

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**Monday, 29 July 2019****ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B****Chair:**

Mr S.J. Duluk

Members:

Hon Z.L. Bettison
Mr B. I. Boyer
Mr D.R. Cregan
Mr E.J. Hughes
Mr S.J.R. Patterson
Mr A.S. Pederick

*The committee met at 13:00**Estimates Vote*

DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND REGIONS, \$96,342,000
ADMINISTERED ITEMS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND REGIONS,
\$4,558,000

Minister:

Hon. T.J. Whetstone, Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr S. Ashby, Chief Executive, Department of Primary Industries and Regions.
Ms J. Burton, Chief Financial Officer, Department of Primary Industries and Regions.
Prof. M. Doroudi, Deputy Chief Executive, Department of Primary Industries and Regions.
Mr T. Goodes, Deputy Chief Executive, Department of Primary Industries and Regions.
Ms M. Griffiths, Executive Director, Corporate Services, Department of Primary Industries and Regions.

The CHAIR: Good afternoon. The estimates committee is a relatively informal procedure and, as such, there is no need to stand to ask formal questions. I understand that the minister and the lead speaker for the opposition have agreed to an approximate time for the consideration of proposed payments, which will facilitate a change of departmental advisers. Can the minister and the lead speaker for the opposition confirm that the timetable for today's proceedings previously distributed is accurate.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Yes.

Mr HUGHES: Yes.

The CHAIR: Minister, we are confirming that from 4.15pm to 5.15pm we will be doing ForestrySA.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Yes.

The CHAIR: Changes to committee membership will be notified as they occur. Members should ensure that the Chair is provided with a completed request to be discharged form. If the minister undertakes to supply information at a later date, it must be submitted to the Clerk Assistant via the answers to questions mailbox no later than Friday 5 September 2019.

I propose to allow the minister and the lead speaker for the opposition to make opening statements of about 10 minutes each, should they wish. There will be a flexible approach to giving the call to ask questions based on about three questions per member, alternating each side. Supplementary questions will be the exception rather than the rule.

A member not on the committee may ask a question at the discretion of the Chair. 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 proceedings may submit them as questions on notice for inclusion in the assembly *Notice Paper*.

There is no formal facility for the tabling of documents before the committee; however, documents can be supplied to the Chair for distribution to the committee. The incorporation of material in *Hansard* is permitted on the same basis as applies in the house, that is, that it is purely statistical and limited to one page in length.

All questions are to be directed to the minister and not the minister's advisers. The minister may refer questions to advisers for a response. The committee's examination will be broadcast in the same manner as the sittings of the house are broadcast, that is, through the IPTV system within Parliament House via the webstream link to the internet and the Parliament of South Australia video-on-demand broadcast system.

I will now proceed to open the following lines of examination: the portfolio being the Department of Primary Industries and Regions, Primary Industries. The minister appearing is the Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development. I can advise that the following members have requested to be discharged, being the members for Kaurna, Hurtle Vale, King and Newland, and have been replaced with the members for Giles, Ramsay, Hammond and Morphett.

I declare the proposed payments open for examination and refer members to the Agency Statements, Volume 4. Minister, could you please introduce your advisers for the committee and make a ministerial statement if you so desire.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Thank you, Chair. It is my pleasure to provide information about the programs and work conducted by the Department of Primary Industries and Regions. Firstly, I would like to introduce members of my department who are here with me today. On my immediate left is chief executive, Scott Ashby. Jane Burton, chief financial officer, is on his left. On my right is Professor Mehdi Doroudi, deputy chief executive. I would also like to note that Professor Mehdi Doroudi was recognised with a Public Service Medal in the recent Australia Day Honours, so congratulations to him.

The CHAIR: Hear, hear!

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Behind me is deputy chief executive, Tim Goodes, and Michelle Griffiths, executive director of corporate services. I would like to start by providing an overview of my portfolio areas and an update on the status of primary industries in South Australia.

Across the state, South Australia's grains, livestock, horticulture, wine, seafood, forests and dairy sectors are contributing significantly in our exports, accounting for more than half of the state's merchandise exports. These industries also employ about 150,000 South Australians. Primary industries and agribusiness revenue totalled \$14.8 billion in the 2017-18 year, and this includes final sales from all primary production and associated processing.

We recognise the coming season could be challenging for many farmers, and this may impact on the revenue of these sectors. But this government is investing in our primary industries and the regions to back our industries to grow; that is, we do have a growth agenda currently underway.

The key feature of this budget is our \$10 million commitment to the \$25 million rebuild of the South Australian dog fence. It is a generational piece of infrastructure and we are very proud to be a part of that rebuild, with co-contributors from the commonwealth and from industry embarking on a rebuild of 1,600 kilometres of hundred-year-old sections of that fence to protect our livestock industry, particularly in the pastoral country.

We have also committed \$7½ million in the budget to the Red Meat and Wool Growth Program, which will increase the state's ability to process and export more product by increasing the size of our herd and our flock, improving sheep and cattle quality, productivity, enhancing biosecurity, while also helping grow more prosperous regions. It will include support to encourage greater cyber and technology adoption and assist producers by building a traceability system that meets market demands and the latest genetics and disease management techniques.

Biosecurity is at the forefront of the government. Not only have we successfully eradicated a number of fruit fly outbreaks over the past year, but we are in the process of developing a modern biosecurity act for South Australia, with consultation underway with key industry stakeholders. This new piece of legislation will create a simple and more effective legal framework for the management of pests, diseases, weeds, trade in plant and animal products and biosecurity emergencies.

The Yamba quarantine station recently received a \$2 million upgrade, which is now complete, as part of the government's zero-tolerance approach towards the fight against fruit fly. Furthermore, additional signage and quarantine bins, as well as 14 extra staff, have been implemented at the Yamba quarantine station.

Touching on forestry, I have established the South Australian Forest Industry Advisory Council, with 11 industry leaders providing advice on how to grow the sector. In the fisheries sector, we have completed an independent review, conducted by KPMG Australia, of PIRSA's cost recovery policy as it applies to fisheries and aquaculture. All 11 recommendations were accepted by the government and are currently being implemented. The new Recreational Fishing Advisory Council has been formed, with an Australia-first election for five members. The council is providing feedback and advice on recreational fishing policy, development issues and initiatives that impact on our sector.

The state's regional communities are, as we say, the backbone of our economy. That is why we have begun the initial steps to deliver the Regional Development Strategy. An independent community advisory panel has completed a statewide consultation process, engaging with communities and stakeholders. This strategy will allow the government to better prioritise and coordinate long-term investment in regional South Australia, providing a roadmap to develop attractive, vibrant communities and ensure people are supported in their decision to live and work in our regions.

To recharge our regions, we have unlocked exciting projects through the first round of the Regional Growth Fund, further supporting regional development. This government is committed to addressing mobile phone coverage issues through the \$10 million mobile blackspot fund, achieving a solution of 29 new base station sites by leveraging round 4 with the commonwealth government and the telcos. This government will continue to work with the telecommunications companies and the commonwealth to leverage additional blackspot funding under round 5 of the program.

I conclude by emphasising that this government recognises the contribution our food, wine and agribusiness sectors make to our economy and continues to work closely with industry to realise potential growth. We are backing our regions to grow. I thank my staff in PIRSA for their dedication and commitment towards delivering our agenda over the past year.

The CHAIR: The member for Giles.

Mr HUGHES: I have no opening statement. I think we will just go straight into questions, but before I do so, I would like to also acknowledge all of the work that the staff put in in order to prepare for these particular sessions. Maybe one day the wisdom of the parliament might decide to reform this process. Maybe it is something we could look at in a bipartisan way so that we do have accountability, but maybe it is not all concentrated on this one day.

I notice a few people nodding. I am sure we could come up with a system that better reflects a contemporary approach. With those few comments, I will get on to some of the initial questions. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 60, Primary Industries and Regions, workforce summary. Can the minister confirm the number of FTEs in PIRSA as at the end of June 2018?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: I can. The budget provides for a cap of 860 FTE staff in the 2019-20 year. At the end of May 2019, there were 839 0.3 FTEs actually employed by PIRSA and therefore the budget provides for a greater number of staff to be employed by PIRSA in the 2019-20 year and deliver the government's initiatives that were actually employed at the time of the budget. This has been achieved despite the ongoing impacts of having to implement \$28.6 million in pre-election budget cuts that we inherited from yourselves. What I will say is that the staff numbers have fluctuated and that comes through programs that start and finish midway through the budget year.

Mr HUGHES: Same budget line: can the minister confirm the number of FTEs in SARDI as at the end of June 2018 and as at the end of June 2019?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: I can. I am advised that SARDI's employee numbers are: in 2018 there were 317.5 FTEs and in June 2019 there were 302.8 FTEs.

Mr HUGHES: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 79, summary of major variations. Can the minister outline exactly how much PIRSA's operating budget has been cut by in the 2018-19 state budget?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: The question was: the budget for SARDI in the 2018—

Mr HUGHES: PIRSA's operating budget.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: PIRSA's 2018-19 efficiency dividend is to be \$3.8 million.

Mr HUGHES: In 2019-20, how much will it be reduced by then?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: The 2019-20 efficiency gains will be \$5 million.

Mr HUGHES: What specific cuts, including full-time equivalent reductions, are anticipated in forward estimates?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Sorry, you want to know what the cuts will be?

Mr HUGHES: Yes, if you have a picture of what the impacts are going to be, looking over forward estimates.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Some of the budget initiatives—that was Budget Paper 4, Volume 4?

Mr HUGHES: Yes, Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 79, summary of major variations.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Some of the budget initiatives—and there are a number of them—were the 2019-20 budget operating initiatives in relation to PIRSA, including the fruit fly eradication response, which provided an additional \$2.65 million in the 2018-19 year to meet that cost of significant fruit fly response activities following outbreaks of Q-fly in the Riverland and Medfly over on the West Coast, which was at Thevenard and Ceduna.

This year, the South Australian government has responded to one outbreak of Q-fly at Loxton and two outbreaks of Medfly, as I said, at Ceduna and Thevenard. We have also had a recent outbreak at Lindsay Point, which is still within the Riverland pest-free area. We are working with the Victorian government on that response. The Loxton outbreak was declared on 7 December 2018. After there was a declaration of fruit fly, we have put in place outbreak areas, suspension areas, which were there to implement quarantine requirements for domestic and international trade. The domestic quarantine restrictions for the response were lifted from 30 April 2019 following a successful eradication program.

The responses on the West Coast followed the detection of the Medfly larvae at Ceduna and Thevenard in January of this year. The Ceduna outbreak was successfully eradicated on 8 May. The Thevenard outbreak is expected to be successfully resolved on 24 October 2019, if no further

detections are made. So I am pleased to be able to report that no wild flies have been detected on the West Coast since 15 May of this year.

The national citrus canker response initiative provides \$1.7 million in 2018-19 and \$660,000 in the 2019-20 year for South Australia's contribution to the national response for an eradication of the citrus canker, following outbreaks in Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

Consistent with longstanding practice, these national significant biosecurity threats are funded from a contribution by all jurisdictions and the commonwealth. We see the support for a red meat and wool industry initiative, providing \$7½ million over three years for a Red Meat and Wool Growth Program, which will improve systems and technology to increase the quality and volumes of production, significantly boost exports, assist regions and increase employment.

The program will partner with industry, private sector and the universities. Some of those initiatives will be to apply innovation in farm practices; support business planning; build industry resilience to biosecurity incidents and adverse events; improve data-based decision-making, allowing stock to be electronically tagged and tracked through the supply chain; and improving feedback to the grower on animal performance.

There are a number more. Through the installation of infrastructure and adoption of technology tools, such as animal identification systems, producers will be able to make more informed decisions. The program also assists producers by building a traceability system that meets market demand and supports adoption of the latest genetics and disease management techniques. The initiative has been funded from the Economic and Business Growth Fund.

Another initiative is in the upgrade of South Australia's dog fence. As I said in my opening statement, it is the longest fence in the world. It is 5,400 kilometres of dog fence and aims to protect livestock from wild dogs and dingo attacks. South Australia's component is 2,150 kilometres of dog fence, and approximately 1,600 kilometres have been recognised through a BDO EconSearch report that recommended that it needed replacement because of age and pressure over the years, particularly with feral animals putting pressure on the fence.

As a state government, we are working collaboratively with the commonwealth and with industry. There is a \$10 million commitment from the state government, \$10 million from the commonwealth and \$5 million from the industry. I was recently up there have a look at sections of the fence, and we are looking to work with commonwealth and industry to finalise the agreement and get on with the job of building it.

The departmental efficiency measures initiative will deliver a saving of \$5 million, as I have already said. I am still working through the options with the chief executive about ways in which this saving will be delivered. I am keen to deliver the savings to government while ensuring that there is no impact on the program delivered by PIRSA to ensure industry development and support. We are looking to do that through operational efficiencies and implementing business reforms. That means that there are no front-line cuts.

Mr HUGHES: So you are saying that there will be no front-line cuts over the forward estimates—

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: That is what we are saying.

Mr HUGHES: —but potentially there is the exception of the varying response to biosecurity threats, such as fruit fly.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: At the moment, the options are all hypothetical, but what I can assure you and the committee is that I am working with my chief executive and his management team to look at ways in which we can make some clear announcements of those decisions that will meet the budget savings but will also retain front-line services.

Mr HUGHES: So you believe that the efficiency gains that are anticipated, both in the current budget and in the forward estimates, are not going to lead to additional net job losses within PIRSA.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: That is what I am forecasting, yes.

Mr HUGHES: Going back to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 60, Primary Industries and Regions, workforce summary, I note that the net cost for services for primary industries and regional development decreased by \$15.1 million in 2019-20. What has caused that particular reduction?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: I am informed that the PIRSA budget reduction is reflected by the SARMS Program (South Australian River Murray Sustainability Program) coming to an end. Also, we are still dealing with the \$28.6 million of pre-election budget cuts to PIRSA that I have inherited. We are also dealing with a reduced expenditure related to the natural exhaustion of the South East Forestry Partnerships Program. That was obviously a partnership program within your government, with the sale of the South-East forests. The fact is that the 2018-19 figures reflect additional expenditure in Q-fly outbreaks and our investment into citrus canker, particularly in response to the commonwealth government's investment into citrus canker.

The only savings in the budget for PIRSA are the \$5 million in efficiencies, which will not impact, as I said, front-line departments or services. These are offset by the \$7½ million red meat and wool strategy and money from the commonwealth and industry for the \$25 million to rebuild the dog fence, which is to commence this financial year.

Mr HUGHES: I note that it said \$3.5 million was expended on the targeted voluntary separation packages in 2018-19. How many separation packages did this cover, and did that represent a net loss? I know you have said that there has not been any net losses, but has there been a net loss as a result of those targeted voluntary separation packages?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Is that Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 79?

Mr HUGHES: Yes, it is.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: So in the 2018-19 financial year, as a result of the prioritisation and restructuring process across the agency, 60 PIRSA employees were offered target voluntary separation packages. Of the 60 offered, 50 were accepted by 30 June this year, 44 employees exited by 30 June, with the remaining six employees exited by 19 July of this year. The 10 employees who did not accept the TVSP offer were then immediately to be declared excess. Seven have been placed into funded roles through career transition processes consistent with PIRSA and the Office of the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment policies and determinations.

Of the three remaining employees who have not been placed into funded roles, two have been formally declared as excess employees and are being managed in accordance with Determination and Guideline 7: Changes to Workforce Composition and Management of Excess Employees—Redeployment, Retraining and Redundancy. The remaining employee who has not yet been placed into a funded role is in the process of being formally declared as excess in line with the commissioner's determination. PIRSA will continue to support these three employees in finding funded, ongoing roles in the state government.

