their families, we are providing additional support to strengthen family based and other care arrangements.

**Mr PISONI:** I have a point of order. It has been the custom that opening statements have been limited to 10 minutes, in my experience in estimates.

**The CHAIR:** No point of order.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Thank you, Chair. I have timed the statement. I do not believe it is longer than 10 minutes. We are also establishing a new infant and family support program which reflects our commitment to helping vulnerable parents and families as early as possible. As members will be aware, families with newborn babies and children up to five years old are visited by child and family health nurses as part of the child and family health program. This year we will build on this support with the new infant and family support program. The program will assist families in the northern Adelaide metropolitan area who have very complex health, education and social needs. It will mean infants and their parents have extra support, when it can matter most, from a range of professionals and others with expertise in child and family support.

By connecting child and family health services with education, we will build on our approach to integrate and shape services around the health, education and wellbeing of children, young people and families. Similarly, we are also bringing more preschools and services, such as those for children with a disability, together at local schools. We will strengthen the role of schools as community hubs through new and ongoing investment and by working with schools and the professionals, parents and carers who support children as they progress through preschool and school.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the critical role that our professionals, including educational leaders, teachers, child and family health nurses, social workers, child protection workers, and school service officers have in making a difference for our children and their families. It reinforces my view that governments and services alone cannot address every social and community challenge facing children and their families. As a community, we all have a responsibility to children to ensure they can maximise their opportunities in life.

**The CHAIR:** Does the shadow minister have an opening statement?

**Mr PISONI:** No, I just have questions, Mr Chairman. Minister, last year it took your department in excess of six months to deliver questions back to the member for Unley that were taken on notice. I think the expectation of estimates is 12 October this year. What guarantees can you give the committee that questions taken on notice will be answered in a timely manner?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** We will do our very best to comply with the requirements as established by estimates committees.

**Mr PISONI:** So no guarantees?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** We will do our very best.

**Mr PISONI:** You spoke in your opening statement about a historic time for education. Are you then surprised or disappointed that your portfolio, particularly school education, did not rate a mention in the Treasurer's budget speech this year, for the first time in living memory? Certainly in the last 10 years, the entire time of this Labor government, this was the first time that your portfolio had not been mentioned in the Treasurer's speech. Do you have a view on that?

**Mr SIBBONS:** Point of order. I am just wondering what budget line that might be?

**Mr GARDNER:** Budget Paper 1.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I am very proud of the budget, and therefore the budget speech that was made by the Treasurer. I am incredibly proud to be part of a government that, over a number of years, has made record investments in education and child development. In 2010-11, our expenditure increased by \$203 million; in 2011-12, it increased by an extra \$127 million; and for 2012-13, it increased by an additional \$56 million. This is a portfolio that makes an investment of over \$3 billion into education and child development. I am very proud of the work we do as an agency, the work we do every day in our schools, and the work we do to keep our children safe.

**Mr PISONI:** I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 209, 'Workforce summary'. We have information back through the FOI process, and it was also confirmed by Mr Bartley at the Budget and Finance Committee, that you are having difficulty attracting applicants and filling vacancies for school principal positions.

In 2009, there were 621 vacancies, and 16 of those did not have applicants; in 2010, you had 699 leadership vacancies, and 18 of those did not have applicants; and, in 2011, you had 812 vacancies, and 15 of those did not have any applicants. Are you able to explain to the committee why the department is having difficulty in finding people to even apply for leadership positions within the school system?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I believe the member is referring to information given to the Budget and Finance Committee. I am advised that the advertising of leadership positions is managed by regional directors and principals, so data is not retained centrally about the suitability of applicants. However, last year there were 866 principal jobs advertised, and nine of these were initially not filled. The positions that were not filled through the initial advertisement were either re-advertised or filled by other means, such as the appointment of an unplaced principal or through an expression of interest.

In total for 2011, 812 leadership positions in schools were advertised, and 15 of these had no applicants, so these positions would have been re-advertised. We want the very best people in these positions. The moment you walk into a school, you get a sense about the culture of a school, and the role that principals have in creating that leadership at a local level is incredibly important—they inspire staff, and staff then go on to inspire students to learn. So, we want the very best people in these positions; they are critical positions.

**Mr PISONI:** I will follow up on that if I may. That was not actually the question I asked. I asked whether your department had a view as to why there were vacancies without applications. There were 16 vacancies without applications in 2009; there were 18 in 2010; and there were 15 in 2011. You did not answer that question, minister.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Can I clarify that they are questions that relate to budgets back to 2009? Is that what I hear correctly? If that is the case, I will have to get back to the member.

**Mr PISONI:** No, they are questions relating to 2010 and 2011. There were 18 vacancies for leadership positions that did not have any applications; and, in 2011, there were 15 vacancies for leadership positions in schools that did not have any applicants. My question was: what advice has your department given you as to why this is happening?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I am very happy to undertake a more detailed search on those questions even though they do not pertain to the budget that we are interrogating.

**Mr PISONI:** They do; we are discussing the workforce summary. Principals are on the workforce, are they not?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I have given, in my opinion, quite a detailed response to the issue—

**Mr PISONI:** You have not answered the question.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** —but I am very happy to take that on notice.

**The CHAIR:** The minister will take it on notice.

**Mr PISONI:** You have not even discussed the fact that in 2011 there were 15 leadership positions that did not even attract applicants. You have not even discussed that with Mr Bartley.

**The CHAIR:** The minister has said she will take that on notice and that is the answer. Member for Florey?

**Mr PISONI:** It is unbelievable.

**Ms BEDFORD:** I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 210. I ask the minister to advise the committee of the progress that has been made in the expansion of the Adelaide High School and the review of the school zone.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** The government announced, as part of the 2010-11 state budget, that it would be investing \$60 million to expand the enrolment capacity for high-demand high schools, including Adelaide High School (and I note the member for Adelaide is here this morning), to ensure that more South Australian children could attend these outstanding public schools. We are working with school communities from Adelaide High School, Brighton Secondary School, Glenunga International High School and Marryatville High School on these expansion plans to ensure that the school communities can shape the expansions.

We have made very good progress in delivering these expansions, although I acknowledge that the progress at Adelaide High School is taking a little longer than the other schools. This is because, obviously, Adelaide High School faces a number of particular issues due to its heritage listing, its location and the particular interests of the school community. This is the very reason why the government has worked so closely with the school to develop the plan for Adelaide High School's expansion, developing a number of options for the school's consideration. Indeed, it was the Adelaide High School Governing Council that unanimously supported this plan for expansion.

I was very pleased that on 24 April the Adelaide City Council voted in favour of the school expansion which will enable the further progression of these important works. Since then, the feasibility study and concept design have been completed. The concept design has also been presented to the governing council and will be submitted to the Development Assessment Commission this month. The scope of the new facilities will include a new learning centre and extension to building 4, and refurbishment of existing areas that will provide 31 new learning spaces and cater for an increase in enrolments to 1,450.

In May this year, Adelaide High School endorsed the scope of works. Specialist heritage architectural consultants have been employed in the development of the proposed design of the new building, extensions to existing buildings and redevelopment works to ensure that both state and commonwealth government heritage building requirements are met. I am absolutely committed, as I am sure everybody in this place is, to the expansion of Adelaide High School, and the government will continue to do everything it can to progress it as expeditiously as possible. Work on the review of the zone will continue in the context of this approval and I look forward to continuing to work with the school and the school community in developing this expansion in the interests of enabling more children to attend this outstanding school.

**Ms SANDERSON:** When will the new zones for Adelaide High School be announced to include Prospect and Walkerville? I note you said you are working on that; is there any estimated time?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Now that the plans have got lift-off, basically, there is still quite a bit of work to do in terms of the Development Assessment Commission process, but we are working very hard inside the agency and hope to progress the zone work as soon as possible, and we look forward to your support in relation to that.

**Dr CLOSE:** My question relates to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 210, Port Noarlunga Primary School. Can the minister advise what steps are being taken by the state government to support children and families attending the primary school at Port Noarlunga in the south of Adelaide?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I thank the member for Port Adelaide for this question. Port Noarlunga Primary School has a very long and proud history of teaching children in the district over many generations, and I understand the school is due to celebrate its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in just four years from now. Our progressive investments to improve, upgrade and provide new schools show that we recognise the importance of improving our schools to ensure the educational needs of today's young people and future generations.

That is why I am pleased that the government has commissioned a feasibility study for Port Noarlunga Primary School to consider upgrading facilities for this great school in the south. Following this study, funding of \$4 million over three years was allocated in the 2010-11 state budget to redevelop the school. This will include a new administration building, a new resource centre, and new classrooms. We are actively working with the school on this important project, and the principal governing council and school staff have direct representation on the project redevelopment.

Further, care has been taken to consult widely to ensure that the needs of all stakeholders have been considered. I am pleased to advise that the construction work is expected to start in August, and it is anticipated that work will be completed in June 2013. This is a great example of how governments and local communities work together in the best interests of our children and young people. I take this opportunity, in particular, to thank the Port Noarlunga Primary School community for their work and commitment to creating an even better school for young people in the south.

**Mr SIBBONS:** I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 210. Can the minister advise how local school communities will benefit from new capital investment projects?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I thank the member for Mitchell for this question. There has been a massive investment in recent years in school infrastructure throughout our community by both the federal and state governments. Every time I visit a school (and Wednesdays tend to be my school visiting days), I walk into new gymnasiums, language centres, new classrooms and much improved facilities all round.

In this coming financial year, the government is continuing its significant capital investment in schools to support families and children in our community. This investment program includes a start for new projects to upgrade and improve facilities at Salisbury East High School and Windsor Gardens Vocational College. I would like to briefly outline these projects which will be progressively developed.

I can advise that during the 2012-13 financial year the government has budgeted \$500,000 for architects to begin detailed design work for these projects. The Salisbury East High School redevelopment will be a \$7.040 million project that will provide a new purpose designed performing arts facility for drama, dance, music and visual arts, which will replace old timber transportable buildings.

The new facilities include new student toilets, change rooms and improved external and internal areas on the school grounds to provide formal and informal teaching and meeting spaces for students and teachers. The Windsor Gardens Vocational College redevelopment will be a \$4.22 million project that will include a new purpose designed music facility that includes two class performance areas and three individual student practice rooms. There will be two new visual art facilities, a new electronics lab, and a physical education lab.

These are among our many great schools that support young people in their district, and I am very pleased that this initial go-ahead for these projects will deliver 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching and learning spaces for students, staff and the whole community. I understand that around \$1.6 billion has been invested in school capital works, maintenance and asset funding since 2002-03. There has also been the historic investment in new buildings and other support, worth around \$1 billion through partnerships between the state and federal governments that included the BER. I take this opportunity to send my best wishes to the staff and the students at those two schools and colleges.

**Mr PISONI:** Are you allowing discussion outside the budget period? I just want to get that clear.

**The CHAIR:** You know as well as I do this is on the budget, and I am sure you will answer and ask appropriately.

**Mr PISONI:** There was a lot of comment in the minister's answer on that last question—it went back to 2002. Will that be ruled out of order if questions are asked outside the budget period?

**The CHAIR:** If you ask questions outside the budget period, yes, they will be ruled out of order.

**Mr PISONI:** But of course the minister can focus on that herself.

**The CHAIR:** Do you have a question?

**Mr PISONI:** I do. A quick supplementary, if I may, on the last question from the member for Mitchell to the minister: I think the minister used the term 'a substantial investment' in capital works in education this year. According to your own budget papers, minister, it is \$11 million. Is that what you describe as a substantial investment in new capital works?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** We actually have a very substantial investing expenditure program worth \$173 million—

**Mr PISONI:** Minister, you said new capital works—

**The CHAIR:** Let the minister continue with her answer and then I will allow you to ask supplementary questions if you so wish. The minister.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I have answered the question, Chair.

**Mr PISONI:** My next question relates to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 216, contract teachers' leave entitlements, under the heading Program summary—expenses, income and FTEs. Can the minister explain why there is no cost in the budget or the forward estimates to cover the High Court decision that ruled that contract teachers up to 2005 were employed inappropriately under section 9(4) of the Education Act? I think on the last day of February this year the High Court made that decision.

The Australian Education Union took the matter to the High Court some years ago because section 15 of the Education Act allowed a break up in service of two years for long service leave accrual, while section 9(4) limits breaks in service to three months. The High Court ruling means that contract teachers inappropriately employed will now be eligible for extra leave entitlements. How much will this cost your budget and will your budget be responsible for finding that money or will that money come from Treasury?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** We are presently working through as a government the impact of that High Court decision.

**Mr PISONI:** When will you be making an announcement on that decision?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I believe—and I stand to be corrected by my advisers—the matter has been remitted to the Industrial Relations Commission here in South Australia. I will check that that is correct. Beg your pardon, the Industrial Court. We will progress that matter in due course.

**Ms BEDFORD:** My question is back to Volume 1, pages 216 to 221 and concerns the Premier's reading challenge. I ask you to advise us how the success of the challenge continues into its ninth year now.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** This is a fantastic little program, although it is no longer little. It is now in its ninth year and has proven to be an extraordinarily popular program, which, each year, gets more and more students reading books, and reading is such an important and fundamental skill that will assist kids throughout their schooling and later in life. It is amazing to think that over 2.8 million books have been read by South Australian students since the start of the challenge. That is potentially 2.8 million books that may not have been read if not for this fantastic program. It brings together all our sectors, as well as home education families.

In 2011, 119,777 students completed the challenge, an increase of about 3 per cent from 2010. In other words, approximately 61 per cent of all South Australian students from reception to year 9 participated in the challenge. There were 722 schools involved, which is approximately 96 per cent of eligible schools across the three sectors.

Interestingly, a total of 3,261 Aboriginal students completed the challenge in 2011, an increase of 4.6 per cent from 2010. This year again, the Premier challenged all students in South

Australia from reception to year 9 to read 12 books before 7 September 2012, and students from year 10 to year 12 are encouraged to continue their participation.

The Premier's Reading Challenge was initially funded over five years with \$1.2 million provided from 2004, taking it through to the end of the 2008-09 financial year, followed by a specific purpose allocation from Treasury in following years. There was \$333,000 allocated for the 2010-11 financial year. This equates to less than \$3 per student who completed the challenge in 2011.

It is significant, given the fact that schools have reported that the Premier's Reading Challenge is having a real impact on motivating students to read at least 12 books a year; that is really important for our students who are reluctant readers. Many schools are reporting that students are challenging themselves to read many more than 12.

This year, we will continue encouraging all students from all ability levels to participate in the challenge, especially as 2012 is the National Year of Reading. In fact, we are encouraging students to read an extra book in recognition of the National Year of Reading so that South Australia might reach a target of 1.5 million books read in 2012. Can I take this opportunity to congratulate all our students and their families and our fantastic staff, teachers and SSOs in our schools who seek to instil a love of reading in our children.

**Mr PISONI:** I have a supplementary question. Recently, Henley High School removed all the books from their library. Has the department done any work on analysing what impact the removal of books from school libraries may have on the Premier's Reading Challenge?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I think the principal of Henley High School made the case very, very strongly. We trust our leaders, our principals, to make informed decisions based on the needs of their school communities and based on research and evidence about the needs of their students. That was a call made by that school and, in fact, it was a decision they did not take lightly. Again, I am happy to be corrected by my advisers, but I understood it was a decision that they made—

*Members interjecting:*

**The CHAIR:** Order! Just let the minister finish.

**Mr PISONI:** She is not answering the question, Mr Chair.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I am answering the question.

**The CHAIR:** Order! The minister has the call.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I completely and wholeheartedly endorse the decision made by that school. The member for Unley, in particular, is always talking about school autonomy. This is one of the very examples of school autonomy in action. I understand that that was a decision that was not taken lightly: it was a decision that was researched.

My department does advise me about the impact of technology. In fact, the impact of technology on young people's capacity to learn is something that we talk about all the time. So, yes, we do talk about it all the time, but I fully and wholeheartedly endorse the decisions that are perfectly made at that local level. Mr Bartley has just advised me that, in that school, there are 16,000 electronic books. So, there are books in that school; they just look different.

**Dr CLOSE:** My question relates to the Parent Complaint Unit (PCU). I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, pages 216 to 221. Following on from the issue raised by Mr Bill Cossey as part of his report into bullying in schools, can the minister advise how parents' complaints are now being dealt with?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Thank you, member for Port Adelaide. This is a really important issue that the member has highlighted. In his report into bullying and violence in schools, Mr Bill Cossey raised the issue of the avenues by which parents could raise concerns and complaints. As a result of this, the new Parent Complaint Unit was opened in mid-March of this year. The unit is designed to support parents and schools, and it will help to support and advise parents on how best to resolve any complaints they may have. This may involve bringing parties together, referring parents back to talk to the teacher or school who are closest, of course, to the issue and therefore may be able to sort it out speedily to the parents' satisfaction, because that is what we want: we want speedy resolution to complaints.

A dedicated parent complaint hotline using a 1800 Freecall number has been opened and is staffed during office hours. In addition, a web-based complaint form is available for use on the



sa.gov.au website. Complaints may be submitted by phone, email, web-based form or by letter. The unit keeps information about the sorts of concerns that parents have, so we as an agency are able to see whether there are common complaints, either about a particular issue or in a particular area which will help us know where we need to focus our efforts.

I am very pleased to provide some detailed information to the committee. Since 16 March 2012 to 15 June this year, 152 complaints/inquiries were received by the Parent Complaint Unit involving 104 sites from all regions; 101 issues were received via the PCU phone hotline; 37 were received via direct email to the PCU; 10 were received via the online form from the sa.gov.au website; three were received via e-courier; and one was received via letter.

Of these, 148 complaints have been finalised by the unit. Of the above issues, the majority have been finalised within two days of receipt, which is fantastic service delivery, I think. Most issues have been managed by the provision of information policy advice and referral back to the school or preschool with support for parents as required. One request for internal review of a decision by the Head of Schools was received but was later withdrawn when the matter was resolved at the local site, and that is what we want to see—grievances resolved successfully at the local level.

The Department for Education and Child Development parent concerns complaints policy procedure and customisable parent information brochures for schools have been launched and are now available on the sa.gov.au website and the DECD website. Work is underway to ensure that all schools and preschools have an updated complaints policy easily accessible on their website. In addition, sites are being supported to add a complaint feedback button to their individual websites which links parents directly to the information on the sa.gov.au website.

Over the next year I am pleased to advise the committee that the unit will develop a long-term systemic data collection process and function, and a formal review of parent complaints policy and procedure will occur and modifications will be made as necessary. We all have a shared interest in resolving problems that parents have with their kids' schooling because we know that educating our children is something that needs not only the school's involvement but that of parents. We seek to resolve issues as quickly as we can so that we can get back to the main business which is educating our children.

**Mr PISONI:** A supplementary question, Mr Chairman. Are you able to advise the committee, minister, of how many staff are allocated to the complaints unit and what the budget is?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Yes, I am. I just need a minute to get that information. I do not have the budget figure but I can advise that we have a manager, two ASO5 senior policy officers and an ASO3 policy support officer. They are employed in the unit so it is quite a small, tight, little unit.

**Mr PISONI:** Can you bring the budget back to the committee, minister?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Yes, I can.

**Mr SIBBONS:** I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 219. Will the minister advise how principals are being assisted in fostering a whole-of-school culture around literacy?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Thank you; this is an issue that I get very excited about. A great deal is spoken about giving more power to principals to manage their finances and staff. There is no doubt that this is an important area. I spoke earlier about the very important role that principals have in shaping and influencing their schools' learning culture. That takes me to the PALL (Principals As Literacy Leaders) program which has been developed and run through the Literacy Secretariat and has already inspired and involved more than 330 of our primary school principals. I have met a number of the principals involved in this program and they speak very highly of it.

It provides school leaders with the latest research and practice to develop, together with their teaching staff, the most effective ways to assist students to achieve their best in reading, writing and spelling. I am very pleased that South Australia has taken the national lead with this PALL program. In fact, I believe our leadership in this area was cited by Gonski in his report. It is an initiative that was generated from our Smarter Schools National Partnership funding from the federal government.

The program involves very strong cooperation between local school leaders, the Australian and South Australian Primary Principals Association, and university expertise from across Australia. Gonski did highlight this program and pointed out that 88 per cent of teachers working

with principals who took part in the initial project believed that it improved their capacity to address students' difficulties with literacy learning and improved student attitudes to literacy learning. Following that successful pilot program, 338 of our primary school principals, including leaders in rural and remote schools, have been involved in professional development. As one primary school principal told me recently, this initiative has given her effective strategies to work with teachers in the classroom and to keep the focus on the literacy outcomes and achievements of students.

The program has proven so successful that it is now being expanded to involve secondary school principals with the South Australian Secondary Principals Association. I would like to acknowledge this morning the work of the associations in supporting the achievement of our students and actively participating with my agency in the development of the program. I am able to report that more than 120 secondary school principals from across the state have been developing their literacy and leadership skills and understanding with the Smarter Schools National Partnership funding support.

I thank the universities, the associations and all of the schools involved for working together on this initiative. Our aim is to inspire and support principals, teachers and students to achieve better and improved literacy outcomes which will, of course, enable them to go on to be the best that they can.

**Mr PISONI:** I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 216, which particularly relates to the objectives of school education, including local school communities. With regard to the department involving local parents and local communities, will the minister advise the status of the legal and financial responsibility of governing council members—volunteer parents—for the employment of staff in school canteens and out of school hours care?

Minister, I want to take you to the situation at Rose Park Primary School. For some time now the governing council has been going backwards and forwards with the department trying to get to the bottom of the assertion that the governing council is the employer of persons working in the out of school hours care. The department has not yet set out the basis upon which the governing council is the employer of the persons working in the out of school hours care.

The governing council understands that it is an incorporated association and as such has the capacity to sue and be sued and therefore employ persons. This is not in dispute. What is in dispute is the fact that it seems to suggest that somehow the governing council has taken steps to employ the persons working in the out of school hours care.

The governing council denies that it is the governing council that is the employer of these persons. As a matter of law, the governing council does not have a contract of service with the persons working in the out of school hours care, and on any view of the matter they cannot be their employer. The governing council surely does not become the employer just because someone else says that they are. The members of the governing council want to ensure that governing council meets its legal obligations.

The governing council understands that as individuals they may have immunity pursuant to section 100 of the Education Act. However, the point is that if the governing council is the employer of these persons when it has obligations with respect to the state Fair Work Act, the state Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare Act, and both the state and federal antidiscrimination laws, surely if the governing council is the employer of persons in the out of school hours care, they must be actively involved in the day-to-day management of the out-of-school hours care and they must have systems in place to ensure their safety at work and that they are paid in accordance with industrial laws and instruments.

Can the minister explain how the governing council is the employer of persons in the out of school hours care when it does not control or direct the activities of the persons working in the out of school hours care, it does not have a contract of employment with the persons working in the out of school hours care, DECD appears to meet the payments of wages for persons working in out of school hours care, and it has not conducted any interviews or any performance management of persons working in out of school hours care?

It does not even know the names of the persons working in the out of school hours care, and it does not make superannuation contributions to persons working in the out of school hours care. It does not meet pay-as-you-go liabilities for persons working in the out of school hours care, it does not meet any of the occ health and safety obligations as the employer of persons working in the out of school hours care, and it does not meet any payments or any WorkCover levies and premiums.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** The question was, Chair?

**Mr PISONI:** Basically, the question is: can the minister explain how the governing council is the employer of persons working at the school's out of school hours care?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I am happy to address this question, and I am familiar with the case to which the member refers. In fact, I will ask Mr DeGennaro in a moment to respond more specifically.

I can advise that governing councils—and we value the role of governing councils—are jointly responsible with the principal for the governance of the school, with the council fulfilling roles specified in its constitution, including the following: strategic planning for the school, determining broad policy direction for the school, determining the application of the total financial resources of the school, presenting operational plans and reporting on its operations to the school community and the minister, complying with the code of practice approved by the minister, and participation in a dispute resolution process for resolution of disputes, in the event that there are any, with the principal.

Governing councils are also responsible for things like the operation of the school managed canteen, if they have one, including the maintenance and repair of fixtures and fittings, disbursement of its profits and the recoupment of its losses, and the operations of the out of school hours care service, where the services are sponsored by the governing council. I will now ask Mr DeGennaro to add anything to that response.

**Mr DeGENNARO:** I would like to confirm that we are having discussions with the chair of the Rose Park Primary School governing council. The information we have available indicates that the out of school hours care is operated by the governing council, and we will clearly continue to discuss that with the chair to clarify and provide information and assistance to his consideration of the matter. There is ongoing discussion with the chair. We quite welcome a discussion with him and we have invited him to have a meeting with us and with our legal advisers to go through the information and to complete that discussion with him.

**Mr PISONI:** I have a supplementary on that answer, if I may. Minister, has the department sought any legal advice from crown law or elsewhere as to any change to occupational health and safety obligations or liabilities that members of governing councils will have if the government is successful in passing its changes to occupational health and safety legislation here in South Australia?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Governing council members have an indemnity under the Education Act.

**Mr PISONI:** Governing council members—

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Have an indemnity under the Education Act, and I believe that that statement has been made publicly before.

**Mr PISONI:** That is the first time we have had it in *Hansard*, so I thank you for that.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** My pleasure.

**Mr PISONI:** This question refers to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 225, Statement of comprehensive income. Will schools be paid for their overruns in breakdown maintenance in 2011 and beyond and, if not, will schools be forced to eat into reserves; for example, if a school has put away money for projected projects or replacement programs, such as furniture? Its RES allocation is about \$2,000 to \$2,500 per annum for furniture, and desks cost about \$90 each? Will a school be forced to eat into these reserves and forgo the project for replacements to make up the difference?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Schools and preschools are provided with funding for breakdown maintenance as part of their annual funding. In 2011, the management of preventative maintenance was centralised. The department is finalising a review of the funding model, in collaboration with preschool and principal associations. Since 2006-07, the backlog maintenance in schools and preschools has dropped from approximately \$250 million to \$152.5 million as at December 2011. Sites are provided with an annual breakdown maintenance allocation within their RES. The formula used to determine an individual site's allocation is detailed annually in the RES notes. We will continue to work with sites.

**Mr PISONI:** Was a memo sent to principals telling them that in the future they would be reimbursed for only 71 per cent of breakdown maintenance overruns?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I am advised that such a circular has not been distributed by my department.

**Mr PISONI:** This question refers to basically the same budget line. Mr Bartley told the Budget and Finance Committee that currently the department is closely monitoring 28 sites for their performance management and is working closely with four sites requiring a high level of assistance. Are you able to advise the committee how many of those 28 sites are running budget deficits and for how long they have been running budget deficits?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I am advised that none of those sites is running budget deficits.

