

**HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY****Tuesday, 4 July 2023****ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B****Chair:**

Mr E.J. Hughes

**Members:**

Mr D.K.B. Basham  
Ms C.L. Hutchesson  
Mr A.S. Pederick  
Ms O.M. Savvas  
Mr T.J. Whetstone  
Ms D.J. Wortley

*The committee met at 09:00**Estimates Vote*

**DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND REGIONS, \$132,612,000**  
**ADMINISTERED ITEMS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND REGIONS,**  
**\$4,516,000**

**Minister:**

Hon. C.M. Scriven, Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, Minister for Forest Industries.

**Departmental Advisers:**

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

Mr W. Kent, Chief Financial Officer, Department of Primary Industries and Regions.

Ms A. Barclay, General Manager, Office of the Chief Executive, Department of Primary Industries and Regions.

Ms M. Spencer, Chief of Staff, Department of Primary Industries and Regions.

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

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

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** Yes.

**Mr PEDERICK:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** Changes to committee membership will be notified as they occur. Members should ensure the Chair is provided with a completed request to be discharged form. If the minister

undertakes to supply information at a later date, it must be submitted to the Clerk Assistant via the Answers to Questions mailbox no later than Friday 8 September 2023.

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

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

I remind members that the rules of debate in the house apply in the committee. Consistent with the rules of the house, photography by members from the chamber floor is not permitted while the committee is sitting. Ministers and members may not table documents before the committee; however, documents can be supplied to the Chair for distribution.

The incorporation of material in *Hansard* is permitted on the same basis as applies in the house; that is, that it is purely statistical and limited to one page in length. The committee's examinations will be broadcast in the same manner as sittings of the house, through the IPTV system within Parliament House and online via the parliament website.

I now proceed to open the following lines for examination. The portfolio today is the Department of Primary Industries and Regions. The minister appearing is the Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development. I declare the proposed payments open for examination. I invite the minister, if she so wishes, to make opening comments and to introduce her advisers.

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** Thank you, Chair. It is my great pleasure to be able to provide information today about the programs and works conducted by the Department of Primary Industries and Regions over the past year. At my side are the Chief Executive, Professor Mehdi Doroudi, and the Chief Financial Officer, Will Kent. Behind me are the General Manager, Office of the Chief Executive, Ann Barclay, and my Chief of Staff, Meagan Spencer.

South Australia's food, wine, agribusiness and regions are a crucial part of the state's economy and continue to set the pace and deliver solid growth, despite challenges faced in recent years. From our vast agricultural areas through to our horticulture, cropping, wine districts and seafood ports, as well as forestry, that drive many of our regional communities, South Australia has a global reputation for premium produce.

The 2023-24 budget includes new measures over the forward estimates, supporting South Australia's regions across all sectors of government. Major initiatives in this budget for PIRSA include:

- \$25 million to undertake significant emergency fruit fly response activities following the detection of further outbreaks across the Riverland;
- nearly \$5.5 million to continue the Farm Business Resilience Program and the Regional Drought Resilience Planning Program to 30 June 2026, as well as the state's contribution to the South Australian Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub;
- funding for the implementation of electronic identification for farmed sheep and goats; and
- funding for the on-farm emergency water rebate scheme.

In the past year, the resilience of these sectors has been very much on display, despite extreme weather, particularly floods and the impact to our river communities, the ongoing supply chain legacy of the pandemic and global events, including trade tensions and economic pressures. Despite all of this, the state's primary industries generated a record revenue of \$17.3 billion in 2021-22, accounting for over 51 per cent of our merchandise exports.

Overseas exports of agriculture, food, wine and forestry products increased by 24 per cent, totalling \$7.5 billion. I have a number of other points, including legislative reform, all of which are forming part of the review of the past year and the plans going forward, but I am happy to leave the opening statement at that and take questions.

**Mr PEDERICK:** Very quickly, I would like to acknowledge what primary industries and the regions do to support this state and the many billions of dollars that flow from the regions. To go straight to questions: Budget Paper 5, page 66, operating savings. Of the budgeted \$3.8 million in operating savings in the 2022-23 budget, what have been the actual operating efficiencies or savings made by the department in the 2022-23 financial year?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** PIRSA is continually seeking to introduce productivity improvements and efficiencies across the agency to invest and support the growth of primary industries and drive regional development. In 2022-23, PIRSA delivered efficiencies of an incremental \$5.7 million compared with 2021-22. This included efficiency savings allocated in previous budgets. There are no new savings targets in this current budget.

**Mr PEDERICK:** Can you outline exactly what those savings were—that was a pretty broad statement.

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** A review and realignment of the department's structure and functions, as part of PIRSA's strategic planning process, resulted in savings of \$3.7 million in 2022-23 and ongoing. There was a reduction in executive positions within the agency, and in addition I am advised that the department received a higher additional revenue from a dividend from the investment in Australian Grain Technologies Pty Ltd.

**Mr PEDERICK:** Same budget line, operating savings: where is that figure recorded in the budget papers?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** When you say 'that figure', what figure are you referring to?

**Mr PEDERICK:** The budgeted \$3.8 million and the operating efficiencies.

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I am advised that would be recorded in the reduction in employee expenses and supplies and services lines.

**Mr PEDERICK:** How many full-time equivalents were cut out of that?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I am advised that over 2021-22 and 2022-23 there was a total of 39 TVSPs that came into effect. There were 16 in the 2022-23 financial year and 23 in 2021-22.

**Mr PEDERICK:** We will go to the program net cost of services summary, Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, pages 50-51. What programs have been cut to equate the reduction in the net cost of services in primary industries programs from \$163 million in 2022-23 to \$113 million budgeted in 2023-24?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** There have not been any programs that have been cut. There have been major variances between the 2023-24 budget and the 2022-23 estimated result as follows: the \$11½ million decrease is primarily due to additional income in the 2022-23 estimated result, which is from commonwealth government funding, including \$7.3 million from the National Water Grid programs, \$1.7 million from the Recreational Fishing and Camping Facilities Program, \$1.2 million from the Japanese encephalitis response program and \$0.9 million from the Construction Softwood Transport Assistance Program.

There is also funding for a Kangaroo Island sterile blowfly rearing facility of \$2.9 million; funding for the rebuild of fire towers of \$2.3 million; and external funding for the containment, treatment and proof of freedom of land snails of \$0.9 million. There is also \$0.7 million in 2023-24 around the snapper fishery management arrangements.

All of these are partially offset by an increase in revenue in 2023-24, following a reduction in 2022-23 mainly in consulting revenue to reflect business activity and that is \$4 million. The budget initiative for rock lobster licence fee relief in 2023-24 was \$2.6 million.

There are further major variances between the 2022-23 estimated result and the 2022-23 budget. The \$6.4 million increase is primarily due to additional income. I think that is a repeat here in my notes, but, as a general comment, much of the revenue and expenditure changes within this department come because so many programs are externally funded. They are partnerships with other bodies or organisations or indeed the federal government, so there will be frequent changes between years because of, for example, time-limited programs. Obviously, things such as drought or flood assistance will vary depending on the circumstances at the time.

**Mr PEDERICK:** So you cannot account for the full \$53 million change; is that what you are saying?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** No, that is not what I am saying.

**Mr PEDERICK:** I have not heard \$53 million and the difference in that. What programs have been cut to equate the reduction in the net cost of services in regional development programs from \$37.7 million in 2022-23 to the \$32.5 million budgeted in 2023-24?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I would reiterate that we have not eliminated any programs. I am advised that the changes to which you are referring are to do with the timing of milestones around the payment to projects through either the Regional Growth Fund or its successor, which is the Thriving Regions Fund.

**Mr PEDERICK:** Why was there an increase in full-time equivalents when there are significant cuts in the net costs of services for both primary industry programs and regional development programs?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** The increases in FTEs relate to the fruit fly response; additional FTEs who were engaged or in the process of being engaged for the emergency animal disease response, which was additional funding that the Malinauskas Labor government announced towards the end of last year to ensure that we are well prepared for emergency animal diseases; and also some additions to SARDI.

**Mr PEDERICK:** Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 50: in regard to the actual FTEs, how many of these extra full-time equivalents are operational and how many are administrative?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I am advised that most, if not all, are operational because they are to do with things like emergency animal disease response, compliance and policy. So most of them would be designated as operational.

**Mr PEDERICK:** Does the department have a clear plan and time line in place for staff who are working from home to return to the office and, if so, can you table that plan?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** PIRSA has a working arrangements policy, which encompasses home-based work as well as a home-based work guideline, which provides further details on the general principles, the arrangements, work types and documentation that is required. PIRSA supports and promotes agreed arrangements between managers and employees that allow employees of all occupational categories and all levels to carry out all or part of their usual duties working from home where that is achievable and in the interests, obviously, of the agency.

An agreement for home-based work needs to be completed by the employee and approved by their manager, with the exception of ad hoc home arrangements for an employee to work from home for a short period of time in response to an urgent and unforeseen situation. Obviously, something like the illness of someone they are caring for might be covered under that.

PIRSA supports employees in relation to flexible work, ensuring that operational needs are not impacted by personal responsibilities, and managers are responsible for ensuring employees' flexible working arrangements are not at the detriment of the business needs. PIRSA currently utilises a number of systems, including TimeWise and CHRIS21, to effectively report on working from home arrangements. I am advised these systems are being upgraded to continue to support working from home reporting.

**Mr PEDERICK:** Are you confident the department has the right balance of staff working from home and staff being in the office?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** My chief executive advises that that is certainly his view; I have no reason to disagree with that.

**Mr PEDERICK:** What is the current proportion of staff working from home and staff working from the office in your department?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I am advised that on formal arrangements there are not quite 20 per cent working from home. I think you also referred to my office. I do not have any formal arrangements in place in my own office.

**Mr PEDERICK:** Has this proportion of staff working from home and working from the office—and I mean through the department—changed over the past year and, if so, how?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I am advised that there obviously have been a number of changes around work from home arrangements over the last couple of years, and I am sure that it is obvious to all here that the impact of COVID was significant. During COVID there was a higher proportion of employees working from home, and I imagine to all of us that is pretty obvious why that would be.

Since that time that has changed, and I am also advised it is worth emphasising that of the percentage who do have work from home arrangements that should not be interpreted as they are working full-time from home. Many of those would be working maybe one day a week or two days a week from home. Further, it is of course only where the nature of the work is such that it can be done from home and that it does not impact in any negative way on business needs.

**Mr PEDERICK:** In relation to working from home, does the department measure staffing productivity and efficiency as they relate to remote working, and can you please explain how that is managed?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I am advised that, first of all, it is worth noting that any work from home arrangements are established taking into account appropriate occupational health and safety assessments and must all meet the minimum standards for OH&S. In terms of management of productivity, that is the responsibility of each individual employee's manager, and it is their responsibility, as it is wherever the person is working from, to ensure that they adhere to their performance agreements and are able to demonstrate the appropriate level of productivity. All working from home arrangements are also subject to regular reviews. That is an annual review at the minimum.

**Mr PEDERICK:** We will go to Budget Page 4, Volume 4, page 59, program 2. This is to do with the Thriving Regions Fund. What funds are committed in this year's budget for the Thriving Regions Fund?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** The Thriving Regions Fund is a \$15 million per year fund, and it is the successor to the fund formerly known as the Regional Growth Fund. The Thriving Regions Fund places a greater emphasis on projects that act as enablers to regional communities, so that we can be growing jobs and strengthening those regional communities. The fund is divided into a number of sub-programs, but the \$15 million per annum continues.

**Mr PEDERICK:** Can you outline what programs are funded from the Thriving Regions Fund, and for what amount?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** There are currently three streams to the Thriving Regions Fund: the enabling infrastructure, which was announced as a \$5 million per annum amount; the strengthening industries; and also the Thriving Communities Program. A number of announcements have already been made and the balance of course is still available under each of those streams. Some of the projects that have been funded so far include the Riverland grape and wine blueprint, assistance to the snapper industry and support to PPSA as the peak body for primary producers in South Australia.

**Mr PEDERICK:** Is that \$15 million a new allocation for this year's budget or is it carried over from last year's budget?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** There is \$15 million each year. The former government had pre-allocated some funds from that, which does impact on the amount that is available in this coming year.

**Mr PEDERICK:** How much is allocated for strengthening regions out of this fund?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I think you might be misunderstanding. Are you trying to refer to a particular sub-program? What do you mean by 'strengthening regions'?

**Mr PEDERICK:** I am just asking, out of this \$15 million, is any of that being used for strengthening regions like our previous—

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** All of the \$15 million is being used to strengthen regions.

**Mr PEDERICK:** Can you list all the programs that benefitted from the Regional Growth Fund in the 2022-23 budget, and can you break those programs down in terms of spend and how much was given to each program?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I am advised that so far \$6.55 million has been committed from the Regional Growth Fund in the 2022-23 budget, including \$2.6 million to the rock lobster industry licence fee relief and \$1.95 million for the forest products master plan. A number of other programs continued, such as the Livestock Underpass Grant Scheme, which commenced under the previous government. The enabling infrastructure sub-program is \$5 million, the Thriving Communities Program had \$600,000 committed in the previous financial year, and there is also the strengthening industries stream.

**Mr PEDERICK:** In regard to the remaining funds, what have they been allocated to and have they formed part of the new budget measures in the 2023-24 budget?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I think a great deal of the question I have already answered. One part perhaps that you might be asking about is in relation to electronic identification (EID). There was, very roughly, approximately \$6 million that was for previous projects that had not proceeded either because they were subject to things such as co-funding from the federal government and they did not obtain that funding, or because they did not have an appropriate scope or they changed their scope. Some of those projects that did not proceed have been used to partly fund the electronic identification stage 1 implementation.