Mr HUGHES: So despite the voluntary separation packages, you are maintaining that there has been no net loss of employment within PIRSA?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: That is correct. The total cost of those termination payments for the 50 departing was \$4.5 million.

Mr HUGHES: I refer to Budget Paper 5, page 85, the upgrade of South Australia's dog fence. Let me put on record that I think this is a good initiative. How much of the \$10 million state contribution to upgrading the dog fence will be spent in 2019-20?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: I envisage that the state government spend will be over a three-year period. There is no money in the budget for the rebuild of the fence for the 2019-20 year. We have now appointed a Dog Fence Rebuild Committee, so we are really in the planning stage. I am sure the shadow would understand the significant amount of planning that needs to be undertaken for a fence of this magnitude. Planning will be critical in making sure that we get the planning right and then once the development of the dog fence rebuild has been determined, we will then have money in the budget for the following two years.

Mr HUGHES: Do you have a clearer idea when actual physical work will commence?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Again, we are waiting for that planning stage from the rebuild committee. That is currently underway. I would imagine that the rebuild of the fence will commence early in the next financial year. Planning is envisaged to run into March but we also have to understand the constraints, particularly at that time of the year, with heat and the order of materials and making sure that we get all the necessary inventories of what we are going to need to put in place. I am not going to determine just exactly how the committee will deem fence-building teams to be proposed, but that is part of the planning phase we are going through as we speak.

Mr HUGHES: Given all of that, when is the federal government likely to make its contribution: as soon as the plan is submitted or on an ongoing basis?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Yes; having met with the new federal agriculture minister, I gave her a briefing on where industry in South Australia is positioned and the way that it will achieve its \$5 million contribution. We will work closely and I guess the collaboration will be that once we have achieved the planning criteria we will then approach the commonwealth government to make sure that we can have that money put into a budget so that we can start spending.

The CHAIR: The member for Morphett is seeking the call.

Mr PATTERSON: Minister, I refer you and the committee to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, pages 64 and 65. Can the minister please explain what actions the Marshall Liberal government is taking to improve the experience for recreational fishers in South Australia?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Yes, I can. Coming into government, there was an election commitment that the rec fishing sector was not being truly represented and having a direct voice to government, so since coming into the role as minister for fisheries I have been able to develop a process, very much a democratic process, for the election of an advisory council, the Minister's Recreational Fishing Advisory Council. It is a first-off, the first in Australia to have a democratically elected committee.

We gave the four peak fishing organisations an opportunity to put three names forward, and they did. There was some criteria around those names so that we could have a representative at the table from those peak groups. For the remaining five we saw a voting process through the YourSay website, and that gave every South Australian fisher the opportunity to either nominate or, if they were not going to nominate, to vote and they could be a part of that process.

There was some criteria there that there had to be a woman present, there had to be someone from the rec retail sector, and there also had to be someone from the inland fishing space. Through that election process it was determined to be a success. We now have the MRFAC and just recently it met for the second time.

Graham Keegan has been duly elected as the chairperson of that advisory committee. I think they are starting to get a bit of traction and starting to move forward and obviously getting a cohesive group together with an understanding of what they would like to see on behalf of their membership base and also as a group with a voice to government about what they would like to achieve.

There are some short-term achievements I am sure they would like to get out there and there are also some long-term achievements. I am yet to see those determinations. They will be presented to me a little bit later this year. I think yourself, having a coastal electorate, and enjoying not only the jetties and the beaches that provide fantastic recreational fishing opportunities, it is also about your rec fishers having an opportunity to have a voice, and that voice is being heard through the MRFAC.

Mr HUGHES: I return to Budget Paper 5, page 85, and the upgrade of the dog fence. Is there any intention of employing Aboriginal people to assist with the upgrade of the dog fence?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: I certainly think there will be opportunities, yes. The dog fence committee is chaired by Geoff Power, a renowned pastoralist. I have met with Geoff a number of times, and we will work our way through the initiatives and the requirements for workforce. Just remember, it will be a long-term project. My wish is to have the 1,600 kilometres of fence finished in three years, and that is a hefty task for that committee and for the teams that will need to get that dog fence up and running.

It is not just flat country; there is a lot of terrain to pass through, and that is where the planning will be very important, and the workforce will need to be strategically placed, which is also very important. I am not envisaging one large company coming in and building a fence; there might be a number of contractors who will come in, and I forecast that there will be criteria on some of the eligibility of the employees of those contractors.

Mr HUGHES: Going on to another part of the budget, Budget Paper 5, Budget Measures Statement, page 85, and support for the red meat and wool industry. In regard to the Red Meat and Wool Growth Program, the budget papers outline that \$7.5 million will be provided over three years to improve systems and technology to increase the quality and volume of production and significantly boost exports, assist regions and increase employment. You touched upon this in your opening statement. I assume the whole of the \$7.5 million is from the state government. What is the expectation on the part of industry in terms of the contribution to that particular program, if any?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: The \$7.5 million is not about putting money into producers' pockets. It is about supporting the programs, the initiatives, that will see the development of not only the identification systems and not only of making sure that industry is included. This is government funded, it is a government initiative, but it will be driven by industry. We are not the experts, the industry is.

We will work very closely with Livestock SA, we will work very closely with Australian Wool Innovation, we will also work very closely with our sheep and beef advisory councils. We will work with the sector to develop the best way we can engage with industry. We are already working with Meat and Livestock Australia and that is very important, as it is the peak body. It will give us the opportunity to leverage money not only from the industry but also from the commonwealth.

Since coming to this role I have seen the opportunities, and that is that we need to grow not only our herds and our flocks so that we can have more livestock numbers, and that is about growing the sector, it is also about taking up opportunities. At the moment, we are seeing record prices for lamb, we are seeing very good prices for beef, but we are also seeing unprecedented returns for wool.

I think now is the time to position the industry to not only grow but also to provide some certainty, particularly to export markets. They want that certainty, they want to know where those products are coming from, they want to know the identity of the properties where the livestock are bred, reared and produced. If we can give our customers that certainty there is only one way growth can go, and that will be upwards.

Mr HUGHES: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, Program 1: Primary Industries.

The CHAIR: What page, member for Giles?

Mr HUGHES: Page 62. Primary industries over the coming years will face a major impact from climate change. What initiatives is the state government going to implement to assist primary industries to adapt to a warming climate?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: We know that we have climate variability. To the primary producers' credit, they deal with a varying season every year. At the moment, we know that we are dealing with the pressures of climate. Obviously, we have seen significant drought right across the nation. Here in South Australia, we have seen very varied situations across the state.

Particularly the coastal areas or, you would say, anything that is south of what has been determined as Goyder's line has enjoyed a pretty good season. We have seen Lower Eyre, Lower Yorke, the South-East, Kangaroo Island and some of the southern pastoral areas having record crops. They have had an extremely good year but, sadly, we have seen eastern Eyre, the Mid North, Murraylands and the southern Mallee experience a really tough year.

We are working with the primary sector to help them, support them, so that we can futureproof their farms. We are doing that in collaboration with the commonwealth government. We know that the Prime Minister's droughtproofing Australia fund has played a significant role in South Australia. We have seen myself travelling over to meet with not only the previous ag minister but the regional development minister and other assistant ministers to look at ways in which we can bring back initiatives.

Some of those initiatives include, I think, upwards of 28 councils receiving \$1 million. That is to offset the drought, but it is also there to help them droughtproof. You talk about climate variability; that is what farmers deal with every year. If it is a good year, it is a great year. If it is a dry year, it is not so good, so that is the variability. If we have storms and too much water in certain areas, that is dealing with that climate variability.

We are developing a state program. Also, in my most recent ag min that was hosted down at Glenelg this year, we saw that we are now responding to that climate variation. We are looking at putting mechanisms in place so that we can futureproof our farms so that farmers have the tools. Whether it be upgrading irrigation or water supply, whether it be offsetting those jobs, we are putting in all sorts of mechanisms to help off-farm income.

The kangaroo pilot program that we have initiated in the Mid North and northern Eyre is looking at ways in which we can adapt our farming practices to a varying climate. Giving farmers the opportunity to commercially harvest kangaroos, making sure that they have water storage, making sure they can access water through pipeline schemes, and making sure their mental health is addressed is our priority. I am sure you as a regional member would understand the mental fatigue and pressure put on our primary producers through a really tough time. That is something that has to be a priority.

There are other areas that we are working on to help with climate variation. SARDI is working on some cereal breeding programs at the moment that are more drought tolerant, dealing with hotter climates and those vagaries. We look into viticulture; we look into horticulture; we look right across the board. We are now developing different root stocks that will accept and cope with variable climate. Drought, salinity and frost are all factors that are part of a variable climate.

So they are a couple of initiatives. I can look further if you would like, but at the moment I think we are putting our best foot forward so that we can actually deal with a variable climate to make sure that our primary producers are best prepared and to make sure that their farms have the tools necessary to deal with a variable climate.

Mr HUGHES: You use the term 'climate variability' a fair bit. Obviously, our primary producers over many years have managed risk and managed a variable climate. The term that I might be looking for is climate trends and fundamental shifts in climate trends and the implications for primary producers. Given the balance of the scientific evidence indicates that we are currently on track with a global average temperature increase of 3° to 4°, which will mean a completely different primary industries sector in South Australia, I am trying to get a feel for what it is that we are doing in order to adapt to those fundamental changes.

You have mentioned a number of specifics, and I accept that. I am not sure if the right expression is that we do not fully accept the challenge that we face, but the challenge for a climatic zone or zones such as we have in South Australia is going to be incredibly significant over the coming years. I want to get more of a feel for what it is that primary industries is doing in that area, and it is not just when it comes to land base operations, we could talk about fisheries as well. The CSIRO has just delivered a major report looking at broadscale impacts nationally.

So I just want to get a better feel for what we are doing in South Australia when it comes to assisting primary producers for what are likely to be some incredibly profound challenges in the future, and have probably just started.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: I think I probably gave a pretty good overview in my previous answer. I would say that I am watching SARDI, watching PIRSA, working with industry at the moment, and I will touch on viticulture. We are looking at ways that we manage the canopies and some of the R&D programs that we are currently undertaking. I note that the member for Hammond has graced us with his presence today, and we have just partnered with the wine industry to look at monitoring and measuring the impacts of heat, not only on the vineyard but on canopy size, and the impacts of heat on fruit and fruit quality.

At the moment, we are working through that program so that we can better understand how the vineyards are responding. We know that we are currently working with industry as a government to better understand aerial imagery of all our primary production areas and looking at that climate

change, that you call it, over a considered amount of time. A lot of that imagery is showing us that the floors of those properties of primary producers are changing the way that they manage it. SARDI is working up at Waite and over at Roseworthy and at some of the other facilities around the state looking at multispecies of pastures.

Some pastures can shade other pastures, so that they can protect one another. We look at some of the vagaries around R&D programs now, so we are not just doing a program, let's say for instance, for industrial hemp. We are now doing it in different areas around the state. We can actually determine what different breeds, what different plants grow better in a hot climate—different root stocks, different management practices, different soils.

We know now that, if we are going to put different management practices in place to deal with climate variability, we cannot do what we have always done. We actually have to have trial sites in different climates so that we can understand what plants, what plant types or what root stock types are better suited to the hotter climates and what are better suited to a cooler climate.

If we look at livestock, we are currently looking at ways that we can put different genetics into livestock. Some of the livestock that could cope better in a hotter climate and some that once upon a time would be grown and raised in a medium climate will now potentially perform better in a cooler climate, like down in the South-East. In terms of livestock types—sheep in particular—we are seeing new breeds of sheep coming in. Some are there for meat particularly, and some are there for wool particularly, and so we know that those animals perform better in different climates. They are small ways we are going forward.

If we look at aquatics—and you touched on fish aquaculture—SARDI and the University of Adelaide are working on Spencer Gulf interactions with different industry sectors to look at external factors. As you said, there is concern about the changing climate. There is a notable movement. We see blue crabs are now heading to deeper water through those warmer summer months. Is it impacting on our fish stocks? We do not know.

I think SARDI is doing some fantastic work at the moment, particularly through the department looking at all of the impacts—not only warmer waters, but looking at the aquatic animals' behaviour. We know our fisheries sector is very fragile. Any weather variations will see them head to deeper water and that is normally because it has become too warm and they head to that deeper, cooler water.

Mr HUGHES: So, as minister, then, you would accept that on current trends we are heading towards a profound climate change, and it is human induced?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: That is, I guess, your opinion. I am not a climate change denier, but what I would say is that I work with farmers—I have been on the land all my life—and we deal with varying seasons every year. If we are dealing with hotter years, we change our practices. If we are irrigating, we change our irrigation practices. Do we irrigate in the middle of the day? Yes, we do. We do not irrigate at night in a very hot season. If we are looking at the way that we want to grow a crop, we are now using sun screens on a lot of our horticulture. We are now working with different products to help trees adjust. There are different measures to undertake different management strategies. Some would move the farm to a cooler area to grow the same crop, others would manage their properties differently.

You did talk about the variation of the temperature between 3° to 4°. I have not heard that—not in any one year, anyway. What I would say is I think our primary producers are doing an outstanding job dealing with the vagaries of climate, whether it be hotter, colder, wetter, drier, whether it be ice and frost, or whether it be bushfires. We deal with those vagaries on a day-to-day basis. I commend the primary producers for doing what they are doing. They are always on the move, looking for new ways, dealing with the different seasons.

The CHAIR: The member for Kavel has been seeking the call very patiently.

Mr CREGAN: Minister, can I take you to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, pages 66 to 67, biosecurity. Can you update the committee on the support measures that were put in place to help South Australian strawberry farmers, following deliberate supply chain disruption?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: I certainly can. Thank you for the question. I am sure that you are very interested in the situation, having a large number of strawberry growers or berry growers in your electorate. Yes, it was a sad state of affairs that in the middle of September last year, there was notification received that there was contaminated fruit that had come from a Queensland pack house of strawberries, and that sent shock waves around the nation—not only around the nation, but it puts out a huge amount of uncertainty. Some of that produce came into South Australia and immediately we saw a large amount of fruit taken off the shelves, but it was not taken off the shelves just for inspection, it was taken off the shelves to be dumped, and that was a crime in itself.

Human safety and food safety is of paramount importance, and so what we have seen is that that contamination, which was believed to have been sewing needles, was then reported widely around the country. Authorities, SAPOL, investigated very, very thoroughly. In some instances, there was almost an act of terrorism but what I would say is that they acted in the best way for human food safety. There were a number of copycat incidents. There have been a number of people who have been prosecuted.

In response to that, as a state government, we were very proactive in putting \$50,000 toward a metal detector down at the Pooraka produce market. That is pretty much a hub here in South Australia for distribution. What we have seen further from there is it proved to be very successful and it gave an assurance to not only consumers, but it gave an assurance to industry that the government was being proactive and acting in their best interests. Since that has been implemented—I know the Premier and I were down at Pooraka the morning that it was switched on, and it was deemed very much a confidence booster for the industry but also the consumer was given a level of confidence that they could go out and purchase fruit that was all but guaranteed to be safe.

Since then, we have seen many, many fresh food producers who have put in metal detectors and they are doing that not only to give reassurance to their consumers and to the markets, but they are doing it in the best interests of human consumption, and they are doing it in the best interests of their customers. If their customers are comfortable that the producers are doing everything conceived possible, they are going to continue to support that grower, that producer.