**Mr PISONI:** Have they received additional funds over and above their budgeted RES statements in recent years?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** We will have to take that one on notice.

**Mr PISONI:** Can I also have a list of those 28 sites?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I will take that question on notice.

**Ms BEDFORD:** I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 210. Can the minister advise how special schools will benefit from relocating to mainstream school sites?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** The government recognises the importance of our special schools, and can I say what an amazing job our teachers, SSOs and other staff do at our special schools. In fact, we had students and staff of the Ashford Special School visit parliament recently and it was a fantastic experience for me, anyway. The government recognises the importance of our special schools and the work they do to provide first-class education and care for our students with significant disabilities.

This is why, as part of the 2010-11 budget, we announced the biggest investment in disability education in a generation, that is, a \$55.8 million renewal program to relocate six special schools to mainstream sites. The program is now well underway and construction will commence in the coming financial year. It is our opinion that the program will have many benefits for students, both those at the special schools and the students at the schools to which they are relocating. The relocation will enable students to engage within a broader school community, developing curriculum and other links between the two sites.

There is no question that our special schools do incredibly important and inspiring work. I spoke earlier about the Ashford Special School: this is a school community that supports the education and wellbeing of each of its students and works very, very hard to enable every student to achieve their personal best. I would like to acknowledge the teachers, the leadership of Ms Jen Mathwin-Raymond and the whole team at Ashford.

The Ashford Special School supports around 80 students from reception through to the senior years. The senior students who visited this place recently were wonderful ambassadors for their school, and I was very pleased to be able to spend some time with them and introduce them to our Premier. In fact, I think one of them spotted the member for Bragg and introduced themselves to her; I think that was pretty exciting for them as well.

I was pleased to discover that senior students have the opportunity to complete a modified SACE program which enables each student to graduate with a real sense of achievement and inclusion in their senior secondary years. In fact, I handed out a certificate to a young man—Steve Atkinson. He was a student at the Gordon Education Centre who received his modified SACE certificate, and I believe he received a merit certificate. I want to send my best to the students and staff at that school, as well.

In the case of Ashford, they are in the process of being relocated to the William Light R-12 School, and I was delighted to hear that there are already bonds and friendships developing between those schools—in so many ways including students, using technology such as iPads (I saw that for myself when I visited these schools) and getting involved in community activities such as the City-Bay Fun Run. This school community is widening the opportunities and experiences of those young people. I take this opportunity to acknowledge, over and over again, the outstanding staff, families, students and support given to our children and young people in our special schools.

**Ms BEDFORD:** It would be remiss of me not to mention here the outstanding work at the Modbury Special School, particularly under the guidance of Julie Ashberger, who I notice has been slurped into the department so her good work will now permeate throughout the state.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** It will.

**Ms BEDFORD:** In my 15 years in the job, I have seen that school go from a childminding centre to an institution of learning, and it is just amazing.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I look forward to visiting the Modbury Special School as soon as I can.

**Ms BEDFORD:** We would love you to.

**Mr GARDNER:** Minister, in your answer you referred to the integration of curricular and school activities within the new sites. I am a member of a school council at Charles Campbell College, as the minister would know, and we are looking forward to having the Kensington Centre relocated next door. However, the information provided to the school council at this stage has largely been that the Kensington Centre will be a discrete facility. It is located on a patch of land that is currently underused on the Charles Campbell site but there has been no suggestion of activities or joint curriculum development or anything like that. I am wondering to what level will that be taking place, and when will the Charles Campbell College, and the other school sites where this is happening, be brought into the loop on those processes?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I thank the member for Morialta. I am well aware of his activity at Charles Campbell, a school that I am very familiar with and, of course, the Kensington Centre is just on the boundary of my electorate—in fact, it is just down the road from where I live—and this is a school that is relocating to that site. I cannot account for the information that you have seen, although I am very happy to interrogate that further. This is where the leadership and the work of these sites at a local level comes into play.

I have spoken about the work that the Ashford Special School is doing to join up all the things you mentioned, and I would expect that that would be occurring as well in relation to the Kensington Centre and Charles Campbell College. I am very happy to make some inquiries on your behalf. We believe very much, as lots of our educational leaders do, in the notion of relocating our special schools to our other schools. We see all sorts of exciting opportunities to increase the life opportunities of our special kids in these schools, and this is a vehicle by which we can do that.

**Dr CLOSE:** My question relates to school funding and the Australian government review. The reference is Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, pages 216-221. Can you provide an update of the South Australia position on the Gonski review?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** South Australia has always been very clear, and we have always said from the outset, that we welcome the Gonski review. It has been long anticipated by all sectors and all states and territories. This is an important and significant piece of work that represents the first really comprehensive review of educational funding in Australia in over 40 years and provides a clear path for providing educational excellence, greater equity and improved transparency across all education systems for our nation.

It is interesting for us here in South Australia that the funding model proposed by Gonski echoes in many ways our student-centred funding model that we recently introduced. Our members would be aware that government schools in this state are now funded via a model that provides student per capita funding to schools in place of the previous enrolment step formula for teachers, ancillary staff and leadership. This funding reform, together with our comprehensive measure to give schools the ability to make decisions locally, has led to Mr Gonski stating:

In some jurisdictions such as New South Wales and Queensland, central control is still a strong feature, while Victoria and South Australia are the most decentralised systems.

We should, of course, all be interested in supporting the education development of our children to take them into working life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. That is why the state government has prioritised investment in the early years, something that Mr Gonski identifies as being of great importance in his report, but there is still substantial work to be done in respect of the recommendations of the Gonski report. Certainly officers in my department are working very hard with our colleagues interstate, and I know people in the non-government sectors are too.

The 2008 Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations was designed to rebuild and reinforce collaborative federalism by affording states and territories the flexibility to direct resources to areas where they will produce the best results, and the National Education

Agreement focuses effort on the outcomes that are nationally agreed to be important without necessarily prescribing how these are to be achieved.

Together, these agreements contribute to a robust and mature national framework for schooling, providing a foundation to build upon to achieve first-class education outcomes for young South Australians. We will continue working with our colleagues in the commonwealth, and with our colleagues in particular in the other sectors in South Australia. We believe very strongly that a productive and collaborative relationship with the other sectors in our state is very important, and we remain cautiously optimistic about Gonski and we will continue working hard. I acknowledge the work being led in the agency in responding to Gonski, in particular the work of people like Ben Temperly and his team, who are travelling and working hard.

**Mr PISONI:** A supplementary, if I may—

**The CHAIR:** You know that supplementaries are meant to be the exception and not the rule.

**Mr PISONI:** But they are exceptional supplementaries, Mr Chairman.

**The CHAIR:** I will listen carefully.

**Mr PISONI:** You spoke about the Gonski review in the answer to the question, minister. Are you able to advise what is the South Australian state government contribution to the \$5 billion annual increase recommended by David Gonski?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I am happy to be corrected by the opposition, but I do not believe that Gonski has put a figure on the states. There is a great deal of speculation as to what—

**Mr PISONI:** He has put out that 70 per cent of it should be covered by the states, so it is pretty simple maths.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Through you, Chair, there is a great deal of speculation as to what that figure might be, but that is why we are working hard with our colleagues. We need to settle on the model, we need to understand the impact of the model before any meaningful number can be attached to Gonski.

**Mr PISONI:** To follow on from that, David Gonski was very clear that 70 per cent of that contribution should come from the states. I would have thought that four months after Gonski had delivered his report you would have some figure. I notice there is no figure relating to additional funding in accordance with the Gonski report in the forward estimates in the next four years.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** That is correct.

**Mr PISONI:** So it is appropriate that I ask what figure the department believes would be in order to deliver the \$5 billion annual increase nationally and the South Australian state government's share of that figure.

**The CHAIR:** The minister has already answered that.

**Mr PISONI:** Yes, she doesn't know.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** No, no—

**The CHAIR:** That is not what she said.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** —I gave my answer, and what I can advise you is that you are correct and it is appropriate that you ask the question. There is no figure in our budget, as there was no figure in the federal government's budget, and that is because we are still working hard on determining the impact of the model. I will now ask Mr Bartley, who was intimately involved in this work in Canberra, to provide any additional information.

**Mr BARTLEY:** The work around the development of the national model is taking place as we speak in fact because, although Mr Gonski made those recommendations, the detailed modelling that flows from them has been taking place between all the states and territories and the federal government. They have to work through all the implications to begin to address the different options that would be available to redistribute the amounts his report indicates. That detailed modelling is taking place as we speak, which is why there is no specific answer yet.

**Mr SIBBONS:** I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 219. Can the minister advise of the benefits for South Australian teachers and schools arising from the federal and state government Improving Teacher Quality National Partnership?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Thank you, member for Mitchell. I am very pleased to have visited a number of schools in your electorate just recently, and I have to say that the best thing that I think I do in my working time is visit schools. I always learn something new about what it is that schools do as well as my role in the scheme of things.

The one thing which is incredibly obvious and which something parents and communities know instinctively is what a difference good teachers make. We know that great teachers change the lives of so many children, so I would like to thank all of our teachers who do an outstanding job in inspiring our students.

We held our very first South Australian Public Teaching Awards last year, after we received more than 1,600 nominations from members of local communities right across our state. Nominations for the awards for this year have just closed and I am pleased to announce that once again local communities have embraced the opportunity to acknowledge the quality of our South Australian teachers. This year we received 1,700 nominations and I look forward to announcing the winners of this year's awards on World Teachers' Day later this year.

There is no doubt in my mind that the real winners are the children and young people who are every day inspired to learn and to develop their creativity and their critical thinking skills as a direct result of high-quality teaching that goes on in classrooms. The challenge for us is to continually lift the quality of teaching and learning that goes on in our schools. We already know from the research that quality teaching is the single biggest factor in schools that influences student engagement and achievement.

I am very pleased to report that there are a number of initiatives that support and develop the skills and knowledge of teachers, and I am pleased that all school sectors in our tertiary sector are working together through the Teacher Education Taskforce—which is, I believe, something that is unique to South Australia—to look at how better we support the supply and demand of quality teachers for our schools. In fact, the task force is chaired by Mr Bartley.

We are also working closely with the federal government and school communities to support and strengthen quality teaching through the Improving Teacher Quality National Partnership. This partnership approach is proving effective here in South Australia. For example, a recent report from the COAG Reform Council confirms that we are achieving the objectives of the partnership and investment in our schools.

That partnership has involved an investment of \$6.87 million to our state since 2008-09. It also provides for a further \$25.58 million to reward the achievement of reform milestones. I am pleased to advise that South Australia achieved all 55 milestones in the first round of reward funding. As a result, we will receive the full amount of \$12.789 million in reward funding that is available for this round. Among the practical outcomes that will support the professionalism and standards of teaching across all schools sectors are things like:

- statewide consultations and professional development for teachers to inform and engage them about the National Professional Standards for Teachers;
- the development by my department of a new performance and development policy to support quality teaching and to provide them with feedback so they can continuously reflect on their practice;
- a leadership program for aspiring leaders, an induction program for new leaders and a strongly subscribed mentoring program, which is very important to ensure that new leaders learn from our most experienced;
- the provision of 43 country teaching scholarship programs that recruit teachers to hard to staff locations and subject specialist fields; and
- extra support for our up-and-coming new teachers, with a number of school centres for excellence which promote high-quality extended teaching experiences and mentoring for final year pre-service or student teachers in hard to staff locations.

Support is also being provided for our school support staff to build their capacity to take on those tasks; that will allow teachers to focus more directly on teaching and learning. We currently have more than 1,000 school and preschool support staff enrolled in accredited training courses.

There is no question about the quality of our teachers and that our teachers are the 'killer app'. I keep quoting someone, I do not know who they are, I read it in the paper a few weekends ago. Someone said that teachers are our 'killer app', and it is true. Our teachers make the world of

difference to our students. I have certainly experienced that as a student and I see it every day when I visit our schools. They do an amazing job.

**Mr PISONI:** Yes, I would like to thank my teachers for helping me get where I am today, Mr Chairman.

**The CHAIR:** They must have been very good.

**Mr PISONI:** They were very good teachers.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Where did you go to school, member for Unley?

**Mr PISONI:** Salisbury High School. I refer to Workforce Summary. Mr Bartley told the Budget and Finance Committee that in 2011 there were 138 teachers and 148 non-teaching employees who were performance managed. He also told the committee that in 2010-11 there were 105 teachers who went out on mental stress claims for WorkCover. Is the minister able to advise the committee how many of the mental stress claims were made after a warning or a notice of performance management was going to be conducted on those members of staff?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** The first thing is we do not have that level of detail here today, but we do not collect that data about what triggered the process.

**Mr PISONI:** You don't collect that data?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** No, we collect data, as Mr—

**Mr PISONI:** If you speak to your principals, they will tell you how many.

**The CHAIR:** The minister has the call.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** No, your question was very specific about—and correct me if I am wrong, Chair—the number of claims or people who went on, as you referred to it, 'mental stress claims'.

**Mr PISONI:** I am sorry, this is the—

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** No, I am speaking.

**Mr PISONI:** No, I need to correct you there.

**The CHAIR:** Order! The minister has the call.

**Mr PISONI:** This is the—

**The CHAIR:** The minister has the call. You are out of order, member for Unley.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** But your question, if I am correct, was how many of those were triggered by warnings, I believe you said. Now, I would be very surprised if we collected that level of detail. I am sure it is—

**Mr PISONI:** Or a notice; I said.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Or a notice—

**Mr PISONI:** Of performance management.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Yes, I am sure that is data that is reflected in officers' personal files, but I doubt that as a system we would collect data. In fact, I am advised that we do not collect data on the process that triggered the claim. I will ask Mr Bartley to respond, if he can.

**Mr BARTLEY:** The assumption that there is a causal link between a performance management process and a mental health issue is one that cannot be sustained. One of the reasons for that—

**Mr PISONI:** I didn't assume that. That was not an assumption. I was asking a question.

**The CHAIR:** Well, let's listen to Mr Bartley and then I will come back to you if need be.

**Mr BARTLEY:** Thank you, Chair. No assumption is made about what it might be that triggers a mental health referral or issue for an employee. The reason for that may be that the circumstances are elsewhere in that individual's life and they in themselves may have led to some of the performance issues that may have been identified. We do not make a direct correlation and therefore would not hold that data.



**Mr PISONI:** Minister, is the department saying that mental stress claims are accepted by the department because of non work-related circumstances?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Chair, as you heard the Chief Executive say, there are a number of factors that contribute to these types of claims, and he has just outlined that for the benefit of the committee.

**Mr PISONI:** I am sorry, the question was: does the department accept new mental stress claims that are not work-related for WorkCover purposes?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** They have to be related to work.

**Mr PISONI:** Well, that is not what Mr Bartley said. Mr Bartley said that there were non work-related issues that may cause mental stress.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** As well as work factors. Mr Bartley's words speak for themselves, but we would have, as an agency, medical advice that may or may not detail the contributing factors. People are entitled to dignity as we seek to manage issues, but they clearly need to be related to their work. It is not surprising that often these matters, which are by their very nature complex, play out at work.

**Mr PISONI:** Minister, can you advise what the process is for performance management of teachers by your department?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Yes, I am very happy to do that. We have a new performance and development policy suite which commenced in September 2011. It includes an overarching performance and development policy, a performance and development guideline and a 'managing unsatisfactory performance' guideline. The key points are: the policy suite applies to all employees in the Department for Education and Child Development; and the 'managing unsatisfactory performance' guideline shifts from a prescriptive step-by-step procedure to a high level principal-based guideline focusing strongly on legal concepts of natural justice and procedural fairness.

The suite is aligned with the national professional standards for teachers, the national standard for principals, and the department's recruitment and selection policy. Implementation has been supported by the department's performance development principal consultants. The principal consultants commenced employment in 2011 to work with site, regional and central office leaders to design, implement and review effective performance and development programs, and manage individual cases of unsatisfactory performance.

**Mr PISONI:** I have a supplementary question.

**The CHAIR:** This will be the last question before morning tea.

**Mr PISONI:** I have here the HR workshop development quality programs and services, a natural justice and procedural fairness checklist for recordkeeping—

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Was that 'procedural'?

**Mr PISONI:** This is put out by your department, minister, and you mentioned the natural justice and procedural fairness in your answer, so I assumed that you would know about this document. It is a 48-step process that principals must go through before they initiate any action on underperforming teachers. Are you able to advise whether the Australian Education Union had any input into the development of this paper?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I will ask Mr Phil O'Loughlin to provide some supplementary information. However, we have refined and streamlined our performance management policies and procedures. I believe the document to which you are referring is the document I mentioned earlier, the natural justice and procedural fairness document, which is part of the suite that I just talked about. I have to say that we approach performance management not from a punitive perspective, but from a perspective where we seek to work with staff to enable them to improve their performance. That is the fundamental task that we have. It comes from a perspective that is a positive one, not a punitive one. I will ask Mr O'Loughlin to address your very specific question.

**Mr O'LOUGHLIN:** Through the Chair, the content of the policy in relation to natural justice and procedural fairness was developed in close consultation with the Crown Solicitor. In relation to the question of the AEU's involvement, this is not an agreed industrial policy, but the AEU was involved in consultation in the final development of a policy, and the final policy was endorsed by the chief executive officer.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. We will now go to morning tea and return at 10.45.

*[Sitting suspended from 10:31 to 10:45]*

**Membership:**

Mr van Holst Pellekaan substituted for Ms Sanderson.

**The CHAIR:** We are due to continue on with school education until 11.45 and then care and protection from 11.45 until 12.30. The member for Port Adelaide has the call.

**Dr CLOSE:** My question relates to Felixstow Community School, and the budget reference is Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 216. Can the minister advise—

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Which question was that?

**Dr CLOSE:** Felixstow Community School. Can the minister advise the committee on the relocation of the Rose Park Family Unit?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Thank you very much to the member for Port Adelaide for this question. The Rose Park Family Unit was for many years, as the member for Unley would be well aware, based on the same grounds as the Rose Park reception to year 7 school. It is obvious to people who know that site that the characteristics of the family unit and the school are very different. The family unit was effectively a separate school with a very different teaching and learning ethos to the Rose Park R-7 school and it is fair enough to say, I think, that all the parties would acknowledge that in recent years this has created a growing number of differences of view relating to the operation of the two different learning environments being provided side by side on the same site.

To seek a resolution on the ongoing differences that affected the overall delivery of education for students, the family unit has now been established as a new school in a new location in Felixstow. This follows extensive discussion and requests from parents, while local members of parliament and other community members were informed as this matter was progressed and resolved. I would like to acknowledge the work that was undertaken by my predecessor, with the member for Unley, in relation to resolving this matter.

The new Felixstow Community School opened from the start of Term 2 this year. The new principal, Jen Bais, is experienced in teaching primary and secondary students and was recently a highly regarded director of the Kensington Gardens preschool. In fact, I am sure I have met her in her previous capacity. New contract staff have been appointed for this year, and the school will advertise ongoing teaching positions to start in 2013.

An interim school council was elected by the community and has established a range of working parties and subcommittees. It will seek formal recognition as a governing council during 2012. The government is pleased there is bipartisan support for a demonstration of diversity in our schooling and we are very confident that both the new Felixstow Community School and the Rose Park School will continue to offer first-class education to children and their families.

**Ms BEDFORD:** Minister, my question again relates to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 219. Can you advise the current status of the Advanced Technology Industry School Pathways Program and how this program is fostering an interest in defence-related courses and careers?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** This is a really important question. There is no doubt that we live in a rapidly changing world and, in order to meet these challenges for growth sectors, such as the defence, automotive and the advanced manufacturing and mining industries, we need to provide our young people with the skills they need to be successful in these sectors. High order maths, science and technology skills are an essential component for many good jobs and careers in these important sectors, sectors that are particularly important to South Australia's future.

For the past three years, we have been working with the federal government as part of a \$5.7 million Advanced Technology Industry School Pathways Program, which goes from 2010 to 2014. The aim of this program is to increase the number of young people doing maths, science and technology subjects which may lead to studies and careers in defence-related industries. The program involves three lead schools, that is, Henley High School, Aberfoyle Park High School and Valley View Secondary School, and 15 partner schools, including St Patrick's Technical College, from the Catholic sector.

I am very pleased to report that the program is already showing strong signs of success. Henley High School, for instance, has two year 12 physics classes this year, while the school's year 10 advanced technology course has increased from one class last year to three classes this year. Central to the success of this partnership is the partnership between the teachers and students and industry. In fact, industry is directly involved in the structure and governance of the overall program.

I would like to mention some of the partners that are part of this very successful program: Lockheed Martin with Valley View Secondary School; Henley Semiconductors with Henley High; the Australian Maritime College and the Australian Maritime Fisheries Academy with Le Fevre High School—and I had a great morning when I visited Lefevre High School; Broens Engineering with St Patrick's College, Craigmore and Fremont-Elizabeth City High School; and Kadego with Aberfoyle Park High. This is, in my opinion, a fantastic program, which is supporting our students and our state's future in defence and mining-related industries.

**Mr SIBBONS:** My question is around attendance and absenteeism. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 221. Can the minister advise what strategies this government has put in place to address student attendance and reduce absenteeism rates?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** This is an issue that is the subject of ongoing work and discussion between myself and the department, in particular, Mr Garry Costello, as the Head of Schools, and Keith Bartley, the head of my department. This government has a very, very good record on school retention rates. The rates have risen over the last year to their highest level in almost 20 years. With regard to attendance, on any given day, about 97 per cent of students are at school or have a legitimate reason for being absent—the doctor, the dentist, whatever.

However, when students are absent and missing school regularly, this can seriously impact their learning and engagement in school, and that becomes a real worry for us. 'Chronic absence' is a term used when a student is away from school for more than 10 days in a term. We know that there are lots of reasons why students are absent from school, and that is why the government has introduced a range of initiatives to ensure that these students return to school and are ready for re-engagement in learning.

Last year, the government appointed 12 additional attendance counsellors across the state, with a specific role in improving student attendance and reducing truancy. This brings the total number of attendance counsellors to 22 FTEs. They have a very important role in working closely with schools and parent communities to understand why students are missing school and, more importantly, to identify ways to support attendance, including linking families with other support services.

Aboriginal student attendances, particularly, are supported by the development of individual learning plans for every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student. In addition to this, the Indigenous Student Support System is employed in regions, and Aboriginal inclusion officers work closely with students and teachers to assist in monitoring attendance and engagement of students. Through our very innovative ICAN program (the Innovative Community Action Networks), we are currently helping thousands of disengaged students to reconnect with their learning and offering them things like flexible learning options to make their return to school smoother.

The state government has also committed \$10 million to six better behaviour centres to address the needs of students with behavioural problems who are often amongst those at greatest risk of disengagement. A memorandum of administrative agreement signed by this agency and SAPOL provides a framework within which both organisations can work collaboratively when responding to school-based incidents and student non-attendance.

We believe it is incredibly important for all students to go to school, but what is even more important is that, when they are at school, number one, they go willingly, because that puts them in the strongest position for learning and engagement. We do, however, recognise that not everybody has the best start in life and, therefore, as a government, we need to be prepared to respond, and we do.

**Mr PISONI:** I have a question on school attendance, if I may, Mr Chair. I also seek leave to insert statistical information into *Hansard* to support my question.

Leave granted.

Table 3.1.1: Number of Days Absent, Term 2, 2003 and 2004

Number of Days Absent	2003			2004		
	Number of Students	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage	Number of Students	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
0	35,046	22.4%	22.4%	35,109	22.7%	22.7%
1	29,002	18.5%	40.9%	28,118	18.2%	40.8%
2	21,818	13.9%	54.9%	21,247	13.7%	54.6%
3	15,762	10.1%	64.9%	15,434	10.0%	64.5%
4	11,495	7.3%	72.3%	11,739	7.6%	72.1%
5	9,259	5.9%	78.2%	9,059	5.9%	78.0%
6-10	21,601	13.8%	92.0%	21,651	14.0%	91.9%
11-15	6,791	4.3%	96.4%	6,672	4.3%	96.3%
16-20	2,675	1.7%	98.1%	2,698	1.7%	98.0%
21-30	1,945	1.2%	99.3%	1,977	1.3%	99.3%
31-40	679	0.4%	99.7%	721	0.5%	99.7%
41+	404	0.3%	100.0%	408	0.3%	100.0%
Total	156,477	100.0%		154,833	100.0%	

**Mr PISONI:** Can the minister explain why, in the past six years, under this government, we have seen a tripling of the number of students absent from school without authorisation for greater than 10 days? For example, in 2004, a survey that I am inserting into *Hansard* today shows that 12,476 (or 9.1 per cent of students) were away for 10 days or more, which I think you described as a critical non-attendance. Then, in 2010, that number was 46,391 (or 27.8 per cent).

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I would like to see that information, Chair, if I may, that the member has tabled.

**The CHAIR:** Yes; we will circulate that.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** If my memory serves me correctly, and I am happy to be corrected, I believe these are the same figures that the member used rather mischievously, recently. He asserts that 30 per cent of our students are away for 10 days or more: that is not correct.

**Mr PISONI:** It is your survey, minister. Are you happy to have that on *Hansard*? Do you stand by that?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** What I would like to do is to see the material to which the member refers, and then I will confirm my statement.

**The CHAIR:** That is being copied for you now so we can come back to that later.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Thank you. I am happy to move on to the next question and come back to that.

**Mr PISONI:** I will start my three questions now that the—

**The CHAIR:** Before you start, I remind you of what I informed you before we went to the morning break. I do not want to be overly pedantic, but the supplementaries are really supplementaries to questions that you ask, not that are asked by other people.

**Mr PISONI:** I see. I understand that the minister is new at this job. Last year she did not take any Dorothy Dix questions at all. On a quick count of the earlier session, I think the minister spent more time answering Dorothy Dix questions with written prepared answers than taking answers from the—

**The CHAIR:** I can inform you that there were more questions asked by the opposition than were asked by the government.

**Mr PISONI:** If you count the minutes, sir—because they were very long Dorothy Dixers answers from the minister—and it surprises me that when she had a portfolio that was worth \$20 million she was happy to take questions without Dorothy Dixers; now, with a portfolio worth \$2.6 billion, she is shielding herself with prepared answers to questions.

**The CHAIR:** And your question is?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Can I take this opportunity to correct the member. The portfolio is actually worth over \$3 billion, not \$2.7 billion, as he incorrectly refers. Can I—

**Mr PISONI:** Hang on. That was the figure the chairman used when he opened this session. It was \$2.7 billion. Perhaps you would like repeat it, Mr Chairman.