**Mr PEDERICK:** Are you saying you are funding the difference between the announced sheep and goat EID funding and the budget measure of \$3.2 million for sheep and goat EID funding?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** What I have said is that the difference between the new funds that were announced—\$3.2 million—and the total package, is from unexpended funds from previous years that did not proceed because of the proponent withdrawing for any number of reasons, including those that I have mentioned.

**Mr PEDERICK:** What projects did not proceed?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I am advised that there were six projects where the proponents either could not proceed or withdrew their applications:

- CABN Pty Ltd, Myponga Reservoir: SA Water did not grant a licence for that project to proceed;
- Geoffrey Packer & Co, Myponga Reservoir: SA Water did not grant the licence to proceed;
- ForestrySA visitor infrastructure proposal: the project scope was changed;
- District Council of Yankalilla, Rapid Bay tourism facilities water extension: the proponent withdrew their application;
- Alexandrina Council, Sugars Beach Murray Mouth Icon project: the commonwealth government funding was not forthcoming and so, because it was subject to that co-funding, it could not proceed at this time; and

- Australian Landscape Trust, Calperum Connect project, transforming infrastructure at Calperum Station: similarly, the commonwealth government funding program changed and we have been advised that that is no longer proceeding and they will need to potentially reapply for commonwealth government funding and potentially reapply to the new Thriving Regions Fund.

**Mr PEDERICK:** Can you list the amounts of money per project that did not proceed?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** Yes: \$1 million, \$500,000, \$1.56 million, \$63,000, \$1 million and \$666,000.

**Mr PEDERICK:** Were we committed to those projects as a state or was it mainly commonwealth funding, you were saying, that did not turn up? How did that work?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** Each one has different circumstances around it. Some of these were announcements made—I think one of them was made during the caretaker period by the former Liberal government and I was unable to access an appropriate scoping document for that particular project. The first two, as I mentioned, were in regard to licences not being issued by SA Water. They of course have requirements about any activities that occur on SA Water property, and that did not continue. The others were withdrawn or subject to commonwealth funding.

None of these had had deeds executed around them. Some of them may well be eligible to reapply either to the new Thriving Regions Fund and/or to the commonwealth regions fund that they have announced in relatively recent months. If so, assuming they meet the requirements of the current guidelines, of course they will be assessed appropriately.

**Mr PEDERICK:** I refer to Budget Paper 5, page 67. The budget indicates \$5.5 million over three years for the co-invested federal government's Future Drought Fund to continue the Farm Business Resilience Program and the Regional Drought Resilience Planning Program to 30 June 2026, as well as the state's contribution to the South Australian Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub. Is there going to be a continuation of the fox bounty currently under the drought support program or indeed any other program post October 2023?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** In relation to the first part of the question, the state government is continuing and delivering a range of drought and resilience-building programs. Through the Australian government's Future Drought Fund, the state government is currently delivering two Future Drought Fund programs: the Farm Business Resilience Program and the Regional Drought Resilience Planning Program.

It is also a major partner in the South Australian Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub, known as the SA Drought Hub. The Farm Business Resilience Program helps farmers build knowledge and skills in strategic farm business management and planning, in farm risk management and decision-making, natural resource management, and personal and social resilience.

In the first year of the Farm Business Resilience Program, industry in the livestock, grains, dairy and vegetable sectors led delivery of training across the state. This included workshops, webinars, support to develop or update a farm business plan, and one-on-one coaching from farm business experts.

On 24 March 2023, together with Senator the Hon. Murray Watt, the federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, announced the program will be available to South Australian grapegrowers, initially in the Riverland, Limestone Coast and Langhorne Creek regions, and will be delivered by the Wine Grape Council of South Australia. The inclusion of grapegrowers within this has been very much welcomed by that industry. The livestock sector has continued delivery in 2023 and proposals have been received from the vegetable and dairy sectors to continue program delivery, which will extend support for existing participants and rollout training to new participants.

The Regional Drought Resilience Planning Program supports partnerships of local government, regional development, natural resources organisations and other regional stakeholders, to develop regional drought resilience plans to assist communities to prepare for and manage future drought risks.

In the first year of the Regional Drought Resilience Planning Program, consortia in two regions in South Australia, namely, the Murraylands and Riverland and the Yorke Peninsula and Mid North including the Barossa, undertook extensive stakeholder engagement across the region, resulting in the completion of two co-designed regional drought resilience plans. These plans have now been reviewed by the CSIRO, as the independent assessors, and provided to the Australian government for approval.

Planning in the Far North outback is currently underway, following delays in the first year of the program due to floods and also machinery of government changes. The South Australian Drought Hub is one of eight hubs established nationwide in 2021, through the Future Drought Fund's Drought Resilience Research and Adoption Program. Led by the University of Adelaide, it is a partnership between farmers, government agencies, traditional owners, industry and business, and it focuses on increasing preparedness for future droughts across South Australian farms and regional communities.

In addition, PIRSA is partnering with Primary Producers SA to deliver the preparing primary industries for the impacts of compounding and complex disasters project, taking an industry-led approach to examine the risks of compounding and cascading disasters to people, production, profitability and supply chains.

The project will explore the disaster risk reduction decisions and actions needed to mitigate impacts on the agriculture sector, minimise disruptions to food supply and maintain vibrancy of regional communities. It will assess the agriculture sector's exposure to disaster and climate risks and insurance options for the South Australian agricultural industry.

In terms of the fox bounty specifically, I am advised that it was established with the aim of supporting drought-affected primary producers to increase their productivity through enhanced fox control. The program was complementing existing coordinated fox control programs run by regional landscape boards, such as 1080 baiting. I am advised that the bounty program is not expected to significantly reduce fox numbers in the long term. I am advised that the program has met its stated aims: 16,000 foxes collected under the scheme since October 2021, paying more than 100 producers over \$160,000.

The other particularly relevant point is that in the eradication of foxes, or at least the control, the bounty is not a major component of that. The landscape board's work is the main piece of work around that, but I guess it is fair to say that it is all part of the integrated pest control programs, which aim to reduce the impacts on primary industries and biodiversity.

I have asked my department to do an evaluation of the fox bounty program. It is likely to be fully extended around October this year, based on the current and recent historical uptake of the program. Once it is fully expended and an evaluation has taken place we will then be able to determine whether there is any benefit, what the cost-benefit analysis is, and whether there is any benefit to reintroducing something similar in the future.

**Ms HUTCHESON:** I refer the committee to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, Program 2: Regional Development statement, page 59. What is the government doing to support Primary Producers South Australia in their leadership role in the primary industry sector?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I thank the honourable member for her question, and I am delighted to be able to answer that the government of South Australia has approved funding of up to \$750,000 over three years to Primary Producers SA. PPSA plays a key leadership role in South Australia's primary industry sector and provides cross-sectoral coordination and input to government policies and programs. This funding will enable PPSA to establish a work program in conjunction with my department, the Department of Primary Industries and Regions, aligned with the 2023 South Australian Economic Statement.

I am advised that PPSA has identified a number of future projects that it will seek to develop and lead on behalf of the primary industry sector as part of that work program. Some of these include supporting implementation of the government's carbon farming road map, which was released in November 2022, to grow skills, knowledge and capacity for farmers to undertake carbon farming; developing leadership capacity in agriculture to develop skills in problem solving and setting policy



to manage and anticipate emerging issues in primary industries; and promoting primary industries careers pathways to encourage the pursuit of a career in the primary production sector.

I think all of those are incredibly important. During my very frequent trips throughout regional South Australia, a couple of key things emerged. One of those is around carbon farming and the desire for better understanding and decision-making opportunities. Data and information is absolutely key for a lot of our agricultural sector and they want to make sure that any decisions they are making around carbon into the future is well informed and that they are able to make an informed choice about how to integrate that within their farming business. The work that PPSA will be doing in that space is incredibly important.

One of the other key issues that is partly addressed through this is in relation to the issues of workforce in regional areas and in particular in the agricultural and horticultural sector. When I am in regional South Australia, often the number one issue that is raised is around workforce, and that includes not just seasonal workforce but also the highly skilled jobs of the future that are and will be part of the agricultural sector. Promoting career pathways and making sure that students are aware of the vast opportunities within the agricultural sector and primary industries more broadly is incredibly important, so I look forward to seeing the outcomes from PPSA. I am very pleased that the funding of \$750,000 over three years will be able to assist with that.

**Mr PEDERICK:** There seem to be some cross-purposes with the information around the fox bounty. It sounds like it has been a very successful scheme. From what you have said, it appears to have reached its aims, but then you have received other advice essentially to say that it is not worth continuing, which I am a bit interested in because it was very successful interstate in Victoria. When you do the review, will you make the review public, and is there an opportunity to keep the fox bounty going into the future? It does sound like it has been quite successful.

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** First of all, I do not think I have used the words 'not worth continuing'. I do question the framing—

**Mr PEDERICK:** No, you said you had had some advice around the wordiness of it or something according to those words.

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I do not agree that that is what I said or implied.

**Mr PEDERICK:** We will check later, but that is alright.

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I think what I said was that we need to look at the cost-benefit analysis. When this program was implemented, which I think was in 2020—I will check that date—I queried the wording because the advice I received was that the words were to the effect that this was not so much a fox eradication program as a program to support farmers who were trying to reduce fox numbers. I queried the wording around that because it was difficult to understand what the meaning behind that was.

The advice I have received was that it was established more as an opportunity during a drought period when many farmers were not receiving income as an additional form of income for them rather than being designated particularly to be a fox eradication program. I will not make commentary on what those particular motivations were, but I am advised that it was a point-in-time program in response to the drought. As times change and conditions change, it is entirely appropriate to review a program and see whether it is the best use of resources.

It is appropriate to review the costs and benefits and see whether it is the most appropriate and effective use of those resources or whether there are other ways it can be done. Certainly, in terms of the work that is done through the landscapes program, I do not have the figures in front of me, but I recall that it is tens of thousands of foxes that are eradicated or destroyed through that program. That is far in excess of the sorts of numbers that are looked at through the fox bounty program.

**Mr PEDERICK:** In regard to the previous \$21 million drought support program, is that program being cut?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I am advised that program has not been cut. That is funding that is leveraged with the commonwealth government. We have identified new projects that can be supported through that, and they are the announcements that have been made in this budget.

**Mr BELL:** I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 57. In terms of targets 2023-24, I notice that there is no mention of footrot in the biosecurity section. Is any work being done around partnerships or aligning with the Victorian model for managing footrot?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I thank the honourable member for his very important question. PIRSA administers footrot programs through a deed of agreement, if I have the terminology correct, with the Sheep Industry Fund. The Sheep Industry Fund directs, if you like, the type of approach and work activity that will be undertaken by PIRSA. Having said that, there is certainly a movement, particularly in the South-East of the state, to change the approach to footrot from essentially an eradication approach to a management approach, which is what Victoria has. Eradication is probably not the right term, given that we know that we will probably never eradicate footrot altogether. The Victorian approach is very different, more of a buyer beware approach.

I have had multiple conversations with stakeholders, both in the South-East and elsewhere, around that approach, and it is fair to say that there are quite mixed views as to how that should be managed and whether South Australia should adopt the same approach as Victoria or whether it should maintain what it currently does under its arrangements with the Sheep Industry Fund, or there might be a third approach. There have been a number of discussions around that—whether, for example, what some have referred to as bubble zones are appropriate or practical.

It is incredibly important to make sure that any changes that might be made—first, they need to be made with the Sheep Industry Fund—must not have unintended consequences for other parts of the state or the sector. Recently, I was on Kangaroo Island with the country cabinet, which is a very valuable part of the Malinauskas Labor government's engagement with regions, and incidentally very well received and has been talked about. We had the first one in Mount Gambier in the member for Mount Gambier's electorate after the election, and it enables not only the formal interactions—meetings and the public forum—but also lots of informal discussions to occur. Certainly, footrot came up in that arena as well, and again there were very mixed views about the appropriate way to approach it.

We have had discussions with Livestock SA about continuing to engage around what footrot and its programs might look like into the future. Some additional information here is that changes to the program in 2019, where diagnosis of footrot changed from solely clinical diagnosis to a combination of clinical diagnosis and laboratory testing, have resulted in an increase in detections of footrot in South Australian sheep flocks that require a management program. Detections have also been further increased by the very wet seasons we have had, which have increased the level of disease occurring.

Because of all the feedback I had received and also the department received, PIRSA and industry through Livestock SA are currently engaged in a review of the footrot program, and the outcomes of the review may impact future program priorities. PIRSA and Livestock SA are currently considering interim arrangements to minimise the impacts being felt by South-East saleyards in particular while the wider program review is undertaken. That review will take approximately 12 months.

One of the items of feedback I have had from various other stakeholders within the industry has been that it has to be fully consulted. There is no use having a review in response to some concerns and not having full discussions across the sector. We need to take the time to have that consultation, make sure that all consequences of any changes in approach are understood and assess the level of support for such changes. Those temporary interim arrangements to minimise the impacts on the South-East can be developed and potentially implemented while the review is being undertaken.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** Back to Budget Paper 5, page 67, with a discussion around wild dog bounties. Did the \$21 million drought support package include full-time wild dog trapper baiting programs or additional baiting programs and the bounty scheme?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I thank the honourable member for his question, which is particularly around the wild dog bounty, as opposed to the fox bounty, as I understand it. The wild dog bounty offers financial support as part of the drought relief package. It is a way of reducing costs to landholders in drought-affected areas who are under pressure from wild dogs. The program complements the existing coordinated wild dog control programs run by regional landscape boards and PIRSA, such as 1080 baiting and the professional trapper program.