So to your strawberry growers—I know we met with a number of them with the contamination issue and it brought a lot of growers to their knees because they lost a huge amount of money. There was a lot of waste and I think, as a government, myself and the Premier, we acted very quickly. We put that \$50,000 towards the metal detector, and the strawberry growers, the berry growers and fresh fruit growers right across the board were then given a shot in the arm of confidence. So we get on with it now and we put that issue behind us, but we do not take anything for granted. We continue to monitor.

I think it is also important to note that different management strategies have been put in place on behalf of those growers, those pack houses, and the distribution centres, whether it be the Pooraka markets or whether it be a distribution centre into some of the supermarket chains. They have to do everything conceivably possible to reassure their consumers, just like we did as a government to make sure that we are looking after them. We are there to make sure that their food is safe.

I might add that in your electorate the majority of the state's strawberries are grown—6,000 tonnes—and it is worth nearly \$42 million. I think that needs to be noted: it is an industry of significance. We as a government are still working closely with SAPOL and the health department making sure that the monitoring still continues, making sure that we have consumer confidence in those products.

Mr HUGHES: Just briefly, returning to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 62, Program 1: Primary Industries, I was somewhat surprised that the minister was not aware of the temperature projections when I mentioned the 3° to 4° increase, which is over the period coming to the end of this century. Is that what you are actually saying, that you are not aware of the projections from the IPCC and from a whole range of other institutional bodies?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: No, that is not what I said. You were not that explicit. You talked about an increase in temperature of 3° to 4°. At the end of the century, that is a different conversation.

Mr HUGHES: Yes.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: I guess I could assume that you were talking about over the next year.

Mr HUGHES: No. Why would you assume that?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: You did not give me the information.

Mr HUGHES: Surely you would be across that information on climate change.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: We are seeing an increase in temperatures; yes, I acknowledge that.

Mr HUGHES: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 64, Sub-program 1.2: Fisheries and Aquaculture. In regard to the Minister's Recreational Fishing Advisory Council, can the minister confirm that in a media release dated 1 January 2019 he announced that he was pleased to appoint four experienced recreational fishers to the council?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: I was pleased to have experienced rec fishers on the council?

Mr HUGHES: Yes.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Yes, that is correct.

Mr HUGHES: Can the minister outline what background checks have been undertaken on the members of the Minister's Recreational Fishing Advisory Council, especially those appointed by the government?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: There were none that were actually appointed by the government. There were recommendations by the government. As I said in my introductory statement, the four main fishing body organisations put forward three names. Those names were then put to an independent panel. That independent panel assessed those names, just as we did with the remaining five positions on that council. They were individuals of South Australia. Those names were put forward to me. There was a clearance check done on the four individuals from the peak groups. Those checks came back clear. They were then given approval to be a part of the initial group that were part of the fishing advisory council.

Mr HUGHES: Can the minister confirm if it was outlined in the selection process that successful candidates must have no prior fisheries offences in South Australia?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: That is correct.

Mr HUGHES: Can the minister confirm that it would be inappropriate to have a government-appointed representative on the council who has breached South Australia's fishing laws?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: I would not like to think that I had anybody on an advisory council who had prior offences. I will take that on notice. I will come back to you with an answer before the session is finished, just to give you clarity about that. As I understood it, the security clearances were given for those people to represent the rec fishing sector.

Mr HUGHES: And clearances in relation to fisheries breaches?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Yes.

Mr HUGHES: Has the recreational fishing industry or rec fishers ever raised any concerns about government-appointed representatives on the fishing council?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: There has been dialogue where people have expressed an opinion. Individuals' opinions are front and centre, particularly in the rec fishing sector. Are you referring to a government employee on the advisory council?

Mr HUGHES: No, I am referring to an appointment to the advisory council.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: So a member of the advisory council?

Mr HUGHES: Yes.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: As I am advised, there have been no official complaints put to me.

Mr HUGHES: So the minister can provide an assurance, then, that there are no ministerial appointments (if we want to use that term) on the Minister's Recreational Fishing Advisory Council who might have breached fishing regulations?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: As I said, there was a security clearance for those members of the advisory council. I am not aware that there have been any formal complaints or concerns about members on the advisory council. I am also advised that, as part of the application process for them to be a part of the advisory council, they had to make a declaration that there were no prior offences.

Mr HUGHES: So if somebody was in that position, I would take it then that there would be delivery of natural justice and due process—that if somebody was in that position that person would be stood down from the council?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: That is correct.

Mr HUGHES: Can the minister confirm that the growth plan for recreational fishing opportunities will be overseen and directed by this council?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: They will be giving me recommendations and directives. That is what they are for. They are an advisory council, and we will work together. I have attended the first two meetings and I think they have gone pretty well. We have had one resignation due to private matters, but otherwise the rec fishing council is working extremely well together and getting a much better understanding of the bigger picture when it comes to governance and policy development. They also now have a capacity to work with fisheries people working with SARDI. It has given them a much bigger picture and a clearer understanding of what it means to represent a large sector.

Mr HUGHES: Given the role of the council, if there were a person in the sort of position I am referring to it would undermine the integrity of the council when it came to its recommendations; that is, if there were somebody there who had breached fishing regulations.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Are you saying that if there were someone who had a prior fishing offence?

Mr HUGHES: Yes.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: It certainly would.

Mr HUGHES: Thank you.

Mr BOYER: Minister, I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 66, highlights, under the fruit fly freedom highlight mentioned there. On what date did the quarantine station at Yamba become operational?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: On what date did Yamba become operational?

Mr BOYER: Yes, under the new protocols.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: The zero-tolerance approach started on 4 January this year.

Mr BOYER: Same budget line: what advice did you request and receive from your agency about their capacity to meet the time lines for the zero tolerance policy at Yamba?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: What role?

Mr BOYER: No, what advice did you receive from your agency about the capacity of your agency to deliver and implement the new protocols of zero tolerance at Yamba in that time frame, so that they are operational on the date you have provided, 4 January?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Certainly. The response leading up to 4 January was an emergency response, particularly to the outbreak at Loxton. There was a level of adjustment at Yamba and that level of adjustment gave some people concerns. What we did was make sure that they were given the opportunity to be upskilled. We have employed a further 14 employees. We have just undertaken a \$2 million upgrade of Yamba to help with not only the level of traffic going through

Yamba but also the magnitude of people who are now committing an offence coming into South Australia.

There has been a level of transition, if you like, with the zero-tolerance approach. That has been that we put temporary bins in place. We put some temporary signs in place. We had some measures in place that are now part of the permanent infrastructure. As I said, we have upskilled some of the staff. We have made sure that the upgraded infrastructure has been finalised now. I was out at Yamba a week ago, and we are looking at ways that we can further not only enhance Yamba, making it easier for the employees, but streamline the process.

For anyone who has been through Yamba on a busy period, the cars can bank up a long way. So that is what we are wanting to deal with, that is, making sure that we make it a smooth transition, a smooth process, dealing with a zero-tolerance approach. We are not talking about enacting a new measure for the sake of enacting it; it is protecting a \$1.2 billion industry. It is also protecting the market advantage that the horticulture sector has, particularly in the Riverland. We are looking at ways that we can now further enhance the state—all of the state's borders.

We have four quarantine stations: Ceduna, Oodla Wirra, Yamba and Pinnaroo. We are also running the random roadblocks. I think we are upwards of 20 random roadblocks this year. As an emergency response we are upgrading our biosecurity measures to making sure that we do everything we can to look after a billion-dollar industry, making sure that we look after our reputation as the only mainland state in the country to be fruit fly free.

Mr BOYER: The 14 staff you mentioned in that answer, when were they hired?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: I am advised that the transition has been implemented over about a six-month period. We have seen recruitment and upskilling of staff coming into Yamba. What it means is that some people are more adaptable to being able to undertake and have the skills necessary, but we have been through that upskilling process, the recruitment process, and we have got to a level now where we have the level of staff required with a skill set, and we think it is going along pretty well. But again, as I said, my recent visit to Yamba showed the staff there that I am still listening, and if there are any improvements that need to be made, well, we will consider those improvements.

Mr BOYER: So the 14 staff were hired after Yamba became operational in terms of the zero-tolerance policy; is that right?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: I beg your pardon?

Mr BOYER: The 14 staff were employed after Yamba quarantine station became operational in terms of its zero-tolerance policy; is that right?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: That is correct.

Mr BOYER: Was the advice provided to you before 4 January this year by your agency that that was one of the reasons why it should not come into effect so soon, that it should wait some time before it became operational?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: There were a number of discussions about implementing the zero-tolerance approach. I am advised that when the zero-tolerance approach was implemented there were some concerns by staff, and we listened to those concerns. The zero-tolerance approach was not something that was slowly implemented or thought about, it was an emergency response to an outbreak. We listened to the staff's concerns immediately, and that is why we enacted a recruitment program to employ more people and to give them the skilling that they needed to be a biosecurity officer at the border protection at Yamba.

I listened and the department has worked very closely with the staff. We have worked very closely with DPTI and we have worked very closely as a collaborative approach—PIRSA executive, Biosecurity SA, working with the commonwealth, working with industry—making sure that we had other mechanisms on the ground. Industry and government came together and employed a liaison officer so that would help with that transition. That liaison officer worked with the staff at Yamba, worked with industry and worked within the outbreak area so that we could deal with any unforeseen

issues along the way. As I am fully aware, it took a little while for that program to be fully implemented but it is working pretty well now.

Mr BOYER: When were the existing signs on the approach to Yamba—that, as I understand it, informed motorists that they could deposit fruit at a quarantine station five kilometres ahead without penalty—removed?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: They were removed before 4 January.

Mr BOYER: Was there replacement signage put up before 4 January?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Yes, there was.

Mr BOYER: What did the replacement signage advise motorists?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: There were a number of signs that informed motorists that it is an offence to bring fruit into South Australia and that there is a zero-tolerance approach.

Mr BOYER: Was there a bin provided before the new operationally, I guess, changed Yamba station that was zero tolerance? Was there a bin provided before that to enable motorists to eat it, bin it or declare it before they got to the zero-tolerance station? Was that in place prior to 4 January?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Yes.

Mr BOYER: Where was that located?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: That was located in amongst the new signage. Those bins were temporary bins and they were located outside of the exclusion zone. Just so that you are aware, the deposit of fruit in bins, if it is inside the exclusion zone it is defeating the purpose of keeping infected fruit outside or fruit at risk on the outside of the pest-free area. So those temporary bins were located in a parking bay on Bede Road outside of the pest-free area. They were there as a temporary measure until we had the permanent bins installed.

Those permanent bins had to be made and then had to be transported up, and then we had to have earthmoving equipment come in and dig the pits and install them. They have been installed and the signage has been upgraded. I think everyone now is looking at ways that they can support South Australia and that is that they are pulling into Bede Road and putting their fruit into the bin. Those who do not, receive an on-the-spot fine at the Yamba roadblock.

Mr PEDERICK: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, pages 66 and 67. I know you have mentioned the dog fence in a previous answer, but can you advise what else the state government is doing to protect the South Australian livestock industry from the impact of wild dogs?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Yes, I can. In my opening statement I very proudly said that we have a collaborative agreement with industry, with the commonwealth and with the state government. This has been a long time coming. The history of the dog fence is that it is a 100-year-old fence that has just been patched up over time, and the pressure that has been put on that fence over recent years has been immense. It is about keeping wild dogs out, but it is also about dealing with a number of other wild pest animals—camels, horses, kangaroos, there are all sorts of pressures.

We have also seen a huge amount of pressure on the fence dealing, in particular, with soil erosion. The fence does not just go along a flat bit of country on hard ground, it goes up over sandhills, it crosses waterways and creeks. When we have flash floods and when we have rain events the fence has been known to be washed away. There have also been other areas where the fence has been damaged by a third force. We have fence riders who travel the fence and they make sure there are no holes or access points for wild dogs, in particular, to get through.

I will also just touch on other measures we have put in place. An initiative of government, when we came in, was to install wild dog trappers along with a very much coordinated baiting program. Some of that baiting program was distributed by air and some was distributed by land. We saw a significant campaign not only by industry, not only by the pastoralists and livestock owners, but also by government to implement that much more coordinated approach, as well as employing two full-time equivalent dog trappers so that we could deal with the pressure that had been building.

That building pressure has been exacerbated by previous good breeding seasons. When we get good rainfall we get a natural chain of events, and we have seen a population explosion of wild dogs. For those of you who are not aware, dingoes are survivors and when they have pups they normally have only one. That gives it a much better chance of surviving. The more domesticated dogs, farm dogs, etc., normally have litters of dogs, multiple numbers of dogs.

We are dealing not only with wild dogs but also with dingoes, with crossbreeds, with domesticated dogs that have gone rogue, so we have trappers out there trapping dogs. The trapper does not go out there and just look for dogs and trap them, sometimes those trappers are out there for days on end looking for one dog. That one dog could be quite elusive, because dogs are smart. We know that.

Some of the dogs that are elusive have, I guess, been touched by a bait or scared by gunshot, or they have been scared off by other third parties, so they are very hard to see, to get into the sights of the trapper. They are animals that are very hard to track, trace and then trap.

I think the program has worked extremely well. It has been successful in capturing around 300 wild dogs, mostly on stations inside the fence. It shows you the number of dogs that have been out there causing havoc. What I would say to the pastoralists is that for a long, long time they would lie awake in bed at night wondering how many sheep they were going to lose that night due to wild dogs. They can now know that we are putting a program in place of replacing the fence. There will be continuation of the baiting program so that we can deal with wild dogs and look after a very valuable livestock industry.

Mr BOYER: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 66 and the zero-tolerance policy. During what hours was the Yamba quarantine station staffed once the zero-tolerance policy came into effect?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: It is 24/7.

Mr BOYER: Was it always 24/7?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Yes.

Mr BOYER: At no stage was it not open because there were not enough staff there and people were waved through?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: I can take a little bit of a step back in time. Under a previous government, there was consideration given to closing the Yamba quarantine station and running it as a nine to five. There was consideration given to doing that back in about 2012, if my numbers are correct. I stand to be corrected. I, as the local member, and industry fought very hard against that proposed decision. In the wisdom of the time, minister O'Brien back then decided that he would leave the Yamba quarantine station open 24/7. So it has always been a 24/7 facility, as I understand it.

Mr BOYER: Did the staff who were at the Yamba station during that 24/7 period have all the necessary authorisations from the day of commencement to issue expiation notices to motorists?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: I am advised that they do not issue expiation notices. They take information from an offending motorist and then they give a recommendation to the department of biosecurity. I am advised that the motorist is issued with a notice. It is given to the motorist and then that notice is given to a responsible officer here in Adelaide who then deems it appropriate to issue an infringement notice.

Mr BOYER: Was security employed at the Yamba station at any point?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Unfortunately, yes. I am advised that there was security put in place after the zero tolerance was implemented, and that was there for the safety of the biosecurity officers. There were a number of motorists who had reacted to the zero-tolerance approach, so we acted immediately to make sure we had some security there until it was deemed that the timing was right to lift the need for security at the Yamba station.

Mr BOYER: Was the flow of cars through the station ever so great that the staff there could not handle the traffic flow and had to wave cars through?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: When lines got long, and in very extreme heat, safety decisions were made on the spot, at their discretion, to move traffic on for public safety and welfare. That was used at the officer's discretion.

Mr BOYER: Does that not mean it was not zero tolerance? How is it zero tolerance if some cars had been waved through?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Yes, that is right. You have to take a sensible approach—particularly with heat and particularly in the hotter months—when dealing with that. It is about human safety as well as overlaying biosecurity measures in place. That is why the approach was taken by the biosecurity officers that, in extreme circumstances, they would not issue those notices.