**The CHAIR:** I did not actually read in the figure for administered items for Department for Education and Child Development of \$220,355,000, so I apologise, my fault.

**Mr PISONI:** Chair, if I may, the \$2.7 billion—

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I have not asked a question yet. That was a precursor to my question.

**The CHAIR:** Order! Minister.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I thought the member for Unley might be interested in some more information which will shed some light on his previous question.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, we can do that now.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** The absence rate in South Australian government schools has remained stable at approximately 10 per cent in 2011, the same as in 2009 and 2010, not the 30 per cent to which the member refers. The country absence rate, 11 per cent, was slightly higher than the metropolitan school absence rate of 9.6 per cent.

**Mr PISONI:** This question refers to supplies and services. Is the minister able to explain how a contractor for the education department, Mr Frank Tesoriero, was able to continue working on a contract basis with the education department after being arrested and charged with child pornography (at about the same time as the former Labor member was arrested) and then went on to be convicted of those charges and, in that period between the arrest and the conviction, was working as a consultant for the department on at least two occasions?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I am happy to answer that question, although I will refer the matter to Mr DeGennaro. I can advise that Mr Tesoriero was a consultant in the field of community development at the time charges were laid and was an associate professor, Discipline of Public Health, Flinders University of South Australia, until August 2011.

He was engaged by my department in 2009 by arrangement with Flinders University. He was engaged directly by DECD as a private consultant to continue to provide support for the community development program. As part of this engagement, he facilitated various sessions in small groups. He was employed in an advisory capacity to staff only and at no time did he have any contact with children or families. At no time during his engagement by my department did Mr Tesoriero inform the department of his arrest and/or subsequent criminal proceedings. We believe that we took every step that we could.

We asked the right questions. We always ask the right questions of our prospective contractors and consultants. He clearly was not forthcoming, and there are of course a number of other checks that staff are required to go through when they are engaging with children. Given that he was not engaging with children, they were not applied.

**Mr PISONI:** I have a supplementary question. Did your department fulfil its requirement to inform Mr Tesoriero, who was working for you as an education consultant while charged with the pornography offences that he was later convicted for, that he was obliged to inform them of the criminal proceedings?

He is obliged through the Screening and Criminal History Checks Policy Guidelines for government and independent schools, which state that entrusted persons, including those contributing to policy and decisions affecting children's education who will have access to records relating to children, must be informed in writing by the department of their responsibility to notify of any significant change in their personal circumstances, for example, and I quote, 'criminal offence charges and convictions'. The question is: can the minister assure the committee that Mr Tesoriero was in actual fact informed of those obligations?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I reiterate the fact that at no time was this man employed in the engagement of children, and I have provided the committee with quite an amount of information, but I will ask Mr DeGennaro to supplement the answer with any additional information.

**Mr DEGENNARO:** The minister has asked us to review and revise the working with children checks we undertake. We obviously do that for anybody working with children or in a

position of responsibility. In this case, as the minister said, the contractor had no involvement with children and was providing services in the absence of children entirely. We are undertaking a revision or review of the working with children checks and are still developing that.

To that end, we have already met with the South Australian police department in relation to how to progress the issue of persons being charged where they do not make disclosures to their employer or to persons they are engaged with in terms of the charge lodged against them. We are reviewing that process and discussing with the police how to get information about persons charged who may have some involvement in the education sector.

**Mr PISONI:** A supplementary, if I may, Mr Chairman: was not Mr Tesoriero an entrusted person under your own guidelines, screening and criminal history checks policy guidelines? It says here that entrusted person is someone working with or in close proximity with children. You explained that he was not doing that. It also goes on to say:

- (b) having access to records relating to children or young people or
- (c) contributing to policy or decisions affecting children and young people in education and care environments
- (d) supervising or managing persons who work in close proximity to children and young people.

Did Mr Tesoriero come under any of those categories to be described as an entrusted person?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** My advice is that he did not meet any of them and I reiterate the most important fact, which is that he did not have direct engagement with children. I am satisfied that we asked all the right questions of this person. However, the case has raised important issues for us and we are working through them with SAPOL.

**Mr PISONI:** Well, supplementary—

**The CHAIR:** No, I will not allow you to ask a string of supplementary questions; this will be a fresh question.

**Mr PISONI:** Can you then explain: if he was not an entrusted person under your own guidelines, which include contributing to policy and decisions affecting children and young people, why he was a partner in the report to executive on early years in 2009 where key discussion points were the 'purpose of early years forum, phonological awareness, regional professional learning opportunities 2010' and 'engaging young minds from birth to age 3, practitioner inquiry protection'. That document was freely available on the DECS site dated 14 October 2010. It was a regional report. Members included Anne Lamont, head of TOSIA, and Chris Markos. The partnerships that were established in this project include Anne Clover, UniSA facilitator, Frank Tesoriero, Flinders University and Professional Support Co-ordinator in the PSC South Australia (In-centre Support).

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I am not aware of the document to which you refer, of course, but I acknowledge that this is an issue, which is why I have asked my department to look into our practice around this. We ask questions of people. We undertake checks if they have an active level of engagement with children. He did not, in this case, but nonetheless we are pursuing the matter with SAPOL. We will take their advice, and we will consider what this case means for us as an employer.

**Mr PISONI:** How many DECS staff have been charged with sex offences?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** We clearly would not have that information in front of us. I am happy to take that on notice.

**Ms BEDFORD:** As a government member, I consider my questions as important as anybody's in this room, and my next question to the minister is again to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 216.

*Mr Gardner interjecting:*

**Ms BEDFORD:** Some of us do have some interest in our own electorates. I ask the minister to advise how the government is providing schools with fairer and more predictable funding.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I talked earlier about the Student Centred Funding Model, which the government introduced in 2011 and which represents quite a radical approach to funding, compared with what we used to do, because it funds schools on a per student basis. The model applies to schools with primary or secondary enrolments and provides schools with fairer and more predictable funding than the previous approach. The result is a funding model that

provides greater flexibility in how school principals can allocate resources according to what they think is important, and it reinforces the fact that South Australia has one of the most decentralised systems in the country.

Under the previous funding model, which was based on quite a complex formula, school funding levels could vary significantly with very small changes in enrolments. It could mean, for instance, that if there was one fewer child in a classroom compared with the previous year the school could miss out on funding to provide an extra classroom teacher or other staffing support. I am advised that there has been positive feedback from principals and principal associations which has acknowledged the benefits of this funding approach. It has been well received because it provides school leaders with more flexibility about how they manage and deploy their staff and greater certainty of funding on a year-to-year basis.

A review group, which includes the principal associations, determined that there would be minimal change to the funding agreement for this school year. Some minor changes have been made to strengthen this approach, including measures such as indexation to reflect the average increase in salaries, an increase to the base funding level for primary schools with 600 or more students, and updating the index of educational disadvantage ranking for all schools using the most recent available data.

**Dr CLOSE:** My question relates to support for students with disabilities, and the reference is Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 218. Can the minister advise how the More Support for Students with Disabilities National Partnership will benefit South Australian students?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** As a government—in fact, all of us, I think, in this place would agree—we believe in the right of all children, regardless of ability, to access first-class quality education. Indeed, South Australia has the second highest rate of students who receive disability support in the country.

Within our public school system, 9.1 per cent of children, or about 15,000, receive some form of support. This is much higher than most other states and territories and more than double the rate of states such as Western Australia. That is because in South Australia we are committed to including every child and we support a much broader range of students than other states and territories.

I was very pleased to announce recently in partnership with the commonwealth a further injection of funds to support students with a disability in South Australia. There will be \$11.9 million spent in government schools to provide specialised assistance and support to these students. For South Australia, this funding will include:

- \$1 million to provide assistive technologies to support students to work more independently in inclusive environments;
- \$2 million to support the establishment of specialist teacher support centres;
- \$2.7 million to develop materials and provide professional development and other support to help teachers adjust curriculum to meet the individual needs of students with disability;
- \$5.8 million to train and mentor teachers and school leaders to build their skills and knowledge in special education; and
- \$233,500 to strengthen the skills of paraprofessionals to support students with disabilities in the classroom.

Implementation of this initiative will occur in 2012-14 and will overlap with South Australian government commitments to establish six new disability units—two for students with autism—and relocate special schools onto mainstream school sites (things I talked about earlier).

Government schools in South Australia have been invited through an expression of interest process to take part in this national partnership. Schools will be selected to receive funding by a stakeholder committee using a range of criteria, with the most important being numbers and support needs of enrolled students with a verified disability. The national partnerships initiative has already commenced in South Australia with Professor Barry Carpenter delivering workshops on the theme of engaging families, working in partnership with schools and visiting schools.

**Mr GARDNER:** I have a supplementary on that.

**The CHAIR:** A supplementary will be asked in relation to the question where it comes from.

**Mr GARDNER:** Yes, this is directly related.

**The CHAIR:** No, you missed my point.

*Mr Gardner interjecting:*

**The CHAIR:** That's right. Member for Mitchell.

**Mr SIBBONS:** My question relates to retention rates in SA government schools. I refer the minister to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 221. Can the minister advise of some of the government initiatives that have had a positive effect on apparent retention rates?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I spoke for a moment earlier about retention rates. In South Australia, retention rates are the highest they have been in a decade. We know that remaining at school longer substantially increases a young person's chances of successful employment. In 2001, for instance, the retention rate was just 68.9 per cent and in 2011 it was 87.5 per cent. This figure is also well above the national average. I am pleased to report that retention rates for Aboriginal students have also increased in the five years from 48.3 per cent in 2007 to 66.9 per cent in 2011. This has narrowed the gap in retention rates from 26.2 per cent in 2007 to 20.6 per cent in 2011.

These are excellent results and what they mean is that more students are remaining and engaged in school longer. In fact, last year we saw some excellent results in the first group of students sitting the new SACE for the first time. The aim of the new SACE, among many things, is to offer flexible subject and learning options to cater for students' broad range of interests and future career choices. In fact, 91.6 per cent of students who commenced year 12 achieved their SACE. This is an increase of 1.4 per cent. However, it is very important that our schools offer choices and options for students who may not choose to go straight into further study after year 12, and that is where our Trade Schools for the Future come into it.

Another really important initiative that has contributed positively to our retention rates is the ICAN program, and I spoke about that briefly before. I will provide a bit more detail. The program works with students and their families to re-engage the most vulnerable and disengaged six to 19 year old students in the state in meaningful learning programs. I am pleased to report that in 2011 ICAN supported more than 8,000 significantly disengaged students to re-engage in learning and community.

Our ICAN model has now also been expanded to include primary school students and students transitioning from primary school to high school, because this is also a very challenging period for vulnerable students. I am very proud of our retention rates and our strategy is to keep our struggling and vulnerable students engaged at school in a productive way longer.

**Mr PISONI:** I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, objectives of the department. The Cadell Primary School currently has 25 students, according to your latest summary of enrolments dated term 3, 2011, and five of those students use the Cadell ferry. The closure of the Cadell ferry will see the addition of 80 kilometres to the round trip each day for parents via the Morgan ferry. Will those families now be entitled to DECS bus services so that their children can continue to attend the Cadell school?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I thank the member for his important question. The member would be aware that the issue relating to the Cadell ferry service falls in the portfolio responsibilities of the minister for transport, and I believe he has answered questions about this service. I will take this opportunity to say that the Cadell Primary School has a very proud tradition of providing quality education to young people living in that region.

I am advised that the latest enrolment figures indicate that the school has 27 student enrolments. There are a number of other small schools in this area and around the state, and we remain committed to working and monitoring closely the circumstances as they unfold. We are very proud of the small schools in our community.

**Mr PISONI:** Come on, Mr Chair. I asked whether they are entitled to use the bus service.

**The CHAIR:** Is this a point of order?

**Mr PISONI:** For heaven's sake!

**The CHAIR:** I am sure that the minister is endeavouring to answer the question.

**Mr PISONI:** No, she is fluffing about.



**The CHAIR:** That is your opinion.

**Mr PISONI:** Holding off the scrutiny—that is what she is doing.

**The CHAIR:** The minister has the call.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** We believe, on preliminary estimates, that there may be five students who might be eligible and, of course, that depends on the students' residential address, as to whether they are eligible for transport assistance into the Cadell Primary School. We will do what we do in every case, and that is to work with the school community and take advice from the school community and from the principal. There is no suggestion that the future of that school is anything other than viable, and we will continue to monitor the situation closely.

**Mr PISONI:** Will you guarantee then that if those five students end up at other schools the school will continue to have a principal and two teachers even though it has a lower enrolment?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** As I said before, we fund schools on the basis of their student numbers. We fund schools using our student-centred funding model, and I have outlined that in great detail. We, on this side of the house in government, do not close schools. We are very proud of the fact that we have a number of very small schools and—

**Mr PISONI:** You have closed or amalgamated 79 school since you have been in office.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** We have not closed, we have amalgamated schools that have effectively been operating—

**Mr PISONI:** You have closed and amalgamated 79.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** —as one school. In the case of closures—we do not close schools.

**Mr PISONI:** You have closed 32 schools.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Schools make decisions about their future and their viability. Since I have been minister that has certainly been my experience. School communities vote on the future viability of their school. We are very proud of the fact that we do not close schools. We respect the role and the place that school communities have in determining their future. We continue to support schools on the basis of their student enrolments.

**Mr PISONI:** Yesterday the transport minister told the estimates committee—this is regarding the Cadell ferry closure—that:

They advised me that they consulted with the government agencies, the education department and the CFS.

The question is: what advice did your department give the minister for transport when being consulted about the ferry closure? I have been advised by members of the Cadell school community that the school was not consulted. I am asking what advice your department gave the minister for transport.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** We would need to check our records in relation to that, but what I can say very confidently—

**Mr PISONI:** Hang on. Are you going to bring your answer back to the parliament?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Yes, I am very happy to bring back that information, that advice, if it exists, but the most important factor here—

**Mr PISONI:** So you are suggesting that it may not exist?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** No, I am suggesting to you that you have asked a very detailed question, and I am very happy to take that on notice.

**Mr PISONI:** Well, the transport minister knows the answer. He said that your department—

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Did you ask him the question?

**Mr PISONI:** It is in *Hansard*. Here it is: this is exactly from *Hansard*, 'They advised me that they consulted with the government agencies,' and the education department is one that he lists in his answer. I am amazed that with all this discussion, all the media this week about the Cadell ferry closure, you are unable to answer the question as to what advice your department gave the Minister for Transport.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** The most important question is about the future of that school, I can assure you that this government does not close schools. We do not close schools on the basis of their enrolments. I can assure the community—

**Mr PISONI:** But you did not answer the question about the two teachers and the principal. You did not answer that question.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I did answer.

**Mr PISONI:** No, you did not.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Well, you may not like the answer, but I did answer your question. Your question was—

**Mr PISONI:** Will you guarantee two teachers and a principal with lowering enrolments?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** And I can guarantee you that there will be a principal at the school. The principal, as with every school, makes the call. This is what you want, Mr Pisoni: you want greater school autonomy.

**Mr PISONI:** It is your funding based on your formula.

**The CHAIR:** Order! Let the minister continue with her answer.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** We give a resource allocation to schools. Principals make the call—

**Mr PISONI:** Based on enrolments.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** —based on enrolments, and principals make the call as to how they allocate leadership positions and other positions. That will continue to occur. You also asked a very specific question about the nature of advice that may or may not have been provided in relation to this matter, and I am very happy to bring back to you a detailed response. We will need to check our records, but the critical factor here is that this government does not close schools and that we will do our best to work with that community and with that school.

I would just like to confer with the head of my department about whether we have any information at our disposal I could use quickly. Mr Bartley is happy to provide a greater level of detail about how the Student Centred Funding Model, to which I referred earlier, applies in relation to small schools.

**Mr BARTLEY:** To ensure that small schools are not jeopardised where the movement of a small number of pupils can obviously have a significantly greater impact on these schools, our Student Centred Funding Model actually has a small school element within it which gives those schools a base. If the number of pupils were to alter by, say, two or three, or three or four, and that might make it difficult for the school to continue to employ a full teacher, the operation of the model protects that school and increases its budget to enable a full teacher to be employed. So, there is a mechanism in place.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** If I may just add some supplementary information, the member for Unley referred to the previous questioning of the responsible minister (that is, the Minister for Transport) in relation to the Cadell ferry service. He referred in relation to a line of questioning where the Minister for Transport reported to his estimates committee that consultation was undertaken with education. In fact, I believe it was the member for Bragg who asked the Minister for Transport.

Mr Milazzo (Andy Milazzo, whom I know from my travels) advised the committee, 'We were told by the education department that schools will not close unless there is a vote in the community.' Ms Chapman says, 'That is the law,' and the Chair tells her not to interrupt. Mr Milazzo says, 'We were also told at the meeting that the Lyrup School, I understand,' and a big hello to everyone at the Lyrup School, 'is continuing with a student population of five children'.

**Ms BEDFORD:** I refer again to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 216. I would like the minister to provide an update on the South Australian Public Teaching Awards.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I advise that 5 October is World Teachers Day; this is an international day that recognises the important role of teachers and education in transforming the life of young people in our community. On that day, we will also honour our outstanding educators through our South Australian public teaching awards.

We know that teaching is an incredibly challenging but very rewarding job, and this government wants to provide the possibility for colleagues and parents, members of the community, and members of the opposition and members of the government to formally acknowledge and recognise the hard work and dedication of all school staff, and that is why we introduced the awards.

Past winners have been assisted in using the grants they have received as a result of their nominations to organise really important things, such as study in relation to early childhood teaching; conferences and other type workshops, especially in specialised subject areas; and embarking on further studies, such as a masters in education. They will also, of course, go on to share with their peers their experiences and knowledge from such professional development.

This year, the awards were launched on 23 April, with a lovely front page story in *The Advertiser*. I am very pleased to say that *The Advertiser* is supporting our awards, and I would like to quote *The Advertiser* at the time when it said:

There can be few occupations more important to the social and economic wellbeing of a society than teaching.

The categories are as follows: inspirational preschool teacher of the year; inspirational primary school teacher; inspirational secondary school teacher; inspirational school/preschool leader; inspirational early career teacher of the year; excellent school/preschool support staff member of the year; and innovative school/preschool engagement with business and the community.

In order to be considered for an award, nominees select the category most relevant to them. The nomination and information are then endorsed by the school principal or manager, and regional selection panels will assess applications and select a regional winner for each category. It is expected that regional winners will be announced in *The Advertiser* in August, and from this pool of regional winners the state award panel selects the overall state winners. I urge everyone in this place to get on board with what is a really exciting way of acknowledging the outstanding work teachers do in our community.

**Dr CLOSE:** My question relates to Better Behaviour centres. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 219. Can the minister advise how the Better Behaviour centres will provide intensive behavioural and education support for students?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** The government has committed to establishing six Better Behaviour centres, four of which are already operating; the remaining two will be completed later this year. This is a really important program because we need to assist teachers and schools to deal with students when at times they become aggressive and their behaviour is unacceptable and that is brought into our schools. We know that this kind of disruption can be a significant burden on teachers and, of course, on the learning of other students, and that is what is motivating the development of these centres.

The centres help students not only to improve their behaviour but also to build their social skills. Students participate in intensive literacy and numeracy programs so that they are primed for success when they do return to their school. They are also assisted in developing strategies to deal with anger and to relate better to fellow students. Students attend two days a week at the primary school centres, with the remaining three at their mainstream school, and this helps them maintain an important connection with their home school and, importantly, their peer groups.

This is a new approach in the primary school centres which focuses on identifying children who show signs of poor behaviour, and then supporting their families and classroom teachers to interrupt the emerging pattern of behaviour. As is the case with so many things, early intervention is absolutely critical and, with early intervention, you see much better improved results.

The two country centres based in high schools will provide intensive behavioural and educational support for students who have exhausted all other regional behaviour support systems. These students will participate in a 10 to 20-week intensive intervention program, supported by continued educational programs. The secondary centres will also have a family coordinator who will provide social and emotional support for students and their families.

**Mr SIBBONS:** I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 219. Can the minister advise what support is being provided for our teachers to support and improve quality teaching and learning in the classroom?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I have spoken before in this place, on many occasions, about how critical great teachers are: quality teaching is very, very important. I am pleased to advise that

here in South Australia we are supporting our classroom teachers with a very targeted program and resources to assist them to build on what works best to improve their practice. This program is called the Teaching for Effective Learning (TfEL) program, and I would like to acknowledge the team—Margot Foster, in particular, who received a big national gong for her work in this area.

It is very important, because it is based on the considerable practical teaching experience of educators in our schools and is supported by an international academic reference group. It brings together both the research evidence (which is very important) and the best classroom practice to share what works best for teachers and school leaders. Recently, every public school principal was given a leadership support package that included TfEL materials, and over 30,000 copies of our TfEL framework guide have been provided to schools and universities.

Throughout this year, more than 1,400 school leaders are attending a series of workshops at a number of metro and regional areas, including the Fleurieu and Kangaroo Island, Yorke and Mid North, Murray Mallee, Southern Adelaide, Adelaide Hills and Eastern Adelaide. I am pleased to report that during the first two terms of this year more than 3,400 teachers and leaders are taking part in professional learning sessions, and more will take part in the second half of the year, providing a total of 89 sessions for our teachers this year.

In fact, all our educators across more than 600 primary and secondary schools will also be able to participate, through videoconferencing. To provide additional support, 10 of our outstanding teachers have been trained in using the TfEL program, and these teachers will work from 18 schools across the state to provide expert classroom coaching support for teachers. I am pleased to see a real partnership approach between schools and government in this respect, with funding support also being provided as a result of our Communities Make a Difference national partnership with the federal government.

I have to say that when I first became minister the TfEL program was one of those things that I kept hearing a lot about; then I had a presentation on the program itself by Margot Foster. I cannot speak highly enough of this program, and I encourage all of our schools (as they are doing) to become familiar with its work. It has been recognised by others and is based in solid research and practice, and I am very, very proud of the work that we are doing in this area.

**Mr PISONI:** This question relates to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 225. I refer to an FOI document that has delivered an email from Bill Hignett of the Australian Education Union where, amongst other things, he says that our agreement with DECS is that we are handling the registrations for PAC training. Are you able to advise the committee of the agreement that was made with the Education Union about PAC training?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Yes, I am. In a moment, I will ask Mr O'Loughlin to supplement the information. That is correct: the AEU has representation on our personnel advisory committee.

**Mr PISONI:** No, minister, you have misunderstood the question.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** No, I understand your question perfectly.

**Mr PISONI:** No, you have misunderstood the question. It specifically says here 'an agreement with DECS is that they are handling the registrations for PAC training'.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I was giving you background.

**Mr PISONI:** No, I know the background. Save time, I know the background.

**The CHAIR:** Order!

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Yes, we do have a PAC process and they are members. I will now ask Mr O'Loughlin to address the member's question.

**Mr O'LOUGHLIN:** I believe that email would refer to purely and simply administrative arrangements about the conduct of the training. I do not think 'agreement' is technically correct, but we do use the AEU facilities from time to time to conduct the training because of the proximity and convenience factor for parking, and I think that is all that means.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** This government sees it as perfectly legitimate that teachers have an entitlement to be represented by an industrial body, and we think that they bring to the table a great deal of value. I would like to acknowledge the work of teachers in this place, and we will continue to work with them and their industrial representatives because each and every one of us in doing so has one objective—that is, to provide the best opportunities for our students.

**Mr PISONI:** Can you advise, minister, whether it is common practice for language like this to be used by union members? Bill Hignett emailed a Mr Ian Norman on 8 April last year in regard to organising PAC training, and he used the following language, 'I thought we had an agreement to run with the Goolwa training and I will fry your balls if the numbers aren't any good.'

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I would ask the member to furnish me with the document to which he refers.

**Mr PISONI:** If you are suggesting I am misleading the parliament, you should do that by substantive motion.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Did I say any such thing?

**Mr PISONI:** I am telling you what was written by Bill Hignett.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** And I am asking you to furnish me with the document, as you have very kindly done earlier in the hearings.

**Mr PISONI:** Standing orders do not allow me to insert non-statistical data into *Hansard*.

**The CHAIR:** You can provide us with a copy.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I am simply saying that, if you want a meaningful response to your question, I need to look at the document to which you refer, but the information that we gave earlier stands. I would also like to say that we do not pay the AEU for any services: we hire the room for training of staff. I reiterate that there is room at the table for teachers and their industrial representatives because we think that that contributes to a better result for our education.

**Mr PISONI:** Can you advise, based on your last comment, why there are 15 documents with invoices totalling \$6,000 for 2011 for room hire for meetings that are not related to PAC training? There is a cost here of \$1,062. This was an invoice received on 15 July last year for half the cost of catering for the Stepping Out conference. The Stepping Out conference, I believe, and according to the AEU website, is sponsored by the AEU and is basically a conference about what the AEU can do for you as a teacher. That was an invoice on that particular day.

We also saw strategic recruitment, where Jason Proud, Trevor Broughton and Greg Platt's accommodation was partly paid for by the education department via an invoice sent to them from the Australian Education Union. There are also invoices here for catering, for purpose for meetings for Literacy Secretariat, SA Cross-Sector Languages Forum. Can you explain why you are not using your own facilities, particularly when the AEU website warns AEU members that when they attend functions at the Australian Education Union building that they use public transport because there is no parking?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** If the member for Unley is happy to give me copies of his documents, as he has done earlier in the day, then I am prepared to provide what I am sure are very rational answers to his questions.

**Mr PISONI:** These documents were provided by your department and signed off by your department, so you have access to them. I am happy for you to come back with an answer.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I am very happy to provide you one, so we agree.

**Ms BEDFORD:** I refer to the same volume, Volume 1, page 219. I ask about the South Australian Institute for Educational Leadership and how this initiative will provide aspiring and current educational leaders with access to high quality, flexible and tailored professional development to help sustain ongoing leadership development across their career pathway.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I have talked this morning about the very valuable role our leaders play in ensuring that our children and students are successful learners. Leaders in education include our principals and our preschool directors to specialist teachers and highly-skilled school services officers. We want to support our current leaders to ensure that the future generation of leaders understands and is equipped for the challenge of the role. We take this notion of empowering our educational leaders very seriously.

Earlier this year I was very pleased to release the leadership in public education discussion paper that sets out the government support and commitment to fostering leadership in our schools by enabling aspiring and current leaders to identify their strengths and priorities for professional development.