There is also, of course, the major project, which is the dog fence rebuild, which has completed 800 kilometres of new fence lines, and PIRSA is developing a new wild dog management strategy, which will provide the plan for wild dog management activities for 10 years to 2033.

In addition to the wild dog bounty that the honourable member mentioned, the wild dog eradication program, using funds secured from the commonwealth and state governments and industry, involves additional control programs that protect the South Australian sheep industry inside the SA dog fence.

Those activities include ground baiting, which delivers around 100,000 baits each year; aerial baiting programs, which deliver baits to inaccessible country, with 90,000 baits delivered in 2021-22 and 100,000 delivered in 2022-23; the trapper program, which has removed over 760 wild dogs since 2018; and also workshops and engagement activities with hundreds of landholders, because of course the educational part of any program is often one of the most important parts, so landholders and others can know what their options are and also what are the most effective approaches to things such as wild dog control.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** Minister, how much of the funding was allocated to the wild dog bounty and how much is still available?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I am advised that when the program started it had a set budget of \$100,000 and I think that project started in April 2020. I am advised that, as of June this year, over 90 per cent of the budget has been spent and there are approximately 70 bounties remaining to be potentially claimed.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** Are you prepared to extend that program?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** Whether that program will be extended is one thing that will be considered under the new wild dog management strategy. Again, it will depend on the cost-benefit analysis, particularly as it relates to the other programs, many of which I have mentioned.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** You have given me the figures of scalps handed in and the budget that has been put there, so the cost-benefit analysis is on your desk. Would you consider extending that program?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** It will be considered as part of the new wild dog management strategy, but I would also suggest that a simple dollar amount is not a full cost-benefit analysis. It also needs to look at opportunity costs in terms of other wild dog management approaches and whether this is the best use. It may prove that it is, in which case I would expect to extend it, or it may prove there are other opportunities that actually give a better return in terms of the control of wild dogs.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** It is a pretty good spend for \$100,000, I would have thought. I will move on to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 59, the Cross Border Commissioner. Can you give me an understanding of when the first annual report will be given to parliament and also a much clearer understanding of the make-up of the office, full-time equivalents and what the budget for the office for the Cross Border Commissioner is?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** The establishment of the Cross Border Commissioner was an election commitment that was made by the now South Australian government, obviously prior to the election, with a total investment of \$2 million over four years. The Cross Border Commissioner Act 2022 was proclaimed on 1 December 2022 and the act assigned to me as minister.

In early December 2022, we were able to make the announcement of the successful appointment of Liz McKinnon as the state's first Cross Border Commissioner. Based in Mount Gambier, the commissioner will be or in fact already has been travelling and visiting border

communities. The idea is that the role will be able to assist border communities identify opportunities and facilitate collaboration to enhance regional and economic development outcomes.

The commissioner is based at 7-9 Krummel Street, Mount Gambier, which is the same building as is occupied by PIRSA, but it was certainly established early on that it would be of benefit to have a separate office for the Cross Border Commissioner so that the role is seen not as simply an extension of a government department. We are very hopeful to be able to make an announcement about a more permanent site in the near future as changes have been happening, and it has been moving within, indeed, this week.

In terms of the program's total budget, that is \$2 million over the four years. I am sure the honourable member can work that out in terms of an annual amount. In terms of the annual report, I do not have a specific date. I will need to take that on notice and check. It is an annual report; obviously, it needs to be each year. I am not sure off the top of my head whether there is a specific date as yet. I recall from the act that the annual report needs to be tabled within a certain number of sitting days of receipt, but I am simply going on memory from when we debated the bill, which is close to probably a year ago now. I can get some additional information for the member and will take that particular detail on notice.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** Can you just give me an understanding of what that budget breakdown will be—operational expenses as well as the administration costs of the role?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** To a large degree that will be within the authority of the Cross Border Commissioner. She obviously needs to work within the budget and to be able to operate within that budget. In terms of staffing, there is the commissioner herself and, I am advised, one executive officer, who is an ASO5. That is at present.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** Moving on to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 57, spray drift. You have described partnering with industry to develop and implement new initiatives. What funds have been allocated and what initiatives will the government install in terms of initiatives to address spray drift?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I thank the honourable member for his question. The Department of Primary Industries and Regions received reports of alleged spray drift damage to grapevines in the Clare Valley in February of this year, and that was the second consecutive season that Clare Valley grapegrowers had reported to PIRSA observed symptoms and damage from alleged spray drift, with similar reports occurring sporadically over many years.

PIRSA has been working closely with industry to develop and implement new initiatives to address the issue of spray drift, including through agricultural chemical regulation; compliance training; education; mesonet weather stations, which I am sure the honourable member is familiar with; and investigating the potential use of other new technologies. There was a piece of work that was done with Grain Producers SA in partnership, and a lot of that work is continuing. Certainly, it has been well received.

State regulators and the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) have established a national spray drift working group that has worked together for a number of years to share initiatives to address spray drift and discuss new strategies. The APVMA has also implemented numerous regulatory changes.

PIRSA has already dedicated significant resources to education and compliance programs, including PIRSA's code of practice for summer weed control, annual audit programs, compliance investigations, targeted chemical reseller and consultant education visits, and annual media messaging. It was during the 2022-23 season that PIRSA has worked closely with PPSA on new initiatives relating to chemical user training and improved auditing, investigation and compliance responses from PIRSA.

PIRSA is planning further discussions with industry prior to the next grapegrowing season, with focus areas to include agricultural chemical regulations, compliance activities, education, mesonets and any other new technologies that might be appropriate.

**Mr PEDERICK:** Plant protein: Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 57, targets 2022-23, dot point 1. In last year's budget there was a 2022-23 target of conducting research to support

development of a plant-based protein industry in South Australia. In this year's budget papers it was not listed as a highlight, and the plant proteins project is no longer a target for 2023-24. Was this research conducted, and what did it find?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I thank the honourable member for his question. I would mention though, in terms of highlights and so on, there is limited space, so I am delighted that there are so many things that we are able to highlight and that will continue to be projects for coming years, but unfortunately the budget papers do not allow us to mention each and every one as much as I might like to do so.

Pulses or edible legumes are a good source of plant-based protein, and South Australia produces the largest quantity of winter pulses such as fava bean, lentil and chickpea in Australia. That has positioned the state to lead expansion of the plant-based protein sector. SARDI is providing fundamental research and development capability across the food value chain to support the growth of this industry in South Australia.

Increasing the growth of this industry requires producing pulses with the best quality traits, achieved through agronomy and plant breeding, and also processing the pulses to provide ingredients for food products. The South Australian plant-based food incubator meets the need for pilot scale food production infrastructure, filling the gap between experimental and commercial scale manufacturing equipment, and provides access to research and development support to assist with product development and testing.

The incubator allows SARDI to apply a number of technologies to process pulses into ingredients and utilise those ingredients in developing new food products. The fit-for-purpose laboratory and equipment have been functional since July last year and are being utilised for ingredient production and new food product development trials. Outputs of research to date include information about the protein content and other composition profiles of key pulses—fava bean, lentil, field pea, chickpea and lupin.

Using dry fractionation enrichment methods, SARDI food technologists can now separate an enriched protein from key pulse species, providing the starting ingredients for downstream ingredient and new food product research. I am advised that other projects have included modifying the flavour of pea protein flour and developing new pea products, isolating protein from green leafy material, and developing new products from both leaf protein and starch, and also developing plant-based milks.

I am very grateful to SARDI for the excellent work they are doing. The project work has been funded from several sources. SARDI funds in 2022 through to 2023 are for Innovation Connections projects, which is federal and industry; contracted projects from industry; and also the Fight Food Waste CRC. We are in discussions with the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) and the University of Adelaide to develop new and/or continue the programs.

**Mr PEDERICK:** I will go to flood recovery programs, Budget Paper 1, pages 12 and 13, and there is some reference in Budget Paper 3, page 95. How much money was allocated and how much is being spent on the clean-up and waste program?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** Of course, the considerable flood events have had huge impacts across the state, and I would like to acknowledge all of those who have contributed so very much to both the flood preparedness and also the recovery since, which of course is ongoing. This followed some of the other issues, such as the hailstorms that occurred prior.

The state government provides a range of support services to regional communities affected by adverse events, as well as other hardships, including drought, bushfires, storms, biosecurity outbreaks, the industry downturns of COVID-19, and also the severe floods. It is probably worth noting the variety of programs that are available. One key support service is the Family and Business Support program (sometimes known as FaBS), administered by the Department of Primary Industries and Regions. That is a confidential triage-style service, delivered by a team of professional FaB mentors and designed to connect individuals, families and businesses to vital services at times of need.

The state government also works closely with Rural Business Support to ensure their rural financial counselling service is available to primary producers and rural-related businesses across the state. Those two programs work collaboratively to complement each other's service offering and promote myriad other available support services. That has included information about various grant programs that have been provided through both the state and commonwealth government programs.

In terms of the specific package of support that has been provided by government, there has been a comprehensive package to primary producers recovering from the River Murray flood, including, on 22 November 2022, the Premier announcing a \$51 million support package. This included \$3 million for irrigation infrastructure grants to meet the costs of relocating or re-establishing irrigation and electricity infrastructure for irrigators who were impacted by floods.

I have details on that program: as at 30 June this year, there have been 152 applications for a total value of \$2.67 million. That is the number that had been applied for and, of those, 132 applications have been approved, for a total value of \$2.29 million. That does not mean that those others will not necessarily be approved; it may be they need to provide additional information or other factors. The grant program remains open to ensure primary producers have adequate time to access the support.

I think it is absolutely worth mentioning that the department and, indeed, government are very cognisant of the fact that when people have had such significant impacts from floods it is not necessarily easy to gather the information that might be required to enable them to fulfil their applications and therefore the timing is being very flexible to enable that to occur wherever possible.

On 3 January 2023, a joint state and federal announcement launched a \$126 million recovery package approved under the DRFA that included funds for primary producer recovery grants, as well as blackwater fish kill clean-up and additional Family and Business Support services. There have been a number of applications, but members would appreciate that this comprehensive package is across multiple departments, not only my own department.

In terms of the responsibilities that are directly under my department, a dewatering program is underway in the Lower Murray region, estimated to cost around \$3.6 million. As at 30 June this year, 12 areas have completed dewatering and eight areas were in progress. Some of those dewatering activities have been delayed due to wet weather conditions.

I have visited the Murraylands a number of times in recent months, talking with those who actually started the very first dewatering, and some of those who were still waiting, and we have been trying to maintain communication as much as possible. I think information is often key and that is something that we are always looking at how we can better improve, because without appropriate information there is a vacuum and that can cause concerns.

PIRSA is convening the LMRIA, which is the Lower Murray region irrigated areas recovery committee, to identify additional recovery needs in the Lower Murray area once dewatering is complete. In terms of other flood-related issues, a fish kill operational response plan is in place to respond to large-scale events and fish kill clean-up efforts are assessed on a case-by-case basis. Since 1 February this year, PIRSA has coordinated 10 clean-up operations on south coast beaches, Murray Bridge and Wellington. Clean-up activities removed about 30 tonnes of fish and associated debris.

**Mr PEDERICK:** In regard to what I specifically asked, how much was allocated and how much has been spent of the clean-up and waste program?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** It is a little unclear what is meant by the clean-up and waste program. There is not a program specifically by that name.

**Mr PEDERICK:** The Green Industries program?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** Green Industries does not fall under PIRSA. That is with another department.

**Mr PEDERICK:** Okay, we will try another one.

**The CHAIR:** I must go to the member for Narungga but we will come back to you, member for Hammond.

**Mr ELLIS:** Forgive me, I just wanted to touch on the plant-based protein thing before we got too far along. You have wonderfully articulated the academic stuff going on at SARDI and at the university, but has the government done any work on actually attracting a commercial operation to conduct itself in this state? Has any work been done on where it might fit and where it might be best placed? Have there been any approaches made to existing players in the industry? It is wonderful to have the research going on but at some point we need to, I think, attract this industry to our state and get it pumping.

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I thank the honourable member for his question. I was just confirming and clarifying the division of responsibilities. Under PIRSA, that is where the main research has been lying, particularly through SARDI, and I guess one of the main goals of that is around proof of concept. The Department for Trade and Investment (DTI) has been doing the more, I guess, commercial-based work in terms of attracting investment and so on. Far be it from me to be speaking on behalf of another department and minister, but certainly DTI would be able to provide additional information.

**Mr ELLIS:** I do not want to harp on the point, but it would be a reasonably good opportunity for regional development if we could stick a facility like this, an industry like this, in country South Australia. It would be a good employer and a good opportunity to value-add to the product that we so capably make already.

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I think the honourable member makes a very good point. There certainly are huge opportunities for our state and in particular the regional areas, and I am confident that the Department for Trade and Investment and the minister there will be working with that. The honourable member is an excellent advocate for his region and for regional areas in general. Similarly, I am always advocating for ensuring that where there are development and commercialisation opportunities, the regional benefits and opportunities are definitely taken into account.

**Mr ELLIS:** Just as the Minister for Regional Development ought to be. Thank you very much.

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** Thank you.

**Mr PEDERICK:** How much money was allocated and how much has been spent of the Primary Producer Recovery Grants?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I believe I already answered that question. I am happy to answer it again. As of 30 June 2023—

*An honourable member interjecting:*

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** We have had an interjection saying, 'Not really'. I think I was very specific.