They were still inspecting vehicles, but what it meant was that we were still dealing with a level of adjustment with a zero-tolerance approach, and that is what we have done. Since 4 January this year until now, we have slowly implemented change to the infrastructure, we have upskilled more staff and they now have the capacity to deal with the offending motorists at any given time.

Mr CREGAN: Minister, I take you to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, pages 63 to 64. I would be grateful if you could outline to the committee the measures that were put in place to support the Adelaide Hills apple and pear growers impacted by adverse weather events.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: I am just wondering, are you talking about the most recent event, or are you talking about the continual events over the previous two years?

Mr CREGAN: Thank you, minister. It might be helpful to have a global overview of events over the last couple of years and then turn to the most recent events.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Yes, I certainly can. There have been a number of incidents over the last three years and, in some cases, apple, pear and berry growers have been impacted by severe weather events. I know that over the last couple of years I have been up there with yourself, the member for Morialta and the member for Heysen, and it has shown me a pretty sad story after a hail event has been through. There has been a loss of \$30 million over recent years.

It is a 30,000-tonne industry. They export about \$2 million worth of apples a year, and the Adelaide Hills accounts for about 80 per cent of South Australian production. Those businesses were severely impacted, not only because of the damage to fruit, but a lot of that fruit—particularly in the most recent hail event—was of a maturity that it could not be sprayed off. When I say it could not be sprayed off, a spray application could not have been put on those trees to drop the fruit or to drop the damaged fruit. That would have decreased the cost of picking—labour—making sure that we actually exhausted the fruit off the trees to reduce the burden on those growers.

The devastation was very apparent. After those hailstorm events, I visited a number of farms and we looked at ways and measures that we could put in place to help them. First of all, we committed \$60,000 to the Apple and Pear Growers Association to promote the 2019 Hailstorm Heroes program. That program was put in place to ask support from consumers, that even though an apple has some exterior blemishes, it is still really good inside. The internal quality is first class. People have to understand that hail-damaged fruit has an exterior not pleasing to the eye, but what I would say is it still tastes really good inside. There was \$60,000 put to the Hailstorm Heroes program.

We also looked at furthering the capacity, particularly to the Lenswood Cold Stores Co-op that had dealt with those previous two years of storm damage. For a pack house to be viable, we have to make sure that it has throughput. Pack houses normally get paid on return per carton. They take out a packing charge and if you are not putting very much fruit into a carton, they cannot make money and they cannot pay the bills.

We worked with the Lenswood Cold Stores Co-op. They had a \$1.346 million loan through the cooperative loan scheme, which we waived to give breathing space to the Lenswood Co-op so that they could continue operating without the burden of a large loan that had to be repaid without the capacity to be able to make those payments. That was very well received.

We also appointed a FaB Scout mentor to support affected Hills growers. That FaB mentor continues to travel around, drive up driveways, knock on doors, sit down and give affected growers

a level of surety that there are levels of support out there. If they are suffering from any wellbeing or mental health issues, not being able to make informed decisions, the FaB Scout is able to assist. If they are up against it, the mentor is there to make sure that there is a capacity to have food on the table, that the kids get to school and that the day-to-day necessities are dealt with.

Additionally, we then provided a \$400,000 grant to a number of apple and pear growers within the association. As I recall, 22 growers received assistance in upgrading pump capacity, dealing with the high cost of power. That gave them a level of clarity around reducing costs and inputs into their business. That came out of the Regional Growth Fund. It was a \$1 million project and that upgrading is continuing. It gave them a level of support—not directly into their pockets as such, but it did give them support to be able to upgrade their pumps and put solar panels on their pump sheds so that they could reduce the outgoings within their business.

We were also able to provide \$38,380 to applicants to the Natural Disaster Resilience Program, which is to assist to build the preparedness of the Adelaide Hills fruit industry for those extreme weather events. So that helped. There are a range of measures that we put in place. We were also able to give access to the Rural Financial Counselling Service and the Country Women's Association fund. That gave a level of comfort and a level of support to those growers who had been absolutely belted financially with what the industry had faced over, in some instances, three years in a row.

So we look to the skies, we touch wood, and we pray for the apple and pear growers this year that they are not touched by hail. We hope that they can finish their pruning off, have a good fruit set and then get on with growing good South Australian apples. Again, it is important to know that both the government and industry work together with the growers and will continue to do that should any further challenges arise. I think the apple and pear industry has been dealt a number of successive blows, but we will continue to—

The Hon. Z.L. Bettison interjecting:

Mr CREGAN: You don't think this is serious, do you? You don't think this is serious.

The CHAIR: Order!

Mr CREGAN: My growers have just suffered—

The CHAIR: Order!

Mr CREGAN: —for years and you are making fun of it.

Mr BOYER: You didn't even get your question right.

The CHAIR: Order!

Members interjecting:

The CHAIR: Order! Member for Kavel! Order!

Mr BOYER: The minister didn't know what he was talking about.

Mr CREGAN: I think he did.

The CHAIR: Member for Wright!

Mr CREGAN: You don't care.

The CHAIR: The member for Hammond has a question.

Mr PEDERICK: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, pages 63 and 64. Will the minister outline initiatives by the state government to support growth in the wine industry, including at Langhorne Creek?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: I certainly can. I know that in one of my previous answers to the shadow minister we talked about climate variability and we talked about extreme heat in vineyards. It is not just the issue about losing the capacity for a season's crop. We know that the extreme heat this year has impacted on many vineyards right around the state. In particular, down

at Langhorne Creek they saw a number of extreme weather events and that was heat. Those 45° days down in that beautiful part of the world do not mix well with those cooler climate vineyards.

We know that in extreme heat, particularly in the cooler climates, they do not have the robust canopies and they do not have the structure in their vineyards to deal with extreme sun and extreme temperature. So we have initiated putting money in a program to deal with heat stress down at Langhorne Creek. We know that it is a significant industry down there, and we have supported them to do R&D on measuring the impact of heat on canopy and on the bud set.

We know that a lot of the fruit and the buds are set in the previous year for the upcoming year and if they are impacted it creates a poor environment and a poor circumstance for fruiting wood—bud wood—to be successful the following year. As I said, the heat impacts not only on the fruit, it impacts on the canopy and it impacts on the carbohydrate storage in the vines.

So this program down at Langhorne Creek will help to make sure that if we are dealing with these extreme temperatures, how do we manage the canopies? How do we actually manage the vineyards? Do we put in the capacity to put in cooling into the vineyards? Do we look at growing a large canopy? All those management abilities will be tested under this research program.

I think it is a great initiative. What it did is it was money put into place. It was only a small amount of money but it will have a huge impact: \$20,000 into a couple of vineyards to do those trials can have a far-reaching impact. What happens in one vineyard is normally characteristic of what happens in another vineyard. What we have seen over a period of time is that if we can actually determine ways and measures in one vineyard and spread the message through the industry, that can have a much more positive impact on the way that we deal with the next heat event.

So it was money well spent. It is the industry and government collaborating, as we did with a number of projects with the wine industry, and we will continue to do that because we know that these projects are only small projects but they have a profound impact on a much broader scale.

Mr HUGHES: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, Sub-program 1.1: Agricultural Services, targets 2019-20, 'Continue to support drought affected regions, communities and farmers.' I am aware that the government did reject freight subsidies for feed to assist the drought-affected farmers, unlike other states, and I understand the arguments, but you did indicate that there may be help with annual costs.

In a *Stock Journal* article dated 1 November 2018, you were quoted as saying, 'Government intervention, such as subsidies, distorts and disrupts the market and I am loath to talk about them.' The article went on to report that 'assistance for Natural Resource Management levies, council and water rates, could be considered'. Then you were directly quoted by the *Stock Journal* as saying, 'These are things that really do help and are something we would give consideration to'.

The CHAIR: Member for Giles, I have given a lot of latitude this afternoon to everybody, but quoting extensively from the *Stock Journal*, unless it is identifiable to the budget papers, is very much out of order. I have let it go all afternoon. It is up to the minister if he wants to answer it. I know we have had a very good-natured estimates, but I have to remind the committee that it is highly out of order to be quoting. I was upholding the same points of order on Friday when the member for Kaurna was quoting *Hansard*. We are here to look at the budget papers and the estimates program that comes out of those budget papers. I will allow you to continue—

Mr HUGHES: I was just trying to provide some context—

The CHAIR: —but if you do not get a fulsome answer—

Mr HUGHES: —directly relevant to drought.

The CHAIR: —from the minister, please do not be surprised.

Mr HUGHES: I will rephrase it then. So what options were pursued by the state government? Were the options of assisting with council rates, NRM levies and other costs pursued? If so, what was the ultimate financial cost?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: I guess there were a number of measures put in place. As a government, we thought it appropriate that we work with the industry to get a much closer, clearer

understanding of how we could best help our farmers who are dealing with the drought. We are not a government that throws money at anything and hope that it sticks. We have seen governments do that over a number of years, and it has little to no benefit.

What I would say is that we were monitoring the conditions along the course of time. What we did is we formed a representative group on behalf of all the sectors. That was a group that I chaired. All of those sectors—Primary Producers SA, Grain Producers SA, Livestock SA, Pork SA, Dairyfarmers' Association, Australian Fodder Industry Association and Rural Business Support. PIRSA staff were there to facilitate these meetings. We had people from the Department of Human Services and the Department for Environment and Water, SA Health and the Bureau of Meteorology. They were all there as part of that dry season working group.

We came up with measures and initiatives that we thought would best support our farmers. We actually gave them the level of understanding. For a number of the community meetings that I held and at which I addressed those concerned farmers, the majority of the farmers did not understand what support was out there for them on an ongoing basis. So I was able to give them an understanding that the Farm Household Allowance was there, up to \$25,000. Then there was an additional support mechanism put in place, if those farmers were deemed and they were given—

Mr HUGHES: They were federal government programs.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: I am getting to it. What we did is we worked with the federal government in making sure that, first and foremost, there was food on the table, making sure that mental health issues were addressed, making sure that farmers knew where there was support that they could access. Very few knew that there was actually support out there to access.

As I said, we travelled the regions and we went out to the majority of the regions. Actually, I can confidently say that I have been out to all of the regions now and listened to the communities concerned. The drought programs that were put in place were there. They were targeted, but there was a lot of, as I said, support that was not initiated. There were support programs for financial aid, there was support for feed and fodder stocks and there was support there for water carting. There was also support there for rural financial counselling and rural business support. All of those initiatives were there to support.

We talked about the On-farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme. We also talked about my travels to Canberra to work with the commonwealth to understand some of those jobs that were offset because of the drought. For those farming communities, if they do not have the grain at the receivals, they do not have a job. So we saw the attraction in working with the commonwealth to attract \$28 million—for 28 councils—to bring money into the regions to help offset job losses and also for some of the community programs that had been put on hold due to the situation.

We also looked at ways in which we could help them claim up to 25 per cent of their expenses through purchases and installation of on-farm water infrastructure. By June this year, the program had provided 76 farmers with almost \$600,000 in rebates. Some of the technical advice given to our farmers not only helped with the management of their farms but also in understanding how they were dealing with livestock. Animal health officers were providing technical advice to those farmers.

As I said, there is also the FaB Scout mentoring program. As I understand it, there are 80 clients currently being supported by the FaB Scouts. It is a great initiative. The FaB Scout program is one that I experienced when I was going through drought back in the early 2000s. It gave me a sense that there was someone out there who was prepared to knock on the door and give me all the advice that I needed. We talked about the Farm Household Allowance and we talked about all kinds of things—the Farm Management Deposits Scheme, the Farm Business Concessional Loans Scheme and the personal health and wellbeing support available through different programs.

There are a couple of other initiatives. When farmers are going through a tough time, normally there is an issue with their farm not being able to access support. On the other end of the scale, there is also the pressure of the bank manager, who is, by and large, breathing down their neck, looking for repayments. We were able to pass the farm debt mediation legislation—thank you for your support in that—which was proclaimed in September 2018.

I guess you are particularly looking for the monetary contribution into our farming sector. The state government contributed about \$1.927 million as part of a state contribution to the Drought Response Program. We tipped money into the Family and Business Support Program and we put money into Rural Business Support and its Rural Financial Counselling Service—we committed an additional \$140,000 there. We provided a large amount of extension for those farmers to be able to access the support that they need.

All that ongoing support was enhanced by extra funding. We provided money to Livestock SA to cover costs for participating landowners in obtaining required meat hygiene and food safety accreditation with the pilot of the kangaroo program. That is helping them attain not only an income but is also dealing with the pressure on their pastures with the overabundant kangaroo numbers. We know that there are about 4,000,000 kangaroos in South Australia. The sustainable management harvest number is about 400,000 a year, and we are currently harvesting about 120,000 kangaroos. That shows that there is room for farming families to be a part of the commercial harvest. It is a great initiative.

PIRSA also coordinated and delivered a range of services that required a significant salary contribution, estimated at about \$1.15 million. That included technical advice, animal health officers and the coordination and connection of mental health and wellbeing services. So there is a raft of issues that the state government put forward in helping our farmers. It was not just about giving subsidies, distorting markets; it was not just about making sure that the farm was okay. It is making sure that the farmer, his family, his community all knew where there was support, making sure that they got the necessary advice.

It was also working with the commonwealth government. We did not go there looking for a fight. We went there looking for their hand in giving us the support that we needed. Local governments got that support; farmers got support. The mental health, as I said, was an absolute priority throughout the whole exercise. We have had some good opening rains this year, but we are not out of the woods yet. We know that in western New South Wales, western Queensland and some of northern Victoria, they are still in dire straits with the drought.

Again, touch wood, we are looking for a continued rainfall, and we are looking for a prosperous season for South Australian primary producers. They have been through some pretty tough times, and we as a government continue to monitor and continue to work with industry. We continue to work with the banks; we continue to work with all of the government departments so that we are abreast of the issues and we can react as necessary.

Mr HUGHES: So I gather that means there was no assistance with council rates, water rates or NRM levies.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: There are different ways that you can assist councils and the like; that is, if we can put money into councils. Some councils decided to spend money on projects; some councils decided to resist increasing council rates. In a way that is a council subsidy. But we have not initiated putting money directly back into farmers' pockets because we think we have a raft of initiatives that are helping our farmers get through a really tough time. To date, my dry working group have been very happy with the initiatives that we have put on the table.

Mr HUGHES: I guess it would be fair to say that other states have got a raft of initiatives as well, and that did not preclude them from providing direct financial assistance. I refer you to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, Sub-program 1.2: Fisheries and Aquaculture, targets 2019-20.

The CHAIR: What page, member for Giles?

Mr HUGHES: Sorry, page 64. Regarding developing recommendations on a reform package for South Australia's marine scale fishery, what progress has been made to date when it comes to the commercial marine scale reform committee?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: There has been a number of initiatives that have been put in place. The marine scale fishing council has met on a number of occasions, but what I would say is that we have seen that marine scale fishery has been through the wringer. The previous government that you were a part of promised them money—never in the budget. We are now currently dealing with making sure that we meet with the scalefish sector through the advisory committee.

Not only are we dealing with the reform, but we are dealing with 300 licences, and those licences in some instances are a stressed asset. Those commercial marine scale fishers are dealing with some really tough times at the moment. They are dealing with being shut out of some of their waters for fishing through sanctuary zones. They have been led up the garden path with a promise of \$20 million to buy out licences. They have been led up the path that they would have a government, the previous government, that would actually support them to get through all of those tough times, and that never came through.