One of the initiatives discussed in the leadership paper is the new Institute for Educational Leadership, and I acknowledge the outstanding leadership shown by my chief executive in this regard and the work he has done to lead this initiative and the work he will go on to do. This is a very exciting initiative, based on extensive research and planning. We envisage the institute will provide high-quality programs designed using contemporary leadership thinking and evidence from across the world that will reflect the challenges and opportunities that public education leaders face.

We have collaborated and consulted with international experts, including Professor Dame Pat Collarbone, who led the development of the national professional standard for principals to ensure that the programs offered by the institute are at the cutting edge. As the leadership paper states, another important partner in this initiative will be the tertiary sector to develop opportunities for postgraduate qualifications for our leaders that reflect the high level of expertise we want to foster in our leadership workforce.

The institute will have both a physical and a virtual presence, and the programs and curriculum of the new institute will be overseen by an advisory board that answers to Mr Bartley. It is very important that the institute's programs are aligned with the national professional standard for principals and will cater for leaders at all stages of their career. I am very confident that this initiative will be a very useful tool in ensuring that our schools have first quality leaders.

**Mr PISONI:** I refer to Budget Paper 4, page 225, Expenses, General supplies and services. As of the April Budget and Finance Committee, according to your department, there had been no decision made as to whether schools would be compensated for the 10 per cent or more increase in electricity due to the carbon tax. Has this decision been made and will schools be compensated?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I can report that a provision has been made in the budget for the impacts of the carbon tax. In fact, they were first factored into the state budget economic forecasts in the 2011-12 Mid-Year Budget Review. The South Australian Department of Treasury and Finance made an allowance for the potential impact of a price on carbon.

As part of the 2012-13 state budget, funding has been provided to agencies to meet the estimated direct impacts from the introduction of the price on carbon. At mid-year review, the estimated cost impact on the state budget was \$10 million to \$11 million per year. The amount allocated to this agency as part of the 2012-13 state budget is the departmental component of the government's centrally budgeted \$10 million to \$11 million per year estimate. That means that DECD has been allocated \$6.1 million over four years from 2012-13 to 2015-16.

**Mr PISONI:** The question was: are schools being compensated?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Yes, there is a budget allocation for that.

**Mr PISONI:** For schools?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Yes.

**Mr PISONI:** To start when?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** From 2012-13 to 2015-16.

**Mr PISONI:** To start when—on 1 July?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Yes.

**Mr PISONI:** This year?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** 2012.

**Mr PISONI:** I have a question now about performance indicators for year 7. Back in 2008, I think it was, there was an agreement between all of the states to move to a national curriculum. At that time, there were three states that had grade 7 in primary school and the other states had grade 7 starting in high school.

Since then, the Queensland governments—both under the previous Labor government and the new Liberal National Party government—have committed funding for bringing grade 7 into high school, and the Western Australian government has also committed funding for bringing grade 7 into high school. Are you able to advise whether your department has plans to bring grade 7 into high school and whether there has been any work started on the evaluation of such a plan or whether you are ruling it out?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** No decision has been made to move year 7 into high school for South Australia. I have made that statement before publicly, but my agency is gathering and considering current datasets, contemporary research—because, of course, that is what we should be guided by—best practice and policy settings on the requirement of young adolescents and the educational provision in the middle years of schooling.

**Mr PISONI:** Hang on, are you suggesting that you are ignoring what all the other states are doing and you are going to be taking your own advice on whether or not it is good for grade 7 students, even though you agreed to move into a national curriculum which is designed for grade 7 students to be taught by specialist teachers?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** They are two separate issues. The Australian Curriculum and where we place year 7 in South Australia are different issues. In relation to the Australian Curriculum, we are absolutely on board and we are full steam ahead. In relation to year 6/7, I will do what I determine to be in the best interests of South Australians and I will do that based on the best advice that we have at hand, and that is what we are presently working towards.

**Mr PISONI:** How will grade 7 students have access to specialist teachers under the national curriculum?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** They are two separate issues.

**Mr PISONI:** No, they are not. Grade 7—

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** They are two separate issues.

**Mr PISONI:** The national curriculum requires grade 7 to have specialist teachers.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** The national curriculum establishes content requirement in relation to areas and we are absolutely meeting our obligations in relation to the Australian Curriculum. For instance, we are all moving towards an Australian Curriculum, but every state has a different certification system for the senior years. They are not inconsistent. What matters most is what goes on inside those classrooms. I am less fussed about whether these classrooms are in one building or another. What matters to me is the educational value of making the transition.

**Mr PISONI:** Will year 7s still be in composite classes—year 6/7 classes, for example—under the national curriculum? Will they have access to specialist teachers?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** There are a variety of things going on in our schools. In fact, we have a number of schools where we have birth to year 12 schools, and preschool to year 12 schools, and year 6 to year 12 schools. So, there are a range—

**Mr PISONI:** There is only 169 of those, so my question is when will year 7s have access to specialist teachers? Will they still be required to be in composite classes?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** My response to you is that we are meeting all of our obligations under the Australian Curriculum. I will ask Mr Bartley to supplement my response. They are two separate issues. We are meeting all of our requirements under the Australian Curriculum that prescribes the content of courses, for instance—we are doing all of that. As for the issue in relation to the placement of year 7, that is a decision that we will continue to look into. I will do what we deem to be in the best interests of South Australia. I will now ask Mr Bartley to supplement my answer.

**Mr BARTLEY:** The Australian Curriculum was designed to not make assumptions about school structures. As the minister has indicated, the Australian Curriculum, which South Australia is rolling out in partnership with all the other states and territories, is very much focused on the content. Our interest is particularly in the pedagogy and the practice of teachers right across the Australian Curriculum.

**The CHAIR:** I remind members that, technically speaking, we are in Care and Protection. I allowed a bit of flexibility there because I thought it was warranted.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I need to do a swap with departmental staff.

#### **Departmental Advisers:**

Mr K. Bartley, Chief Executive, Department for Education and Child Development.

Ms J. Riedstra, Chief Financial Officer, Department for Education and Child Development.

Mr G. DeGennaro, Deputy Chief Executive, Chief Operating Officer, Department for Education and Child Development.

Mr G. Costello, Head of Schools, Department for Education and Child Development.

Mr P. O'Loughlin, Executive Director, Human Resources and Workforce Development, Department for Education and Child Development.

Mr C. Bernardi, Director, Finance and Investing, Department for Education and Child Development.

Mr D. Waterford, Executive Director, Families SA.

**The CHAIR:** We will now go into Care and Protection.

**Ms BEDFORD:** I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 223. I would like the minister to provide more detail on the Infant and Family Support program as announced in the budget.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I am very pleased to talk about this initiative announced in the budget recently because we know that the early years are a crucial time in a child's development and learning and therefore establishing a strong foundation in the early years provides the base for building the health and wellbeing and therefore the ongoing educational capacity of young children.

The state government has been supporting families with newborn children for many years through the successful Universal Contact Visit and the Family Home Visiting programs. This new program, the infant and family support program, will build upon those existing policies and programs. We have committed \$3.3 million over the next four years to establish a pilot program in the northern Adelaide metropolitan area.

The program is designed to target families with very complex needs. We know through previous consultations that there is a need for targeted services for high-need, disadvantaged infants and their families. We are responding to that need with this program which will work holistically with families to assist in addressing that disadvantage and that adversity. The really important thing about this program is that it will involve additional multi-agency, multidisciplinary case management support and intervention over and above the services universally available to all babies and their families.

The literature indicates that this support needs to be accessible and acceptable to the families. It should be practical as well as therapeutic and offered in the home as well as in community settings and, very importantly, available early in the antenatal period. The program in the northern suburbs will build on existing services which are well accepted by the local community. This location has been chosen by analysing the social determinants of child health and wellbeing and the needs of this population and the service demand in relation to that.

We anticipate that the program will improve the families' awareness of infants and children's health and developmental needs; enhance the development and learning capacity of infants and children; improve the health and wellbeing outcomes for infants and children and their families; facilitate access to networks of family support services with a focus on prevention orientation; and, of course, strengthen the voice of children and families in the community.

What is very exciting about this initiative is that it reflects the new notion of this agency, and that is using the different disciplines represented in this agency to build a team around the child, which, for example, we see in our children's centres as opposed to children in need and their families having to jump on what can often be described as a bit of a merry-go-round of service delivery. I am very excited about this program and we are looking forward to building this program to assist our most vulnerable infants.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. The member for Port Adelaide.

**Mr GARDNER:** Sorry, Mr Chair, can I just clarify: we have just moved to care and protection and I know the member for Florey was particularly keen to ask that question but is it not normal practice to allow the opposition to open, especially as we have 23 to 25 minutes left?

**The CHAIR:** No, I do not think that is the normal practice. We are alternating and have been doing so through the morning period and that is why I acknowledged the member for Florey—and now I acknowledge the member for Port Adelaide.



**Dr CLOSE:** My question relates to the APY lands and the Ted Mullighan recommendations. Will the minister advise what progress has been made to implement the Mullighan recommendations?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** It was this government that established the Mullighan inquiry in 2007 to examine child sexual abuse on the APY lands. The report was extensive and I am sure members of the committee are aware of that work. There were 46 recommendations, 45 of which the government accepted in the areas of governance, child protection, health, mental health, education, justice and policing. Of course, those recommendations involve a range of government agencies and non-government organisations.

I am pleased to report that significant work has been completed and continues to be progressed, with 26 recommendations completed. This means we now have Families SA workers on the lands, based in schools at six major communities involved in early prevention strategies and assisting to prevent child sex abuse in line with recommendation 5 from the Mullighan report.

It means there are now social workers on the lands to respond to mandatory notifications of suspected sexual abuse of Anangu children on the lands, in line with recommendation 34, and recommendation 35 means we now have better resources available to staff working on the lands, like teachers, who play a tremendously important role. In the interests of transparency, I will leave it at that.

**Mr SIBBONS:** I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 223. Will the minister advise how children placed under her guardianship are cared for under the kinship care program?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Thank you, member for Mitchell. Kinship care is a very important component of our alternative care system in South Australia, and this is important for our children who require out-of-home care due to child protection concerns within their environment. Kinship care often means that children maintain some level of family continuity, providing nurturing and safe care by a relative, kin or a significant other person known to the child.

The principles of the Children's Protection Act 1993 recognise and emphasise the importance of family as the primary means of providing for the nurture, care and protection of children. Where, sadly, professionals have assessed and determined it is presently not safe or not in the child's best interests to remain with their parent or parents, kinship care is utilised both for short-term and long-term alternative care.

When we came into office in 2002, home-based kinship care placements totalled 159. We have grown this area by over 500 per cent; growth has been by 519 per cent to 985 children in kinship care. This means that 48 per cent of all children in home-based care are being cared for by a relative, kin or significant other. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our carers, who provide safe havens for our children in moments of need.

Our program budget for kinship care this year is more than \$5.6 million. We have put an additional \$1 million in the 2011-12 state budget to expand the program. We now have 49 kinship care workers and we are predicting that by the end of this year we will have more children placed in kinship care than any other form of alternative care. I again take this opportunity to thank all our carers.

**Mr GARDNER:** I join with the minister in extending the gratitude of the whole parliament to all our carers: kinship carers, foster carers and all other carers in our community. Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 222 refers to a strong commitment to working in partnership with Aboriginal communities. We have had some mention of the Mullighan report, and the minister mentioned the government has accepted or partially accepted 45 of the 46 recommendations.

At the Budget and Finance Committee on Monday, evidence was given that Families SA is responsible or is the lead agency for very few of those recommendations. Can the minister please identify for which of the 45 recommendations the government has accepted or partially accepted that Families SA is the lead agency? How many of those recommendations have been fully implemented? How much has been budgeted in the 2012-13 year to implement those recommendations?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** There are a number of questions there, all of which I am very happy to answer. We have accepted all but one of the recommendations. As the minister responsible for Mullighan I am responsible for tabling the report towards the end of every year. As Minister for Education and Child Development I am responsible, I believe, for seven of the outstanding 19 recommendations. Can I just confirm that; I am just going off the top of my head here. There are 19 outstanding and I believe I am responsible for seven, but I will ask my advisers

to confirm that in a moment. There are other ministers who are responsible for their recommendations.

As to a readily identifiable figure I can point to in the budget that says 'Mullighan inquiry recommendations', I do not believe one exists because it is done on a program-by-program basis. For instance with respect to the Mullighan Children in State Care inquiry we have just announced that we have entered into a contract with Relationships Australia SA (RASA) to take on the work we were doing as part of our services; we offer services to people who have been in care.

The late Justice Ted Mullighan acknowledged that it should be done by a party that is not a church or government, and so we have just landed on that, and this morning I announced that RASA will be taking on that service. I am happy to do my best to get you the information you have requested. But please advise us, if you are listening, if it is not 19 or seven, now is the time to advise. I am correct, apparently.

**Mr GARDNER:** We will look forward to the further detail on notice.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Yes, I will do my best. But I can tell you that I am certain that we do not have a budget line that points to Mullighan because that is represented in different programs.

**Mr GARDNER:** Just on the annual report, when are you expecting to present the fourth annual report to the parliament?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I believe that last year it was November, and this year it will be in the last sitting week.

**Mr GARDNER:** On a similar budget line, and I think it also relates to Budget Paper 5, page 20 and Budget Paper 6, page 90, but let's keep in Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 222 for the moment, on 4 May federal and state governments jointly announced \$2.8 million for new investments, and it included \$400,000 for new intensive family support services to improve the wellbeing of children in the APY lands. The announcement stated that this funding would be used to employ additional social workers and Aboriginal family support workers. What role, if any, will Families SA play in the establishment and ongoing management of these new intensive family support services on the APY lands?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I understand that the state government received \$100,000. The other funding was made available to non-government organisations for forensic interviewing, but we received \$100,000 of that money.

**Mr GARDNER:** What functions are we doing with that \$100,000?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** We will be training staff in forensic investigation.

**Mr VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN:** Minister, I refer to Budget Paper 6, Part 2, page 36, 'Alternative care'. Funding is identified over five years, including an additional \$3.3 million in the 2011-12 financial year. Does this amount to an increase in existing funding arrangements to the various programs supporting children in state care, or are we talking about a new type of alternative care that is now receiving funding for the first time?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** It is an increase in funding. It might be worth mentioning some background. Prior to children being placed in alternative care, work is undertaken to keep children and young people with their birth family wherever that is possible. But children who are unable to live with their birth family because of abuse or neglect can be placed in alternative care, and there are a number of options. The number of children in alternative care placements in South Australia has continued to increase. It is very important that we continue to support children and carers who provide this really valuable service.

**Mr VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN:** So, a straight-out \$3.3 million extra for the existing program?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** And that reflects growth in the number of children coming into care.

**Mr GARDNER:** At Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 224, on 'Activity indicators', going to the Child Abuse Report Line, 'Notifications of child abuse or neglect assessed as requiring further action by DECD through Families SA or through other relevant agencies' is identified as 21,145 in 2010-11 and 22,100 in 2011-12. For each of those years, can you advise how many total notifications were received of which these numbers identify those which required further action?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I just need to understand the question, sorry.

**Mr GARDNER:** These numbers are the ones that were listed as requiring further action, but they are not all the phone calls and all the claims that were received, so can we have the total number of notifications including those that were not assessed as requiring further action?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I am advised that we can provide that information.

**Mr GARDNER:** You will take that on notice?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Yes; it is quite detailed.

**Mr GARDNER:** Also on that, can you advise how many were received through the Child Abuse Report Line, how many through the electronic (e-CARL) system, and if there are any other categories of reporting, what are they and how many were received through them?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Most of them would have come through the Child Abuse Report Line; the e-CARL system is progressively coming on board. I am happy to provide that information.

**Mr GARDNER:** As I understand it, the e-CARL system is being redesigned into a web-based application so that more people can use it than currently—which, I understand, is a fairly limited number at the moment. I think, Mr Bartley, you gave evidence on Monday that that was due to be completed by the end of this year. Can you advise how much has been spent so far on the development of this application, and what is the total anticipated expense of developing this new system?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I can advise that Mr Bartley was correct when he said that version 2 of e-CARL, the web-based alternative for making notifications of suspected child abuse in South Australia, will be released by the end of 2012. Version 2 will allow for over 5,000 users to self-register and submit lower-risk notifications, meeting their obligations as mandated notifiers, so that people like teachers do not have to wait on the telephone. Until this update, version 1 (with approximately 300 users) will continue to be tested.

I do not believe I have that figure: the question was about the cost of going to the (web-based) stage 2. I would also like to put on the record that the CARL telephone infrastructure is being enhanced to include a number of new features, including the option of automatic call-back to notifiers and the additional option of dedicated queues for police and health professionals. If my memory serves me correctly, we are also working on a program for teachers. Of course, now, teachers and Families SA colleagues operate in the one agency. I often walk into a school (not that often but a couple of times) and see a teacher on the phone to the Child Abuse Report Line, so the new agency gives us a real opportunity to create some improvements in the way that we manage that communication.

Can I take this opportunity to acknowledge that there are waiting times. I think the average for last year (Mr Waterford will correct me if I am wrong) was something like nine to 10 minutes. I thank everybody who takes the time to discharge their responsibility.

**Mr GARDNER:** Can I clarify two things from that answer? First, in relation to the new and improved CARL system as well as the new and improved e-CARL system, when you get back to us with the cost of the e-CARL development, is it all one upgrade together (accumulated) or are they separate ones that we can identify separate costs for?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Mr Bartley advises me that he has some specific information.

**Mr BARTLEY:** There is a major review being undertaken of the operations surrounding both the Child Abuse Report Line and the Crisis Response Unit which is closely associated with it, because, clearly, notifications that are made out of hours have to be assessed. The review that has been taking place—you have cited two examples of the outcomes in terms of the improvements to telephone infrastructure and also to the development of an extension of e-CARL. There are a number of system and process re-engineering outcomes that will be rolled out, commencing very shortly, we hope in July, and all of them will be fully completed by the end of the year. Some we have identified specifically too, but there are a number of other associated service and re-engineering proposals in train.

**Mr GARDNER:** You said that there were 5,000 people who would be able to use the new e-CARL system. We have at least three times that many teachers in our system, to my knowledge, so which potential reporters of abuse will remain unable to use the new e-CARL system?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Not every teacher is making a notification, but we hope that the 5,000 web-based notifications, the phone line and I think what is called the DART program—and Mr Waterford can talk about that in greater detail than I can, but this new program we are seeking to develop between teachers and Families SA—will go some way in addressing that issue. I will ask Mr Waterford to talk briefly about the work that we are doing in relation to teachers as mandated notifiers, given now that we all are in the same agency.

**Mr WATERFORD:** The new e-CARL with the potential for 5,000-plus registered notifiers is going to be primarily available to people who are frequent notifiers, and that would include, in a school context, people like deputy principals, school counsellors and particular staff in health and police. For people who are not frequent or regular notifiers then the telephone line would still be the preferred mechanism for them; with the enhancements that Mr Barley referred to, we believe that that will be a much quicker process. As the minister referred to, we also have the DART team, which is a team which is specifically focusing on receiving notifications from school teachers and looking at supporting the responses to them.

**Mr GARDNER:** So, to clarify then, the department will be identifying those who they seek to register as potentially frequent users, and everyone else will still be on the phone system?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I am advised that it will be a self-registration process, but they will need to do an online training program. We want to make sure we get the right information from notifiers, because that information goes into our C3MS (not C3PO) program which then goes into a case file. There may be a decision made by a professional that no further action is necessary but that information is retained, so it is important in the event that there is a further notification.

**Ms BEDFORD:** I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 223 and ask the minister to advise what work South Australia is undertaking as part of the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I am very happy to answer this question. The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020 is a collaboration between the Australian Government, the state and territory governments and the non-government sector towards ensuring the protection of our children. The framework has been drawn up on the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child; namely, it is the right of children to grow up in an environment that is free from neglect and abuse.

One of the most important themes of the framework is that protecting children is everyone's business and so the framework establishes shared responsibilities within families, communities, various professional services and at all government levels. In 2009, COAG endorsed the framework, which consists of six supporting outcomes. The first of the three-year action plans was focused on building firm foundations for the care and protection of our children.

The achievements under the first action plan include the establishment of national standards for out-of-home care; the mapping of financial and non-financial supports for carers; significant improvements in information sharing, especially between the commonwealth and state and territory governments, and that is very important; a national approach to planning transitions from care; and the first national research agenda for child protection.

I have to say that information sharing has been a priority for this government for some time. We want a system where children and young people do not fall through any of the cracks, and that is why we have continued to work across government and with the non-government sector to implement our information-sharing guidelines for promoting the safety and wellbeing of children protocols.

In addition, we have the rapid response program which we implemented and which is designed to ensure that children and young people under guardianship orders have priority access to health, housing, education, welfare and employment services, because we know these children often are coming from a very low base.

**Dr CLOSE:** My question relates to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 223. Will the minister advise how the Stronger Families Safer Children Program is assisting families?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Thank you, member for Port Adelaide. The Stronger Families Safer Children initiative is part of our investment to ensure every chance for every child, and we have dedicated \$28.4 million over four years to this program. It seeks to support families in contact with the child protection and care system. The program works by assisting children, young people and their families from entering the statutory child protection system. For those already in out-of-

home care, the program seeks to support them to reunify them with their families where we consider it to be safe.

This program essentially looks to build the capacity of families at risk and build their resilience and their capacity so that their children do not end up in our care. The program comprises three service streams: targeted early intervention, which provides outreach services to vulnerable children and families; the second, intensive placement prevention, which provides intensive support to families assessed as having serious and substantial child protection concerns; and, thirdly, the reunification support service, which seeks to support children in out-of-home care in reconnecting and reunifying with their families.

In the last 12 months, there have been more than 189 referrals to the program, assisting more than 483 children, with the majority being through the targeted early intervention component of the program. In April this year, stage 2 evaluation of the program was completed. The evaluation covered a period of 2½ years, from April 2009 to the end of September 2011. This is very interesting and important: the evaluation clearly reports that overall family functioning improved for some of the families involved in the program. It was evident that the targeted early intervention component and reunification support services are working well and have assisted nearly 1,680 children since its commencement.

The report identified that the targeted early intervention and reunification support service had the potential to divert families (which is what we want) away from the statutory child protection system by assisting them to remain together and reunify where possible. This could potentially mean savings of \$16.8 million through the reduction of the number of children who enter alternative care. In the year ahead, the program will continue to work closely with families.

The Families SA reunification initiative and other key NGO service providers improve the lives of our vulnerable children and families. We do not want to see any of our children in care. That is a big task, but the challenge for us—and this is the power and capacity of this new agency—is to identify families very early, identify families antenatally (so before children are actually born). We have a good idea who is likely to end up in our child protection system. If we can work with those families early, which is why the other program I spoke about earlier is so important, then we are giving ourselves the best shot at keeping children out of our statutory child protection system, and that is something we all want.

**Mr GARDNER:** In relation to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 224, I just have a quick point of clarification. The line is titled 'Total children in out-of-home care at 30 June 2011', then we have the columns of results for each year.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Sorry, which page are you on?

**Mr GARDNER:** Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 224. It is the third category down on the list of performance indicators: 'Total children in out-of-home care at 30 June 2011'. I just wanted to clarify because I am assuming 30 June 2011 is in relation to the 2,368 figure in the 2010-11 year and, therefore, the 2011-12 2,545 relates to the 30 June 2012 and 2,723 relates to 30 June 2013; is that correct?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Yes. Your question is whether 30 June is the date for each of those years?

**Mr GARDNER:** In the list it says 30 June 2011, so that is why I wanted to clarify that that was not in relation to—

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Yes, I am advised that 30 June is the date.

**Mr GARDNER:** Okay. For 30 June 2012, our target was 2,545 and we are on line to get that exactly, which is excellent foresight. It is identified on the next line that 985 of the 2,368 were placed with relative or kinship care and in 2011-12 that has improved to 1,112 of those 2,545.

Can the minister identify the numbers relating to other categories of care? How many with foster carers, how many in group homes, residential care centres, emergency accommodation for each of those financial years? I do not know if you have expectations of the 2012-13 year as well, but that would be terrific.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** We do have that detail and I am very happy to give it to you now. There are a number of categories. For children and young people placed with relatives or kinship carers—and these are all as at 30 June—estimated result as at 30 June 2012 is 985.

**Mr GARDNER:** Hang on, that is 2011, isn't it?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Beg your pardon, I missed the first line. The estimated result is 1,112 as at 30 June 2012 and you know the actual. For children and young people in the foster care placement, 1,052 is the estimated result at 30 June 2012; 1,032 actual at 30 June 2011. For children and young people in non-family based care, 377 is the estimated result at 30 June 2012 and 347 is the actual at 30 June 2011. For children living in financially assisted adoption arrangements, four is the estimated result at 30 June 2012 and four is the actual at 30 June 2011.

Just a note for your information: non-family based care includes things like community residential care, transitional accommodation, government housing, interim emergency accommodation, Tregenza House, family day care and a range of emergency and long-term non-family based care services provided by NGOs. So we have a cocktail of care placements to suit our children.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, minister. Last question, please.

**Mr GARDNER:** Did you give figures for that last one? Sorry, this is just clarifying that.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** The last one was adoption arrangements.

**Mr GARDNER:** Were there numbers there. I did not hear you read them.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Four—very small. The estimated result for 30 June 2012 was four and four was the actual at 30 June 2011.

**Mr GARDNER:** In relation to expenses, can the minister identify the current arrangements in relation to alternative care support payments to foster, relative and kinship carers to contribute to the cost of caring for the child? If at all possible, can you break that up into how much for each of the categories—how much on start-up payments, caring for a child with special needs, incidental expenses and any other categories that you have?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Yes.

**Mr GARDNER:** Can you do that now or on notice?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I will do it now because I have quite good information here. Alternative care support payments include the fortnightly payment to family based carers, so that includes foster, relative and kinship carers. It contributes to the costs of caring for a child. It also includes start-up payments, loadings to help with the extra costs of caring for a child with ongoing special needs, and incidental expenses to cover the occasional extra needs of children in alternative care that are not covered by the fortnightly carer payment or loadings.

To maintain alternative care support payments in real terms, Families SA on-passes indexation provided by DTF, so foster care payments were increased from October 2011. I have given you figures about the number of foster carers. Since 1 July 2007, foster and relative carers have received increases in their carer payments of some 54 per cent. The budget for carer payments in 2011-12 is estimated at \$25 million, which is quite significant, equating to approximately \$11,560 per child.

In line with the Families SA policy to maintain alternative care support payments in real terms, foster care payments are planned to increase by 2.25 per cent from October this year, and the budget for carer payments in 2012-13 is estimated to increase to \$25.6 million, equating to about \$11,941 per child.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, minister. We are well over time. I thank the advisers and the members of the committee.