**Mr PEDERICK:** It was a long answer.

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** There were 152 applications for a total value of \$2.67 million—

*Members interjecting:*

**The CHAIR:** Give the minister an opportunity to answer, please.

*Members interjecting:*

**The CHAIR:** Can we have no interjections across the chamber, please. Let the minister answer.

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** If those asking the questions on the opposition side would like to listen to the answer, they would not have to ask the same question twice. As I have already said, as at 30 June 2023, 152 applications for a total value of \$2.67 million have been received and 132 applications for a total value of \$2.29 million have been approved. If those opposite would like me to say it again, I am more than happy to do so.

**Mr PEDERICK:** That is fine. There is a lot of information there, minister, and we are trying to sieve it out. How much money was allocated and how much has been spent of the primary producer irrigation infrastructure grants?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I think I may have misheard, because the figures I just gave you were for the irrigation grants.

**Mr PEDERICK:** The irrigation grants for primary producers.

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** Just to clarify, the information I just provided was for the irrigation grants. In terms of the recovery grants, there have been 125 applications approved for payment to a value of \$4.479 million approximately.

**Ms WORTLEY:** I refer the committee to Budget Paper 4, Sub-program 1.1: Agricultural Services, page 53. What benefits have producers received from PIRSA's agtech program?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I thank the honourable member for her question. I know she has a longstanding interest in technological matters and I am pleased that that extends to the agtech program. PIRSA's agtech program is accelerating the development and commercialisation of agtech to futureproof South Australian primary industry enterprises.

It is assisting primary producers to make informed decisions about agtech adoption and, similar to one of my earlier answers, feedback that we have had is that the ability to make informed decisions and to have that relevant background information as well as the various opportunities and options available is key. That education process is crucial, as is assisting primary producers to navigate the implementation and use of agtech and to understand the options and possible solutions to on-farm connectivity issues.

We have agtech demonstration farms at Loxton, Minnipa, Nuriootpa and Turretfield, which are supporting primary producers to find technology solutions to on-farm challenges. Of course, in my local area at Struan, I am a big fan of the projects that we have there. The demonstration farms are showcasing a range of technology solutions and agtech extension officers are providing assistance through primary producers workshops, field days, decision support tools and technology fact sheets.

The best practice demonstration farm at Struan and Kybybolite, which is a collaboration between PIRSA, Elders, Thomas Elder Consulting and the Thomas Elder Institute, is supporting primary producers to find solutions to on-farm challenges and also demonstrating a range of technology solutions. The Struan and Kybybolite farms are also investigating optimised management options and agtech solutions to improve productivity, reduce costs and reduce risk on farm. Workshops and field days have been held throughout the year and they enable primary producers to meet to discuss their primary production challenges, and to share and understand the technological solutions that are available, including the return-on-investment considerations.

There are also a range of supporting materials for primary producers that have been developed. That includes fact sheets, fact studies and case studies about the practical use of technology. Certainly, experience has shown that having one-to-one conversations with others who have had benefits from particular technology or have tried them out by something such as a demonstration farm or, ideally, on their own farm, is perhaps one of the most powerful ways of enabling farmers to make the decisions that they want to make around agtech.

The program also includes startup hubs to enhance the development of future agtech solutions, and that is by supporting entrepreneurship and technology capabilities to solve the critical industry challenges that are faced. Through this program experts support agtech startups to progress along the commercialisation farm way. The AgTech Growth Fund is a dedicated program aimed at accelerating the development of technology solutions to significant agricultural production challenges.

Through the AgTech Growth Fund round 2, seven projects have received a total of \$618,300 in funding to deliver tangible outcomes for primary producers across a range of industries, including dairy, horticulture, sheep and livestock, cropping and viticulture.



**Mr PEDERICK:** In regard to the same line of questioning, is the AgTech Advisory Group still in operation?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** The group does not exist in a formal way at present. I had some discussions quite recently with the former chair, and I am having continued discussions with other members of the group. One of the meetings that I had after coming into government was around what the group had already achieved and where future directions lay. For example, some of the successes included the agtech meet-ups which were being held and, as I understand it, are continuing to being held, which is I guess reasonably organic.

The feedback I have had is that they have been successful but they do not feel that they necessarily need the input of a formal steering committee or group to enable those things to occur. I would like to put on the record my sincere thanks to all of those who have been involved in it, and I welcome our continuing engagement as we go forward but potentially in a different way.

**Mr PEDERICK:** In regard to the advisory group, when did they last meet formally?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I can take that on notice and bring back a response.

**Mr PEDERICK:** So they have gone by the wayside.

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** No, I do not think that is a fair characterisation, and I do not think that does justice to those who have been involved in the advisory group. They are and continue to be very active within the agtech space and with other related sectors. I think simply because a particular mechanism that was formulated and was useful for a period of time has changed into something else, it would be disrespectful to those involved in that group to suggest that they have, to quote the member, fallen by the wayside.

**Mr PEDERICK:** How many meetings have they had?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I can take that on notice.

**Mr PEDERICK:** In regard to the former questioning, because there were a lot of grants, in regard to the Primary Producer Recovery Grants and the primary producer irrigation infrastructure grants, are you saying they are one and the same, or are they two different grant strategies?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** Two different programs.

**Mr PEDERICK:** In regard to the individual generator grants—this is not irrigators—how much money was allocated and how much has been spent of those generator grants?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** There is no particular program called the generator grants, so could the member could be more specific about what he is referring to?

**Mr PEDERICK:** There was a smaller fund for people who needed smaller generators to run their business. How much money was allocated and how much has been spent?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I appreciate some of the terminology can be confusing. I am advised that what we think the honourable member is referring to are actually the irrigation infrastructure grants, which are the \$3 million in grants that I have already mentioned earlier. That included opportunities for the purchase of generators. The amount of the potential grant that could be applied for was \$25,000. That was separate and in addition to grants of up to \$75,000, which are what are being called the recovery grants.

**Mr PEDERICK:** How much of that was expended?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** Which do you mean by "that"?

**Mr PEDERICK:** In regard to those \$25,000 grants. We are trying to fish through these different grant programs because there are many of them.

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** They are the amounts that I have already put on the record twice now, but I am happy to put them on the record a third time. As at 30 June 2023, 152 applications for a total value of \$2.67 million had been received and 132 applications for a total value of \$2.29 million had been approved.

**Mr PEDERICK:** Let's go to Budget Paper 1, pages 12 to 13. Was the River Murray Flood Primary Producer Recovery Grants program, budgeted to be delivered in 2022-23, new money or funded from existing funding programs in PIRSA and, if so, what funding program was this funded out of?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I am advised that all of the money that was given out in regard to the flood programs was new money and that none of that came from existing resources in PIRSA. Having said that, of course, some personnel who were already involved in the disaster areas within PIRSA were assisting, but in terms of actual grant money, I am advised all of that was new money.

**Mr PEDERICK:** In regard to the flood recovery program, do you support an independent inquiry into how the River Murray flood was managed for the continuum of the flood, and now post the flood?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** This is something that has certainly been discussed. I think as a government we have said we are not necessarily opposed to a review, but it needs to be done in a time that is appropriate given that we are not at the end of the flood. We are still in the recovery process and the recovery timing. We need to ensure that anything that is occurring in terms of review is not impacting negatively on those efforts that are continuing.

Part of a multifaceted and proactive response will mean that there will be a review undertaken in any case by the State Emergency Management Committee, and that is to be able to share the lessons and improve arrangements for any future events. Of course, we all hope there will not be future flood events, but history tells us that they will occur. There will also be close consultation continuing with impacted communities and, following that, a community recovery plan will be finalised for release early this month.

At this stage, I do not think there is a specific intention by government to initiate an independent inquiry, but we do remain open-minded to a parliamentary inquiry. Again, I want to acknowledge that we are in the ongoing recovery phase. This is not something that has been finished. We are currently in that phase, and each department, of course, is constantly reviewing the sort of work that is occurring.

It is our government's view that the work currently being undertaken will deliver the best outcomes for affected communities. With those ongoing recovery efforts in play, our view is it would be premature to establish a parliamentary inquiry and, indeed, could be counterproductive. Through the response and now into the recovery process, the state government and its key departments have worked hand in hand with local councils, agencies such as the State Emergency Service and SA Police and also other key stakeholders to ensure that the best outcome is achieved for those affected.

I do think it is worth putting on the record our thanks to the many stakeholders who have been involved in the recovery process, including local councils. As a government, as well as individual ministers, particularly the Premier, we have had frequent and ongoing engagement with the flood-affected communities. There has been amazing strength shown in incredibly difficult times, and I place on the record our appreciation of all the efforts that have occurred to date.

**Mr PEDERICK:** Absolutely, I will agree and support all those people who supported this, but the question for me is why you will not support an independent review, considering there was a lot of bipartisan work with those of us who live on the river: the member for Chaffey, myself, the Hon. Nicola Centofanti, the member for Finnis. There were a lot of positive outcomes with people working across government and opposition.

I firmly believe we need to look at where there were any shortcomings and at future management. The live future management of the 110 kilometres of levee bank is just one example of where decisions need to be made now to have surety for citizens who live on those flood plains moving into the future.

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I thought I had answered what the honourable member is raising again, which is simply that it would be premature at this stage to establish a parliamentary inquiry and potentially could be counterproductive, but the government remains open-minded at a future date.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** For the record, will you support an independent inquiry such as was held after the bushfires in 2020? That was an independent review, and that was not as big a natural disaster as has been claimed by one of your cabinet colleagues, with the floods being the largest disaster in the state's history. I would like you to put on the record whether you will support an independent inquiry—that would be yes or no?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I think I have already answered that question.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** That sounds like no. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 53, sub-program 1.1. South Australia's wine industry is at a crossroad at the moment, and you have funded the Riverland wine community to develop a blueprint. When will that be finalised and will it be made publicly available?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I thank the honourable member for his question. Certainly the Riverland blueprint was an outcome, among other things, of a meeting we held in the Riverland with representatives from the department of industry and trade. If I recall correctly, it was at a time when the entire cabinet went to the Riverland last year. I was able to announce on 18 January this year that the South Australian government was investing \$100,000 to support Riverland Wine to develop the Riverland wine industry blueprint from the Thriving Regions Fund and in direct response to the current red wine grape oversupply concern.

It is the state government's intention that this blueprint will provide a strategic guideline for the Riverland wine region value chain as it looks towards the next 10 years. It is scheduled to be delivered in late 2023—I do not have a specific date, but that is the general indicative date. The Department of Primary Industries and Regions is the lead South Australian government agency for the project, but governance for the blueprint process is being provided through Mr Dennis Mutton, who is the independent chair, and through a steering committee of regional industry and government stakeholders.

A project consultant has also been appointed, and that person is an experienced strategist with extensive experience in the wine sector and in government, most recently holding an executive position in the Department for Trade and Investment, which I envisage will be a very useful link. Members of the steering committee will lead various subcommittees, which are being established to ensure that all the appropriate data challenges, opportunities and strategies are informing the blueprint process.

Industry will also be providing significant co-investment, including \$50,000 from Riverland Wine and \$30,000 from Wine Australia. In addition to that, a number of organisations are expected to contribute in kind to the process. One of the indicators for success is that there is that cross-industry and cross-stakeholder cooperation in this. Having a long-term vision of the Riverland wine industry is incredibly important. Having a blueprint will assist all those affected and involved in the industry in the Riverland to make decisions about their future and I thank all those involved, particularly those who are on the steering committee.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** With the breakdown of this blueprint, you say it comes at a cost of \$100,000.

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** It is \$100,000 from the state government.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** It is from the state government and not federal government-directed funds?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** That is correct. To clarify, the \$100,000 is not federal government funds; it is state government funds. As I mentioned in my answer, there are other contributors.

**Mr PEDERICK:** I will go to the veterinary services bill, Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 53, sub-program 1.1. This is in regard to the mental health of vets. Given the data exists but current access of the South Australian suicide register only occurs with the permission of the Chief Executive of Health, does the minister acknowledge there is the opportunity to legislate for the reporting of these figures—numbers only, obviously, to protect privacy—in the parliament on a triennial basis and the veterinary services bill provides us with an opportunity to do just that?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I thank the honourable member for his question. Certainly, the issue of mental health within the veterinary profession is incredibly important. The state government recently provided a small amount of money to be able to support a process to get a project under Sophie's Legacy into all vet clinics in South Australia, which is essentially reminding clients in veterinary practices to be respectful and kind to those who are working within the practices, which includes not only the vets themselves but all the staff involved because certainly there has been evidence both anecdotal and otherwise of the increased mental strain experienced by veterinarians because of client abuse.

I had the privilege of meeting on several occasions with Garry and Kate Putland, who lost their daughter, Sophie, through suicide. They have been incredibly brave in advocating for the veterinary profession and in getting the campaign together, which is called We're Only Human, if I recall correctly, to be able to advocate on behalf of the profession. Incidentally, I would encourage all those in this chamber or listening to see if they can get involved in that as well. There is a QR code available that links to some important pieces of information around that.

The honourable member mentioned that the suicide register exists and that is certainly something I have mentioned in this place during other debates. At this stage, it is not clear what the advantage of legislating would be. My office and I have been having discussions with Health about the ability to access specific data because, of course, while we are particularly concerned—and the question from the honourable member is particularly concerned—with the mental health and the sad suicide rates for the veterinarian profession, there are, of course, other professions as well that are impacted.

At the moment, while that data exists and we are looking at ways it may be able to be released in a way that would be useful for planning of services or in terms of the veterinary profession and potentially their bodies, such as the AVA or others, to be able to use that data in a useful way, I think it is worthwhile to continue to progress those discussions. I am certainly open to see if there would be any benefit through legislating, but at the moment those benefits are not clear to me.