What we are doing at the moment is we have the advisory committee, which includes an independent chair, an independent economist, six marine scale fishers, a recreational fishing member and a representative from the rock lobster sector, as well as PIRSA fisheries and aquaculture staff. That is there to facilitate this group. We also have SARDI from their institute, particularly with aquatic sciences, to look at ways that we can best address the hardship so that a sector that has been promised so much and given so little can deal with it.

The advisory committee is continuing to meet. They will hand down their recommendations later this year and once they have done that we will make the appropriate consideration as to how we can reform a sector that has been promised so much and given so little.

Mr HUGHES: On the same budget item: there was an explicit, and it was an explicit commitment to a \$20 million reform package in 2017, and that was not to be implemented until 1 July this year, so there would have been scope to fund that explicit commitment when it came to commercial buybacks and quotas. In your current budget, what has been set aside to engage in commercial buybacks, given that \$20 million was aimed to take out roughly a third of the commercial fishing activity or a third of the licences in the state?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: I will refer to your \$20 million. That was just a hollow promise. There was never any money in a forward budget, there was never any money committed to addressing that pledge of \$20 million. I have come into this role picking up the pieces of prior promises. That \$20 million was not in the budget. The only thing that was in the budget when I walked into the fisheries section was a \$28.6 million budget cut.

I think it is pretty ripe that you would suggest that there was a \$20 million promise that was not a promise; it was just spin. That \$20 million was never put into a budget paper, it was never even put in the forward estimates. I would say that it created a lot of mental angst and created a lot of heartache out there. There was a lot of planning for exiting, there was a lot of planning for growing the sector. They got a hollow promise and they are still there dealing with it.

As a government, we are dealing with the mental issues that they were left with. We are dealing with picking up the pieces in reform in that scalefish sector. We, as a government, are acting responsibly and looking at ways that we can reform the sector without giving them false hope.

Mr HUGHES: I beg to disagree because obviously there was scope to implement that \$20 million reform package. Given that it was going to be implemented on 1 July, you have had an opportunity now in two budgets to allocate funding for a reform package, so what has been allocated within your first budget, this second budget or the forward estimates for a commercial buyback package?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: As I said, we have the scalefish working group that is working through its list of recommendations. They are working very closely with the sector. In my previous answer I gave everyone an understanding of who is on that advisory council. We will continue to work with the industry and, as I said, we will have some recommendations at the end of this year and then we will look at the best way forward. But I will not entertain giving them false hope and I will not entertain giving them spin, which has put them in the current situation that they are in today.

They were dealt a blow with the sanctuary zones. That was ill-conceived. They are dealing with a lot of their waters that they cannot access. They are now dealing with a promise that was given to them that there would be \$20 million in the budget. There was no money in the budget, not a cent. What we are doing now is working with the sector to look at ways to help that sector move forward.

Mr PATTERSON: I refer the committee to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, pages 64 and 65, again in the fisheries and agriculture program. Thank you for explaining what the government is doing

regarding its election commitments to deliver that reform to South Australia's important marine scale fishery, but also about some hollow promises made to them by the previous government. Maybe in that same section, could you advise the committee about how important the rock lobster fishery is to South Australia's economy, and perhaps touch on the recent season and how it fared in comparison to previous years.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: I certainly can. The rock lobster fishery is a glaring example of how a fishery that has been managed properly, given a clear policy directive, moves forward. They are on the quota system, and we have a number of regional zones—the northern zone and the southern zone. It has shown us that the commercial lobster industry, worth \$122 million, continues to grow and prosper, and contributes around \$200 million to the GSP.

I have been out and about, particularly with the industry, and there are almost 1,500 full-time employees within the industry. Most of these employees are in regional South Australia. What we are seeing now is that it gives the ability for the fleet to upgrade, the ability for fishers and the industry to value add. When I say value add, they are looking for new markets, they are looking to increase their capacity to put live, premium product into some of our new markets.

It should be noted that the southern zone has a considerably larger quota than the northern zone, but both those zones complement one another. They have their allowable commercial catch, or quota. In the southern zone and the two regions in the northern zone closures have been in place since 1966, but on 31 May 2016 the closures in the outer region of the northern zone were removed. They were removed for a good reason: it allowed the industry to supply products in the off season and also gave them the ability to spread their catch out over the entire year.

What that showed us is that the lobster industry, the way it is managed, the quota system they are working in, is working extremely well—and that can be said for a number of the fishing sectors that have quotas. I expect to receive advice shortly from the Rock Lobster Fishery Management Advisory Committee to PIRSA regarding the total allowable commercial catch for the 2019-20 season, which will begin on 1 October. Once that information is shared with the industry they can get on, knowing exactly what their allowable catch will be, and plan for the season.

The lobster industry is one that puts in a lot of self-management, self-regulation, themselves. They go out there and make sure they can consistently feed a market rather than flood the market and the market dry up. PIRSA is working with the sector in a constructive manner so that they can actually grow the sector and have more of a continual supply into the marketplace. I think it is called continuity.

They are doing an outstanding job, and I congratulate the industry and the way it has come together and built itself around prosperity. It is proving to be very, very successful.

Mr HUGHES: I refer to Agency Statement, Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 59, and ministerial office resources regarding the minister's trade mission to Israel. What was the total cost of the minister's trip to Israel, including flights, accommodation, meals and drinks?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: The total of the cost of the trip or the total cost of—

Mr HUGHES: The total cost of the trip would be useful.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: If you are talking about Israel, I will just have to seek some clarification. I undertook two overseas trips in this financial year, and they have been sort of put into one, so we will just get a breakdown and I will give you that answer.

Mr HUGHES: Can you give us a total for the two trips to start with while your advisers are looking for a breakdown?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: The total cost of the two trips was \$70,870.38

Mr HUGHES: In relation to both the trips—I do not know if you have the broken down figures—how many advisers from the minister's office and how many staff from PIRSA travelled with you to Israel and travelled with you on the other trip?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: On my first trip, to the United States, I was accompanied by my chief of staff. On the second trip, to Israel, I was accompanied by my agriculture adviser and also my chief executive.

Mr HUGHES: What measurable outcomes are expected from the Israeli trip?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Say that again?

Mr HUGHES: What do you expect to get out of that trip?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: We have a number of initiatives that have come out of the Israeli trip. Since returning, I know that my CE has met and spoken with a number of the businesses we met while we were over there. While we were over there, we had a strong focus on the ag tech and agricultural research and development but, more importantly, it was about how we were going to commercialise the ag tech and what we saw over there.

We saw a number of businesses—I am sure I will get a breakdown shortly—that we have now been in contact with. We are looking to hold an ag symposium early next year. The previous chief scientist to Israel is a potential guest speaker. We met with a number of universities, and we also had the ability to look at a lot of on-farm working initiatives through biosecurity, irrigation efficiency technology and marketing. Most of that was through start-up businesses.

We visited the Volcani Centre and we have an agreement with PIRSA and Adelaide University currently underway. We also met with Netafim. There are initiatives about how Netafim can better engage here in South Australia—we know they have a manufacturing plant in Victoria—to look at some of the new technology through Netafim. Netafim is probably regarded as the grandfather of micro irrigation. The Israeli technology, not only for a micro emitter but its controllers, filtration and programming, has been world-renowned.

I know that while I was over there there were a number of initiatives dealing with fruit fly, and we are currently working with the proponents of that product. We are looking at using some of those products at trial sites on some of our SARDI facilities in South Australia. It is also important to note that, while I was away, I met with the Australian Ambassador to Israel, and the collaboration will continue.

I attended that trip with the Australia Israel Chamber of Commerce. They were very good to work with, and I would recommend that, if you have the time, you go over there and have a look at some of the expertise, particularly in the ag sector and biosecurity. To answer your previous question, the cost of the Israeli trip for the minister and the adviser came to \$39,153.

Mr HUGHES: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, Sub-program 1.2: Fisheries and Aquaculture, targets 2019-20, page 64:

Establish a growth plan for recreational fishing opportunities in South Australia.

In estimates last year, you indicated that you would negotiate with the Treasurer and cabinet to put together a budget allocation to introduce a stocking program for Murray cod, and I quote from estimates:

That is something that as a government I would like to think is a priority when it comes to dealing with recreational fishing.

I have not noticed anything in the budget to fund a Murray cod restocking program, despite the fact you identified it as a priority.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: It certainly is, and it is one of many priorities that I have in this role. As you are potentially aware, I was involved in a number of those restocking programs between 2016 and 2018. That program was funded through the Recreational Fishing Grants Program, and that money was sought in response to the implementation of marine parks. That money came out of that program, but the program does not continue to roll along.

Coming into office—and I have said this once and I am going to say it again—while I had a number of priorities, particularly in fisheries, I had to deal with a \$28.6 million pre-election budget cut. For yourself, that is a pretty hefty cut to implement into a reasonably small department, so some of the niceties that I had as a priority I was not able to implement. As we have not been able to continue

that program because of those cuts, I am dealing with the management around that cut every day—and I still am.

I can say that in February this year, there was a cod fingerling release into the River Murray. That was undertaken due to some residual government funds. So there has been a very small cod fingerling release in February of this year, but not to the extent that was previously undertaken back in 2016 to 2018.

Mr HUGHES: On the same page, you indicated last time, when flagging it as a priority, that you would work 'with the recreational fishing sector, with tourism, with environmentalists, with the Murray-Darling Basin Authority, and with the Premier and the Treasurer, to make sure that we got a stocking program up and running.' I assume you have met with all those people and organisations to make progress on the restocking?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: I continue to meet with the Premier, the Treasurer and my department, and the wish is to again be able to undertake a Murray cod stock enhancement.

I am working with my Recreational Fishing Advisory Council, and we are now working through our priorities within that council. While I have a passion to continue the restocking program, it is now up to me, on behalf of rec fishers, to listen and consult with the advisory council on the priority that they want to see government enhance. I will continue to listen to them, I will work with them. We work with SARDI and the Murray-Darling Basin Commission on their plan. But their plan comes through the FRDC, and we know that the Fisheries Research and Development Corp are always looking for the ability to enhance stocking programs.

It is not just freshwater fish that I want to enhance: I am looking at all sorts of enhancement, whether it is fish stocking or other initiatives, but I am going to work with my advisory council in the best and most appropriate manner so that they are giving me advice on behalf of rec fishers here in South Australia. Whether it be in the marine environment or a freshwater environment, they will be the advisory group that I will be taking counsel from.

The CHAIR: The member for Kavel has sought the call, and then the member for Wright.

Mr CREGAN: Minister, can I take you to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, pages 66 to 67, biosecurity. What assistance is the state government providing farmers to reduce impacts of pests, including rabbits?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: That is a very good question. Rabbits are an invasive introduced species. We have been working with the commonwealth to employ a rabbit coordinator. We know that at the moment rabbits create damage somewhere in the vicinity of \$30 million a year. We see Australian agriculture up, but that amount of money is being taken away by rabbit damage, not only to landscapes but to plants and crops.

We are working with the commonwealth with a strategic rabbit coordinator who is currently working around the state. His name is Josh Rosser and he is working with landowners, not only in coordinating the ability for landowners to poison together, to rip together, but also to eradicate rabbits together. That is something that has been missing in previous management plans. To bring the landowners together, to bring the farming sector together and attack rabbits in a pointed strategy will produce the best results, a little bit like the wild dog strategy.

We have seen other viruses that have been released, such as myxomatosis, the rabbit haemorrhagic disease virus, and the calicivirus. There is a new strain that is about to be released, and that will be released in conjunction with landowners and our rabbit coordinator here in South Australia, making sure that we have this coordinator there as a partnership between landowners, government and industry. For far too long we have seen this rabbit problem. There are certainly areas in the member for Kavel's electorate, particularly in the Adelaide Hills, that have a very large problem, where rabbits have an ability to hide in vegetative growth and to put their warrens and the burrows out of harm's way.

The coordinator will better address the ability not only to rip and to poison but to make sure that we remove habitat for rabbits. If we do have to protect some of the high-value crops, the rabbit coordinator can look at some of the best ways to put in rabbit-proof fencing or rabbit-proof

environments to make sure that we can actually protect our crops and our landscape. By and large, Josh has undertaken workshops in most of regional South Australia. Those educational workshops, again, are not only about the individualised approach but about making sure that landowners and farmers work together. If Josh gets it right, we will see a significant reduction in rabbit numbers right across the state.

The CHAIR: The member for Wright.

Mr BOYER: Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 66: just to briefly refer back to Yamba station, can the minister rule out that any of the vehicles that were waved through Yamba station had fruit fly infested fruit in them?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: What I would say is that the cars that came through were inspected. If they did have fruit, they were not issued with notices, to speed up the process.

Mr BOYER: Every car was inspected; none were waved through without inspection at any time?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: I am advised that all cars were inspected, fruit was collected, but to speed up the process those notices were not issued for a small period of time. We still upheld biosecurity measures at Yamba, just the zero approach was not enforced.

If I can, I will just come back to an earlier question in order to clarify a matter on offences or breaches by members of the MRFAC. I can advise that no member has been convicted of any fisheries-related matter. I note that a couple have previously received expiations for what were considered minor infringements but these are not recorded as convictions.

Mr BOYER: I can do the omnibus, if you like.

The CHAIR: Glad you can.

Mr BOYER: Thank you, Chair. The omnibus questions are as follows:

1. For each department and agency reporting to the minister:
 - What is the actual FTE count at 30 June 2019 and the projected actual FTE count for each year of the forward estimates?
 - What is the total employment cost for each year of the forward estimates?
 - What is the notional FTE job reduction target that has been agreed with Treasury for each year of the forward estimates?
 - Does the agency or department expect to meet the target in each year of the forward estimates?
 - How many TVSPs are estimated to be required to meet FTE reductions over the forward estimates?
2. Between 1 July 2018 and 30 June 2019, will the minister list the job title and total employment cost of each position with a total estimated cost of \$100,000 or more which has either (1) been abolished and (2) which has been created.
3. Will the minister provide a detailed breakdown of expenditure on consultants and contractors above \$10,000 between 1 July 2018 and 30 June 2019 for all departments and agencies reporting to the minister, listing:
 - the name of the consultant, contractor or service supplier;
 - cost;
 - work undertaken;
 - reason for engaging the contractor, and
 - method of appointment?
4. For each department and agency for which the minister has responsibility:

- How many FTEs were employed to provide communication and promotion activities in 2018-19 and what was their employment expense?
 - How many FTEs are budgeted to provide communication and promotion activities in 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23 and what is their estimated employment expense?
 - The total cost of government-paid advertising, including campaigns, across all mediums in 2018-19 and budgeted cost for 2019-20.
5. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, please provide a full itemised breakdown of attraction and retention allowances as well as non-salary benefits paid to public servants and contracts between 1 July 2018 and 30 June 2019.
6. What is the title and total employment cost of each individual staff member in the minister's office as at 30 June 2019, including all departmental employees seconded to ministerial offices?
7. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, could you detail:
- (a) How much was spent on targeted voluntary separation packages in 2018-19?
 - (b) What department funded these TVSPs? (except for DTF Estimates)
 - (c) What number of TVSPs were funded?
 - (d) What is the budget for targeted voluntary separation packages for financial years included in the forward estimates (by year), and how are these packages funded?
 - (e) What is the breakdown per agency/branch of targeted voluntary separation packages for financial years included in the forward estimates (by year) by FTEs?
8. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, how many executive terminations have occurred since 1 July 2018 and what is the value of executive termination payments made?
9. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, what new executive appointments have been made since 1 July 2018, and what is the annual salary, and total employment cost for each position?
10. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, how many employees have been declared excess, how long has each employee been declared excess, and what is the salary of each excess employee?
11. In the 2018-19 financial year, for all departments and agencies reporting to the minister, what underspending on operating programs (1) was and (2) was not approved by cabinet for carryover expenditure in 2019-20?
12. In the 2018-19 financial year, for all departments and agencies reporting to the minister, what underspending on investing or capital projects or programs (1) was and (2) was not approved by cabinet for carryover expenditure in 2019-20? How was much sought and how much was approved?
13. For each grant program or fund the minister is responsible for please provide the following information for 2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22 financial years:
- (a) Name of the program or fund;
 - (b) The purpose of the program or fund;
 - (c) Balance of the grant program or fund;
 - (d) Budgeted (or actual) expenditure from the program or fund;
 - (e) Budgeted (or actual) payments into the program or fund;
 - (f) Carryovers into or from the program or fund; and

(g) Details, including the value and beneficiary, of any commitments already made to be funded from the program or fund.