*[Sitting suspended from 12:37 to 13:30]*

#### **Membership:**

Ms Sanderson substituted for Mr van Holst Pellekaan.

#### **Departmental Adviser:**

Ms T. Strachan, Interim Head of Child Development, Department for Education and Child Development.

**The CHAIR:** We are now going to early childhood development and administered items. I invite the minister to introduce any new advisers, if in fact there are any.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I take this opportunity to introduce Trish Strachan, the interim head of child development. I also take this opportunity to refer to the clarification I mentioned earlier. I think there might have been some confusion on the part of the member for Stuart, who referred to a number of lines.

As I mentioned, the \$3.3 million is for the new program which I referred to earlier, the family infant support program. That is \$3.3 million over four years, and \$19.84 million over four years is to fund the growth and alternative care. I cannot quite member where or how the confusion occurred, but I want to be very clear about the funding that is attached to those programs—both those moneys are new in this budget.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Member for Unley.

**Mr PISONI:** My question refers to Budget Paper 5. There is a list of proposed expenditure for 2012-13 in the area of the preschool reallocation program and the Pukatja Family Wellbeing Unit. Are you able to advise as to whether those proposed expenditures have been met?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** This is in relation to the establishment of four Aboriginal children and family centres?

**Mr PISONI:** This is page 20 of the capital statement. We have the preschool relocation program and \$6 million is proposed to be expended in 2012-13.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Yes, I am very happy to provide some information. The preschool relocation program, also known as Preschool Works, was announced in the 2011-12 state budget for the relocation of preschools in new facilities co-located with primary schools; \$14.4 million was allocated to this program, with completion due by June 2015. The Preschool Works program is intended to strengthen children's education through better transitions from preschool to school and for their families to experience a convenient and integrated approach within their local community.

It will also provide children, staff and parents with new preschool facilities in a single location for families and professionals to support the educational development of young children. Participation is voluntary and open to all department preschools that are presently located on sites separate from schools within a new co-located environment. Preschool directors will continue to be respected as the leader of the preschool services. However, it does offer the opportunity for the preschool's director and staff to work side by side with the primary school team in supporting the educational wellbeing of each child—and that is very important.

In 2011, expressions of interest were sought from preschools and schools for participation in this program. This was then followed by a registration of interest, which was completed by interested schools and preschools and submitted to their regional director for endorsement. The registration of interest was to include local consultation to ensure that supports existed within both the school and preschool communities. The application process for 2011 closed on 14 October 2011.

All registrations of interest identified as priorities by the respective region were reviewed by a panel to prioritise sites, and departmental officers worked with the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure on the planning investigations. In terms of the outcomes for 2011-12, the registration and expression of interest process has been completed. The assessment and priority setting process is completed.

The following projects were announced as part of the 2012-13 state budget: Jamestown Preschool, \$3.5 million to establish a preschool at Jamestown Community School; Ashton Kindergarten, \$2.1 million to be relocated to Uraidla Primary School; and Miltaburra Child Parent Centre, \$0.34 million to redevelop the centre at Miltaburra Area School.

For 2012-13 our targets include the delivery of the projects at Jamestown and Miltaburra, preparation of tender documents for the Ashton kindy relocation, and detailed feasibility studies to be undertaken for the relocation of Cranston Street Kindergarten, Morphett Vale preschool, Sir Thomas Playford preschool, Maitland preschool and Woodville West preschool.

**Mr PISONI:** Federal funding for childcare centres came to the state government for the Aboriginal Pitjantjatjara lands (APY lands) and there was a report in *The Australian* on 3 October last year that said:

Federally funded childcare centres 'critical' to families in the troubled APY lands have not been built—six years after millions of dollars was handed out for their construction.

The federal government provided \$2.1 million for centres in Amata and elsewhere and the construction had not begun by that time. The story basically explains that this has been a disappointment for people such as Brian Gleeson, the federal coordinator for Remote Indigenous Services, who for two years has been urging governments to complete the centres in the shortest possible time.

The APY lands council general manager, Chris Malcolm, said he was disappointed with the delay and that it appeared to be the result of bickering between state departments over the location and management of the centres. Has any of that been resolved? Do we at least have a centre allocation sorted out? Has any work begun on spending that federal money that was allocated to the state government to build those centres?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I do not have in front of me, of course, the article to which you refer, but I think I know generally what you are speaking about. This department is responsible for the family wellbeing centre at Pukatja, and I am happy to stand to be corrected by my officers. This is always on the agenda. Just about every time I see David Rathman I ask him how it is going, and I am advised that work is progressing well. In fact, I might have some more detailed information—I do. I think it is presently with the council, but this might be useful.

As I said, this department is the lead agency for one of the three family wellbeing centres that are being established in the APY lands. Pukatja is our responsibility. The FWC's capital costs—that would be the family wellbeing centre—are being met through the redirection of funds intended for a courts administration building at Umuwa. That was the original intention of what was negotiated with the commonwealth many years ago. Ongoing costs are being met by DECD.

The manager's role has been filled and a suitable building has been identified at Mintabie. Consultation is occurring regarding the suitability and location of the building. DPTI is managing the building process. Local community members have requested that an alternative site to the Aboriginal Children's Centre be identified for the older cohort of community that will use the FWC. As such, a location close to the TAFE building has been identified as suitable. We are very committed to this building project. We believe that progress on the lands can only be made by working very closely with the community and with the commonwealth and we are committed to doing that.

**Mr PISONI:** How much of the \$5 million in federal funding that was received has been spent on building the family wellbeing centres to date?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I can only respond to the ones that I am responsible for. The one that I am responsible for is Pukatja. I do not believe I have with me a figure that relates to Pukatja.

**Mr PISONI:** The article had the then state education minister (the incoming Premier, Jay Weatherill) responding to the questions, but he could not provide details of what services would be provided at those centres, so I am not quite sure I understand why you do not feel that it is your responsibility.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I will throw it to the Chief Executive in a second. You misunderstand the fundamental question here, and that is that there was an amount of money given by the federal government for a project; that was many years ago. The scope—

**Mr PISONI:** 2005.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** If I may continue uninterrupted. The scope of that project then changed, and that was renegotiated with the commonwealth. I believe there are three family wellbeing centres that have been identified. DECD is responsible for the one in Pukatja, and the budget for this project is \$1.367 million. If your questions were about the nature of the services that will be provided from that centre, I will ask the Chief Executive, Mr Bartley, to add more information.

**Mr BARTLEY:** We have already completed the construction of an Aboriginal children's centre in Pukatja and, through that centre, we will offer our services directly to children and their families in line with our children's centre practices more widely. The second dimension of the family wellbeing centre in Pukatja is the construction the minister referred to. A building has been identified in Mintabie, and it is currently being transported to Marla, where it will be refurbished and then transported on to the lands.



One of the reasons for wanting to make the locations separate within the community is because of the older clientele the family wellbeing centre will cover. It was felt best that it be more closely associated with other facilities in Pukatja, including TAFE. That is a matter the community council is still considering and discussing; they met, I think, last week. Indeed, the APY Executive Committee for the lands is also actively involved in discussions about its location. So, the building blocks (excuse the pun) are in place; it is a matter now of getting the final agreements with the community about where it will be situated.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** For the benefit of the member, I advise that Chris Malcolm is no longer with the APY executive.

**Mr PISONI:** I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 211. This relates to the objectives of the department in relation to the provision of accessible early childhood and care services, etc. Can the minister advise the current policy situation in relation to preschool children and school buses? Do they have the same access allocation as older students or is it only if there is a spare seat, and are preschool students requiring school buses counted in the requirement for a minimum of 10 students for a bus operation or a school bus service?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I am very pleased to provide some information in relation to this. Our policy around this matter is that no automatic transport assistance is provided to preschool children, as they are not under compulsion to attend a preschool facility—and that facility might be kindy, child/parent centre or preschool—and that they generally travel infrequently, depending on the sessions provided by the preschool.

They are, however, permitted to travel on the school buses under the following circumstances: individual approval is given in writing by the principal controlling the bus; there is room available on the bus; the bus is not involved in any additional travel; the child is considered by the principal who manages the bus to be mature enough to travel on the bus without causing difficulties for the driver; the child is met at set-down points; and permission may be withdrawn if the bus is overcrowded with primary and secondary school-aged children, who are eligible for bus travel.

This is a policy that has been in place since the 1980s. I have to say that we are dealing with children who are very, very, very young. Notwithstanding all those conditions, and they are very important, we are dealing with very little children; if they can meet those conditions, we are happy for them to travel on the bus.

**Mr PISONI:** Are there conditions for metropolitan students attending early childhood centres?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I will just take some advice on that. I believe the Minister for Transport is responsible for that. We are responsible for assisting students to get to school, and I spoke about that earlier in relation to Cadell Primary School.

**Mr PISONI:** I am sorry, I think you have misunderstood the question.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Do you mind repeating it, then?

**Mr PISONI:** Are there conditions on metropolitan children having access to early childhood centres?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Metropolitan preschool-age children?

**Mr PISONI:** Yes. Are there conditions on them having access to your early childhood centres?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** No, we do not provide transport in that regard.

**Mr PISONI:** No, not about transport; this is nothing to do with transport. Do you put conditions on metropolitan students to attend your early childhood centres?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I asked you before whether it was preschool children and you said yes.

**Mr PISONI:** Preschool children, yes, that is right. Are there conditions on any of the services—

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** We do not provide services for preschool—

**Mr PISONI:** —on your early childhood centres?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I will ask Julieann Riedstra to provide some advice, if she can. We are a bit confused about the nature of your question, so can you repeat it, because I asked you to clarify before whether it was about preschoolers and you said yes.

**Mr PISONI:** Your objective is—

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** To which page do you refer?

**Mr PISONI:** This is on page 211, which I referred to prior to the questioning and where it states:

The provision of early childhood and care services that are accessible, integrated and build effective relationships with children and families is at the core of the program.

What I am asking is: are there any restrictions on metropolitan families or children accessing those services that you provide?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Not that I am aware.

**Mr PISONI:** Then why are there conditions on rural students accessing those services?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I think we are talking at cross-purposes, Chair.

**Mr PISONI:** No, because your bus policy is all about access to schools—

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** That is correct.

**Mr PISONI:** —and you have just said there are no conditions on access for metropolitan students, but in your answer to my question about school buses you said there are conditions—

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** No.

**Mr PISONI:** —on students using those school buses; in other words, getting access to early childhood services that you provide in rural South Australia.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I believe you are being intentionally mischievous. We provide transport assistance for students to get to their school of right if their school of right is more than five kilometres away. We do not provide transport assistance services for preschool children. That was the line of questioning you started off with. They are the two facts. I am happy for you to seek further clarification.

**Mr PISONI:** What is the purpose of the school bus system? To get kids to school; is that right?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Amongst many other things, yes.

**Mr PISONI:** Because they live a distance away from the school—

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Yes, five kilometres.

**Mr PISONI:** —they cannot walk to the school, there is no public transport, so the department—not the transport department, the education department—runs bus contracts, and they own and they run buses.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** And we do not transport children in metropolitan areas.

**Mr PISONI:** Sorry?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** And we do not transport children in metropolitan areas.

**Mr PISONI:** No, because there is a public bus system for children.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** That is correct; that is run by minister Fox.

**Mr PISONI:** So children not having access to your department's bus service means that they cannot access the early childhood services you are providing, yet they can in the metropolitan area because they do not have the barrier of the tyranny of distance that regional and rural students have. There is no separation between the bus service and schools in regional South Australia as far as the education department is concerned. That is the ideology, that is my understanding of why you run a bus service, to get kids to school, but you have just said that there are conditions on preschool children getting to school but there are no conditions for metropolitan students.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** We do not arrange to transport three and four year olds. We do not send a bus around the city to collect three and—

**Mr PISONI:** You do not provide any bus services in the city.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** —four year olds.

**Mr PISONI:** You do not provide any bus services. The department of transport runs a public transport system that is available to the metropolitan community. They have a train service, a tram service (when it is on time of course), yet because there is no such service in regional South Australia, and students live quite some distance from schools, the department takes it on itself to get students to school. There are no conditions on students entering an early childhood centre that you run in the metropolitan area but you have just told me that there are conditions on having that access if you live in regional South Australia because you live too far away, and you may require a bus service but you are not entitled to it.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Children in the city, in the metro area, have to get themselves to school. I am going to deal in the business of facts because I do not quite follow your line of logic. These are the facts. We provide transport assistance for children whose school of right—so the school they are entitled to—is more than five kilometres away from where they reside, so we provide assistance for them. I outlined before the conditions under which we make transport assistance available to preschool children. We do not arrange the transport of three and four year olds in the city. If there is any other idea or an inkling of an argument or a question, I will get back to the member because I cannot follow his logic.

**Mr PISONI:** No, you have answered the question. There is more access to childcare centres for the metropolitan residents than what there is for rural residents, you have answered that because they are not entitled to the bus service.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** That is correct and that is the case for just about every service the state government provides.

**Mr PISONI:** But it is compensated in the education system with the bus service for school students—

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I am very pleased you acknowledge that, thank you.

**Mr PISONI:** —but that does not happen for early childhood students so you have just confirmed that.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Are you proposing that we put three and four year olds on the bus in the city?

**Mr PISONI:** I am asking you what you are offering and you are not offering that. So, we have cleared that up.

**The CHAIR:** I have been very generous in allowing you to follow this line of questioning well beyond three questions.

**Mr PISONI:** You have, Mr Chairman, and for that I am forever grateful.

**The CHAIR:** If you are moving on to a different area, I should move to the other side.

**Mr PISONI:** Yes, okay.

**The CHAIR:** Member for Florey.

**Mr PISONI:** I will not push my—

**The CHAIR:** Thank you.

**Ms BEDFORD:** That would be a first. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 213. Can the minister advise how the Learning Together program is supporting families to engage with their children's early learning and development?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I am very pleased to answer this question, thank you, member for Florey. Learning Together is a family literacy and support program which aims to improve early literacy learning for children from birth to three years of age. We know that those early years are absolutely critical. The Learning Together program focuses on adult/child engagement, child involvement and learning, and adult learning and support.

We have established five Learning Together programs at the following places: the Enfield Children's Centre, a great centre, I was very happy to visit a number of years ago with the now premier; the Fraser Park Child Parent Centre to Year 7 School in Murray Bridge; Para West Adult

Campus at Davoren Park; Carlton R-9 Aboriginal School in Port Augusta and Christie Downs; and O'Sullivan Beach Preschool and school.

Funding from the Smarter Schools National Partnerships Communities Making a Difference strategy is provided for two additional programs at Millicent in Newbury Park Primary School and Port Pirie in Airdale Primary School. In addition, through the same funding, five FTE Learning Together outreach teachers have been employed and are establishing Learning Together programs in a further 12 schools. All Learning Together programs continue to work closely with Learning Together @ Home field workers.

Learning Together @ Home is primarily but not exclusively a home visiting program. In 2011 the field workers had more than 10,000 contacts with families in home and group settings, which is a remarkable achievement, with 58 per cent of referrals coming from community health services and child and family health services. In 2011 there were over 48,000 attendances at the learning together program. This was an increase of 19 per cent from the previous year. There were 113 different activities being run, and 78 of these are ongoing.

In April of this year there were 1,036 children from 774 families enrolled in attending. It is interesting that an extensive evaluation is showing that the learning together program results in significant increases in families' understandings about when important literacy behaviours, including reading and singing with their child, should begin. It is also resulting in more appropriate understandings of children's emotional development and a marked improvement in understandings and confidence in a wide range of activities that support children's learning, social and literacy development.

Through the program there has also been a 100 per cent increase in the number of parents accessing parent education and/or support groups, a 100 per cent increase in families accessing speech occupational therapy or nutrition services for their children, and small but significant increases in families accessing child care, preschool and school services. More families are taking up opportunities to interact with their children, and observations show an increase in interactions by 28 per cent.

Finally, I am pleased to report that the proportion of families who are observed listening to and responding to their children has risen to 92 per cent from 51 per cent; 75 per cent of families were able to build on child-initiated discussions, up from 20 per cent. This may seem to some in this place to be something that comes naturally to families; it does not always, and that why our intervention at the earliest moment that we can is so important. Early intervention gives us the best bang for our buck, and I think this is a fantastic program.

**Dr CLOSE:** My subject relates to universal access, Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 212. Will the minister advise how the government is supporting young South Australians to gain increased access to preschool?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Since 2009 the government has been working with the commonwealth to deliver the Universal Access to Early Childhood Education initiative. I would like to commend the member for Unley's acknowledgment in the past that universal access to childcare services is very important and that our centres are more than just venues for baby sitting. This initiative will provide 15 hours per week of early childhood education, delivered by university-trained, early childhood teachers, for every child in the year before they go to school.

We are doing this in a number of ways. We are increasing the hours that children enrolled in government preschools can access preschool from 11 to 15 hours per week. We are also helping create new preschool places by entering into new partnerships with childcare operators and non-government schools to help deliver access to early childhood education to children currently not accessing or unable to access government-funded preschools. It is anticipated that up to 2,400 new preschool places may be delivered through this initiative.

A number of subsidies are available for these providers, including a local government area subsidy of \$1,000 to \$2,000 per annum per child. The level of subsidy is linked to the ABS index of relative socioeconomic disadvantage. We also provide a remote area subsidy of \$500 per annum per child for services located in remote and very remote locations in South Australia, and in order to directly target children who may be at risk of not accessing preschool, such as ATSI children and children and families from low SES communities or refugee children, the targeted child subsidy provides a further \$1,500 per annum per child.

I want to acknowledge that particular emphasis is also being given to meeting the needs of children who are geographically or socially isolated, as well as children with complex needs who

are unable to access mainstream services. Service delivery options being explored include the use of new technologies to deliver preschool online.

I am very pleased to report that preschools in metropolitan and country regions with the highest proportions of Aboriginal and disadvantaged children were prioritised at the commencement of the strategy in 2010. Of children enrolled in the year before full-time schooling in DECD funded preschools, 87 per cent now have access to 15 hours of preschool. This includes 702 Aboriginal children, which represents 98 per cent of the total Aboriginal enrolments in DECD funded preschools, which is pretty fantastic.

I am pleased to report that a preschool program has also commenced at the Adelaide Women's and Children's Hospital and a new early childhood leadership position on the APY lands will be established to help improve participation of Aboriginal children in preschools on the lands. Two inclusive preschool programs have been established in Port Pirie at Solomontown Kindergarten and in western Adelaide at the Parks Children's Centre. These are integrated preschool programs supporting up to seven children with additional needs. Facilities are modified and additional staffing resources are provided to assist children's participation in the preschool program.

Scholarships have enabled 112 DECD teaching staff to commence training to upgrade their qualification to a four-year teacher qualification and 70 of these will have completed their training by June 2012. This work is part of an important era of reform and collaboration in early childhood—an area that everybody acknowledges South Australia has led the nation in and one that all Australian states and the national government now see as critical to the future health, prosperity and wellbeing of the Australian community.

**Mr SIBBONS:** I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, pages 211 to 215. Can the minister advise how the new Same First Day policy will be rolled out?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I have spoken publicly about this matter before. I think this is a very important policy, given what I have just spoken about in terms of the importance of early childhood education, because, presently, children can spend differing amounts of time in reception, with thousands of children receiving less than a full year in reception. Under this new policy, what is important is that all children will spend a full year in reception, ensuring that all students receive the same entitlement and commence school on the same day.

This policy brings South Australia into line with all of the other states and territories in Australia. Changes will begin to apply and be completed in preschools in 2013 and we move towards full implementation in 2014. The year 2013 will be a transition year for preschools. There will be no change for children who have started preschool in 2012. They will start school after their four terms of preschool as is now the case. Further information is being circulated to preschools in regions about management strategies to support making the transition to the new arrangements in preschool in 2013.

From 2014, children who turn four or five prior to 1 May will enrol in preschool or school at the beginning of the year and those children who turn four or five on or after 1 May will enrol at the beginning of the following year. The policy will still enable Aboriginal children and children under my guardianship to start preschool from three years of age and children with additional needs will still be able to start preschool early using a phased in approach which is individually planned, depending on the needs of the child and the capacity of the preschool.

The 31 designated DECD rural preschools where children can spread their entitlement over six terms under the current policy will now be able to attend for the same entitlement as children in other centres with their entitlement spread over four terms. It is interesting to note that Catholic education has aligned its policy positions with those of the department. Like I said, we are rolling out a comprehensive communications strategy, especially for those families whose children presently do not have any involvement or for whom there is no interface with government or care arrangements. I think this is a very important policy. I will ask my chief executive, because we were talking about it over lunch, to talk about the educational value—and that is what we must be motivated by—of fewer transition points.

**Mr BARTLEY:** The benefits of all children receiving a consolidated year in Reception lasts throughout their school careers. Schools themselves are able to deal with a single cohort throughout the year, and that means their plans for learning and their plans for those children are able to be applied consistently over the whole period of the year. Where you have differential entry points, the Reception classes continually are having to accommodate different groupings and that mitigates against the effective learning program for all of the children. So, it is pretty well attested

all over the world that a consistent and common first year in Reception benefits children for the remainder of their schooling.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Can I clarify something? I said earlier that this policy is the same in every state and territory. I might have said South Australia, but it is in Australia. So, we are the only state that is yet to do it but we are now doing it.

**Mr PISONI:** How is that different from the rationale not to bring year 7 into high school? Every other state is doing it but not South Australia, yet you have just said that one of the reasons for doing this is that it brings us into line with other states.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** No. I have said that every state and territory does it. We are motivated by the educational benefits of this policy and, whenever we do anything in relation to education and care, we are motivated by what is in the best interests of children, and that is the case that has to be built in relation to the future of year 7.

**Mr PISONI:** The \$8.2 million in budget savings from this measure, how are they being achieved?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I can take that on notice. That is quite a detailed answer.

**Mr PISONI:** Well, not really.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Beg your pardon?

**Mr PISONI:** Not really. Why is that detailed?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Well, I am happy to provide the information, if you would like me to.

**Mr PISONI:** All right, well, take it on notice.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** No. Just one moment, Chair.

**Mr PISONI:** Time is precious, minister, so while your staff are—

**The CHAIR:** The minister is going to give the answer.

**Mr PISONI:** While your staff are preparing your answer for you, I will ask another question, if you like.

**The CHAIR:** I think she is nearly ready to go.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I am happy to bring it back.

**The CHAIR:** Bring it back.

**Mr PISONI:** The national childcare union, United Voice, has collated national figures indicating an increase of 11.2 per cent in childcare fees in the last 12 months. Is the minister able to advise what figures her department has collated in regard to increased costs in child care over the last 12 months here in South Australia?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** What I can advise the committee is that South Australia has, according to all reports, the most affordable rate of child care.

**Mr PISONI:** With all due respect, minister, that wasn't the question. The question was: what has been the increase in childcare fees in South Australia over the last 12 months?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** No, that wasn't your original question.

**Mr PISONI:** Yes, it was.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** But I can tell you that we have—and again, I am not privy to the document to which you refer—the most affordable child care—

**Mr PISONI:** They are a union that operate in your industry, minister. I am astonished that you would not even know that.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** And I am not accountable for the words that they choose to report nor am I privy to the documents to which you refer, but I can tell you—

**Mr PISONI:** Unbelievable.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** But I can tell you that, according to all reports, South Australia has the most affordable child care, and we work very closely with workers'—

**Mr PISONI:** Can I have the answer on notice?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** —representatives.

**Mr PISONI:** I will have the answer brought back.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Can I clarify what the question—

**Mr PISONI:** I want to know what the increase in childcare costs have been in South Australia over the last 12 months.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Yes, I am happy to give you that information, if that information exists.

**Mr PISONI:** Is the minister aware of any trends towards the use of unregulated childcare centres—for example, families who might be taking in extra kids or day care being operated by non-licensed or unregulated facilities? How do you monitor that situation?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I do not have that information with me. However, we have mechanisms in place to regulate that activity, and that is the main thing. I am happy to undertake further investigations and bring back information if there is information I can provide. We certainly have a new regulatory body that has a very long title, the name of which I cannot remember. It is the body that is chaired by Dr Neville Highett, but I cannot remember the title of the committee.

**Mr BARTLEY:** Chair, if I may, just on the point about unregistered provision, should any unregistered form of provision come to our notice we would certainly draw it to the attention of the registration board because the purpose of putting that board in place was to both monitor and regulate the whole industry.

**Mr PISONI:** So, minister, there is no proactive stance by your department?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Of course there is.

**Mr PISONI:** It is only if it is drawn to your attention.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** No. For a start, they have to—

**Mr PISONI:** With all due respect, that is what your CEO just said—if it is drawn to his attention.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** The childcare centres or providers need to be registered. They need to be registered and accredited if they want funding, and that, by its very nature, is a very active process. The member is being very mischievous because he is very well aware of legislation that was passed in this place last year that brought into play a whole new and extensive regulatory regime. The chair of that board is Dr Neville Highett and it has very significant representation. We are not passive players in this space; in fact, we are leaders in the nation, especially given our focus on early childhood development.

**Mr SIBBONS:** I refer the minister to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, pages 211 to 215, which refer to the Early Years Learning Framework. Will the minister advise how the Early Years Learning Framework is being used to support young children's learning in South Australia?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Thank you, member for Mitchell. The development of the national Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) is part of the raft of reforms occurring across the country to deliver significant improvements in early childhood education and care for all young Australians. The framework is an integral part of the national quality standard and focuses on the learning and development of children from birth to five years and their transitions, especially from early childhood services to school.

South Australian educators led the development of the educator guide for the Early Years Learning Framework which was distributed nationally by DEEWR. The framework and educator guide have strong links to Reflect, Respect, Relate, which looks at the area of child wellbeing, involvement in relationships and an active learning environment. This resource was also distributed nationally by DEEWR.

I am also pleased to share that consultation with educators in the APY lands, both Anangu and non-Anangu, has shown that the principles and practices outlined in the framework resonate with community and are supported by educators and children.

I have to say that this project has provided, in my opinion, a wealth of resources to support the growing engagement of educators with this requirement. Resources from the project have been

made available to services through the DECD website, and new materials will continue to be developed and provided. These resources showcase some of the excellent practice that is occurring in South Australia in early childhood services. All DECD preschools have adopted the EYLF as the basis for their curriculum, and I know that we will continue to receive positive feedback from preschools and families.