**Ms SAVVAS:** I refer the committee to Budget Paper 4, Sub-program 1.4: Biosecurity, page 56. Minister, could you please advise of the activities being undertaken by the department to mitigate the potential impact of exotic diseases on the pig industry?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** The pig industry, of course, is an important part of our South Australian economy, and I am able to discuss the risks of exotic diseases on the pig industry, with African swine fever, which emerged in Asia in 2018, being a significant concern. It spread rapidly through South-East Asia to Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea by 2020. The Department of Primary Industries has been working in partnership with the South Australian pig industry to mitigate the risks that are posed by an outbreak of this disease.

That collaboration has led to the development of the SA Pig Biosecurity Project. It is a collaborative biosecurity project, which was started before the emergence of foot-and-mouth disease in Indonesia and also Japanese encephalitis in Australia and assisted in mitigating and responding to these diseases when they emerged. Having such diseases in our near neighbours is, of course, a particular concern.

The primary aims of the project have, firstly, been to enhance the biosecurity of the entire supply chain to prevent further spread of disease should an emergency animal disease be detected in Australia and also to minimise disruption to the industry and to the supply chain. Secondly, the project has developed industry and government partnerships to prepare and respond to outbreaks.

A common understanding of the impacts that an emergency animal disease outbreak will have and the likely response requirements allows for collaborative preparedness activities that are suitable for the specifics of the industry and the South Australian context. Of course, there are a number of things that would be in common across the nation in the event of an outbreak, but there are others that would be specific to South Australia.

This has led to several key projects: the SABOR semen collection facility biosecurity upgrade, high biosecurity standards to prevent the potential for widespread distribution of a virus should an EAD outbreak occur, and new truck wash facilities at major processors, with truck washing

facilities planned for installation at the two major processing plants in South Australia, with the Big River Pork site already in use. The truck wash facilities allow for adequate decontamination of trucks and drivers between loads of pigs and therefore help to prevent spread between farms.

Other projects are enhanced farm-level biosecurity, which is a jointly funded PIRSA pig biosecurity officer working with industry to implement high biosecurity standards through collaboration with private veterinarians and producers, and EAD outbreak preparedness, which is ensuring that the whole supply chain is aware of what to expect if an emergency outbreak occurs and having systems and procedures in place to allow quick adaptation to the additional requirements likely to be imposed by response activities as described in AUSVETPLAN disease response strategy, which is a national strategy.

This supply chain approach will increase industry resilience to the economic impacts and also minimise supply chain disruptions as well as the animal welfare and human mental health impacts of outbreaks of all emergency animal diseases, which could include African swine fever and foot-and-mouth disease.

**Mr PEDERICK:** Just getting back to the very important issue of vets' mental health, has the department considered additional resources to address the mental health implications of the veterinary industry and how it affects the profession and the total scale of the effect this has on the profession?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** In terms of specific resources, as I mentioned there is the recent payment that was made to assist with Sophie's Legacy. In terms of mental health, I think it is important to note where the expertise lies in that, and that of course lies with the Department for Health and Wellbeing. Suicide prevention is a very high priority, and we have a position that is devoted to suicide prevention within our parliamentary caucus. So suicide prevention continues. SA Health has the expertise, and that is the appropriate way for that to continue.

Of course, as a department and myself as minister, we are always open to hearing of opportunities to collaborate where that might be appropriate, and Sophie's Legacy is one example of that, but I will continue to work with my colleagues across our very collegial cabinet to progress the sorts of activities and initiatives that might help to address this tragic situation that we have in many industries but in particular in the veterinarian industry.

**Mr PEDERICK:** Do you think there is the opportunity to add additional provisions in the veterinary services bill, in regard to the mental health of veterinarians? Directly into the legislation is what I am asking. Do you think it is appropriate?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** It is not clear what sorts of provisions around mental health would be inserted. It is worth mentioning that the veterinary services bill, which I am expecting to be able to introduce formally into parliament tomorrow, does propose some changes that might indirectly assist with mental health. One of the particular provisions is in regard to the registration of veterinarians who might want to take a prolonged period out of the industry. That could be, for example, parenting responsibilities, it could be for overseas study, it could be for mental health reasons.

Making the process to re-establish their registration after a period away more transparent, and therefore hopefully simpler, may indirectly have a positive impact on mental health and enable those who might benefit from a time away to be able to do so without giving up their profession altogether or feeling that the hurdles to overcome to return might be too difficult. I think that is an appropriate benefit, potentially, from the veterinary services bill. If there are specifics that the honourable member is proposing in regard to legislating around anything to do with mental health, I would be interested to hear them and obviously we can consider them, but at this stage it is very unclear what he would possibly be referring to.

**Mr BASHAM:** I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 54, sub-program 1.2. In May of this year the government released 100,000 snapper fingerlings into the waters near Port Pirie. It is understood these baby fish were bred at SARDI in the Aquatic Sciences Centre at West Beach. What was the cost of breeding these 100,000 snapper fingerlings?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** We do not have here the specific figure in regard to the actual breeding of those fingerlings, but we can take that on notice and provide it to the honourable member in the near future. The fingerlings program is certainly an important part of trying to rebuild the snapper fishery. We know how popular snapper fishing is within the state and, unfortunately, currently, unless one is in the South-East or is fishing in the South-East of the state, snapper fishing is banned both for commercial and recreational fishers. That follows a long period of time when there has been a decrease in the stock in regard to snapper, to the stage where they are now assessed as depleted and have now been for several years.

Last year, there was the release of the science, essentially, into the snapper stock assessment. One of the important things that our government committed to prior to the election was being more open and transparent around the science in relation to stock assessments in particular and so I was very pleased to have a number of forums held throughout the state when the stock assessment was released, as well as an online forum because it was important that people who might like to fish for snapper, whether commercially or recreationally, had access to the basis upon which the decisions were being made.

Following the release of that, I had advice from the Marine Scalefish Fishery Management Advisory Committee, which recommended a further ban on the fishing of snapper except in the South-East because the snapper stocks in the South-East are considered sustainable as they come from a different area and are more associated with western Victoria than with those remaining in South Australia.

Part of the program that we announced was a support program to a total value of \$8.8 million. That included a number of aspects: \$2.4 million in commercial sector fee relief for impacted snapper quota holders in the marine scale fishery, as well as a 50 per cent annual fee relief for charter boat fishery licence holders. That has been applied to their base licence fee from 1 July this year.

We also announced \$5 million, which included \$2½ million from the Fisheries RDC, for a snapper science program led by SARDI to improve understanding of the factors that underpin stock recovery. That is quite a major research program, but what was clear is that we do need further research around the snapper stocks and both the reasons for the lack of events that have resulted in such a depletion, and more information where possible around what might be impacting that.

Also, two things that were particularly asked for were looking at different ways of assessing the biomass and also whether the West Coast fishery should be considered as part of the two gulfs, as one and the same fishery, or a separate fishery associated with Western Australia. That is a \$5 million investment.

There was also \$1.2 million in total over two years for the SARDI-led snapper restocking program and that will produce nearly a million fingerlings to replenish stocks in both Spencer Gulf and Gulf St Vincent. As I say, we will find out specifically how much the breeding part of that program cost in regard to the 100,000 fingerlings that were released in April and May this year. For members' information, the remaining 900,000 will be released across both gulfs over the next two years.

Members might also be interested to know that, to guide the implementation of the snapper science program, a SARDI-led stakeholder snapper science working group has been established. So far that has met twice: once in March and once I think at the beginning of June. In addition to the support package, PIRSA is working on the development of a snapper rebuilding plan and snapper bycatch discard reporting framework. Also, we are working closely with Seafood Industry Australia to expand the national Stay Afloat program, which is to support the mental health and wellbeing of affected commercial fishers, charter operators and seafood processors.

**Mr BASHAM:** We were just looking for the cost, but thank you for that.

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** It is a very important industry for South Australia.

**The CHAIR:** A comprehensive answer, I thought.

*Members interjecting:*

**The CHAIR:** Enough interjections.

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I am sorry to hear the member for Chaffey is not interested in snapper. I know it is not his own—

**Mr WHETSTONE:** You are the guys that let the stocks get where they got to. We are the people who fixed it.

**The CHAIR:** Okay, let's get on with it. You have one more question.

*Members interjecting:*

**The CHAIR:** Enough interjections, please, on this side of the chamber. You have one last question.

*Members interjecting:*

**The CHAIR:** The member for Chaffey and the member for Newland, the member for Finniss wants to ask a question. Last question.

**Mr BASHAM:** Does the West Beach facility have the capacity to breed freshwater fish?

*Members interjecting:*

**The CHAIR:** And we were doing so well.

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** The answer to the question is that, yes, there is a capacity to breed freshwater fish at West Beach and my information is in the past that has occurred, but it is a matter of where the priorities lie in terms of utilising that facility for whatever is of the highest priority at any given time.

*Sitting suspended from 11:00 to 11:15.*

#### **Membership:**

Ms Clancy substituted for Ms Wortley.

**The CHAIR:** I advise that the proposed payments remain open for examination.

**Mr BASHAM:** A question in relation to recreational fishing licences. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, sub-program 2, page 54. Does the minister and the government support a recreational fishing licence in South Australia?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I think the link to the budget paper is pretty tenuous, but I am happy to answer the question in any case.

**The CHAIR:** This is a perennial question at every estimates hearing, irrespective of who is in opposition.

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I have stated publicly that the government has no intention to introduce a recreational fishing licence in this four-year period. I have also said that, before we would be willing to consider such a proposal, it would need to come from the recreational fishing sector and they would need to be able to demonstrate very widespread support for it.

I have been involved in a number of forums as well as informal discussions around the perceived advantages and the perceived disadvantages of a recreational fishing licence. I have heard that there may be some within the recreational fishing community who may bring to me a proposal for a recreational fishing licence. I have said on multiple occasions that if that occurs, then that is something that can be considered, but I reiterate that there will be no introduction of such a licence in this current term.

**Mr BASHAM:** I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 54, target 2023-24. Will the minister table a report from the independent review into the cost-recovery process for the fisheries sector?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I thank the honourable member for his question. Just as a little bit of background, in March 2022 we announced as one of our election commitments that we would

undertake an independent cost-recovery review of the current seafood sector cost-recovery policy or model. That is designed to ensure that it is both sustainable and appropriate.

An independent cost-recovery review panel was established and commenced their review following the announcement of member appointments on 15 December 2022. Two reports were prepared, because we responded to feedback from the aquaculture sector to indicate that their provision should be considered separately, and indeed that was done. So there are two reports looking at this.

In terms of the reports being made public, as yet I have not made a decision about that. I will be considering the recommendations of the report as well as other information that will feed into the decision-making process and will be able to advise in the future.

**Mr BASHAM:** If you are not prepared to release this report, is there something to hide?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** As I have said, I have not made a decision about whether to release the reports, remembering that there are two of them, not only one as the member indicated from that question. I will make that decision in the future.

**Mr BASHAM:** Does the fishing community not have a right to see these reports?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** There are a number of different pieces of information that will feed into any decisions. Once I have considered the reports in full, including the recommendations and other advice, I will then make my decision.

**Mr BASHAM:** Just going back to some previous questioning in relation to the West Beach facility and fish breeding. You talked about the opportunity that, previously, freshwater fish had been bred there. Is there any understanding of what it might cost to do a program for, say, 100,000 freshwater fish—Murray cod, for example?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I thank the honourable member for his question. My advice is I guess similar to the question before the break, that there is both the capacity and expertise at the facility to breed freshwater fish and it does come down to the priorities in terms of various programs that are in existence. Whilst to our knowledge there has not been a specific costing of breeding Murray cod, in a general sense my advice is that it would not be very different to breeding, for example, snapper fingerlings.

**Mr BASHAM:** What sort of capacity is there at West Beach in totality for fingerling breeding?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** My advice is that there is capacity to breed up to about 150,000 fingerlings per run and there may be several runs within a calendar year.

**Mr BASHAM:** I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 54, highlights 2022-2023. In relation to the cuttlefish closure, prior to the minister's decision to impose a permanent ban on the taking of cuttlefish in the waters of Spencer Gulf north of a line between Arno Bay and Wallaroo, did the minister consult with the Minister for Science before making the decision?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** The decision to implement that, as the member has mentioned, was an election commitment prior to the election.

**Mr BASHAM:** Did the minister receive scientific advice from SARDI or PIRSA about whether the permanent ban was necessary for the protection of the cuttlefish?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I certainly received a briefing in regard to the depletion of cuttlefish that had occurred over many years. I am pleased to say that since the ban has been in place that has improved considerably.

**Mr BASHAM:** Will the minister make available all that information in relation to the science behind making the decision to stop the fishing in that zone?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** As I mentioned, the decision was made prior to the election. At that time, I was obviously not relying on briefings from PIRSA, given that PIRSA does not give briefings to members of the opposition, so that decision was made then.



**Mr BASHAM:** In relation to science then, will the science continue to be conducted so that decisions can be made going forward to see whether the ban was necessary or not?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** The monitoring of the giant cuttlefish numbers is done on an annual basis, and that will continue. I might also mention how well received that has been by the local community, and indeed the Chair of this committee I am sure could attest to that if he was not sitting in the chair at this moment.

**The CHAIR:** Incredibly well received.

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** So very strong support across that community. The benefits to Whyalla from the tourism opportunities have been absolutely considerable. Certainly, engagements with members from local government as well as tourism operators around that area have shown that it really is an absolutely unique event that occurs, the aggregation in this manner is unique in the world.

I think it is one of the interesting things in South Australia that often we are not quite so conscious of how world leading some of our opportunities are. It is something that perhaps we should all value even more. I hope that those on the opposition benches would also value the opportunities that the giant cuttlefish enclosure has created for the Whyalla community and therefore our state more broadly.