14. For the period of 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019, provide a breakdown of all grants paid by the department/agency that report to the minister, including when the payment was made to the recipient, and when the grant agreement was signed by both parties.

15. For each year of the forward estimates, please provide the name and budgeted expenditure across the 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23 financial years for each individual investing expenditure project administered by or on behalf of all departments and agencies reporting to the minister.

16. For each year of the forward estimates, please provide the name and budget for each individual program administered by or on behalf of all departments and agencies reporting to the minister.

17. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, what is the total cost of machinery of government changes since 1 July 2018 and please provide a breakdown of those costs?

18. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, what new sections of your department or agency have been established since 1 July 2018 and what is their purpose?

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

- What savings targets have been set for each year of the forward estimates?
- What measures are you implementing to meet your savings target?
- What is the estimated FTE impact of these measures?

Sitting suspended from 15:26 to 15:45.

Membership:

Hon. A. Piccolo substituted for Hon. Z.L. Bettison.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr S. Ashby, Chief Executive, Department of Primary Industries and Regions.

Ms J. Burton, Chief Financial Officer, Department of Primary Industries and Regions.

Mr T. Goodes, Deputy Chief Executive, Department of Primary Industries and Regions.

Ms M. Griffiths, Executive Director, Corporate Services, Department of Primary Industries and Regions.

The CHAIR: If we could please move to the Regional Development portfolio of the Department of Primary Industries and Regions. The minister appearing is the Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development. Could I please welcome the member for Light, who replaces the discharged member for Ramsay. I declare the proposed payments open for examination and refer members to Agency Statements, Volume 4. Minister, if you could just update your advisers for the committee and then we can proceed.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: I certainly can; thank you. I have my chief executive, Scott Ashby, to the left of me. Jane Burton, chief financial officer, is still with us. I have a new inclusion: Tim Goodes, deputy chief executive, who is ready and raring to go.

The CHAIR: Thank you.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Chair, if I may, in relation to an answer regarding fruit fly out at Yamba, I just wanted to clarify that Bede Road is where the bins are. Bede Road is inside the

PFA, but it is outside the Loxton outbreak suspension zone. It is confusing, I know, but those are the facts.

The CHAIR: Sometimes they are. Member for Giles.

Mr HUGHES: There you have it. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 69, Program 2: Regional Development, targets 2019-20. In regard to the consultation for the Regional Development Strategy to create a plan for future economic opportunities in regional South Australia, what is the total cost of developing the strategy?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Thank you for the question. The strategy obviously, as I have said, is currently being developed to reform how the state government prioritises investment in regional South Australia and grows those opportunities. It is a holistic regional development strategy which outlines how the government plans to invest and develop policy. It is about the regional economies over the long term, how they will foster business and create investor confidence.

I anticipate the strategy will be delivered in partnership with private investors and the community. It is how we attract people to live and do business in our regions. To reinforce the government's commitment to engage in regional South Australia, I have established the independent community advisory panel. They are independent panel members. They have been out on the road. I think they have concluded their 14 community forums.

As understand it, those members are not paid. They are there for the betterment of regional South Australia. They all have connections to the regions. They are doing it out of the goodness of their heart, but they are also doing it out of a concern for regional South Australia needing a stimulus. They do need the levers for government to understand how regional centres can grow and how government can actually acknowledge that and develop a strategy. The strategy development is being funded within the PIRSA regions SA divisional budget, so there is no cost outside of the PIRSA budget.

Mr HUGHES: So there is no outsourcing involved at all with the strategy; it is all done internally, with a number of volunteers out there in the community.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Correct.

Mr HUGHES: How many people so far have made either written or verbal submissions at the various meetings? Have you got those numbers?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: I do not have those numbers. The consultation process only closed last week, that is, Friday 26 July. I will have to come back to you with an answer and give you the numbers of engagement with that panel.

Mr HUGHES: When do you anticipate the strategy will be in place?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: As I said earlier, the consultation process only closed last week. The group is now taking stock of what was put to them. I know that they regularly met after each of those community forums and condensed the input from those community people, businesses and local government RDAs. They will come back to me. I would anticipate that the strategy will be put to me within the coming months, and we hope to have the strategy released in early 2020.

Mr HUGHES: Who exactly is on the advisory panel, and how were they selected?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: They nominated. The people on the panel are:

- Mark Sutton, who is the panel chair and also the current chair of the Regional Development Australia Far North board. Mark lives and worked in regional South Australia for many years. He is also the director of the Outback Communities Authority. He is a resident of the regional South Australia Far North community.
- Jeremy Conway, who is the current Acting Chief Executive of InfrastructureSA. Prior to that role, he worked across the transport and infrastructure portfolios in government, as well as providing commercial advice as a commercial director for Places Victoria.
- Bill Spurr, who is a highly regarded South Australian with a strong background in tourism and education. He is a current member of the Premier's Economic Advisory Council. He

is currently the chair of the Adelaide Venue Management Corporation. He is an adjunct professor of tourism at Flinders University and is on the Rhodes Scholarship Selection Committee. He is also a member of the Zoos SA board. Previously, he was the chair of education Adelaide and a board director of SeaLink Travel Group.

- Mayor Sam Telfer, who is the current President of the Local Government Association of South Australia and a previous board member, spanning five years. He has been an elected member of the District Council of Tumby Bay since 2010. He is a resident in regional South Australia, near Tumby Bay, and he is a farmer.
- Tony Vaughan, who is the Chief Executive Officer of the Royal Flying Doctor Service South Australia since November 2018, having previously held the position of deputy chief executive since 2014. He was previously the general manager of MedSTAR and has an extensive background in paramedics, working with country and metropolitan operations. He has extensive leadership experience within health and emergency services. He is a resident of regional South Australia, residing in the Barossa Valley.
- Maree Wauchope, who is a current member of the Training and Skills Commission in South Australia. She has extensive experience working in the public sector, focusing on transport and infrastructure in metropolitan and regional areas of South Australia. She is currently working in the private sector, providing services in the area of infrastructure, transport planning, environment, property and management. She is a resident of regional South Australia, residing on Yorke Peninsula.

So they are the members of the panel. They are highly credentialed. I have met with them, after their first few meetings. They gave me very good feedback, and I gave them a very good dinner.

Mr HUGHES: With the implementation of the plan, is it going to dovetail with the Regional Growth Fund, or is it going to be across portfolios when it comes to funding the implementation, depending on what comes out of the ultimate strategy?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: No, the Regional Growth Fund is not connected with the regional advisory panel. The Regional Growth Fund is separate. What I would say is that developing a regional development strategy is about working with the communities, with the regions, about what we think, in terms of a strategy, we can do as a government to prioritise attracting investment and attracting opportunities but also instilling confidence in regional centres.

The Regional Growth Fund is a separate initiative. That is something that has been, obviously, rolled out since we came into government. Round 2 of the Regional Growth Fund opened on 1 July this year and will continue to roll on as it has been.

Mr HUGHES: From that answer, then, I am just wondering about the funding source for the strategy. I am still not clear. Given that when we talk about regional development, clearly there are the responsibilities within your portfolio but regional development is something that goes across all portfolios. I suppose the question is: given the nature of the strategy that you anticipate, do other ministers also take responsibility for whatever is thrown up in that plan that might cross over into their portfolio area?

The CHAIR: Member for Giles, I remind you and the minister that the minister is only responsible for the estimates that we are looking at. He is not responsible for what other ministers may be responsible for in terms of what we are looking at here.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: It is going to be a whole-of-government strategy. With the development strategy, the department has received 50 written submissions. There will be additional submissions received from the moderators of the YourSAy website. There were 14 community sessions, with over 100 one-on-one presentations to the panel from key stakeholders. It was well attended and well supported.

The feedback that I have had from a number of community organisations, a number of industry businesses, is that they were given the opportunity to express their opinion, they were listened to and they were treated with a high level of respect. I think most people who have been to those stakeholder meetings have had good engagement with the panel.

Mr HUGHES: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 39, Program 2: Regional Development. How many full-time equivalents worked specifically in the regions division of PIRSA at the start of the 2018-19 financial year?

The CHAIR: Sorry, member for Giles, did you say page 39?

Mr HUGHES: No, I said page 69.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Regions SA has 24 FTEs.

The CHAIR: Member for Kavel, do you have a question? I know you have been seeking the call.

Mr CREGAN: Minister, can I take you to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, pages 69 to 70, regional development. I would be grateful if you might please update the committee on what the state government has done to support food and beverage production in the Adelaide Hills.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: I can. There has been particular interest through the Adelaide Hills with the Regional Growth Fund. We know that it is a \$15 million growth fund that has been split into two: \$5 million is part of a competitive round and \$10 million is part of a strategic round. What we saw as one of the deliveries of the growth fund into the Adelaide Hills was to Lot 100. Lot 100 is a consortium of businesses at an establishment called Lot 100 at Nairne. The investment has given the capacity to ensure that they can have a continued expansion not only in the Hills brewing, in their cider production, juicing and distilling industries, but it has given that business, that consortium, the ability now to be able to enter export markets and have the capacity to provide a continuity of supply and quality of product going into some of the newer export markets.

I believe that they are now exporting into Japan, Singapore, the UK and North America. I think it is an outstanding success story. It is estimated that it will create about 15 FTEs. The total project was \$900,000. This project only went ahead because the Regional Growth Fund gave that expediency to that business. For those of you who have not been up to Lot 100, you should go up there and have a look. It is an outstanding success story. Not only are they treating their own wastewater but they now have state-of-the-art brewing facilities and distillation and are also using Indigenous food products. It is a great opportunity to go up there and experience what the tourism sector has wanted in that area for such a long time; that is, it is quite a complete visitor experience. Not only do they serve very good food but they also serve very good beverages.

Mr HUGHES: Returning to the same page, how many full-time equivalents worked specifically in the regions division of PIRSA at the end of 2018—that should have been the 2019-20 year? What is anticipated?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Eighteen.

Mr HUGHES: You have already answered 2018-19. The 2019-20 year: how many full-time equivalents are anticipated?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: I am advised that it is anticipated to stay the same.

Mr HUGHES: Stay the same, okay. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 69, Program 2: Regional Development, highlights 2018-19, and the Regional Growth Fund. Given the nature of the successful applicants to the competitive round, do you agree that there has been a shift from a greater focus on job creation to a more generalised community or business benefit; notwithstanding the fact that there are clearly some projects here that would be employment related? Do you think there has been that shift?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: No, I do not. I guess what we have seen is that the competitive round has been broken away from the strategic round for a very specific reason, and that is to give the ability to industry, to give the ability to communities to collaborate and bring either industry together or bring communities together to have a focal point on what they are looking to do, and that is to grow the regional sector within that jurisdiction. Previously, we saw that there were advantages given to individuals, businesses—let's just say individuals—that created a little bit of have and have not; it created a division. For myself, living in a regional centre, I was fully aware of the impacts that the previous development fund had. What I am seeing now with the growth fund is just exactly that;

it is giving the ability for businesses or community groups to grow and it essentially brings those groups together.

We now have a collaboration or a cluster or a community group that is becoming eligible for that Regional Growth Fund, so it is giving the ability for the growth fund to be spread further with a smaller amount of money. As I have just said with Lot 100, we created 15 FTEs with a \$400,000 investment, and I think that is a pretty good spend of taxpayers' money.

Mr HUGHES: As time goes on, will these particular projects be assessed in terms of their job creation, not just what they are indicating they are going to create but what they ultimately do create?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Absolutely. The Regional Growth Fund gives the individual proposal or project put forward the capacity to grow. As you have said, and rightfully, it is not about the immediate growth on the fruition of a project, it is about a longer term strategy. That is why we are calling it a growth fund.

Mr HUGHES: On the same page, on the competitive round, can you give a breakdown of how much was allocated to each of the projects?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Yes, I can. Would you like me to name these projects, is that what you are looking for?

Mr HUGHES: Yes; if you could name the projects and the amount tied to each project.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: In the 2018-19 year, \$4.1 million was committed to nine projects through the competitive round of the Regional Growth Fund from a total of 84 applications submitted. More than \$23.8 million has been committed to 11 projects from the strategic portion of the growth fund. It is anticipated that the total investment for regional South Australia from these projects, when co-investment is taken into consideration, will be more than \$99 million.

In the competitive round, successful funding went to Shield Intermodal at Bordertown, funding went to the Lot 100 consortium up at Nairne, and the Mid Murray Council has been funded \$346,556 to install a new underground electricity line at Bowhill to give the town and Bowhill Engineering the space and capacity for expansion.

As I have said, Bowhill Engineering and, in particular, the general store are now seeing a huge expansion. Anyone who has been up Darlington way, if you look at any of those overpasses, those green and yellow steel structures, the majority of them were built by Bowhill Engineering, a very small engineering firm up in the Riverland. That is a great outcome. The Bowhill general store has also started to rebuild after the fire. So we think that money has injected a huge amount of optimism and Bowhill is now looking to expand to bigger and better things.

We saw an investment into the Apple and Pear Growers Association of \$400,000 to upgrade its existing water pumping systems and install solar technology. That has been very well received. We also saw funding go into the Coorong District Council to fund the installation of four lined water catchments and one weather station at Salt Creek and Woods Well for improved water security. I have actually been down there and had a look at one of those lined catchments, and it is truly incredible to see. It is another diverse way of capturing water and putting it into storage, and it is a great outcome.

The Goolwa Pipi Company was awarded funding of \$489,000 to expand their operation and process and package extra wild catch pipis. That was done in partnership with the Ngarrindjeri fishers down at Goolwa, which is a really good outcome. Not only has the Goolwa Pipi Company partnered with the Ngarrindjeri people, they are now marketing to bigger and better markets, and they also have a capacity to have a much more diverse range of product that they can put into their markets.

In the next round of funding, the Royal Flying Doctor Service has been funded \$387,000 to develop a purpose-built clinic at Innamincka, providing quality and culturally safe health care and related social services. As we all know, Innamincka is one of the very remote communities in South Australia. I presented that funding at the Royal Flying Doctor Service facility at Adelaide Airport. The way that very professional organisation is run is testament to why taxpayers' money was put into

developing that purpose-built clinic. The Outback Communities Authority will be funded \$50,010 to upgrade tourist facilities in seven outback communities, including some of yours, sir—

Mr HUGHES: Yes.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: —including Parachilna, Yunta, Beltana, Glendambo, Iron Knob, Fowlers Bay, Penong and the unincorporated areas in South Australia. Those are the competitive projects that got up and got the funding.