**Mr PISONI:** On that previous line of questioning, has the minister received correspondence, submissions from private operators or others, advising the minister that they have had a drop off in enrolments, causing them difficulty in conducting or continuing their businesses or difficulty in making adjustments to deal with those enrolments? If so, how many?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I meet with private and public providers all the time. In fact, earlier this year I brought together a round table of a fair representation of providers, for my benefit as well as the benefit of ACECQA, which is the new company established by the SCSEEC, which is the ministerial council for schools, education and early childhood. It used to be called MCEEDYA. They were in town and I was very happy to arrange for them to meet with providers, all of whom are dealing with the implementation and the requirements of the new national quality framework. I believe the member for Unley was supportive of this national push. We certainly are here in South Australia.

Child care is all about quality, especially given what we know about the early years. I have made representations to, in fact, SCSEEC, and Kate Ellis as the national minister. At the last meeting I raised concerns in relation to the transition to these new requirements, and that was noted. At the SCSEEC meeting, as well as at the meeting of stakeholders (for want of a better term; people in the industry and the sector) in the presence of Karen Curtis from ACECQA. Ms Curtis did mention that we would be reviewing in 2014 the new provisions as they applied.

It is very good actually that a number of our centres in South Australia already meet the new ratios in relation to the 0-2s, I believe, the babies, so we are well on our way in relation to that. I do acknowledge that there are implementation issues for people. I have raised those with the appropriate bodies. I think people here have been heard. I certainly feel that I have been heard and have made adequate representations. We will continue to monitor the situation, and there will be a review process in 2014 to consider issues being faced by the sector prior to further reforms coming into force.

I do think that there are checks and balances in place and I am always very happy to make representations, but let us remember what motivates us here in this policy area, and that is quality. Our childcare centres are more than just sites for babysitting. They are sites for early learning and care, and we entrust these workers with a very special job. Can I take this opportunity to thank all the workers in the centres who provide a variety of care, all sorts of configurations of care. They do a great job. Having kids screaming at you all day cannot be easy, but there are people who are made for that line of work and I thank them for it.

**Mr PISONI:** Did you give me the number?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** The number of representations that were made to me?

**Mr PISONI:** No, the number of correspondence by child care providers, or others, about their concerns for their drop off in enrolment and how it is making their businesses unviable.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I do not have figures in front of me that detail the correspondence. I do not carry with me a running tally of correspondence, but I am—

**Mr PISONI:** I am happy for you to bring those back.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** No, I can tell you that I have met with significant numbers of representatives of the sector with whom I am satisfied that we have an ongoing and important working relationship. They do not need to write to me; they can meet with me.

**Mr PISONI:** Well, they do. They have done, and they have copied me.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** And they are welcome to, but they also meet with me—

*Mr Pisoni interjecting:*

**The CHAIR:** Order!

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** They also meet with me in relation to these matters, and I would prefer them to meet with me than send me a letter.



**Mr PISONI:** So the answer is: no, you are not going to provide those numbers to the committee?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I do not have those numbers here in front of me.

**Mr PISONI:** I am happy to wait for them, 12 October.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I will see, Chair, if those numbers are readily available; but, if the member has any information at his disposal, I would be pleased to receive it.

**Mr PISONI:** You have a lot more staff than I do, minister.

**The CHAIR:** Are there further questions on this line?

**Mr PISONI:** No, I am moving to something else.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Can I clarify where we are moving to?

**The CHAIR:** We have until 2.45 and we should be doing administered items now.

**Mr PISONI:** That is where I would like to go.

#### **Departmental Advisers:**

Dr P. Kilvert, Chief Executive, SACE Board of South Australia.

Mr C. Bernardi, Director, Finance and Investing, Department for Education and Child Development.

Ms J. Andrews, Chief Executive, Office of Non-Government Schools and Services.

Ms J. Riedstra, Chief Financial Officer, Department for Education and Child Development.

**Mr PISONI:** This refers to the SACE board, operating activities at page 235. Are you able to update the house on what is the status of plans to lift the FOI exemption from the SACE board?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I am very happy to address this question. In fact, I believe that the member for Unley was briefed personally by Mr Kilvert in relation to this matter. The SACE board is reviewing its current blanket exemption under FOI legislation in line with the government's policies of openness and accountability. By way of background, the exemption has been in place since 1992.

The SACE board is mindful of the possible ways in which SACE-related data and information may be used once the current blanket exemption is removed, and is working closely with its stakeholders to develop a framework for the management of SACE data and information that maximises its educational effectiveness and usefulness. We intend to progress this matter this year, which is, I believe, what you were told by Mr Kilvert when you were briefed earlier in the year.

**Mr PISONI:** That is why I am asking for an update. I was told at a meeting in February that, hopefully by the end of 2012, a report on the progress of lifting the exemption would be available halfway through this year, which is now. Is that available?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** The progress is that we are working on this matter and we hope to be able to bring to the parliament—because we will need to bring it to the parliament—proposed legislation towards the end of the year.

**Mr PISONI:** But I was told that a report on the progress would be available halfway through the year, so that is not happening now; is that what you are saying?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I am giving you a report on the progress, that is, that the SACE Board is working with people who will be affected by the release of the data.

**Mr PISONI:** But that is what I was told in February. That is not an update.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Well, I am giving you a report. As a government we have been very clear that we think that this status needs to change, and we are taking active steps to ensure that the SACE Board is open and transparent. I hope to be in a position to bring something to the parliament later this year, but work is still going on. The information that the member for Unley was given still stands. We are working towards progress for the end of this year.

**Mr PISONI:** I was told that a report on the progress would be available midway through this year. You are saying that is not the case now?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Mr Kilvert advises that the board will shortly consider such a report, and what the member for Unley needs to consider is that it is not just me in relation to the SACE Board: the Catholic and independent sectors also need to be in the loop, so to speak, about the impact of this decision. This is what we want. The member for Unley and I are on the same page in relation to this. I am providing an update to him, that is, that we hope to be in a position to change the FOI status of the SACE Board by the end of the year.

**Mr PISONI:** Has a report been prepared?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** For whom?

**Mr PISONI:** On the progress.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I understand that a report is being prepared and it is going to the June board meeting of the SACE.

**Mr PISONI:** Thank you; that answers the question I asked about five minutes ago.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** My pleasure.

**Mr PISONI:** When will the evaluation be complete and when will the results be made available to the opposition or to other interested parties?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Again, I believe this was the subject of the personal briefing the member for Unley had with Mr Paul Kilvert. In fact, I think you also met with Bill Cossey, who is chairing the evaluation and undertaking the evaluation.

**Mr GARDNER:** Now you can tell all of us.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I am very happy to. The time line is this: from June 2012 ongoing, presentation of the evaluation panel's report to the SACE Board will occur, so it is all about to happen soon. The SACE Board will then consult with key stakeholders about the evaluation panel's report. The SACE Board will provide a copy of the report to Education and to the wider community, as well as its own response to the evaluation panel.

**Mr PISONI:** Do you have time lines for those actions?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** This is happening from June. The SACE Board will need some time to consider the evaluation report and prepare its own report. I am committed to making it available to you as soon as I am in a position to.

**Mr PISONI:** When the evaluation was first announced, it was reported in the local press that a spokesperson in the department had said that it would not be published until the 2011 annual report was published—that it would be published with the annual report. Is that the earliest time the public will have access to the evaluation?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Did you mean 2011 or 2013?

**Mr PISONI:** The 2011 annual report, which is tabled next year, in 2012.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Or 2013, next year?

**Mr PISONI:** Sorry; the 2012 annual report, which is tabled in 2013.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** The SACE Board will undertake to have the evaluation completed within six months of its commencement in February 2012. The SACE Board needs time to consider it, and I need to consider it. I am confident that the evaluation report will be released this year.

**Mr PISONI:** Is it your intention, minister, that recommendations that are agreed upon will be implemented for the 2013 school year?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** It depends on what the nature of those findings, observations or recommendations are. I am not pre-empting any of the findings of that evaluation.

**Mr PISONI:** I am not asking you to do that. What I asked was: will the findings that have been agreed to (in other words, findings you have agreed to implement) be implemented for the 2013 school year?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** It depends on what they are. You are speculating on what may or may not happen as a result of the evaluation. As with anything, this is a serious and rigorous evaluation. There were only two things I said to Bill Cossey. I said that I wanted everybody who has a view about the new SACE to be heard and that I wanted this to be an open process, and it will

be. So, they have been busily undertaking their evaluation. There is a full member panel and a reference group made up of various people, and they will make a number of observations and findings in relation to the evaluation of the first year of the SACE.

We will deal with the responses when we see them but, as always, I will be very mindful of the educational impact and the transitional issues in relation to those. Given that I do not know what they are at the moment, it is hard for me to speculate, and that would be silly and irresponsible. But we will consider all of those factors when they are brought to our attention.

**Mr PISONI:** Are you saying, then, minister, that you have not been briefed at all on the process of the evaluation since it was announced?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** No, I have been briefed on the process of the evaluation, and I—

**Mr PISONI:** What about on the evaluation, such as the major concerns that have been raised, have you been briefed on any of those?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** The major concerns, the positives and perceived negatives of the new SACE, are obvious to a number of people, and those issues were made very clear in the terms of reference that established the evaluation.

**Mr PISONI:** But have you been briefed—

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** They are obvious—

**Mr PISONI:** —yourself?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I have met—

**Mr PISONI:** Have you been briefed about the concerns that have been raised since the concerns have been coming into Mr Cossey?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Of course. I have had many discussions. It would be—

**Mr PISONI:** Can you advise the committee then what are the major—

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** Chair, if I may finish my—

**Mr PISONI:** —concerns that have been raised?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** —response without interruption.

**The CHAIR:** Can we finish one answer before we get another question?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** It would be remiss of me not to raise and discuss and have serious policy discussions with the SACE Board about the new SACE and the evaluation. That is my job as minister and one I take very seriously. The SACE Board has been charged with the evaluation as well, and it has appointed Bill Cossey to chair the evaluation.

**Mr PISONI:** Yes, you said that.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I am confident that this is occurring in a rigorous way. The most important thing is that the process is done in a rigorous way and that it addresses the key issues that have been identified by people, whether it be the impact of languages or other things. I am confident that it is being done properly, and we will deal with it in a proper manner when it is brought to my attention. The new SACE is an important instrument, a very important tool. We committed to the evaluation a number of years ago; that is what we are doing. I look forward to receiving the evaluation, I think we all do. It will be a very important opportunity for us to take stock of the first year.

**Mr PISONI:** So if you have been briefed on the evaluation to date, are you able to tell the committee what are the three major concerns with the new SACE?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** No; what I said to you is that I have been briefed on the process of the evaluation panel, the work that they are doing. I said to you that I am always discussing matters in relation to the ongoing issues, as I do with all aspects of my department, as they arise in relation to the new SACE.

**Mr PISONI:** So you have not taken an interest in this at all?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** The member for Unley—

*Mr Pisoni interjecting:*

**The CHAIR:** Order! The minister is answering the question. She has been very patient with this line of questioning.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I have been, thank you, Chair. I have articulated in so many fora the issues that people see as their issues in relation to SACE. I think we have an outstanding SACE. What we need to do is identify issues that are of a substantial nature, issues that pertain—

**Mr PISONI:** But you do not know what they are.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I do not think anybody would accuse me—

*Mr Pisoni interjecting:*

**The CHAIR:** Order!

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I do not think anybody would accuse me of not knowing the issues in relation to the SACE.

**Mr PISONI:** I think there would be plenty of people who would do that.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I am not going to waste the committee's time with—

**Mr PISONI:** Alright, next question.

**The CHAIR:** No, the next question will be coming from the government side. I have now allowed you seven questions in this bracket. Member for Port Adelaide.

**Dr CLOSE:** My question relates to SACE Aboriginal student pathways. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 219. Can the minister advise how Aboriginal students in our secondary schools, who are undertaking their SACE, are also being supported to develop their skills for further study, training and work after they leave school?

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** It was only last week at the University of Adelaide that I was very pleased to address and meet approximately 150 young Aboriginal students. They were all taking part in a conference especially designed to support young Aboriginal students and encourage them to aim higher while they explored their opportunities for further study at university or TAFE. These young people were all year 10, 11 and 12 senior school students from Catholic, independent and state schools across the state. I have to say that it was a thoroughly inspiring opportunity for me to see and experience their enthusiasm for their future.

The conference is now an annual event held at one of our universities (it is rotated; I think last year it was at Flinders University) under the auspices of the SACE board. I think this is a really important event that the SACE board holds, and I pass on my congratulations. Unfortunately, because parliament was sitting I was unable to hear the keynote speaker, Abbey Ramirez-Shillingford, a former Findon High School student who went on to Flinders University. She graduated with a law degree and is now practising native title law in Western Australia. I have no doubt that she was a source of great inspiration for those students as they contemplated their senior secondary education.

I am pleased, though, to report that last year more than 84 per cent of Aboriginal students who commenced year 12 went on to complete their SACE; and this is compared to 71.7 per cent just five years ago. In addition, 57.2 per cent of Aboriginal SACE completers received an ATAR, an increase of 17 per cent on 2010. I think that is something we should be proud of. This is important because all the evidence shows that lifting education and skills increases the long-term career and, importantly, health prospects for young people.

I am confident that the young people who explored their career and study options last week at this conference organised by the SACE board will have every opportunity to fulfil their dreams. When I addressed these students, I was reminded of Rebecca Richards, our first Aboriginal Rhodes Scholar. I think her degree was in anthropology, and she graduated at the University of Adelaide. At Government House, I had the opportunity to meet her mother and her sister (who had a little baby), who was studying medicine: a family of great hope, aspiration and obvious achievement. Rebecca Richards' story inspires me and, no doubt, she will go on to inspire many other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

**Ms BEDFORD:** At Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 216, again on SACE, I would like the minister to advise some of the results of the first group of students who sat the new SACE for the first time in 2011.

**The Hon. G. PORTOLESI:** I have to say that the results in 2011, from the new SACE, were fantastic. In 2011, the highest-ever proportion of students who started year 12 successfully went on to complete their SACE. That is a total of 12,367 or 91.6 per cent, an increase of 1.4 per cent on 2010. In addition, the proportion of students who gained an ATAR for entry to university also increased by 3.3 per cent to 85.9 per cent. Similar positive results were seen for Aboriginal students, and I have reported on that.

Having more students gain an ATAR with their SACE is important because we want more young people to access higher education. Compared with when the previous SACE was introduced 20 years ago, many more careers today require university and trade qualifications, and I spoke earlier in the day about what we are doing to improve pathways for those who do not want to go to university but want a trade pathway. In this context, I think it is very important to remind ourselves why the new SACE was introduced in the first place.

The power of the new SACE is that it aspires to prepare every student for work life and learning in a changing world, and I think something like 30 per cent of us go on to university. The question remains: what happens to the other 70 per cent? The SACE encourages all students to achieve excellence in line with their interests and strengths, and it does so while recognising that every young person needs certain essential skills to be successful in the world of work and further study. This is why the new SACE has set minimum literacy and numeracy standards that all students must meet in order to qualify for the SACE. This is the first time the SACE has done that—a fact that is often forgotten in this debate—and it also includes elements that encourage students to reflect and make informed choices in respect to subjects and pathways such as the Personal Learning Plan.

The member for Unley, earlier, alluded to the research project, a component of the new SACE. The research project is now a compulsory subject for the SACE and aims to encourage and develop students' independent study and research skills that are so important to further study and contemporary work. I am pleased to report that 94.1 per cent of students passed the research project and 244 students achieved an A+, which is a great result. Our tertiary institutions are very involved in the evaluation, so they will have their say. The tertiary institutions have supported the introduction of the research project in the belief that it will set up students for success in their future learning and training.

I have had some feedback that the graduates the universities are seeing now reflect a stronger set of research skills and I think that can be attributed to the research project, because the self-directed nature of the research project is a very good introduction to university-style study.

So, I would like to acknowledge everyone on the SACE board, and others. I acknowledge the Chair of the SACE board, Mr Allan Dooley, who has worked hard in transitioning from the old SACE to the new SACE. Clearly, we invested heavily to make sure that that transition was as smooth as possible. We are committed to improving and evaluating, and I look forward, soon, to being in a position to consider the evaluation report.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, minister; I thank your advisers and the committee members. There being no further questions, I declare the examination of the proposed payments completed.

*[Sitting suspended from 14:45 to 15:00]*

**DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION, \$961,839,000**  
**ADMINISTERED ITEMS FOR THE DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES AND SOCIAL**  
**INCLUSION, \$164,327,000**

**Membership:**

Ms Chapman substituted for Mr Pisoni.

Mr Whetstone substituted for Mr Gardner.

**Witness:**

Hon. G.E. Gago, Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, Minister for Forests, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Tourism, Minister for the Status of Women.

**Departmental Advisers:**

Ms J. Mazel, Chief Executive, Department for Communities and Social Inclusion.

Mr J. Ullianich, Executive Director, Financial Services, Department for Communities and Social Inclusion.

Ms V. Swan, Director, Office for Women, Department for Communities and Social Inclusion.

Ms F. Mort, Manager, Policy, Office for Women, Department for Communities and Social Inclusion.

Ms R. Burner, Ministerial Adviser.

**The CHAIR:** The estimates committees are a relatively informal procedure and as such there is no need to stand to ask or answer questions. Changes to the committee must be notified as they occur. If the minister undertakes to supply information at a later date it must be submitted to the committee secretary by no later than 21 September. The minister and the lead speaker of the opposition can make opening statements if they so wish. There will be a flexible approach to giving the call for questions based on about three questions per member. Supplementary questions will be the exception rather than the rule. Questions must be based on lines of expenditure in the budget papers and must be identifiable or referenced.

Members unable to complete their questions during the proceedings may submit them as questions on notice for inclusion in the House of Assembly *Notice Paper*. There is no formal facility for tabling documents before the committee; however, documents can be supplied to the chair for distribution to the committee. All questions are to be directed to the minister, not the minister's advisers. The minister may refer questions to advisers for a response. I also advise that for the purposes of the committee television coverage will be allowed for filming from both the northern and southern galleries.

I declare the proposed payments open for examination, and refer members to Portfolio Statements, Volume 1. I invite the minister to introduce her advisers, and also to make an opening statement if she so desires

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I would like to take this opportunity to make a few brief opening comments. The past 12 months have seen some significant achievements for women in this state, including in the area of women's safety. On 2 December 2012 I launched A Right to Safety, the next phase of South Australia's Women's Safety Strategy 2011-22. A Right to Safety builds on the reforms undertaken through the Women's Safety Strategy to improve services and to strengthen community understanding of the effects of violence against women.

Violence against women collaborations are being established across the state as part of the refreshed strategy. These collaborations provide an opportunity for the development of local regional responses to women experiencing rape and sexual assault, domestic and family violence, and homelessness due to violence.

I am pleased to advise that during 2011-12 the Family Safety Framework was rolled out to the Limestone Coast, Berri, Murray Bridge, Port Lincoln and the Port Lincoln policing areas. This now gives us complete coverage across metropolitan Adelaide as well as coverage in six regional locations. Implementation of the Family Safety Framework has also commenced in Alice Springs. This is the first time family safety meetings have been established in another jurisdiction, and I think that definitely confirms the effectiveness of this model in responding to people at high risk of domestic violence.

The rollout of the Family Safety Framework was a direct result of this government's commitment to ensuring that future domestic violence-related deaths be prevented. As part of this commitment a dedicated research officer within the Coroner's Court is now being funded on an ongoing basis.

Critical to the rollout of the framework is the provision of administration support from the Victim Support Service, and the Attorney-General's Department has agreed to provide financial support for the Victim Support Service in 2011-12. This funding has been used by VSS to support the administrative role of the family safety framework. The Office for Women continues to work with the Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology (DFEEST) and the Department for Education and Child Development on the Women at Work strategy.

In August 2011, DFEEST and the Office for Women held a Women in Science Symposium which included a panel of speakers who discussed their experiences of working in the field, barriers to women's participation and ways to encourage young women in science, technology, engineering and maths. On 14 November 2011, 20 outstanding women were honoured at a reception at Government House as part of the 2011 Women's Honour Roll. The 2011 State Aboriginal Women's Gathering was held from 29 November to 1 December and was attended by approximately 50 women, and the theme was Strong Cultures Inspire Strong Futures.

On Australia Day eve this year, I had the pleasure of presenting the Women Hold Up Half the Sky Award to Katrine Hildyard. Katrine successfully led the Strong Community, Healthy State campaign which led to historic pay increases for community sector workers. A commendation was also made to Stephanie O'Connor. We also continue to make significant progress towards achieving women's leadership targets as part of our Strategic Plan targets.

As of 1 June 2012, women comprised 46 per cent of government boards and committees, with 37 per cent of these boards being chaired by women. The Women's Information Service (WIS) continues to engage South Australian women in person, on the phone, and on the internet, including through Facebook coverage. In May this year, WIS held a Web 2.0 summit, titled 'Powerful users or digital losers? Re-imagining women online'. The summit brought together leaders from government, industry, academia and the community sector to discuss barriers to women's online participation and to explore possible projects to overcome that. I now welcome examination of budget papers.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Does the shadow minister wish to make an opening statement?

**Ms CHAPMAN:** Only to say that I commend the minister this year for the feminisation of her advisers. We have moved from three men out of four advisers last year and have had a reversal, with three women and one man. That is to be complimented—well done.

I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, and, sadly, pages 98 and 99 (only half of page 99) are the only two pages relating to this area directly under the Status of Women. For clarification, because there was a regrouping of different agencies last year, minister, the previous description of this in last year's budget, before the amalgamation, was Building Communities, Status of Women, and now it is called Program 1: Status of Women.

We know that, from several years ago, the office of the status of women has changed and that it is now just the Office for Women. Because this regrouping was to bring in a whole lot of smaller groups under the restructure, we still have an Office for Women, but can I just clarify whether we have anything that has 'status of women' in its title?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** Yes, there were some machinery of government changes that were made or announced on 21 October 2011 that resulted in the transfer of the Office for Women from the Attorney-General's Department to the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion from 1 January 2012, and the Office for Women is now reported in the DCSI's agency statements, as you drew to our attention, in Program 1: Status of Women.

The Office for Women, to the best of my knowledge since I have been minister at least, has always been and continues to be called the Office for Women, and I am the Minister for the Status of Women, and that remains unchanged as well; there are, in effect, no other changes associated in terms of name changes.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** I refer to program 1—Status of women, which provides:

The Office for Women's role is the pursuit of the full and equal participation of women in the social and economic life of the state by providing innovative and balanced public policy advice to government.

My first question relates to the Public Sector Grievance Review Commission, which was established last year to hear issues of concern affecting government employees. There had been a very significant accumulation of cases of people wanting to have their grievances heard. As you would know, minister, last month, Mr Jeff Walsh was appointed as the commissioner, and there were three deputy positions—two males, one female.

The opposition is informed that the delay in these appointments arose from the selection of someone to take the female position. It is academic as to who that is and bears no reflection upon who was actually appointed, so it is not necessary for me to name her. This is obviously an important body to hopefully rationalise and more quickly advance grievances of public servants.

My question is: was there any identification of women who would be available under the register, which is supposed to be available to assist in the appointment of women to boards and

important positions, or was there any direct consultation with or advice sought from the Premier's Council for Women or the Office for Women?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** In terms of the selection process involved with appointing members to that particular panel, that is a matter for the appropriate minister, and we are just trying to work out which minister that is, whether it is minister O'Brien or minister Wortley. These are matters for other ministers. Obviously, we have a position to try to ensure that we have greater representation of women on all our committees and boards.

In relation to access to the women's directory, that is available to all agencies and all ministers. In fact, it is also available to the public in general, so the private sector has access to that as well. We do not proactively monitor who accesses that directory and who does not. We certainly promote, very widely, that the directory is available. I think around 800 CVs of board-ready women are now on that directory, and we certainly do promote that extensively and encourage all agencies to use that when they are filling any position. As I said, we do not monitor who accesses that and who does not.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** I have a supplementary question. I appreciate the anonymity of access to the register. Did anyone in government approach you as the Minister for the Status of Women to ascertain whether somebody could be found to fill this shortfall which was apparently holding up the opportunity for the commission to get started on its important work, or were you not kept in the loop on that matter?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** It would be highly unlikely and highly irregular for an agency to contact me directly to access the directory.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** No, sorry; I was not asking about the directory, I was asking whether you had sought advice, as the Minister for the Status of Women, as to how we deal with the fact that there was a vacancy that was apparently holding up the operation of the commission, and how that might be dealt with.

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** Each agency is responsible for filling their own positions. We have an extensive directory that is available and is well advised and promoted to all agencies. That is where we would refer agencies. It would be highly irregular for individual agencies to be approaching me for individual positions.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** I think we are at cross purposes minister. I thought I had made clear that I was not asking whether you had been advised to nominate somebody, but referred to the issue of there being a vacancy and that a woman was required and how that might be dealt with. In cabinet you are the minister for the Status of Women, and if some agency or operation was to be held up as a result of perhaps not being able to find somebody available to take the position how it might be dealt with? If you were not asked, I am happy to know that, but I just want to know whether you are approached.

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I have answered the question now three times. I think you are failing to hear the answer, and that is that I would not expect, and it would be a highly irregular thing, for individual agencies to be bringing to me positions that are vacant. The agencies are well aware that we have a directory available and that is the mechanism we would use to assist agencies to fill positions for women. That is what we would advise them to utilise. Agencies are already well aware of that. They have access to it, so it would therefore be highly irregular and most improbable that individual agencies would then come to me to ask me about a position being vacant when they would be probably well aware that I would be advising them to go and use the directory.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** So I take that as a no.

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** Well, I have answered the question four times now.

**Ms BEDFORD:** My question refers to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 98. I ask you to advise what is being done to implement the family safety framework to other regions in South Australia.

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** As part of the Women's Safety Strategy, the family safety framework seeks to ensure that services to families most at risk of violence are dealt with in a more structured and systematic way through agency-sharing information about high risk families and taking responsibility for supporting these families to navigate services. The framework includes family safety meetings, which are held at the local level and focus on individual high risk cases.



The framework was initially established at trial sites in Holden Hill, Port Augusta and Christies Beach and have been rolled out as I indicated in my opening statement. The roll-out of the framework to Berri and Murray Bridge areas was a direct result of a coronial inquest into the death of Robyn Hayward and Edwin Durance. It was a preliminary coronial recommendation in this matter that the family safety framework be rolled out to that particular area, and through the cooperation arrangements of a range of government departments and non-government organisations this was able to be achieved.