**Mr BASHAM:** I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, sub-program 1.2. Did the minister receive scientific advice from SARDI or PIRSA about whether the permanent ban for opera house nets was necessary for the protection of platypuses, river rats and other affected wildlife?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** The short answer is yes. In terms of more detail, opera house style yabby nets are an enclosed trap with a side funnel entrance designed to prevent an animal that enters the trap to escape. The problem is that that then creates a risk to air-breathing aquatic animals because they may become trapped.

To address concerns raised relating to the permitted use of opera house style yabby nets based on the risk, PIRSA consulted with the former and current recreational fishing advisory groups. As of 1 July, those types of yabby nets are now prohibited. One thing that was actually done under the previous government, and I give them credit for that, was that from 1 July 2021 pyramid nets were introduced as permitted fishing gear. Pyramid nets are an alternative open top yabby fishing net.

The risks associated with the use of opera style yabby nets have resulted in them not being permitted in the Australian Capital Territory, Western Australia, Tasmania and Victoria. I am advised that in New South Wales and Queensland, opera house style yabby nets are only permitted in limited areas, specifically not in areas where platypus or other at-risk animals are located.

**Mr BASHAM:** I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 54, sub-program 1.2, in relation to the sardine fishery management plan. What consultation was completed on that?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** Management plans prepared under the Fisheries Management Act 2007 describe the management arrangements for their respective fisheries. Can I just clarify which fishery you asked about?

**Mr BASHAM:** Sardine.

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** Replacement plans for the South Australian Gulf St Vincent prawn fishery and the charter boat fishery were adopted and came into effect on 1 July 2022 and 1 August 2022 respectively.

A new management plan for the South Australian sardine fishery is being finalised, with submissions received from public consultation currently being considered. This management plan will be adopted prior to the expiry of the current management plan, and that plan expires on 30 September this year. The current management plan for the sardine fishery passed its fifth anniversary since commencement and, in accordance with the Fisheries Management Act 2007, the former minister (who is present here) approved a review of this plan. The outcome of the review recommended a replacement plan for the sardine fishery be developed.

PIRSA developed a draft management plan with feedback sought from the sardine fishery industry, using the most up-to-date scientific information. The draft plan proposes small increases in total allowable commercial catch for the fishery, which is managed across three fishing zones. The proposed changes were independently assessed by a world-renowned fisheries scientist and are considered to deliver economic benefit to commercial fishers and the state while still maintaining stock sustainability.

Submissions provided during the public consultation are being reviewed by PIRSA and will be considered in finalising the replacement management plan. As I mentioned, that will be prior to the expiry of the current management plan on 30 September.

**Mr BASHAM:** I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 56, sub-program 1.3. Why is there a reduction in the SARDI budget from \$20.456 million in 2022-23 to \$18.747 million in this year's budget?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** First of all, there was no reduction in the base state funding to SARDI. A way of understanding that is that SARDI receives the majority of its revenue from external sources. That can be from RDCs or other stakeholders. It is often a combination of different sources of revenue. As a result, the total revenue varies from year to year based on the investing capacity of investors and the success of SARDI in terms of project applications.

There have only been minor variations in total SARDI annual revenue over the last few years, and I am advised that is anticipated to be continued in 2023-24. Aligned with the budget, the FTEs of SARDI—I know that is not what the member asked about, but it is relevant, I am sure—also vary throughout the year and between years based on that total revenue. Just to summarise, there has not been any reduction in the state funding to SARDI. It is a result of those other factors.

**Mr BASHAM:** I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 55, sub-program 1.3. What were the outcomes of the investigation into the animal welfare, productivity and profitability outcomes of virtual fencing of cattle?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** The possibilities around virtual fencing are something that have been raised with me on a number of different occasions in my interactions with the livestock industry. PIRSA was successful in securing \$1 million of state government funding to undertake research into the animal wellbeing and economic impact of virtual fencing within South Australian livestock enterprises.

PIRSA has invested \$600,000 into this and there have been in-kind contributions from the University of Adelaide. The South Australian Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub contributed a further \$200,000. Field trials are underway at SARDI's Struan Research Centre as well as at Wintinna Station in the state's Far North. I have visited the Struan Research Centre to look at, among other things, the various investigations that are occurring.

Members might be aware that there were in fact several fires at Struan in November 2022. They did cause minor delays to the project. I am glad to say that they were only minor. Trial work has recommenced, and I am advised that there is no negative impact on key project deliverables or project budgets. PIRSA is working with several university, industry and government organisations to deliver the project. Once the project is complete, there will be more information to share around what the outcomes are in regard to animal wellbeing.

**Mr BASHAM:** When is the project likely to be concluded, and will those reports be made fully public?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I am just clarifying what the expected end time is at present, and hopefully I will be able to get that back to you in the next few minutes. In terms of making the reports public, I am advised that, due to the funding arrangements, that is a requirement and therefore it would be made fully public.

While I have the opportunity, and with your agreement, Chair, I want to clarify something I think I said before the break in regard to the introduction of the veterinary services bill. I may have referred to introducing it into parliament tomorrow. If I did, it should have been Thursday, given that we do private members' business on Wednesday in this place.

**Mr BASHAM:** I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 55, sub-program 1.3. The release of 200,000 sterile blowflies occurred on Kangaroo Island in August-September 2022. How often are they being released and in what numbers?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** It is quite an exciting project. I was pleased to be able to be there at I think it was the first release of those flies or, certainly if it was not the first, it was within a week of that. This is about developing a mobile sterile sheep blowfly rearing facility on Kangaroo Island, and it is part of a pilot project to evaluate sterile insect technology as a management option for sheep blowfly.

The project aims to trial the technology to significantly reduce sheep blowfly numbers on Kangaroo Island and further develop the sterile insect technology for future management of sheep blowfly on the mainland. Obviously, due to the characteristics of Kangaroo Island being an island, it presents something of a unique opportunity to be able to trial this type of technology and then, if successful, to look at how it can be modified to be able to be used on the mainland.

Construction of the facility has commenced with site works underway, and specifically-designed modular units are being built in Adelaide for relocation to Kangaroo Island. While that facility is being constructed, there have been trial releases of sterile sheep blowfly, which will be informing the release protocols. Six trial releases were undertaken, in answer to the specific question, in spring 2022 across about three sheep properties to establish the mobility of the released flies and also their longevity after release. Marked flies were recaptured up to six weeks after release and over 1.5 kilometres from the release points.

That sort of information is important for planning subsequent large-scale releases. Rearing of sterile blowfly on Kangaroo Island will commence later this year, and populations will be increased to release up to 50 million sterile flies per week throughout spring and summer over the 2024 period. For members' interest, recruitment of project staff and postgraduate students has commenced and the facility manager is already in place on Kangaroo Island.

The eradication of sheep blowfly on Kangaroo Island would result in savings to local producers of approximately \$3.6 million per year due to reduced losses and management costs. It will certainly be a very valuable program for Kangaroo Island and, hopefully, it can also be modified to provide additional benefits to producers on the mainland.

**Mr BASHAM:** How is the program being monitored to ensure it is eradicating flystrike in sheep on the island?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** As I mentioned, project staff and postgraduate student recruitment has commenced, and that will be part of their roles. It is according to the various protocols and understanding. One thing I mentioned in my original answer was around the marked flies being recaptured up to six weeks after release and over 1.5 kilometres from the release points, and that is the surveillance and monitoring I think perhaps you are asking about.

**Mr BASHAM:** I was trying to get some clarity about how you are monitoring flystrike occurrence on the island itself. Are you in contact with the growers themselves, etc.?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** The project has included that sort of work with industry and also with AgKI. They have been working very closely with AgKI on this. The evaluation, of course, is a slightly longer term part of the project and that evaluation is needed, as indeed it is for any particular project.

I also might like to give a little bit of a shout-out to AgKI. I was pleased to meet with them again the week before last when we had country cabinet on Kangaroo Island. The work they do and the partnerships they form, working collaboratively with PIRSA, landscape boards and DEW, etc., is certainly very impressive and their involvement in this project is also pretty highly valued.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, pages 56 and 57, emergency animal diseases. How much of the budget is allocated to the ongoing emergency animal disease preparedness and surveillance projects?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I thank the honourable member for his question. In a general sense, my understanding is that really all the additional funding, the \$6.8 million funding over four

years that we announced at the end of last year, is to do with preparedness and surveillance. There might be specifics the member wants to ask about, but I will give an outline of where that money is being directed, which might answer the member's question because it was a little bit unclear.

In response to significant and unprecedented increases in animal biosecurity risks on Australia's northern border and overseas and the devastating impacts to South Australia's livestock industry if indeed there was to be an outbreak of such a disease, the Malinauskas Labor government committed an additional \$6.8 million in funding over four years to assist PIRSA to prepare for a response to possible future emergency animal disease incursions.

The funds are being applied to address gaps identified from state, national and international reviews of both Australia's and South Australia's emergency animal disease preparedness. Specifically, what we are looking at doing is enhancing epidemiological technical skills, operational preparedness, regional capacity to detect and respond, diagnostic capability and training for response readiness.

For a little bit more detail, the funding will be directed to five key priority areas. First of all, with epidemiology and risk, it is to develop the epidemiological technical skills required to support preparedness and also effective, informed and flexible responses. Operational preparedness is about engaging in national policy and procedure development and developing state-level action plans to enhance operational preparedness and technical expertise in South Australia.

With most, if not all, of these, we need to recall that it will be guided by a national response if we are talking about, for example, something like foot and mouth disease, but we need to have localised plans in place that fit within those.

Regional detection and response will be undertaking regional activities to minimise the risk of disease outbreaks in the first place, minimise the risk of disease spread and ensure regional-level preparedness to respond. That will include contingency planning by industry as well.

Diagnostic capability will improve SA laboratory services' capability and capacity to respond to an EAD outbreak, and the emergency response capability and capacity will enhance the PIRSA incident management team capacity and capability for an EAD response.

It is also important to note that it will be a cross-departmental response in the event of an outbreak. Obviously, given impacts on livestock or other industries within the PIRSA purview, PIRSA will have specific responsibilities, but that will be in conjunction with other departments that will also have complementary responsibilities, and activities will be within that as well.

The funding supports 10 new FTEs within the biosecurity division, which includes seven veterinary officers, two animal health officers and one EAD preparedness officer. As a government, we think that improving and increasing the capacity and capability of PIRSA to prepare for such an outbreak is important, and certainly some of the feedback from industry at the time that we made the announcement and since has been one that has very much welcomed the increased capacity with PIRSA.

We know and they know also how important it is to have that capability to be able to support industry members in the event of an outbreak, to be able to work collaboratively and to be able to provide the sorts of resources and information (both in advance) so that there can be strong support for on-farm preparedness by individual businesspeople and landowners as well as the coordination that is required from a government department.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** Minister, you talked a lot about the federal government's program that you will administer.

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** No, I do not think I said that.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** Does that include varroa mite?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** The original question was about emergency animal diseases?

**Mr WHETSTONE:** Correct.

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** So your question is?

**Mr WHETSTONE:** Does the emergency animal disease preparedness include the varroa mite?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** The short answer is yes, it can do. Bees are considered livestock under the appropriate acts, and varroa mite affects them, so potentially it could be.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** So are there funds specific to a varroa mite response, or is it just an overall response under the emergency animal disease preparedness?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** There are national cost-sharing arrangements in place in regard to varroa mite, and South Australia, obviously, contributes to that as part of that national agreement. In terms of what we have done for varroa mite, if the member is interested he is certainly welcome to ask more questions on that specific matter, but what we have done includes a technical working group with industry around the approaches to varroa.

If the honourable member is asking whether any of the \$6.8 million for EAD has been or is being used for varroa mite, the answer is no; the cost-sharing arrangements are quite separate to the \$6.8 million of additional funding that was announced for emergency animal diseases.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** So what budget is allocated to the varroa mite program that will minimise the impacts of varroa mite?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** My advice is that in addition to the cost-sharing arrangements, which I think, if I understand the question correctly, is what the member was getting at, there have also been response costs so far of approximately \$385,000. That is the best advice I have at this time.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** Same budget reference line: fruit fly. Of the \$25 million that has been announced as new measures to continue the eradication program, how much of this money has already been spent in the current financial year?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I think the budget papers do reveal this: \$15 million was for the financial year ending 2022-23, \$10 million is for the coming financial year that we are currently in now, so that is the total of \$25 million.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** Given that the current estimate that has been spent was \$28 million in the last financial year, do you accept—or believe—that \$10 million remaining will be sufficient allocation in the fruit fly eradication program going forward in 2023-24?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** When it comes to budget for fruit fly eradication, moneys are budgeted for based on the information at that time. If there are further outbreaks that require a further response, then the money becomes available for that. At the moment, we are expecting that \$10 million will be appropriate for this current financial year based on the outbreak scenario that we have at this time.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** Same reference point—

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** Sorry, I might just add, I am advised that is also subject to a mid-term review around what is required. There is essentially, I guess, ongoing monitoring and assessment of whether additional resources will be required.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** So you would envisage that going forward the Mid-Year Budget Review would see that you will need extra funds above the \$10 million if we look at what we have experienced in the 2022-23 year?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** In terms of what may or may not be the case with fruit fly outbreaks later in the year, I think that is speculation and so is not particularly helpful, particularly in this scenario. What has been the case in the past is if the circumstances change and additional resources are required then the department discusses it with the Department of Treasury and Finance and accesses additional resources as they are required, but to speculate about what may or may not happen I do not think is particularly helpful.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** I am not speculating.

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** What is important is to look at the different types of approaches that we are currently using to address the outbreaks that we currently have.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** I am reflecting; I am not speculating.