Mr HUGHES: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, Program 2: Regional Development, targets 2019-20, page 69. The targets include to promote and recognise the important contributions that regional South Australia and agricultural towns bring to the state. Considering your plan to grow the regions, can you please confirm if you supported the introduction of the outback property tax for unincorporated South Australia?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: I am advised that that program will not proceed. They are not pushing along with having to raise the funds for that project to be successful. I guess that is as good an answer as I can get considering it is not part of my portfolio.

Mr HUGHES: On the same page, as the Minister for Regional Development, did you support eliminating registration concessions for the people in the unincorporated areas, Roxby Downs, Coober Pedy and Kangaroo Island?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Again, I think the Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Local Government will be in estimates tomorrow, and that would be a really good question that you could raise with him.

Mr HUGHES: I was interested in your take on it as the Minister for Regional Development, given the very negative impact it is going to have on the unincorporated areas, Roxby Downs, Coober Pedy and Kangaroo Island.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Having not done the consultation to understand exactly what impacts it will have on those communities—

Mr HUGHES: There was no consultation.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: —I would say that tomorrow would be your opportunity to ask the minister that question.

Mr HUGHES: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, Program 2: Regional Development, targets, page 69. Given the ongoing funding provided for regional development boards, what effort is made on the part of the government to assess the effectiveness of the boards and hold the boards to account for expenditure of public money and good governance?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: What we see is that, coming into government, we have committed to putting the extra funding to the RDAs—those seven regionally located RDAs. We committed \$3 million per annum until 30 June 2022. That funding enables RDAs to make real and lasting decisions for the development of those regional areas. The assessment is really a part of what we will see in time, if the RDAs have been given that support.

I regularly meet with the RDAs and assess their performance. It is very clear that RDAs now have been put on notice. They have got the extra money. They are now working with other RDAs to share knowledge and to share the understanding of how they can better use resources. It has become very clear that the RDAs are supported with \$1.8 million per year from the commonwealth government as well as the \$1.85 million per year from local government.

I think all eyes are watching the RDAs to make sure that they are accountable for the funding they get from all tiers of government so that they actually develop our regions and to make sure that they are creating economic opportunities when it comes to living in a region and are looking for that opportunity that we, as regional MPs, want to come to our town.

Mr HUGHES: Are you saying that there is already an evaluative framework in place?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: There is a framework in place. Previously, we have seen that RDAs live on a very short life cycle. They are continually looking over their shoulder at ongoing

funding so that they continue in their roles as the RDA. We have put some certainty into the workplace for those RDAs. They can now get on and make sure that they can develop strategies and make sure that they are there to do the job that they are destined to do. Previously—

The CHAIR: The time has expired for this session, unfortunately. There being no further questions, I declare the examination of proposed payments for the portfolio of Department of Primary Industries and Regions completed.

Membership:

Mr Brown substituted for Mr Boyer.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr J. Speed, Chief Executive, ForestrySA.

Prof. M. Doroudi, Deputy Chief Executive, Department of Primary Industries and Regions.

Ms S. Ware, Manager, Finance and ICT, ForestrySA.

The CHAIR: We will now move on to the portfolio of ForestrySA. The minister appearing is the Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, Department of Primary Industries and Regions. The member for Wright has been discharged and the member for Playford is joining us.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Mr Chair, we do have a changeover of staff.

The CHAIR: Thank you. I declare the proposed payments open for examination and refer members to the Agency Statements, Volume 4. Minister, when you are ready, if you would like to advise of the change of advisers.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Welcome, everybody. I would like to introduce the executive. To my left I have Julian Speed, Chief Executive, ForestrySA; to his left, Sara Ware, Manager, Finance and ICT; and to my right I have Mehdi Doroudi, the Deputy Chief Executive of PIRSA.

I want to put a little bit of clarification around this portfolio. I guess the easiest way to explain or understand the respective roles of PIRSA and ForestrySA in South Australia's forestry sector is that PIRSA is responsible for statewide policy, including national policy and R&D facilitation. The South Australian Forestry Corporation, trading as ForestrySA, is a government corporation charged to deliver commercial forestry activity, i.e. run the government's forestry and their business, and deliver community service obligations associated with state-owned forest reserves, and the ForestrySA board oversees these operations.

The CHAIR: Thank you, minister. The member for Giles may have a question.

Mr HUGHES: The first question is in relation to the Forest Industry Advisory Council of South Australia, Budget Paper 3, page 109 and Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 68. When was the Forest Industry Advisory Council of South Australia first established and what, specifically, is its role?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: The first meeting of the Forest Industry Advisory Council was on 10 April 2019. At the last election, the Marshall government committed to the forestry sector that it would establish a forestry industry advisory council of South Australia. We have delivered that commitment and announced the membership of the council in late 2018. The terms of reference for the council state that the council will provide strategic advice to government on developing South Australia's forest and wood product industries.

The council first met on 10 April, where members discussed opportunities to supercharge the forestry industry. This includes discussions on expanding plantations, plus increasing the growth of domestic processing. I have since met with the council a second time just to reinforce and listen to their thoughts and ambitions of the industry and where government is best placed to help.

The meetings have been very valuable. They are not only giving a level of dialogue that gives me an opportunity to hear firsthand from industry leaders, but it also consists of those 11 key industry

figures right across, from growing forests right through the value chain. They have generously agreed to give up their time for no remuneration to help achieve outcomes for the forestry sector. The support PIRSA provides the council is from within the forestry division and it is within its normal operating budget.

The council consists of Wendy Fennell, Chair and Managing Director of Fennell Forestry; Mark Rogers, Managing Director, New Forests; Laurie Hein, Managing Director, Green Triangle Forest Products; Jill Stone from Three Streams Farm, who is a farm forestry expert; Ian McDonnell, Managing Director, NF McDonnell and Sons; Linda Sewell, Chief Executive Officer, OneFortyOne Plantations; Ian Tyson, Chief Executive Officer, Timberlink Australia; Tammy Auld, Woodflow Manager, Timberlands Pacific; Martin Crevatin, National Operations Manager, PF Olsen Australia; Peter Badenoch, Managing Director, Plantation Treated Timber; and Emma Daly, Executive Manager, Van Schaiks Bio Gro.

These members were chosen due to their varied expertise. The council represents knowledge right across the value chain. I am very confident that this is a very good, cohesive working group. I receive plenty of recommendations, but I am looking forward to receiving the advice from the council to determine how we can progress and grow the sector.

Mr HUGHES: When are you likely to receive that advice?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Again, I would say that the council will meet again shortly and they will then determine where their priorities are. I think we are dealing with a number of issues. There has been a residual of, I guess, a hangover from the sale of the forests and the lack of certainty that that created. We are now dealing with a number of issues moving forward for the industry to have a much better understanding that, as a government, we will not be there growing the industry, we will be there supporting the industry's growth.

Mr HUGHES: How many times has the council met so far?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: They have met twice. I have met with them twice at official meetings. They continually have those small subcommittee meetings and they continue to have that dialogue privately, over the phone, wherever they deem appropriate. I think it is a good healthy robust committee and they will leave no stone unturned on how we grow the industry.

Mr HUGHES: Does the committee have any key performance indicators?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Yes, they do, and that is growth. These industry leaders are there for the betterment of forestry. If you are saying that I am going to put KPIs on their performance, no, I am not. I am going to put KPIs on any inappropriate behaviour, but to date they have shown exemplary behaviour. They are showing a cohesive capacity to work together and we are dealing with the issues at hand. We have recently undertaken a road and bridge audit: we are looking at that. It is about developing a whole of industry plan to grow that sector.

As I say, at a certain point, they lost some direction because there was a level of fragmentation within the industry, particularly with the sale of the forward rotations. What that has meant now is that they have to regroup, focus, and look at ways they can attract consistent supply, how they can attract new investment, how they can attract a consistent approach with cross-border representation, because we know that the Green Triangle is quite joined with the sector into Victoria.

So, as a government, as a minister, I have to better understand what the industry's needs are before I can go to the Treasurer or the Premier, or to the Victorian government for that matter, and look at ways that we can put initiatives in place to support the industry.

Mr HUGHES: So the government, at this stage, does not have any of its own specific targets?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: This is a growth agenda led by industry and it is facilitated by the government.

Mr PEDERICK: Point of order, Chair: I am just wondering if this line of questioning was more suitable under PIRSA because we are under ForestrySA at the moment. I am seeking some clarification.

The CHAIR: As I said, member for Hammond, I have been very broad this afternoon in giving plenty of latitude and the member for Giles—

Mr HUGHES: A very generous Chair, I have to say.

The CHAIR: That is not what the member for Elizabeth said last week in his contributions about me but, member for Hammond, I will throw you the question if you would like to ask a question.

Mr PEDERICK: No, I am happy for the member—

The CHAIR: Member for Morphett, how about that?

Mr PATTERSON: Thank you, generous Chair. If I could refer the committee to Budget Paper 3, Chapter 5, page 75. Can the minister please advise how many visitors currently enjoy ForestrySA's native forest reserves and pine plantations? While you are discussing that, maybe what activities are encouraged in those estates which could be enjoyed by the people of Morphett and other electorates more generally.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Thank you for the question, and it is a good question because for some, the forestry sector is about trees and timber. For others, it is about recreation and the opportunity to go into those forests and be a part of what the native forests, particularly, the reserves and the plantations have to offer. As I understand it, I am advised that there were more than 260,000 people who visited those reserves in the 2018-19 year.

One of the capacities that ForestrySA have is promoting recreational activities, particularly across the Mount Lofty Ranges and down in the South-East. It is about the opportunity for hiking, horseriding, cycling and motorsports. We all love motorsport, so it is great to see that they are accommodating that activity. There is camping and cave diving, picnicking and birdwatching. They are but a few. We know that hiking trails, particularly through the Heysen and up through Mount Lofty, are just a great experience, particularly up through Kuitpo and Mount Crawford. The list goes on.

I think in the South-East there have been nearly 2,500 permits for cave diving activities. It is now world-renowned, particularly amongst enthusiasts within diving. It goes on. Those experiences, looking through all of the sectors, are really important. The popularity of Cudlee Creek forest near Lenswood, home to the world-class mountain biking trial, continues to grow. We are looking at ways in which we can investigate new revenue streams from this increased visitation. I know that the Premier is very keen to see filming and the arts explore opportunities up into the forest with orienteering.

I am sure that the shadow minister would be very much interested in the Ghost Mushroom Lane. That was open to the public for a third year down in the Green Triangle. If you have not experienced the Ghost Mushroom Lane, you should.

Mr HUGHES: Fluorescent fungi?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: They have the ability to glow in the dark. You get yourself down there and just experience it. I have not experienced it myself, but I am told that it is a unique experience.

The CHAIR: You are recommending something which you have not undertaken yourself.

Members interjecting:

The CHAIR: Member for Giles, do you have a question?

Mr HUGHES: Yes, and I might as well follow on from visitors. Budget Paper 3, government business, pages 73 to 86—

The CHAIR: That is a very broad page reference.

Mr HUGHES: That is very broad, but it is a very specific question. It is about visitor numbers, which has already been discussed, but there are some visitors to our forests who we do not want to encourage. Has any modelling been done on the likely increases to rubbish dumping in local forests due to the Marshall Liberal government's increase of the solid waste levy?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: You do not really want me to go there, do you?

Mr HUGHES: I am just asking if you have done any modelling in relation to this appalling imposition on regional communities.

The CHAIR: There is a question. Minister, you can choose to answer that how you see fit, but no need for commentary.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: The question is out of order and I will answer it. This has been an ongoing problem in the forests for a number of years. People continually, unfortunately, dump rubbish in the forests and on the roadsides up there. It is something that we continually monitor, police, and clean up. The staff at ForestrySA have a lot better things to do than cleaning up people's rubbish but, sadly, it is a by-product of people breaking the law and doing what they do. What I would say is that I think, by and large, ForestrySA and their workforce are doing a great job cleaning up the bad behaviour of some of those people who dump rubbish.

Mr HUGHES: Following on from that and given the likely impact of the hard waste levy increase, has any additional money been allocated to ForestrySA to deal with the potential likelihood of increased dumping in our forests?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: I think that is hypothetical.

Mr HUGHES: I would imagine, if dumping is already taking place, any additional cost would see a rise in dumping. It is something that we experience in quite a few areas in regional South Australia and, I am sure, in the metropolitan area as well. It is partly cost related.

The CHAIR: I think the member for Kavel has a question.

Mr CREGAN: In fact, I was going to raise a point of order, Mr Chairman—

The CHAIR: No, member, you can ask a question instead.

Mr CREGAN: —but the matter has resolved itself, I am pleased to say, without the need for me to raise it with you. May I take the minister to Budget Paper 3, chapter 5, pages 73 to 86, government business. Can the minister confirm whether ForestrySA holds third-party certification for sustainable forest management?

The CHAIR: Member for Kavel, before the minister answers that question, for the sake of fairness I will say to you also that that is a very broad page range. As such, it might elicit a broad response.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: I am pleased to report that yes, they do: they uphold and maintain a sustainable forest management certification. Obviously, that is for Responsible Wood certification. The scheme is really associated with management systems and the aspects of operations within ForestrySA. Responsible Wood is part of a respected international sustainability certification system that provides certainty for customers who buy a product with the Responsible Wood logo. That is its certification. It gives some ownership for good custodianship of those forests. I can say that ForestrySA is committed to responsible environmental management of its plantations and native forests.

Mr HUGHES: I beg your indulgence again. In response to the previous Dorothy Dixier, a mention was made of exploring increased revenue streams.

The CHAIR: Sorry, member for Giles, I am not sure what a Dorothy Dixier is, but if you have a question, please ask it.

Mr HUGHES: It is about increased revenue streams in response to that question.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: We are exploring.

Mr HUGHES: What revenue streams are you exploring?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: We are looking at exploring or investigating. As I said, a variety of people visit the forest. People pay camping fees and permit fees for entering the forest. Should we attract more people or new groups of people into the forest? As I said, there is talk that we are looking at accommodation upgrades. That will increase rates. As we all know, ecotourism is very much a new industry that is growing and thriving. If we can get those sectors improved or get a

greater capacity of visitation into those areas, it increases permit fee income and the capacity for people to go up there to stay, camp and experience. Who knows, we might be making films up in the forest before we know it.

Mr HUGHES: Moving on, I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 68, National Institute for Forest Products Innovation. Of the \$8,520,000 estimated expenses for 2018-19, how much of that was spent on the institute?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: The expenditure was over four years. It was \$2 million over that four years.

Mr HUGHES: So over the following years then, let's say about \$0.5 million a year.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: As an aggregate, yes.

Mr HUGHES: Okay. Is there an anticipation of further expenditure for 2022-23 and onwards?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: That is not really in any budget papers that I am aware of, but I am sure there would be due consideration for that expenditure. But that is not something that is even ready for forward estimates. I am advised that the current agreement expires at the end of 2021. That will give a capacity for negotiations then, perhaps.

Mr HUGHES: At that time, do you anticipate flagging with the federal government a willingness on the part of the state to continue to contribute a share?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: That has not been considered as yet. I can give you an overview of the research centre. Obviously, the primary aim of the National Institute for Forest Products Innovation is to grow forestry and its products. Forestry and forest-based industries are a significant contributor, with \$2 billion in revenue annually. Continuous improvement through applied research is important. It is about maintaining and growing the sector, and that is what the government are focused on.

The Mount Gambier centre is a partnership between the state government and the commonwealth government, each providing \$2 million over four years. The University of South Australia provides accommodation for the centre and business support for the research capacity. Obviously the location of the hub in Mount Gambier is an asset for the South-East, but it also provides an opportunity for local industry to influence the research priorities and the outcomes of the institute.