I am very pleased to be able to advise that the family safety framework will now be able to be rolled out to all remaining police areas across South Australia during 2012 and 2013. It has been a highly successful model and we want to roll it out to the Eyre, western, Far North, outer metropolitan, Yorke and Mid North regions and we expect this to be completed by December 2013. The government believes that every family obviously has a right to be safe in their own home, and this expanded program means that these families most at risk can have access to coordinated services.

Critical to the roll-out of this framework has been the provision of administrative support from the Victim Support Service. The Attorney-General's Department has agreed to provide site financial support during 2011-12 and this funding will be used by the Victim Support Service for administrative purposes, and in the 2012-13 state budget the Treasurer announced the provision of \$100,000 funding to the Victim Support Service each year for four years. The South Australian Police, which has been a strong supporter of this initiative, has also agreed to provide funding of \$20,000 to Victim Support Service for this. This funding will enable us to continue its important support work.

I am also pleased to advise that the implementation of the Family Safety Framework has commenced in Alice Springs as well. That is important collaborative work with the Northern Territory which also supports the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children. The national plan sets out key objectives of improving cross-jurisdictional mechanisms to protect women and children. In the work being done in the Northern Territory, agencies are fostering partnerships and enabling consistency in service provision across jurisdictions.

**Dr CLOSE:** I refer the committee to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 98. Can the minister advise on the activities of the Premier's Council for Women over the last 12 months?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I thank the member for her question. Established in 2002 by the Labor government, the Premier's Council for Women (PCW) provides leadership and advice to ensure that the interests of women are at the forefront of government policies and strategies. The council is co-chaired by the former vice chancellor of Flinders University, Professor Anne Edwards, and the former chief executive officer of the Adelaide Festival, Ms Kate Gould.

The council's 16 members are influential women with expertise in a range of areas such as health, education and primary industries. One of the government's key advisory bodies, the council was actively involved in the review of the South Australian Strategic Plan and has membership on the Strategic Plan Audit Committee and Community Engagement Board.

Representatives from the council meet with me regularly to ensure that they convey their views directly to me. I was also able to attend a council meeting. During 2011-12, the PCW provided a written report to me and the Premier summarising their work plan for 2011-12 and their progress in their priority areas: health and wellbeing; violence against women and safety; leadership; employment and economic status; and women and disabilities. The PCW will continue to pay particular attention to specific issues faced by women of all ages from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds across these five priority areas.

The PCW is also working with the Premier's Science and Industry Council on the issue of women in science. The Premier's Science and Industry Council has identified the participation of women in science as an area of focus and, to that end, has asked the PCW to work with them on progressing this agenda following the Women in Science Symposium held on 22 August 2011. The two councils have agreed to form a joint working group and work together to look at the attraction and retention of women in science.

In November 2011, the PCW and the American Chamber of Commerce hosted a luncheon that addressed the need for companies to embrace gender equity. The objective of the luncheon, titled 'Untapped Resources—Gender Equity in the Workplace', was to raise issues and discuss women in the workplace within that forum. It was held at the Intercontinental and there was a panel of important industry people.

They were selected to highlight the fact that they were all men and to highlight the fact that men obviously need to take a leadership position on gender equity in their organisations, because women are not in sufficient numbers at levels of authority to make the changes needed. Enlightened male leaders are starting to speak out about the benefits of gender equity. They also realise that a failure to encourage reform represents significant risks for an organisation. Gender equity needs to be on the risk register of all organisations.

I am advised that the event was extremely successful with approximately 350 attendees. Mining and defence were the main industries being represented. At the luncheon, the council also launched the wiki Women in Corporate Leadership which is an online community for South Australian business. It is about sharing best practice in that area and includes links to things like research, media reports, toolkits and a number of other resources.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** I have a supplementary, if I may, on that question.

**The CHAIR:** We are only allowing supplementaries from the person who asks the questions.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** Really?

**The CHAIR:** Really. You have the call anyway.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** Thank you. I thought you just said, minister, that the Premier's Council for Women was established in 2002. On 29 June 2009, when you first became the Minister for the Status of Women, you stated then that it was established in 2003 and, in fact, that is my recollection, because I was critical of then premier Rann for failing to actually appoint the council for over a year after he had come into office.

Can I just have that correct? Is it 2003 or 2002? My recollection is that the appointment was made and that they first met in about March 2003, and you seemed to have the same recollection when you gave evidence to this committee on 29 June 2009.

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I have been advised that the women's council was announced in 2002 as part of some election announcements; however, the members to the council were not appointed until 2003.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** Correct, thank you. I go back to when you might be consulted by the Premier's council or by the Office for Women in the advisory role you identify in the budget papers I referred to earlier. As you will also be aware, the position of equal opportunities commissioner remained vacant for two years until recently. Was that an issue that you discussed with the Office for Women, or sought advice from the Premier's Council for Women as to any concern raised about the delay in that appointment, particularly its being left vacant for two years?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** No.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** Was it an issue you raised at all with the government as the representative for women?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** There are obviously discussions when, from time to time, appointments come to cabinet and, obviously, those discussions are confidential. So, I am not able to divulge the nature of those discussions, but there certainly were discussions around that appointment.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** Were you responsible for selecting and recommending the appointment?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** You would need to ask that question of the minister involved. There is—

**Ms CHAPMAN:** That is what I am asking you: were you the minister involved?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I have not finished answering the question yet. They are responsible for putting forward recommendations for that appointment, and they have a process of consulting and considering inputs from other key stakeholders, including other ministers who have an interest.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** Who was the minister?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** It was the Attorney-General.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** After two years, had you raised any concern with the Attorney-General about this position being left vacant?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I have just answered that question. I have said that these matters are brought to cabinet from time to time and they are discussed there.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** Irrespective of the discussions then, did you take any action to ensure that this vacancy was filled and not left open for two years?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** They were matters that were discussed—

**Ms CHAPMAN:** I am not asking what you discussed.

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** Well, I am giving you the answer. They were matters that were discussed and considered inside cabinet and not able to be divulged here.

**Ms BEDFORD:** Again, minister, I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, pages 98 and 99. Could you please advise what progress has been achieved to reorientate the Women's Information Service to be a gateway service providing a strong community and internet presence?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** The Women's Information Service (WIS) operates using a gateway service delivery model to connect women with services and information they might need. WIS has identified the need to engage in partnerships in the community to enable it to leverage its resources to maximise opportunities to empower women and particularly to empower women to make informed choices.

Through its engagement with the community, WIS has also responded to women by creating an online presence, sharing information with women through its Facebook page. I am pleased to advise that the page has received 277 'likes' since it was established in 2011. On a similar theme, in October 2011 the WIS held a planning session with South Australian women who are leaders in their use of technology. The session was funded by the Office of the Chief Information Officer and was facilitated by Sarah Thomas from Social PR.

WIS has identified that there are relatively few women participating in knowledge creation online, such as Wikipedia, and in May 2012 we held the 'Powerful users or digital losers? Re-imagining women online' summit. Also, in April and May 2012 WIS partnered with the SA Cervix Screening Program, the University of Adelaide women's group and The Parks Community Health Centre's Friday Fun young mums' group to deliver a series of workshops to provide women with digital storytelling skills and increase women's knowledge about cervical cancer and other services.

WIS will develop a community engagement framework which will identify a number of projects to empower women who do not have access to the internet or to the WIS shopfront to make informed decisions.

**Mr SIBBONS:** My question relates to the Women's Safety Strategy, Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 99. Can the minister please advise what progress has been achieved to refresh the Women's Safety Strategy in line with the national plan to reduce violence against women?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** The Women's Safety Strategy (WSS) was launched on International Women's Day in 2005 and outlined the South Australian government's vision to address the issue of violence against women, including rape, sexual assault, and family and domestic violence. The WSS has a broad focus, from early intervention work focused on preventing violence through to community education to raise awareness about the level and complexity of women's safety.

A Right to Safety: the Next Phase of South Australia's Women's Safety Strategy was launched in December 2011. That builds on reforms undertaken through the Women's Safety Strategy to improve legislation and services and to strengthen community understanding of the effects of violence against women. It also has a stronger focus on early intervention and prevention. It outlines the South Australian government's commitment to the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children.

The plan brings together government efforts across the nation to make a real and sustained reduction in the levels of violence against women and is underpinned by the belief that involving all governments and the wider community is necessary to reducing violence against women in the longer term. I am pleased to say that we endorsed the plan and our Women's Safety Strategy has been updated to reflect that national plan.

A Right to Safety also reflects that there is greater work to be done in preventing violence against women from occurring in the first place. Prevention work can take many forms and will require new partnerships in this phase of the strategy. There are a number of initiatives currently being undertaken, including the Family Safety Framework, an antiviolenace community awareness

campaign, the research officer in the Coroner's office, and the violence against women regional collaborations.

The Violence Against Women Awareness and Prevention in the Hotel Industry project, which commenced in 2011, was a 12-month project involving the AHA, United Voice, Consumer and Business Services, and the Office for Women. The program responds to the high proportion of sexual violence which occurs following contact with licensed premises, and there were a number of training sessions involved in that. In 2011, \$13,000 was delivered to Women With Disabilities South Australia to conduct awareness-raising activities as part of the Don't Cross the Line community awareness campaign. Awareness-raising training sessions have also been conducted in a number of areas.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** While we are on domestic violence matters, the last two years I have asked you about the legislation that was passed I think now 3½ years ago to provide for prevention against violence, particularly intervention orders that could be issued by police, etc. There was a two-year delay, and the then police minister told us that the police needed to be trained, and there was some delay in that.

Last year I think you told us—if I can paraphrase—that it was being established and that training needed to be done, particularly as there was expected to be a higher incidence of intervention orders, as distinct from traditional restraining orders. Can you update the committee as to whether there has been an increase and, in particular, the number of restraining orders/intervention orders made to the year ending 30 June 2007 and then anticipated, or at least to date to 2012? You can take that on notice if you do not have it in front of you.

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I thank the member for her questions. They are obviously matters for the Attorney-General. I am not aware of any reports to date in terms of the number of orders, but I am happy to refer those questions to the Attorney-General for a response.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** You have mentioned what the Premier's Council for Women has done in the past 12 months, and I am sure the committee is appreciative of that information. In July last year, during estimates, I asked you whether the Premier's Council for Women had provided the government with advice on the then prostitution bill that was under consideration publicly and to be introduced at that stage by the Hon. Stephanie Key.

In essence, you indicated that the Premier's Council for Women was independent of government. It was not there for specific direction, and that is, of course, respected. We have since been provided with a draft of its work plan for 2011-12 under freedom of information. In fact, on the schedule for work to be done, the council actually specified that, in the 2011-12 financial year, it would be considering both the prostitution legislation and also the same-sex bill in its draft document. My first question is: were you provided with the council's draft work plan for 2011-12 at your monthly meetings prior to the commencement of that financial year's work program?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** Yes.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** So you knew at last year's estimates committee hearing, in July 2011, that the Premier's Council for Women had on its agenda to receive a briefing on the decriminalisation of prostitution bill and the same-sex bill?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I have been advised that the council's work plan is an ongoing watching brief. My understanding is that, to this date—and I am happy to double-check this—the council has not requested a briefing on either piece of legislation, and it has certainly not provided me with any advice or comment on either piece of legislation. It may well have indicated an interest in wanting to be briefed in those areas, but it would seem to me that it has clearly identified other areas of higher priority and activity in relation to that. I am not aware as to whether the council has received any briefings, and it certainly has not provided me with any advice in relation to either of those pieces of legislation.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** I was certainly going to ask you whether you had received any advice. As at 11 July 2011, Emeritus Professor Anne Edwards and Kate Gould (both co-chairs) had written to me confirming at that stage that they were aware of the bill and the law reform under consideration, and that they were busy—I am paraphrasing at this stage. In any event, you say you have not received any advice on it.

You will remember, minister, that when your government introduced the amendments to the Equal Opportunity Bill in 2009 the Premier's Council for Women wrote to all politicians asking them to support the amendments; that is, that they had formed a view on the legislation, it was important in the effect it would have in respect to women and that it was important that they convey

to us their view—that is, us as members of parliament, not as members of the government—of what was to be supported. In any event, at this stage you say you have not received any advice and you do not know whether they are going to be considering it?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I have already answered the question, quite clearly, I thought.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** Do you think it is an important issue, the prostitution reform legislation, for women?

**The CHAIR:** I am not sure that is on any budget line.

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I am not too sure how this relates to the budget paper. I have been on the public record many a time speaking very passionately and strongly about the importance of protection for sex workers.

**Dr CLOSE:** I refer the committee to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, Agency Statement, page 99. Could the minister provide information on strategies to increase recognition of the achievements of women?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I thank the member for her important question. The South Australian Women's Honour Roll was initiated in 2008 to formally acknowledge the contribution of outstanding women in the community. All women nominated for the honour roll are included in the ongoing web-based honour roll on the Office for Women website. I had the pleasure of launching the honour roll at a reception hosted by the Governor at Government House in November 2011.

The event honoured the contribution of 20 outstanding women who have had a very positive impact on the South Australian community. The women represented a number of industries and communities, such as homelessness, health, emergency services, criminal justice and defence. It is also significant that nearly half of the outstanding nominees in 2011 were Aboriginal women.

In 2011, inductees included: Margie Charlesworth, inaugural convenor of Women with Disabilities South Australia, an advocate for women with a disability, a wonderful advocate and a tremendous woman; Gala Mustafa, an advocate for interfaith community dialogue and the first Muslim woman on the South Australian Multicultural Ethnic Affairs Commission; Terri Mitchell-Smith, activist for the rights of same-sex couples and leader in the Let's Get Equal campaign for over 10 years; and Shirley Peisley, who has been an advocate for Aboriginal people since the 1960s when she was involved in the Vote 'YES' for Aborigines campaign, supporting the 1967 referendum, a longstanding activist.

The honour roll celebrates 456 women who have been nominated for the roll since its inception. These women are listed on the ongoing roll, which is available on the website. The roll is now being held biannually to ensure that we maintain an air of prestige around the event. It is my intention that we try to link this with celebrations of women's achievements, including national awards and honours.

To that end, 10 outstanding women from the 2009 honour roll were nominated for the 2011 Australian of the Year award, and from these nominees two made the South Australian final. The Office for Women intends to nominate 20 outstanding 2011 inductees for the next Australian of the Year award. The 2012 Women Hold Up Half the Sky award, as I mentioned in the opening statement, was presented to Katrine Hildyard. She is a very successful woman who very successfully led the Strong Community, Healthy State campaign that led to historic pay increases for community sector workers.

Katrine is an extraordinary woman who has led a campaign to ensure that workers in community sectors—of whom 85 per cent are women—are paid appropriately for their very demanding work. They work often in areas of domestic violence, community care, disability care sector and with some of the most marginalised members of our community. They obviously deserve due recognition for their services.

A commendation was also presented to Stephanie O'Connor, an 18 year old woman, who had acted as a primary carer in her household of six (four brothers and sisters and her mother) since she was 13 years old.

**Mr SIBBONS:** This will make the member for Bragg very happy. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 99. Can the minister provide information on the work to increase leadership opportunities for women in South Australia, particularly through representations on state government boards and committees?

**The CHAIR:** Searching. Searching!

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** Indeed. This is something we are very proud of. As Minister for the Status of Women, I have lead responsibility for ensuring that more women are able to make a contribution as leaders and key decision-makers in the South Australian community. Women leadership targets in the South Australian Strategic Plan: as at 1 June 2012, women held 46 per cent of positions on state government boards and committees—a significant increase from 34 per cent as at April 2004. That was following the release of our strategic plan. Also at 1 June, women held 37 per cent of chair positions on state government boards and committees; this is also a significant increase from 24 per cent as at April 2004.

The Premier's Women's Directory, as I indicated earlier, is a key tool that has assisted the state government to improve the percentage of female membership on boards and committees. The Premier's Women's Directory is an online resource of women who are seeking appointment to boards and committees, and the directory is made available to those responsible for putting forward candidates. It has obviously done a lot to promote that resource. I am pleased to advise that as at 4 June, the directory contained approximately 800 CVs, and this marks a strong increase from 450 as at July 2007 and includes 20 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, 19 women with disability and 81 women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Of the women on the directory, 127 are from regional areas. I encourage people to access that directory.

The Office for Women conducted an internal review of the directory in August 2011 with the aim of identifying methods of improving the directory and increasing its impact. As part of the review, Office for Women determined that a large number of women on the directory also registered for LinkedIn, a professional networking website, and I am pleased to advise that the Office for Women is currently developing a networking group for the Premier's Women's Directory. The new group will provide an additional avenue for women to discuss issues associated with getting on boards with other like-minded individuals, so establishment of the group will also allow reports and news items to be shared with members of this group.

A number of other initiatives have also been useful. The Office for Women continues to work with training providers to ensure women have access to relevant, affordable training and enable them to perform at their highest. In March 2012, staff from the Office for Women spoke to the Certified Practising Accountants women's network about the Premier's directory and other strategies for women to get on boards.

The Office for Women also held a board CV workshop for members, of women influencing defence and resource industries community practice. The Office for Women also attends Sassy & Savvy board training held by the Young Women's Christian Association to provide information on women in leadership initiatives. Obviously, meeting these targets is a challenge but obviously this government is very serious about improving these numbers and we have strategies in place and continue to develop strategies to help us achieve that most important target.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** While we are on representation of women, Ms Anne Burgess, the Equal Opportunity Commissioner, publicly made a statement on 24 May this year about her concerns. She was answering questions from the media about the Fair Work Australia case and the pay provisions that were announced for the community sector wages—and good aspects of that which, of course, we are all familiar with—but she was concerned about gender pay and also women's representation in senior professional managerial and administration roles. In that statement she urged that there be pay audits undertaken to find out where the differences are and why women, in particular, end up in the part-time, low paid work. Has that recommendation been undertaken by your department? Are there any plans in the forthcoming 12 months to undertake an audit?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I am happy to take that question on notice and bring back a response. The issue of audits is a matter, I imagine, for the minister responsible for public sector reform—which I think is the Hon. Michael O'Brien. I am happy to refer that to him and bring back a response.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** While you are considering it then, the YWCA of Adelaide has also put a submission to your government for this year's budget and in that on leadership, in particular the promotion of young women's leadership, it recommended:

Report on the numbers of women and men by ASO level by government department and agency across the public sector.

Again, if it is not in your department but going across to minister O'Brien, I am happy for that to be referred. As to whether the government has activated or is proposing to activate any of those recommendations—

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** Again, I do not think that this question relates to the budget specifically.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** It is the budget submission I am taking it from.

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I am talking about the government's budget submission, and these questions are supposed to relate—

**Ms CHAPMAN:** Yours is not a submission, minister; yours is actually a budget. I am talking about the submission that goes to you for you to inform your budget.

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** Yes, but you are supposed to be able to reference your questions directly to a budget line.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** Yes, I think I had. I will read it again. It is only a page and a half. The first sentence says—

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** But in spite of that—I have not finished answering—

**Ms CHAPMAN:** 'The Office for Women's role is to pursue the'—

**Ms CHAPMAN:** '—is to pursue the full and equal participation of women in the social and economic life of the state', etc. It finishes at the word 'government'.

**The CHAIR:** Order! Member for Bragg! I think the minister is answering the question.

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** No, if she wants to use up more of the opposition's time, I am quite happy for her to waste time if she wants to read the thing out in full.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** I have finished.

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** You have finished; okay. In relation to—

**Ms CHAPMAN:** All these people write to you and give you advice.

**The CHAIR:** Order! Let the minister continue; she has the floor.

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I am happy for her to waste more time.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** You have done pretty well at that yourself, so let's get to the point, shall we?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** Only to be outdone by you. Nevertheless, I believe that the public sector already does a breakdown of gender in relation to the ASO categories, so I think that information is already available.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** I look forward to receiving it. Last week, minister, there was a public meeting at Cadell on one of the government's initiatives for the budget. It specifically related to a government decision, on the Department of Transport and/or Transport Services' advice, to close a ferry service. I know you were not at that meeting. I was, amongst a number of other people, including other members of the committee. A number of women spoke about that on that night, in particular about the social impact on their families and on children, safety, education, health and so forth.

My question to you is this: as the Minister for the Status of Women, given the government's decision not to proceed with a regional impact statement which would otherwise take into account these social factors of that type of decision, in consulting with the stakeholders as the minister has announced that he has done, did any of those ministers, or either of those departments—that is minister Fox, minister Conlon or their departments—consult you or your department about the social impact that would have on women?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I would like the member to refer to the particular budget line.

**The CHAIR:** Is there a budget line that the member can refer to?

**Ms CHAPMAN:** The Office for Women's role in the pursuit of the full and equal participation of women in the social and economic life of the state by providing innovative and balanced public policy advice to the government. You have a whole department, minister, which advises you on the public policy, particularly of women, on the economic and social life within the

state. My question to you is, now that we know that the government had not consulted through the usual process—if I can describe it as that, given the guidelines that it set for itself—did it at least consult you or your Office for Women to be advised on what impact that would have on women in those regional communities? Yes or no?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I think the Minister for Infrastructure has been quite clear—

**Ms CHAPMAN:** So he did not speak to you?

**The CHAIR:** Order! The minister is answering the question.

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I am happy to answer the question if the member is happy to listen. I think he has made it quite clear that the degree of consultation—

**Ms CHAPMAN:** Yes, but minister, I am asking if he consulted you.

**The CHAIR:** Order! The minister is answering the question; she should not be interrupted while she is going through the answer. You can ask a supplementary or another question when she finishes.

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** The member might like me to oversimplify the answer, but I am not going to be badgered into giving a simplistic answer to a question just because she has become impatient and petulant. She needs to be able to listen to a full response to this. She might want it to be oversimplified, but in fact I am going to give a full answer, so she just needs to be patient.

The full answer is that the minister has made it clear that the level of consultation was less than desirable. I was not consulted and to the best of my knowledge neither was the Office for Women. Minister Conlon has indicated that he is prepared to receive further input and submissions and to consider those fully. He has certainly made available additional time for the community to put forward their points of view. He said he will consider those points of view. So I think there is ample opportunity for all members of the community to ensure that the government is fully apprised of any potential impact that the closure of that ferry might have.

**The CHAIR:** Was there one last question on the status of women?

**Ms CHAPMAN:** Yes. The supplementary I have is: having not consulted you and notwithstanding your indication that your understanding is that minister Conlon will give an opportunity for further submissions from the community, this is a ferry service which will conclude in a week but, having discovered that your department had not been consulted, have you requested your department to activate any inquiry themselves as to the implication and effect this will have on the social aspects for women and children in that region?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I am confident that the process that the minister has put in place would provide ample opportunity for any and all relevant concerns to be inputted into government decision-making and, if any—

*Ms Chapman interjecting:*

**The CHAIR:** Order! the minister is still talking.

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I should say at this point in time that no members of the community have written to me, to the best of my knowledge, in relation to any concerns about the closure of the ferry service. No women and no other members of the community have written or rung or emailed me to raise concerns or request that I raise with minister Conlon any particular concerns. Given that, as I said, I feel reassured that the processes that minister Conlon has put in place will more than adequately capture all relevant community concerns.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** I just have one other supplementary.

**The CHAIR:** Make it a quick one.

**Ms CHAPMAN:** So that the committee might be reassured that this process that apparently minister Conlon has put in place—and we do not know what it is: you are a cabinet minister so, presumably, you do know what this process is—apart from a statement that there is going to be a meeting between some representatives of the community and the minister next Tuesday morning, can you explain what the process is that you now have such confidence in that there will be a full consultation and an opportunity for stakeholders and the community to make a contribution before the service is axed next week?

**The CHAIR:** I think the minister has replied to that but if she wishes—



**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I have already answered that question.

**The CHAIR:** I thank the minister, her advisers and members of the committee. There being no further questions, I declare consideration of the proposed payments adjourned to Estimates Committee A on 25 June.

### **SOUTH AUSTRALIAN TOURISM COMMISSION, \$49,080,000**

#### **Membership:**

Mr van Holst Pellekaan substituted for Ms Chapman.

#### **Witness:**

Hon G.E. Gago, Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, Minister for Forests, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Tourism, Minister for the Status of Women.

#### **Departmental Advisers:**

Ms J. Jeffreys, Chief Executive, South Australian Tourism Commission.

Ms K. Kent, Director, Sales, South Australian Tourism Commission.

Ms S. Cheese, General Manager, Finance, South Australian Tourism Commission.

Ms A. Barclay, Chief of Staff, Minister for Tourism.

Ms R. Burner, Adviser, Minister for Tourism.

**The CHAIR:** We have: portfolio, South Australian Tourism Commission. We have the Minister for Tourism. I declare the proposed payments reopened for examination and refer members to the Portfolio Statements Volume 4. When the minister's advisers arrive, the minister will make a statement.

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I would like to make a brief opening statement, if I may. The 2012-13 South Australian budget reaffirms the government's recognition that tourism is an important industry contributing billions of dollars to the state's economy and directly employing tens of thousands of South Australians. The growth and development of this important industry is led by the South Australian Tourism Commission through its marketing campaigns and through its partnership with industry.

The commission strives to mature the industry and to increase the number of visitors, how long they stay and, obviously, how much they spend here in South Australia. For the year ending March 2012, the National Visitor Statistics showed a 6.3 per cent growth in visitor numbers to South Australia, just above the national average of 5.4 per cent. Tourism is an industry that is particularly sensitive, obviously, to economic conditions. The strength of the Australian dollar has obviously presented a number of challenges to the industry.

More Australians are taking advantage of the dollar to travel overseas and international visitors are being more conservative in planning their visits to Australia. The South Australian Tourism Commission (SATC) intends to continue to directly support the growth of the industry through measures announced in this budget. Key to the commission's strategy will be to build the interstate and intrastate marketing campaigns.

Internationally, the SATC has representation in the UK, Germany, France, Italy, North America, New Zealand and in a number of other locations. The SATC will continue to work with key partners, airlines and Tourism Australia in overseas markets on consumer marketing campaigns, PR initiatives and the visiting journalist familiarisation program to raise awareness and ensure that we are a compelling part of any Australian journey.

The SATC will continue to showcase the best of South Australia through its events. The Santos Tour Down Under will continue to be the state's premier event. In 2012, overall attendance exceeded 760,000, delivering an economic impact of over \$42 million to the state. The SATC changed its delivery of regional tourism programs in mid-2011, focusing its resources on three areas where it could achieve the greatest return on investment, and it will continue to strive for improved air and sea access to South Australia in 2012-13.

In particular, the SATC will seek to encourage more domestic and international flights into South Australia. For example, from 1 July 2012 Singapore Airlines will increase the number of weekly direct visits into Adelaide from seven to 10. South Australia will host 25 cruise ship arrivals between November 2012 and May 2013, welcoming nearly 56,000 passengers and crew.