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** No, you are asking me to speculate.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** Minister, same budget paper reference: the dog fence. Is it still on track to be completed by 2024, and is it still on budget?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** The dog fence is an incredibly important project, and I would like to acknowledge the advocacy for a number of years of the member for Giles, currently Chair of this committee, around the rebuild, as well as the work that has been done since.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** I never heard from him once.

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** That was before your time, member for Chaffey.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** No, it was not.

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I do not think you were minister prior to 2018. I was about to also acknowledge the work that has been done since 2018 by the former government as well. Something that is so very important to our state I think is worthy of bipartisanship and is something that is certainly proving its worth. The rebuild of 1,600 kilometres of the SA dog fence has now passed the halfway mark, with just over 800 kilometres of the new fence now completed.

I think it is fair to say that the rebuild of the dog fence, as well as the baiting programs that are in place and the trapping programs, have given confidence to many landholders. I visited the dog fence I think it was about a month ago and was able to inspect the new areas as well as some of the older areas. The previous dog fence was quite remarkable when you think that some of these sections of fence were originally constructed back in the 1800s. It is an absolutely amazing piece of infrastructure, and, of course, the rebuild is particularly important.

Properties are now restocking areas adjacent and near to the dog fence and I have been told that 11 properties covering 18,000 square kilometres are already restocking with sheep, and that includes one station that has brought in 20,000 sheep to paddocks that have not been able to hold sheep for many years prior due to the wild dog attacks. There have been challenges faced over the last 12 months, and that certainly includes multiple heavy rain events, which I am sure members are aware of, as well as some of the issues that are being faced by other sectors and regional industries in particular, such as labour shortages and substantial increases in the costs of materials.

When the initial budget of \$25 million for the rebuild was determined in 2019, it allowed for an all-inclusive cost of \$15,625 per kilometre. The beyond-expected price increases have seen this cost increase currently to more than \$20,000 per kilometre. The total project expenditure to 21 June 2023 is \$17.1 million—roughly 70 per cent of the original project budget—and it is estimated that there will be additional funding required to complete the rebuild.

The state government recently committed a further \$1.6 million as part of this 2023-24 state budget to ensure completion of the project, and we continue to work with both the commonwealth government and the livestock industry on this project. Due to the rain events and labour shortages, the project is now expected to be completed by 30 June 2025.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** Moving on to the pest eradication program, you have talked about the wild dog management plan. How much of the 2023-24 budget has been allocated to feral pig management on the mainland, and also how much has been allocated to the feral deer eradication program?

#### **Membership:**

Mr Odenwalder substituted for Ms Clancy.

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** The figures that I have are for a broader period: \$15 million for the 10-year wild dog eradication program, which is 2022 to 2033; \$14 million for the 10-year feral deer eradication program; and \$5.8 million for the Kangaroo Island feral pig eradication program. Funding for delivering the first four years of the wild dog and feral deer eradication programs as well as funding to complete the Kangaroo Island feral pig eradication program has been secured from the commonwealth and state governments, as well as industry.

I think we have already talked about the wild dog eradication. The feral deer eradication program is focused on reducing the numbers of feral deer, with aerial culling being the major tool. Between all project partners working on the feral deer eradication program, between May 2022 and May 2023 there had been 7,800 feral deer culled in South Australia. There were 2,612 removed in three PIRSA-coordinated thermal-assisted aerial culls over 300,000 hectares of private property, national conservation parks and ForestrySA reserves. That was over six weeks of aerial shooting over the Fleurieu Peninsula and the Limestone Coast.

There were 2,900 deer culled in six aerial culling programs coordinated by regional landscape boards, being in the Limestone Coast, Hills and Fleurieu, and Eyre Peninsula landscape board areas; and 1,225 deer were culled in six ground-shooting programs coordinated by the Limestone Coast Landscape Board.

I would certainly like to commend the landscape boards that have been involved. I met with them in the Limestone Coast when I was looking at one of their earlier aerial culling programs. I also acknowledge the expertise and professionalism of those who were involved in that aerial culling program.

Recently when I was on Kangaroo Island—not at country cabinet, but a few weeks before that—and we were reaching the conclusion of the aerial culling of the feral pigs, it came to my attention that the thermal-assisted aerial culling apparently is actually quite a nation leader. It is something that is being used in South Australia, I think—if my information was correct—for the first time for this type of operation. I think it is worthy of mentioning that we really are at the forefront of using innovative technologies to be able to address feral animal eradication, and I commend all of those who have been involved in the project.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** I refer to the same budget paper reference number, biosecurity centre. Is the government committed to establishing an eradication and fumigation facility for biosecurity in South Australia?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** Sorry, could you repeat the question?

**Mr WHETSTONE:** As a government, are you committed to establishing an irradiation and fumigation facility in South Australia?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** There is a proposal by a private company for an irradiation and fumigation facility. The way the question was phrased seemed to be implying that government might be establishing its own facility, in which case I can certainly let the honourable member know that that is not the case.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** No, that is not what I was referring to. There is a federal government source of funding that has been on the table for biosecurity here in South Australia. It has been put to you, with the establishment and the building of an irradiation facility potentially at, or under the auspice of, the South Australian Produce Market, are you inclined to include any state government funding to establish that irradiation facility in South Australia? If not, why not?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I thank the honourable member for the clarification around the way the question was phrased. There has been a \$20 million federal funding program that has been allocated to address fruit fly in particular, and of course there are a number of different mechanisms that can be used for that. Currently, there has been no announcement made in regard to the specifics of that funding, and negotiations are continuing with the federal government.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** Does the funding need to be available in the state budget to enable South Australia to bid for that contestable federal funding?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** The \$20 million has been committed to South Australia without a requirement for state matching. One of the approaches that I made to the federal minister, Senator the Hon. Murray Watt, soon after I became minister was around guaranteeing that that \$20 million would be coming to South Australia. I am pleased to be able to have had confirmation from the federal minister that that is the case but, again, reiterate that matched funding was not a requirement of that.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** Obviously the irradiation proposal has been on the table for a considerable period of time. What is holding the progress of that project up?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** There are always a number of negotiations around any kind of funding agreement. They can take some time. It is a matter of once those things are resolved, then announcements can be made about any projects that may be able to be implemented.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** Can you give me an update on the progress of the duplication of the sterile insect facility at Port Augusta, please?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** Yes, I certainly can. As I mentioned, Minister Murray Watt confirmed to my office that South Australia will be receiving \$20 million of national funding and that includes work to expand the Queensland fruit fly sterile insect technology facility at Port Augusta. The expanded facility will produce up to 40 million sterile flies every week. That is double what the current capacity is, which is incredibly important for the fruit fly response. Work is on track to double the facility's operational capacity by spring of this year.

In terms of the construction that is continuing, it is subject to the final funding schedule being in place. It is an incredibly important project I think. It is something that has been advocated for by industry and the fact that we will be able to double that capacity by spring of this year has certainly been welcomed.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** So is that the same \$20 million that you referred to with the irradiation facility?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** That is the total funding from the federal government, so yes.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** For both projects?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** For a number of projects. There was a scoping study that was completed by Deloitte that identified a number of opportunities to address fruit fly within South Australia and the specifics are being finalised.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** I refer to the same reference point. The government has included the transition from an emergency response to a surveillance management program of Japanese encephalitis. What was involved in the transition process and what funds are allocated to the surveillance management program?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I am sorry, I missed a couple of the words of your last sentence there and your actual question.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** What funds are allocated to the surveillance management program? It was formerly an emergency response.

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I am advised that Japanese encephalitis virus (JEV) is now considered likely to be endemic in the Australian environment, hence the change from an emergency response to a different response that is appropriate for something that is considered to be endemic. Therefore, PIRSA transitioned from a formal emergency response to a management program.

This involves working with SA Health in particular, the affected South Australian industries as well as other jurisdictions on a one health approach. The transition project will continue for several years as Australia seeks to understand how this new disease is likely to behave in the Australian environment. Obviously, there is a lot of evidence from overseas as to how the virus might behave, but the specific conditions of the Australian environment need to be taken into account.

Funding has been provided by the commonwealth and is combined with existing state government funds that support animal health programs and are contributing to the management of



JEV, and that includes disease surveillance, laboratories services and field activities. The program has allowed the employment of new staff who are being trained in epidemiology skills which are also transferable to other emergency animal disease responses and preparedness activities. There are still uncertainties around the behaviour of JEV in the Australian environment because it is relatively new to Australia and that is expected to take some years to expand.

So a national approach has been required, and it continues to be required in relation to the coordination of policy, interventions and public messaging. We are continuing to work with other bodies, particularly SA Health, including communications, and there is enhanced passive surveillance through the disease surveillance program to test animals for JEV, as well as participation in a national JEV survey.

**Mr BASHAM:** I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, pages 50 and 51, key agency outputs. Has PIRSA undertaken any analysis or research on what effects a mass buyback of water licences in the Murray-Darling Basin to meet environmental water recovery targets might have on the state's food and fibre production?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** The South Australian River Murray Scheme (sometimes known as SARMS) has involved extensive work around the water issues in terms of a number of different factors. Obviously, the Department for Environment and Water is the appropriate body looking at River Murray issues. It really does come back to how important it is to get our full allocation under the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

Sadly, as we have seen over recent years, there has been a real abrogation of responsibility from those upstream in terms of delivering the water that was promised through that plan. We know that the former Minister for Environment was criticised very heavily for—I cannot remember what the word was; it was not capitulating but it certainly was a similar word in regard to the upstream irrigators. As a government, we continue to be dedicated to ensuring that we get the full allocation from the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

**Mr BASHAM:** Is the minister concerned about the security of the state's future food needs following buybacks?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I am not aware of any evidence to suggest that buybacks would have a negative impact, as the member is implying.

**Mr BASHAM:** If water is sold back from agriculture into environment, is that not going to lead to the loss of production from the South Australian system if it is bought from South Australia?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** My understanding is that the evidence has not shown that to be the case.

**Mr BASHAM:** I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 54, sub-program 1. What funds were available from the National Water Grid for the financial year 2022-23, and how much of these funds were spent?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** There are a number of projects that have been funded through the National Water Grid. It is worth noting, however, that the scope has been expanded in the last six months to include urban and remote area projects. We can take on notice how much has been expended in the period that the member asked about, but I would also advise members that, due to that expanded scope, future responsibility for National Water Grid projects has been transferred to the Department for Environment and Water.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, minister. There being no further questions, I declare the examination of the portfolio of the Department of Primary Industries and Regions completed.

#### **Membership:**

Ms Stinson substituted for Mr Odenwalder.

**Departmental Advisers:**

Mr M. Hanton, Acting Chief Executive, ForestrySA.

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

Ms A. Barclay, General Manager, Office of the Chief Executive, Department of Primary Industries and Regions.

Mr R. Robinson, Director, Forest Industries, Department of Primary Industries and Regions.

Ms M. Spencer, Chief of Staff, Department of Primary Industries and Regions.

**The CHAIR:** The portfolio is ForestrySA. The minister appearing is the Minister for Forest Industries. I advise that the proposed payments remain open for examination. I call on the minister to make an opening statement, if she so wishes, and if there is a change of advisers to introduce the new advisers.

**Mr PEDERICK:** Chair, can we read the omnibus questions while we are setting up?

**The CHAIR:** Yes, feel free.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** Thank you, Chair. I would like to present the omnibus questions to the committee, please:

1. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, how many executive appointments have been made since 1 July 2022 and what is the annual salary and total employment cost for each position?

2. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, how many executive positions have been abolished since 1 July 2022 and what was the annual salary and total employment cost for each position?

3. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, what has been the total cost of executive position terminations since 1 July 2022?

4. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, will the minister provide a breakdown of expenditure on consultants and contractors with a total estimated cost above \$10,000 engaged since 1 July 2022, listing the name of the consultant, contractor or service supplier, the method of appointment, the reason for the engagement and the estimated total cost of the work?

5. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, will the minister provide an estimate of the total cost to be incurred in 2023-24 for consultants and contractors and, for each case in which a consultant or contractor has already been engaged at a total estimated cost above \$10,000, the name of the consultant or contractor, the method of appointment, the reason for the engagement and the total estimated cost?

6. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, will the minister advise whether it met the 1.7 per cent efficiency dividend for 2022-23 to which the government committed and, if so, how was the saving achieved?

7. For each department or agency reporting to the minister, how many surplus employees are there in June 2023, and for each surplus employee what is the title or classification of the position and the total annual employment cost?

8. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, what is the number of executive staff to be cut to meet the government's commitment to reduce spending on the employment of executive staff and, for each position to be cut, its classification, total remuneration cost and the date by which the position will be cut?

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

- What savings targets have been set for 2023-24 and each year of the forward estimates; and

- What is the estimated FTE impact of these measures?
10. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, will the minister advise what share it is receiving of the \$1.5 billion the government proposes to use over four years of uncommitted capital reserves held in the budget at the time it took office and the purpose for which this funding is being used in each case?
11. For each department and agency reporting to the minister:
- What was the actual FTE count at June 2023 and what is the projected actual FTE count for the end of each year of the forward estimates;
  - What is the budgeted total employment cost for each year of the forward estimates; and
  - How many targeted voluntary separation packages are estimated to be required to meet budget targets over the forward estimates and what is their estimated cost?
12. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, how much is budgeted to be spent on goods and services for 2023-24 and for each year of the forward estimates?
13. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, how many FTEs are budgeted to provide communication and promotion activities in 2023-24 and each year of the forward estimates and what is their estimated employment cost?
14. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, what is the total budgeted cost of government-paid advertising, including campaigns, across all mediums in 2023-24?
15. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, please provide for each individual investing expenditure project administered, the name, total estimated expenditure, actual expenditure incurred to June 2023 and budgeted expenditure for 2023-24, 2024-25 and 2025-26?
16. For each grant program or fund the minister is responsible for, please provide the following information for the 2023-24, 2024-25 and 2025-26 financial years:
- Name of the program or fund;
  - The purpose of the program or fund;
  - Budgeted payments into the program or fund;
  - Budgeted expenditure from the program or fund; and
  - Details, including the value and beneficiary, or any commitments already made to be funded from the program or fund.
17. For each department and agency reporting to the minister:
- Is the agency confident that you will meet your expenditure targets in 2023-24;
  - Have any budget decisions been made between the delivery of the budget on 15 June 2023 and today that might impact on the numbers presented in the budget papers which we are examining today; and
  - Are you expecting any reallocations across your agency's budget lines during 2023-24, if so, what would be the nature of this reallocation?
18. For each department and agency reporting to the minister:
- What South Australian businesses will be used in procurement for your agency in 2023-24;
  - What percentage of total procurement spend for your agency does this represent; and
  - How does this compare to last year?