As some of us know, the centre was launched in 2018 by Senator Ruston. She is a former minister for forests. They appointed an industry-led management committee, and the Marshall Liberal government is continuing this commitment.

Mr HUGHES: Given the importance of the national institute and the importance of taking a long-term approach, would you be willing to guarantee as a state that we will continue to fund beyond the forward estimates?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: What I can say is that it is an industry-led committee, but just recently I jointly announced with the then assistant minister for agriculture and water resources, Senator Richard Colbeck, a successful round—it was round 1—of the projects. Four projects accounting for \$1.3 million of the \$4 million of funding were selected by the committee. So there is that commitment to those topics: the safe and efficient workplaces, the precision management, the social licenses issue for blue gums and plantations and of course plantations and water.

I have also made an announcement with minister Colbeck about the successful round 2 applications; there were eight projects accounting for the remaining funds that were selected by those committees. The topics included biosecurity and biosecurity systems, protocols, carbon emissions, forest fire detection and suppression, and softwood sawn products.

The initiative of the federal coalition to establish the centre in partnership with the state government—it is at the forefront of research and development. I guess they will be assessed on their merit, and if we can see credibility with those rounds and those successful projects, I would be very keen to put my support for ongoing funding.

Mr HUGHES: Very keen, but no guarantee at this stage?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Well, nothing is guaranteed. What I would say is that we will watch very carefully the success of those projects, and should they be good for the industry, I will continue to support that funding, and I will do what I have to do as a minister to secure ongoing funding.

Mr HUGHES: Referring to Budget Paper 3, page 109 and doubling the economic value of timber production across South Australia by 2050, what progressive benchmarks do you have in place with regard to doubling the economic value of the timber manufacturing sector by 2050?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Obviously, the forestry advisory council is having their dialogue with where they would like to see the growth of the sector. We made a commitment, coming into the 2018 election, to support the industry's growth targets to double the value of the forestry industry, the timber industry, by 2050, and we will continue to do that. We will work with the industry for the industry to grow the value of that sector.

It is very important that the industry has ownership of those initiatives to grow the sector. As a government, we are putting initiatives in place to support that, not only through FIAC and not only through the roads and bridge audit, but through working with the commonwealth government with ongoing funding and initiatives, research projects into forestry and also the perception of forestry. I think that has been very important. Many of you would have seen that the industry is looking to grow the sector but first they have to have good social licence and, at the moment, to do that they are putting their best foot forward.

Mr PEDERICK: My question refers to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 187. Will the minister detail the current economic demand for ForestrySA product and the overall financial position of ForestrySA?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: I will. It is a good question, even if it is a government question. ForestrySA's strategic business focus has been about gaining efficiencies. My chief executive is doing a very good job in finding efficiencies within. We know that the forward rotations in the Green Triangle were sold. That was the jewel in South Australia's forestry crown. What they left was the product of what others did not want. The team at ForestrySA is doing a very good job at finding efficiencies, doing the best they can with product to industry, value-added industry, because the forests that were not sold with the forward rotations in the Green Triangle were parts of the sector that new investors did not want.

We are now looking at ways that we can find efficiencies within the next jewel in the crown, if you like. However, it does come at a cost. We have found efficiencies this year but it has posed problems. We continue to look around at what it is currently costing. The state is currently subsidising ForestrySA's commercial operations in the final year. The budgeted equity contribution by government was \$4.3 million; however, this is now unlikely to be paid this year due to the agreements and Crown leases on behalf of the Mid North forests, which normally would be returned to Treasury but that has been retained by ForestrySA so that we can get on with doing what ForestrySA does very well.

As I said, I have commended the board and management for their efforts. They have finished well ahead of budget and have exceeded the operation result target by \$2.1 million. That is a great result. It is a really good result when you consider the ongoing expenses that ForestrySA has had to encumber with the ongoing subsidising of timber to some of those sawmills, dealing with a very small product base with a workforce that once upon a time stood proud over all of South Australia's forestry asset. I think ForestrySA and the executive are doing a very good job with a very small portion of forests in South Australia.

For those of you who do not understand, efficiency gains come with economies of scale in forestry and the economies of scale went out the door when the rotations were sold. That is why I continue to commend the board and senior management for what they have done to pick up the pieces and get on with running the remainder of ForestrySA's assets.

Mr HUGHES: Just returning to the benchmarking, in estimates last year you referred to benchmarks being set up once the Forest Industry Advisory Council was in place. In your previous response you did not give me any clarity about the benchmarks and what are the benchmarks. If you

could just return to that, specifically what are the benchmarks and how is progress going to be measured against those benchmarks?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: As I have said, the advisory council is meeting to look at ways it can work in growing the sector. The benchmark is to grow the sector, the benchmark is for the government to support the industry's KPI, which is to double the value of forestry by 2050. That is what we are focused on doing at the moment. As I said, it is looking at ways we can attract investment, looking at ways we can increase the fibre grown in our forests, looking at how we can increase the value of the fibre we are growing.

It is not about putting all the log into a market but about understanding how we meet the needs of the domestic market and how we meet the needs of consumer-based demand. FIAC is developing details around growth strategy, developing details around sustainable supply, developing details around consistency with cross-border issues, it is looking at the details around finding efficiencies with those cross-border issues.

However, we also look at ways we can retain the majority of our timber, whether it be sawlog or pulp log, here in South Australia so that we can add value to it in our state rather than put it, as a commodity product, onto a ship and send it away. Inevitably there will always be that element of export opportunity, but the more we can maximise value-adding our product here in South Australia the more jobs we will create, the more certainty we will put into the sector, and the more confidence people will have to invest.

To do that we also have to look at how we find efficiencies, and they come not only with roads that are compatible for use by large log trucks, by making sure that bridges are up to scratch. We find efficiencies in the logistics of delivery. There are plenty of KPIs there. It is not only growing the value of the sector, growing the sector by volume, making sure we find efficiencies in the sector, making sure we deal with the cross-border issues, and making sure we retain as much fibre here in South Australia as possible for our local industries to capitalise on. I reckon those are probably six pretty strong KPIs.

Mr HUGHES: When you say that you have strong KPIs in place, anecdotally—

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: No; the industry has strong KPIs in place.

Mr HUGHES: Okay. The benchmarking exercise you were referring to, and you very strongly referred to benchmarking in the last estimates session, when you are looking at the success of an industry and you have a broad goal of doubling the value of timber production by 2050—which is a good thing—I guess it is all those steps on the way, and where people can see those steps on the way, something against which we are measuring the industry.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: I have to reinforce that the government is not doubling the value of the industry: the government is supporting the industry's growth targets to double the value by 2050. We will put measures in place to assist the industry in reaching its targets, and its target is to double the value by 2050.

Mr HUGHES: Shifting to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 68 and the South East Forestry Partnerships Program, how much funding from the program was expended in 2018-19?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: The South East Forestry Partnerships Program was an initiative of the previous government to provide grants to timber processors following the forward sale of ForestrySA's plantations. Primary Industries and Regions is overseeing the projects funded from that program with contract management by the South Australian Government Financing Authority.

The Marshall government is honouring that funding for the three remaining projects, which will be completed in the next couple of years. The three projects are the three RTs innovative strand technology production unit, Roundwood Solutions' biochar plant and treatment plant, and Scheidl's sawmill improvements. There has been significant investment into those projects: the three RTs innovative strand technology, nearly \$1 million; Roundwood Solutions' biochar plant, \$2.11 million; and Scheidl sawmill improvements, nearly \$0.5 million.

Significant investment has gone into those three projects. I have given a commitment to the industry that we as a government will watch those projects very closely as they draw to completion, and we expect those projects to draw to completion in the next couple of years.

Mr HUGHES: And once that happens, that program has come to a conclusion?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: That is correct.

Mr HUGHES: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 85, the forestry community service obligation payment. Why did the community service obligation payment reduce from 2017-18 to 2019-20?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: I am advised that the reduction in the community service obligation payment is due to now not having to manage the Mid North forest. That area of forestry has seen a reduction in the need for community service obligation. The reduction has been \$700,000. We have seen the reduction from the 2015-16 year to the 2017-18 year.

Mr HUGHES: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 68, forestry-specific road transport issues. The highlights include 'developed a prioritisation list of forestry-specific road transport issues'. How much funding did you secure for forestry-specific road transport issues?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: The improving road transport and forestry project was a survey. It was a collaboration between Primary Producers SA, Primary Industries and Regions and the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure. What the industry did was use that opportunity to provide good comprehensive feedback that we now know targets the issues.

Whether it is about permit issues, night movement, overmass machinery or licensing requirements, the survey has raised 32 issues, over half of which have been related to route access. This is something that we will continue to work with DPTI on, but it is the responsibility of DPTI. It is not the responsibility of PIRSA, it is not the responsibility of ForestrySA, but we have worked with DPTI in gaining feedback for the needs and those issues that have been raised.

I will work with the minister responsible for upgrading a number of those issues: route access, first-last mile issues. As I said, there have been a number of issues with productivity gain, over-mass machinery (particularly at night) and permits. That has been a bit of a bugbear of the industry for a long time. The Minister for Transport and Infrastructure is the minister you should be asking, but rest assured I will work with the minister to look at any opportunities for gaining support and funding for achieving some of these outcomes that have been seen through this process.

Mr PEDERICK: I refer to Budget Paper 3, Chapter 5, pages 73 to 86, government businesses. Can the minister please advise about the environmental monitoring ForestrySA undertakes?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Of course, the environment is instrumental with forestry. ForestrySA manage about 32,000 hectares of plantation and other forest reserve in both the Mount Lofty Ranges and the Green Triangle regions. In the sustainable management of these areas there is active conservation management of about 16,500 hectares of native forest. That includes the control of environmental weeds and animal pests. The native forest reserve areas are covered by management plans. The management plans are integral to the performance measures of ForestrySA and the guide management activities in the reserve areas.

During 2018-19, ForestrySA undertook weed control activities over about 750 hectares of its native forest reserve. Managing weeds is sensitive, and broadscale weeding techniques are a priority for ForestrySA. It is also very difficult in some instances to manage weeds and manage the infestation of introduced species in between forestry reserve. Whether it be plantation or native, it is critically important that we monitor and keep the ecological bent in making sure that when we are monitoring and managing the assets we do not impact on birds and other species of wildlife that we could put at risk through fire or human intervention.

What we are seeing, particularly in the native forests and the plantation forests, is that there is always a threat of species being under pressure—that is why they are in the forests. But revegetation is always happening. The biodiversity corridors are always being managed. Again,

during the winter of 2018 ForestrySA planted an estimated 15,000 plants. They were grown by school kids.

There is not only environmental monitoring but there are also the environmental programs that come with it: the Trees for Life and the red-tailed black-cockatoo programs. Plants were put into those assets to put in local habitat for vulnerable species. The contribution from ForestrySA was the school volunteer partners' program, which amounted to about 4,000 hours. I think that is an outstanding achievement, particularly volunteer partners from our schools in South Australia.

Mr HUGHES: I return to forestry-specific road transport issues. When did the development of the prioritisation list of forestry-specific road transport issues conclude?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: I might have to take that one on notice. It was more than 12 months ago. I will take that on notice and, if time permits, I will have an answer for you very shortly.

Mr HUGHES: Was that an initiative that started under the previous government?

The CHAIR: Member for Giles, I think the minister said he will take it on notice.

Mr HUGHES: This is a separate question.

The CHAIR: Which budget line item?

Mr HUGHES: Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 68.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: It was an initiative started by the previous government. The trouble is they never put a budget line to it. There were a lot of promises but no budget, no commitment. Still, we have seen the audit, we have seen the issues that need to be addressed and we are working with government. We will work with DPTI so that we can actually look at ways that, as a responsible government, when we promise an industry something, we can put it in the budget so that we can actually deliver.

Mr HUGHES: I seem to recall that there were a number of initiatives that were delivered under the previous government. You mentioned the last mile. A number of projects in that area were delivered by the previous government. Of the 32 transport issues identified in relation to forestry, how many of those have budget allocations at this stage?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Sorry, could you just repeat that?

Mr HUGHES: You mentioned 32 issues that needed to be addressed when it came to transport within the forestry sector. How many of those projects have been addressed at this stage?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Getting back to your previous question, the report was concluded in February 2019. I am advised that the road audit for grains was an initiative of the previous government. The road and bridge audit was an initiative of the current government. Out of the 32 issues that were raised, over half of which related to route access and that first and last mile issue, there have been four projects that have been completed. We will continue to work with DPTI to make sure that we keep those issues on the agenda so that we can actually deal with them.

Mr HUGHES: Turning to some general financial issues, I refer you to page 84 of Budget Paper 5. Page 84 states that there will be 'savings of \$5 million per annum from 2019-20 through operational efficiencies, reducing funding to portfolio agencies and implementing business reforms'. Of the \$5 million per year, how much will come from the forestry budget?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: I am working with my CE and my executive team at the moment, looking at ways in which we can find those efficiencies. As I understand it, there have been no directives to forestry for a specific efficiency gain, but what I have demonstrated through a number of the answers today is that the ForestrySA executive are finding efficiencies as we currently speak. I am working with all of the agencies within the department to find efficiencies and then we will level those efficiencies towards the \$5 million gain.

Mr HUGHES: How many full-time equivalents are currently employed in the forestry section of PIRSA?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: It is not the right format for that question, but I am sure we can answer it. We have 4.6 FTEs who are currently working within PIRSA on behalf of forestry.

Mr HUGHES: Do you anticipate any change over the next 12 months and over the next two years?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: No.

Mr HUGHES: Returning to Budget Paper 3, government businesses, pages 73 to 86, the increase in the waste levy, do you expect an impact on private forest growers because of the increase in illegal dumping?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: I do not think there is any dumping in the budget paper for forestry—no.

Mr HUGHES: So the expectation will be that it will come out of the budget that is set aside. Obviously for private forests, it is going to come out of their particular budget. Did you make any effort to advocate on behalf of forest growers when it came to the potential implication of the increase in the hard waste levy?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: I guess I will come back to what I have said: it has nothing to do with ForestrySA.

Mr HUGHES: When it comes to dumping in the forest, you do not believe that in any sense has anything to do with ForestrySA? The actual hard waste levy specifically does not have to do with ForestrySA, but the implication for regional forest communities might well lead to an increase in dumping. That is quite likely to lead to an increase in dumping.

Mr PATTERSON: I am really struggling to find any reference to dumping.

The CHAIR: And a hypothetical. Is that possibly what you are alluding to as well, member for Morphett?

Mr PATTERSON: Yes.

Mr HUGHES: Well, it is a double whammy, then, isn't it?

The CHAIR: It is a double whammy. It is late in the afternoon.

Mr HUGHES: So at long last I have exceeded your generosity.

The CHAIR: Perhaps, member for Giles, if you would like to rephrase your question, we can continue.

Mr HUGHES: I think we might leave it at that. Given I have a double whammy, I think I will retire from the seat.

The CHAIR: Member for Hammond, any final questions?

Mr PEDERICK: No, I think I will leave this one. The minister did glance over the Ghost Mushroom Lane unless he has an update on that.

The CHAIR: Given the minister has not gone to Ghost Mushroom Lane, I declare that there are no further questions and the examination of proposed payments for the portfolio of ForestrySA, the estimate of payments for the Department of Primary Industries and Regions, and administered items for the Department of Primary Industries and Regions completed.

At 17:12 the committee adjourned to Tuesday 30 July 2019 at 09:00.