We all recognise that tourism is a tough and competitive business. It demands not only investment but also sound strategic thinking and innovative approaches to build on South Australia's strength. I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the passionate and very supportive staff and industry members across the whole spectrum of our services and business.

**The CHAIR:** Does the shadow minister wish to make an opening statement?

**Mr VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN:** Yes. I will be brief. I would like to pick up on one point and agree and disagree with the minister. The \$5 billion, or thereabouts, that comes into our state from tourism certainly is very important, but it is not driven by the SATC, the government or the minister: it is driven by operators and staff who work in the industry, ably supported by the SATC and ably supported by local government and other agencies. It is actually the tourism operators who drive our industry. They are the core of our industry, and I would like to thank them and their very hardworking staff who are involved both directly in tourism businesses and also indirectly in hospitality, as well as the many other service industries that support tourism.

**The CHAIR:** We will now go to questions.

**Mr VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN:** Let me say at the outset that all my questions refer to Budget Paper 4, Agency Statements, Volume 4. I refer to page 129, Tourism Development. Minister, were you asked for and/or did you provide the transport minister with advice regarding the impact of the proposed closure of the Cadell ferry service upon local tourism development and, if so, what was the advice you gave?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** The short answer is no. I bring to the member's attention that minister Conlon has indicated that he accepts that consultation around the closure was less than desirable, and he has also indicated a process for the community to input further considerations to the agency. We will provide any community member who has a concern with an opportunity to put forward information in relation to that.

**Mr VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN:** Just to be clear: the transport minister did not consult with you or your agency or your staff before or since making that decision?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I have answered that question.

**Mr VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN:** Have you offered any advice since finding out about the proposed closure?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** The short answer is no.

**Mr VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN:** Thank you.

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I have not finished answering the question yet. To the best of my knowledge, my office has not received any phone calls or emails from any member of the public, including any tourist operator from the area. So, no-one from that community has raised with me any concerns about the closure. As I have said, the minister has indicated a process that would provide anyone with concerns an opportunity to direct their concerns into that process for further consideration.

**Mr VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN:** My second question refers to page 137—Financial commentary.

**The CHAIR:** It is not really your second question.

**Mr VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN:** The first point on the page states that decreased expenditure of \$1.4 million is due to 'the transfer of the management of the South Australian Visitor and Travel Centre to a commercial operator'. As reported last night, the troubled travel centre is on the move again and will be taking up residence in the EDS Building on North Terrace, sharing with Service SA. Minister, my questions are:

1. What is the cost of the North Terrace relocation and set-up?
2. Is this a permanent location or a temporary one?
3. What discussions has the minister had regarding any future arrangements for the visitor centre?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I think your assertions are extremely speculative. The SATC obviously has been considering a range of different models for the service delivery of travel information, and I would expect to be making announcements soon.

**Mr VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN:** I have one brief supplementary on that second question. At 1 July 2012, will the South Australian tourism app still list the location of the visitor information centre as Grenfell Street or will it be changed from the date of the relocation?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I am advised that it will be changed.

**Ms BEDFORD:** My question also refers to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 129. I ask the minister: what is the SATC doing to promote regional attractions in the state?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I thank the member for her question. In 2011-12 the SATC redirected its substantial investment of over \$2.2 billion in regional tourism towards a more strategic and coordinated approach to intrastate marketing, a more targeted approach to experiences development, and a strong commitment to building operators' capacity to compete in an increasingly complex and competitive world of online sales and distribution.

The SATC has committed 11 FTEs and maintained its substantial investment of over \$2.2 million to drive this focused regional tourism strategy. The SATC's new approach is based on establishing destination action plans for all of the states non-metro regions. Each DAP is developed in close liaison with regional stakeholders and is backed by a work team drawn from all key units of the SATC. This level of integration is unprecedented.

The DAPs are aligning the work programs of all relevant SATC units. Thus, the regional events and festivals program will focus on support for event priorities identified in regional DAPs. For example, SATC ran a very successful training day attended by 60 event managers from predominantly around the metropolitan area and will run more such days in various regional centres in 2012-13.

The SATC's Experience Development team is working collaboratively with the local stakeholders and operators to pursue new commercial experiences for regions as identified in the DAPs. In 2011-12, through its new product support program, it helped bring into the market things like the Kingsford Homestead, Australian Air Holidays air touring packages to KI, etc., a Barossa backpackers grant, Aboriginal tourism, and a wide range of different activities.

Another area the DAP process has highlighted is accommodation standards, which is a strategic approach by South Australian Tourism. The accommodation sector is largely dominated by a room stock of three-star or below, which is often in need of refreshing, especially in regional South Australia. The SATC is actively working to address the need to develop four and five-star accommodation.

The SATC's business development team has been following up with regional visits and an accommodation audit to identify the best prospects for encouraging private sector investment. The sales team works closely with tourism operators to increase their understanding of internet booking opportunities, the various online booking systems available, and how they can become bookable on the new southaustralia.com website. An industry online booking roadshow featured presentations from a number of different companies about their online booking systems. This provided a platform for SATC's industry development executives to follow up with interested operators.

Visitor information centres in the regions play important role as well. There are 45 accredited VICs located around the state. The SATC launched a new initiative called Sell SA, which is designed to improve the customer experience at VICs and ultimately increase bookings generated by the VICs for their regions.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** The Riverland's tourism industry is currently worth in excess of \$102 million. What, if any, research will be undertaken to determine the reduction in the value of this as a result of the closure of the Cadell ferry, given that Cadell is the gateway to the Riverland, the Flinders Ranges and the Outback, and is the most direct route through the Riverland from the eastern states to the Mid North and the Flinders Ranges? What infrastructure and/or other measures will be put into place to direct tourist traffic away from the Cadell ferry crossing?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** In terms of the first part of the question, I believe I have already answered that. In relation to the process that minister Conlon has made available to those members of the community who believe they have been adversely impacted on to feed into further consideration of their issues (that includes tourism operators), as I have indicated previously, I

have not received any contact—mail, emails, phone calls—from any member of the public in relation to Cadell, and that includes anyone from around the Riverland as well. As I said, I am confident that the current system that has been put in place by the minister will afford those members who believe they have a case the opportunity to put their case to the minister.

**Mr VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN:** Referring to the new visitor information centre on North Terrace, can you guarantee that this location will maintain the current in-centre booking service for visitors? Will visitors be required to take tickets and queue for service, as those making licence and registration inquiries currently do? If not, can you give some detail on the physical arrangements that exist within the EDS Centre with regard to sharing space with Service SA?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** The member makes a speculative assertion. I have said that I have not made any announcement as yet, and I will shortly, and that will deal with any service details.

**Mr VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN:** You have told us that the information in the act is changing, so you have essentially confirmed that a change is on the way.

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I confirmed that almost six months ago when we made an interim arrangement with Holidays of Australia. Back then, we said that was an interim arrangement and that a review of the options for an alternative service model would be completed and an announcement would be made. That is exactly what we have done: a review has been conducted and an announcement will be made shortly.

**Mr VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN:** We look forward to that announcement. The federal Minister for Tourism, Martin Ferguson, has announced that motels, hotels, serviced apartments and other tourism accommodation providers in locations including Kangaroo Island will be able to employ seasonal labour from Pacific countries and East Timor from 1 July under a three-year trial.

Accommodation providers in five areas, including Kangaroo Island, are eligible to apply to become approved employers to employ seasonal workers for 14 weeks to six months. The Australian government is entering into partnership agreements with relevant state and territory governments and industry organisations through a memorandum of understanding, and this refers specifically to page 129. Can you advise the committee what consultation you have participated in on that?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I have been reminded that the issue around the use of seasonal workers has been the subject of previous tourism minister meetings, where there was agreement for a trial to occur at locations in a number of different jurisdictions. Are all jurisdictions involved? We do not know. Anyway, a number of jurisdictions are involved. In South Australia, Kangaroo Island will be part of that trial. What we have agreed to do as part of that trial is to ensure that we consult with the industry to see how effective, or not, that model is.

**Mr VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN:** Have you entered into a memorandum of understanding or are you negotiating to enter into a memorandum of understanding with the federal government on this issue?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I am advised that, no, I have not signed an MOU.

**Mr VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN:** No, I said 'or are you negotiating'.

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** Yes, I have already answered that question.

**Mr VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN:** So you are negotiating?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I have been part of discussions through the ministers forum.

**Mr VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN:** Thank you.

**Dr CLOSE:** I refer the committee to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, Agency Statements, page 137. As an emerging market, what activities is SATC doing to attract the Chinese market to South Australia?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I thank the member for her question. In November 2011, seven South Australian tourism operators joined SATC's second roadshow to China. I am advised that the roadshow was attended by over 180 agents, and I am further advised that a third dedicated South Australian roadshow involving South Australian tourism operators will be held later in 2012. The objective is to educate South Australia's trade partners on specific Chinese-ready products to better equip our trade partners to promote and sell South Australia.

In partnership with the Australian Tourism Export Council, SATC hosted the first workshop and mentoring program for Australian tourism businesses that are considering marketing their business in China or greater Asia. The February workshop was attended by 41 South Australian tourism operators, and a survey has provided excellent feedback to shape the content of the program of the second workshop to be held later this year. Also during February 2012, a Chinese television crew filmed in Adelaide, the Barossa, the Adelaide Hills and the Fleurieu Peninsula to enable production of four episodes of the very popular Chinese drama *Jiang Ai*. The launch of this series will be aired in the latter part of 2012.

In February, South Australia worked with Tourism Australia and Singapore Airlines on an airline brand campaign featuring Kangaroo Island as the 'zoo without fences'. The online campaign involved advertising on a variety of popular websites, highlighting special airfares to Adelaide. It covered all eight cities in China where Singapore Airlines or Silk Air have direct access.

The SATC and Tourism Australia jointly hosted a film crew from Hong Kong in March to produce a travel program named *The World Map of Happiness*. The theme of this program explores how South Australians derive their happiness from wine, the natural environment, and the unique Australian personality. This will result in a one-hour episode about South Australia featuring Adelaide, the Adelaide Hills, the Barossa and the Murray River. A popular Hong Kong-based boy band, The Grasshoppers, will present the show.

The SATC maintains an active presence on leading microblog sites, which are extremely popular in China. It has also been working with travel agents to promote self-drive itineraries. A radio campaign resulted in the first group driving through South Australia in May, who were accompanied by a radio station host who did live crosses to China each day to further promote the itinerary to future groups.

The SATC is also working to help develop more tourism product in South Australia that will meet the needs of this emerging market. It is providing \$20,000 in funding, along with in-kind support, over two years through their New Product Support Program towards Chinese Central Market Tours. This funding will allow the owner of Central Market Tours, Mr Mark Gleeson, to run three specialised Chinese tours, delivering a high quality Chinese-speaking tourism product in the heart of the markets.

**Ms BEDFORD:** I refer to page 135, again of Budget Paper 4, Volume 4. Could the minister advise what the state government is doing to market South Australia in the interstate market?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I thank the member for her question. The SATC launched its domestic marketing campaign, featuring Kangaroo Island, in mainstream media on 18 February 2012. The campaign will run for a minimum of 18 months in Sydney, Melbourne, Perth and Northern Rivers. The campaign is featuring on television, cinema, press, and online (including search engine marketing, relationship marketing and social media). The campaign includes brand, TV commercials and retail press ads, partnering with Qantas Holidays, Holidays of Australia and SeaLink. A successful print media partnership featured an eight-page insert on KI in *Good Weekend* magazine in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age*.

The results of the campaign are already showing through, with 41 per cent of the interstate travel population considering taking a holiday to Kangaroo Island in the next 12 months. A domestic campaign is important in assisting SATC to contribute towards South Australia's Strategic Plan target of \$8 billion in South Australian tourism expenditure.

To support the KI advertising campaign, in conjunction with a number of trade and event initiatives, the SATC has produced five pieces of electronic direct marketing, and has also launched an additional campaign promoting KI through a custom-built application through a Facebook profile, where consumers can enter a competition. It is maintaining its progress in relation to the domestic campaign.

Again, it has been a key focus. Extra layers of this campaign will be added in the form of promoting regions such as the Barossa and the Flinders, and they will continue to leverage the KI campaign and other unique regions through media familiarisations, targeted TV commercial placement, and cooperative retail campaigns with domestic airlines.

**Ms SANDERSON:** I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 132. I note that the estimated total income in 2011-12 for tourism events was \$6 million. The budgeted income for this financial period is some \$800,000 more, that is, \$6.82 million. The financial commentary below

explains that the additional \$800,000 will be, 'due to the increased event sponsorship, entry fees and participation fees for managed events'.

Will the minister list the events that she envisages will bring in this additional income, and will the minister provide a breakdown of the money which has been earned through the entry and participation fees for the Tour Down Under Community Challenge for the past three financial years?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I have been advised that the \$800,000 increase in income is primarily due to the increase in event sponsorship, entry fees and participation fees from managed events. Sponsorship revenue will increase from events including the Santos Tour Down Under, which continues to grow as a leading cycling and tourism event, and the Credit Union Christmas Pageant. Entry and participation revenue is expected to strengthen for the Skoda Breakaway Series Bupa Challenge Tour, Club Tour and Legends' Dinner Night, managed by SATC in conjunction with the Santos Tour Down Under.

**Ms SANDERSON:** So they are all existing events? None of those are new events?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** That's right; they are existing.

**Ms SANDERSON:** And the other part of the question was in relation to the Tour Down Under Community Challenge: can you provide the breakdown for the last three financial years, if that is possible?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** A breakdown of what, exactly? Broken down into what?

**Ms SANDERSON:** The entry fees and participation fees; so the comparison over the last three financial years.

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** Okay, I am happy to take that on notice.

**Mr VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN:** I refer to page 135. I note the \$430,000 budgeted increase in income to this program for the current period. Halfway down the page, it is explained that this 'is primarily due to revenue generated from the newly redeveloped tourism consumer website'. Are businesses currently being charged to be listed on that website, and is there any intention of charging businesses to be listed on that website?

The fourth dot point also talks about additional expenditure on direct-to-consumer marketing activities. What is the budget for this year's direct-to-consumer marketing activities, what is the budget for the three previous financial periods, and over that time has there been any reclassification of what constitutes direct-to-consumer marketing?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** In relation to the first question, I have been advised that, no, we do not charge businesses to be listed on our website. In relation to the second question, I have been advised that in relation to the tourism marketing budget the budget for the 2012-13 financial year is \$30.471 million.

**Mr VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN:** \$30.471 million—

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** For tourism marketing.

**Mr VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN:** Consumer marketing activities?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** It is all of tourism marketing.

**Mr VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN:** Minister, thanks for confirming businesses not charged to be listed now. Part of that question was: will they be charged on the new website?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I have been advised that there is no intention to charge for listing. I think that only goes as far as this financial year.

**Mr VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN:** To clarify those numbers: the budget for this year's direct-to-consumer marketing activities—that is the \$30 million you are talking about there?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I have just explained that we only have an overall tourism marketing figure—we do not have a direct-to-consumer marketing breakdown.

**Mr VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN:** The dot point in the middle of the page, where it says:

The \$0.4 million increase in income is primarily due to revenue generated from the newly redeveloped tourism consumer website.

That is the website we are talking about. You do not break down your marketing activities any further than that—just \$30 million lump sum for the lot and that's it?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I have been advised that the \$0.4 million increase in income is primarily due to revenue generated from the newly redeveloped southaustralian.com tourism consumer website, and that the website generates revenue through bookings made directly on the site, for which SATC is paid a small commission.

**Mr VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN:** And the last part of the question was whether there has been any reclassification over the last few years of what constitutes direct-to-consumer marketing?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** The question was change to classification?

**Mr VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN:** To the classification—how you lump the dollars with the description of how it is spent in your marketing budget. Is direct-to-consumer marketing today the same as it was last year and the year before and the year before?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I have been advised that the short answer is no, that our strategies keep changing to align with what is happening in the marketplace. It is an evolving thing.

**Mr VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN:** So it has not changed in the past, but it might change into the future?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I do not know whether it has not changed in the past.

**Mr VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN:** The short answer was no.

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** You asked the question—

**Mr VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN:** Has the description, the classification, of this marketing changed? You said that the short answer is no, but it might evolve?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I beg your pardon—the short answer is yes. The classification has changed and it evolves.

**Mr VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN:** Minister, would you take on notice how it has evolved? What was included in this category three years ago, two years ago, last year and currently?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I have been given some examples of the sorts of changes that have occurred. One change is less spend on advertising campaigns and we are spending more on websites and website information. Another change has been that we are spending less than we used to, for instance, on production, with a greater spend on media. As I said, there are constant and evolving changes. Those are some examples.

**Mr VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN:** Referring to page 129—Tourism development, under the heading 'Description/objective', the preamble for this sub-program talks about increasing access to South Australia particularly by air and sea. Historically, South Australia has taken the lead in airline attraction with the airport then co-contributing a significant portion of the budget. Will the minister advise what the current tourism budget is for airline attraction and, over the previous two budget periods, what the tourism budget for airline attraction has been?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** Obviously direct air access into Adelaide is a significant feature of tourism. There is a very compelling case that South Australia gain a greater share in relation to the access that we have. Obviously the aviation sector is highly competitive and, particularly, international airlines are courted fairly aggressively, not only by other Australian airports but by airports all around the world.

As our dollar has been so strong and with the increasing cost of fuel, etc., airlines are obviously looking for the most profitable routes to direct their aircraft and are attracted to large hubs like Sydney and Melbourne. Airports can be very aggressive with their support for new routes, offering significant financial support in partnership with their relevant government counterparts. The state government and Adelaide Airport are obviously competing in a very challenging environment and we do a great deal to try to attract direct airline access here. In terms of our air access budget for 2011-12, it was \$724,000 and the actual expenditure was \$417,000. Our air access budget for 2012-13 (and this is an estimate only) is \$516,000.

**Dr CLOSE:** I refer the committee to the Agency Statements, page 129. What is being done to grow tourism expenditure in regional South Australia?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I think I have already given a thorough and comprehensive outline—

**Dr CLOSE:** My apologies for being inattentive.

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** That is okay. We will just move on.

**The CHAIR:** The member for Port Adelaide has plenty stored away.

**Dr CLOSE:** In that case, I will ask a question relating to the Agency Statements, page 135. How is the SATC encouraging more South Australians to holiday in their own backyard?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** The state government recognises that intrastate travel is important to our economy so that the tourism industry remains operating strongly and regions maintain a constant flow of visitation. The SATC launched a Best Backyard intrastate marketing campaign in October 2011. The campaign was designed to remind South Australians of what their state has to offer and why they should holiday in their own backyard.

The campaign covered all 11 regions and five themes: food and wine, coastal escapes, River Murray, national landscapes, and journeys. It was fully integrated with media activity, including television commercials, print, press and digital marketing. As part of the campaign the longstanding Shorts brand was rejuvenated and used as the main plank of the retail component.

The testing results have been very positive. To support the Best Backyard advertising campaign, we have produced seven monthly themed pieces of electronic direct marketing (EDM), with another five EDMs to be sent in the coming months. Each EDM was sent to 25,000 South Australians via email featuring hero experiences, tourism product and Shorts packages as activation points for conversation.

All product and content featured within the EDM is linked to [www.southaustralia.com](http://www.southaustralia.com), driving traffic to the SATC's strongest digital asset where customers can book tourism product online. In addition, media coverage has assisted the campaign and helped promote must-do travel tips. The SATC supported Amanda Blair from FIVEaa radio with regional visits, including one to KI and Yorke Peninsula.

The campaign will continue to run in 2012-13 with continuing increased awareness, and this will be done by extension of the Best Backyard campaign that highlights key experiences to support each unique regional proposition, such as 'the Barossa equals flavour'. In addition, through sponsorship of local TV programs, media and publicity familiarisations, digital applications and relationship marketing platforms also continue to support this campaign.

**Mr SIBBONS:** I refer to Budget Paper 4, Agency Statements, Volume 4, page 135. Is the digital age changing the way the South Australian Tourism Commission can promote South Australia and remain a competitive tourist destination?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** The state government recognises the imperative to move forward in the digital era when marketing South Australia in the interstate and domestic markets. In 2011, the SATC domestically launched a redeveloped website—[southaustralia.com](http://southaustralia.com)—based on best practice approach. In 2012, the redeveloped [southaustralia.com](http://southaustralia.com) won an open text experts 2012 ANZ Public Sector Innovation Award, setting a new benchmark in tourism websites whilst putting South Australia at the forefront. It was a prestigious national award.

The [southaustralia.com](http://southaustralia.com) website is focused on making it easier for users to find and book products online. The website is structured for optimising viewing on mobile phones and tablets to enable consumers to enhance their visitor experience once they arrive in South Australia. Users are given distances from their current location, as well as product descriptions and click-to-call telephone connections. In addition to the [southaustralia.com](http://southaustralia.com) website, three event websites have also been re-launched, including [tourdownunder.com.au](http://tourdownunder.com.au), [tasting-australia.com.au](http://tasting-australia.com.au) and [cupageant.com.au](http://cupageant.com.au) for the Credit Union Christmas Pageant. All include additional functionality and an enhanced user experience.

In 2011, there was a 70 per cent increase in the number of sales from [southaustralia.com](http://southaustralia.com) compared to the same period previously. SATC has established a relationship marketing program designed to send monthly electronic direct marketing (EDM) emails to our database of 100,000 consumers. I am advised that in just seven months the relationship marketing program has been hugely successful. It has delivered just under 40,000 visits to [southaustralia.com](http://southaustralia.com) from our emails. Our average email open rate is 30.3 per cent, nearly double the tourism industry average, and the average click-through rate is over 250 per cent above the industry average.

**Mr VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN:** I refer to page 129, Financial Commentary, 2011-12 Estimated Result/2011-12 Budget. The last dot point under this heading states that the \$4.9 million decrease in expenses for the tourism development program is in part due to:



- reductions in expenditure including fleet vehicles and operating expenses for the regions and a reduction in tourism development funding (\$1.2 million).

How much was the reduction in fleet vehicles, in operating expenses for the regions and in tourism development funding?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I have been advised—and these are only estimates—that it was approximately \$250,000 in relation to fleet vehicles and approximately \$150,000 in relation to the TDF.

**Mr VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN:** And operating expenses for the regions? There were three components identified as making up that \$1.2 million.

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** Yes, but you only asked about the fleet and TDF.

**Mr VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN:** No, one was fleet vehicles, one was operating expenses for the regions and the third was tourism development funding.

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** Sorry, I only heard two. Approximately \$800,000 for operating. As I said, these are rough estimates only.

**Mr VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN:** Yes, I understand. My next question refers to page 130, Highlights 2011-12. I note that on page 130 the first highlight listed for 2011-12 was the creation of action plans for the state's 11 tourism regions, identifying priority actions and opportunities to develop tourism over a three-year period. Further down the page, under Targets 2012-13, the minister plans to invest in initiatives identified in those destination action plans. How does the minister intend to recognise the potential and any increased opportunities identified through these plans without a corresponding increase in investment, or at least a maintenance of funding for our regions, and does this direct budget cut to our regions not contradict the preparation of action plans for those very regions?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I thank the member for his questions. As I said in my opening comments, there has been a complete remodelling of the way we manage tourism in our regions. I believe that the new model is a far more efficient and strategic way to deliver tourism in the regions. I am reminded that 3.3 million visits were made to regional South Australia in the year ending March 2012, which is a 9 per cent increase from the previous year. So, it is a very good track record, given the hard economic times, that we have actually been able to grow tourism in our regions.

We have developed a regional tourism growth plan which has led, as I said, to major changes in regional structures. That commenced in July 2011. Part of the changes under the plan is the putting together of 11 specialist positions that have been established in the SATC. The new specialist positions will focus on regional marketing campaigns targeted at South Australians—three FTEs for that; supporting operators to become bookable online and to assist visitor information centres to become commercial—five FTEs are designated for that; delivering new commercial experiences and infrastructure—two FTEs; and developing the SATC's partnership with regional stakeholders—an FTE is involved there.

I also advise that the new model involves a high level of integration of all SATC areas of expertise and resources in the development of marketing of regions. In 2011-12, regional tourism organisations received just over \$2.2 million from the SATC. In 2011-12 again, the expenditure stands at \$2.31 million and, in fact, under the new model, the SATC has been able to refocus regional intrastate marketing expenditure, and this has actually increased significantly: up from \$662,000 in 2010-11 to \$1.4 million in 2011-12. An amount of \$1.4 million per year will be spent on the SATC promoting the key experience themes of food and wine, coastal river landscapes and journeys in a campaign to stimulate South Australians to travel to regions.

The SATC has also provided funding of \$110,000 to 11 non-metro regions for regional tourism organisations (RTOs) to be able to use to employ part-time local contact persons. That is about \$10,000 per region. The local contact persons liaise with the SATC on PR, media, trade and familiarisations and assist the SATC to ensure that print content in things like visitors guides and digital media remain up-to-date. In addition to the 11 FTE specialist staff directly employed by the SATC to work on regional projects, most regions have also employed some form of in-region support staff.

The SATC has also allocated a further \$200,000 under a once-off destination development fund to enable RTO boards to initiate projects, enjoying strong support within their local tourism industry. Successful projects include several web-based initiatives, several interpretive training and

planning projects, a scoping study of how the outback can continue to flourish after water levels leave Lake Eyre, pre and post conferences programs, a regional brand development strategy and an itinerary planning project. Destination action plans have been established for all of the state's 11 non-metro regions. We have also provided the one-off \$20,000, which includes GST, to be provided to each RTO for specific projects while destination action plans were being finalised.

**The CHAIR:** One final question for the minister.

**Mr VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN:** Given all that thorough work and the new streamlined efficient strategic plans that will achieve more with less money, can you please give me the budget for each of the 11 regional areas? It would not be possible to achieve that efficiency without having broken it down region by region.

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I am happy to take that question on notice. I do not have that level of detail here with me today. I will put on the record that the destination action plans, and that whole process, have been warmly embraced by the regions. It is strongly supported. I am not necessarily saying unanimously (100 per cent), but overwhelmingly we have received strong support for that whole process, and the support given to the regions by SATC, so it has been, at least to date, a highly successful exercise and one that is supported generally by the regions.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, minister, and thank you to your advisers and to the committee members. There being no further questions, I declare the examination of the proposed payments for the SA Tourism Commission and the Minister for Tourism completed.

At 17:03 the committee adjourned until Monday 25 June 2012 at 09:00