19. What protocols and monitoring systems has the department implemented to ensure that the productivity, efficiency and quality of service delivery is maintained while employees work from home?

20. What percentage of your department's budget has been allocated for the management of remote work infrastructure, including digital tools, cybersecurity and support services, and how does this compare with previous years?

21. How many procurements have been undertaken by the department this FY, how many have been awarded to interstate businesses, and how many of those were signed off by the chief executive?

22. How many contractor invoices were paid by the department directly this FY? How many and what percentage were paid within 15 days, and how many and what percentage were paid outside of 15 days?

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

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

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** Yes, just a brief one. The government's interests in forestry are led by both ForestrySA and the Department of Primary Industries and Regions. I might indicate that I am happy to take questions during this period for both of those. I know that in the past sometimes there has been discussion around which parts will be answered in which section, but I am happy to answer questions in relation to either.

The South Australian Forestry Corporation, trading as ForestrySA, is the statutory authority with commercial and regional economic responsibilities that include management of the Mount Lofty Ranges forest estate, with more than 10,500 hectares of commercial pine plantation area, and also the delivery of specified non-commercial activities on behalf of the government. PIRSA is responsible for providing policy advice and the implementation of the government's initiatives to develop the state's forest and wood products industry. Here with me today, I have Mr Michael Hanton, Acting Chief Executive, ForestrySA, and Mr Rob Robinson, Director, PIRSA forests.

South Australia's forest and wood products sector is significant to the state's economy, contributing around \$1.4 billion in 2020-21 and thousands of direct and indirect jobs, mostly in our regional communities. With such an important role for our regional communities, the state government is working closely with industry on a number of initiatives to ensure the sector's growth well into the future.

The state government has committed \$15 million over 10 years for a new Forestry Centre for Excellence, which I will refer to as 'the centre', to advance skills to drive innovation and investment, while ensuring science and technology work effectively for business. The centre's strategic directions plan has now been launched, illustrating the vision behind the collaborative project that will be co-located with the Green Triangle Forest Industries Hub, the National Institute for Forest Products Innovation and the University of South Australia's Mount Gambier campus.

The government has committed to a master plan for the Wireless Road precinct at Mount Gambier, which is a \$59 million state government investment to bolster education and training for the Limestone Coast, which will also link with the centre for excellence. This process is being led by Rear Admiral Kevin Scarce AC CSC, under the Minister for Education, Training and Skills.

The Trees on Farms Initiative has commenced, which will quantify and promote the environmental and economic benefits of on-farm plantations and guide appropriate partnerships between timber processors and landholders.

Over \$2 million has been provided as part of the commitment to strengthen forestry fire management and this includes OneFortyOne Plantation's repairing, maintaining, improving and operation of the existing towers and overseeing construction of a replacement tower at Penola North. OFO is implementing works including undertaking critical repairs and improving security across the fire tower network. Last summer, they staffed the towers to enable early fire detection and operated several trial fire detection cameras and management systems.

The funding includes \$1 million to the Green Triangle Fire Alliance, comprising all major forest plantation growers in the region, to implement new technologies. The aim is to improve the ability to detect dangerous fires early. Other technology trials include satellite detection and remote-operated cameras, which have occurred at The Bluff, Penola North and Mount Burr, with the alliance soon to confirm arrangements with a contractor for new automated detection systems.

The initiative also supports the protection of others in the landscape, including primary producers and those who live and work in the region. The camera-based fire detection system across the Lower South-East is expected to be installed in time for this coming 2023-24 fire season, subject to successful trial and implementation.

That is just a snapshot of some of the exciting initiatives that are happening within this sphere, and I look forward to questions about this year's budget.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, minister. Is there any opening statement from the opposition?

**Mr PEDERICK:** No, I am ready to go. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 58, sub-program 1.5. I note that \$1.5 million was budgeted for the 2022-23 financial year for the Construction Softwood Transport Assistance Program. How much of this was spent?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** The Construction Softwood Transport Assistance Program provides a subsidy for the transport of burnt softwood logs from Kangaroo Island to the mainland and local sawmills and the Australian and South Australian governments have together committed up to \$2 million. My understanding is the former government committed the South Australian share from the then Regional Growth Fund. The Australian government has provided a budget commitment to continue the transport assistance program until 30 June 2024. In terms of the specific figures that have been expended so far, I do not believe we have those. I can take that on notice.

**Mr PEDERICK:** So have you outlined what amount was spent?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I said we do not have those figures here. I can take that on notice.

**Mr PEDERICK:** I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 57, sub-program 1.5. Prior to the 2022 election, Labor committed to appointing a hydrologist and an ecologist from the Department for Environment and Water to be based in the Limestone Coast. Have those appointments been filled?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** It is correct that that was an election commitment. I know that those positions have been advertised. Given that it does fall under the Department for Environment and Water, I can take that on notice and provide an answer.

**Mr PEDERICK:** So you do not know why there has been a delay and that it has been a broken election promise? You do not know any of those details?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** As I mentioned, my understanding is that those positions have been advertised. Any further update would need to come from the Department for Environment and Water. The honourable member's colleagues could perhaps have asked that question of DEW during the Deputy Premier's estimates.

**Mr PEDERICK:** Do you know any of the costs involved in appointing these positions to the Limestone Coast, both the hydrologist and ecologist?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** That would be an appropriate question for the Department for Environment and Water, under whose responsibility that falls.

**Mr PEDERICK:** So the budget to fund these staff will come from the DEW budget, then?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** That is my understanding.

**Mr PEDERICK:** I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 58, sub-program 1.5. What allocation of funds is there for the government to support the implementation of the Forest Products Domestic Manufacturing and Infrastructure Masterplan?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** An election commitment was made of \$2 million to support the development of that master plan.

**Mr PEDERICK:** I refer to Budget Paper 4, page 58 again. Will the Forest Products Domestic Manufacturing and Infrastructure Masterplan be implemented in the 2023-24 financial year?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** The nature of a master plan is such that it is looking at the future directions for the forestry industry, particularly in regard to domestic manufacturing. My expectation would be that once the plan has been developed, that would apply to a far greater period than simply the next 12 months or, indeed, the next two or three years.

The idea of having a domestic manufacturing master plan is to be able to look at both the opportunities and potential challenges that might be experienced in terms of increasing the amount of domestic manufacturing here in our state. I think there is certainly widespread agreement that that is a worthy goal, that we want to make sure we are value-adding as much as possible to all of our forest industries products so that we do maximise the number of local jobs, we maximise the number of high-tech jobs in South Australia and we are getting the maximum benefit here in South Australia.

So that is the goal of the domestic manufacturing master plan. Once the plan has been developed, then I am sure a number of recommendations would apply to short-term initiatives; I am sure there will be some that are medium term and some that are longer term. It is an incredibly important piece of work that needs to be done to ensure we are getting the maximum value here in the state from our various forest industries.

**Mr PEDERICK:** Has work commenced on the master plan and, if so, can you indicate what work has been done?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** Certainly, there has been a, if you like, skeleton document that has been created for discussion and consultation. One of the roles of the Forest Industries Advisory Council of SA (FIACSA) is to progress that plan, and I look forward to receiving further updates on the progress of that in due course.

**Mr PEDERICK:** In regard to the development of the master plan, is it being developed fully within ForestrySA, or is an external consultant to be engaged and, if so, at what cost?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** It is not being developed by ForestrySA. That has not been part of ForestrySA's remit. The initial work was done by a person appointed partly specifically for that task in the previous financial year. She has now moved on to another role, but her work was complete in terms of formulating, as I refer to it, a skeleton document with some key points and opportunities for discussion and further enhancement. The work now is to continue to consult, but the feedback has often been that it is easier to have something to start with and then to consult and discuss, expand, to take things out or to fill in any gaps that might be there rather than starting with a blank slate.

At the moment that work is sitting with the Forestry Industries Advisory Council of South Australia. They certainly have not suggested to me that they think the engagement of a consultant would be beneficial. Were they to come to me with that proposal I would consider it on its merits, but at this stage that does not form part of the plan for developing that plan.

**Mr PEDERICK:** In regard to developing the skeleton document, were any stakeholders consulted in that part of the operation of developing the master plan?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** Yes, they were. There were quite close discussions with the Green Triangle Forest Industries Hub, which the member may or may not be aware involves a large number of industries within the Limestone Coast—South Australia is part of the Green Triangle—and then further informal consultation has occurred. The South Australia Forest Products Association also had some involvement in that, as well as other stakeholders.

The intent was to develop a working document that could be a starting point and to develop it further to ensure that all of the opportunities are considered; that if there are any gaps in that skeleton document, they are filled; and if there is anything that is considered of lesser importance to the industry—and by industry I include in that government departments, the businesses, the workforce. The entire industry has a contribution to make in terms of developing that master plan, and they will all be involved in that going forward.

**Mr PEDERICK:** What is the expected benefit from developing the master plan?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I think I outlined that in my response to the first part of the question.

**Mr PEDERICK:** What other jurisdictions have developed a forestry products master plan?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I am not aware of what other jurisdictions have done. I suggest perhaps the honourable member might like to Google that. There are opportunities to find such things out—

**Mr PEDERICK:** You could. I am just asking.

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** —but I think it is very common to have a master plan for a particular industry or sector. We have a number of different documents, some that are prepared through government, some through associations. We have industry blueprints. The general consensus I think is that having a master plan to look at the future directions for our sector, particularly one that is as important to the state as the forest industry sector, is very valuable and will help to guide future investments both from a private capacity and, potentially, from government investment as well, notwithstanding of course that we made I think it was \$19 million worth of investment announcements prior to the election for the forestry industry.

This, of course, contrasted with the former government who made virtually no announcements whatsoever, as clearly they did not consider the forest industry of particular importance to our state despite the many, many tens of thousands of jobs that it supports and the revenue that it provides to the state.

**Mr BASHAM:** I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 58, sub-program 1.5. Does the minister believe there is a shortage of structural timber for the housing industry in South Australia?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I think the short answer is that the shortage has perhaps had pressure relieved on it just slightly, perhaps in the recent 12 months, but that is only in comparison to the last couple of years where we have seen significant issues around the supply of structural timber, partly to do with COVID and supply chain issues, partly to do with fires in the Eastern States in particular, but not confined to only there, and also the increase in approvals for either new dwellings or extensions and so on, some of which was in relation to programs run by the federal government to boost the building industry, who were suffering so much from COVID.

Recent media reports suggest that some of those structural timber and other building supplies are more readily available than they were, and there has also been a decline in Australia's new dwelling approvals during 2022 as compared with the previous year. Some of that will be impacted by interest rate rises. The resulting reduction in dwelling approvals has meant that the demand for sawn structural timber has eased somewhat and that has an impact.

However, it is fair to say that, both domestically and internationally, high demand for structural timber continues, and indeed for most timber products it does continue. The increasing middle-class demand in India, not to mention the rise of a much larger middle class in China over the past decade, has seen a great increase in demand for structural timber and other timber products.

One of the other reasons that there would be such an increased demand is the recognition that timber, as the quote goes, is the ultimate renewable in terms of the increased desire for environmentally sustainable building products. Timber is a product that sequesters carbon and therefore does not have associated with it the negative environmental outcomes that some other building products do. All of those things combined means there is a continued very high demand for structural sawn timber as well as other timber products and therefore the desire and need to meet those demands continues.

**Mr BASHAM:** Back in late 2020 I think it was, when you were the shadow minister and I was the minister, you made demands on me to support the industry at the time following the implementation of bans into China, fearing there would be an oversupply. Now that, my understanding is, China is lifting those bans, is that not going to put further pressure on these supplies?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I am very pleased that the bans on exports to China are in the process of being lifted and with the work that is being done by the federal government in that sphere

around the various trade tensions with China to do with timber but not just timber. We know that there have also been impacts on lobster, on a number of other different commodities—wine being a huge one—and that the very positive moves made by the federal government to re-establish stronger trade links with China are certainly very much welcomed and beneficial to industries, including the timber industry.

I do not have notes to hand but my advice from memory is that, following the bans on timber to China, the reports from industry were that most of those markets were picked up through other nations and so the demand has been reasonably consistent. If I have further detail to bring to hand, I can certainly take that on notice.

**Mr BASHAM:** Does that not all mean that there is going to be greater demand and put a shortage further onto structural timber here in—

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I do not think there is anyone who disagrees with the fact that nationally and internationally there is a demand for structural timber. The international demand, as I referred to in the answer to the first question on this particular topic, referred to the rise of middle classes in India as well, and therefore the increase in international demand means that there will continue to be pressures on supply. While that has some benefits in terms of the price that might be gained for timber products, it also creates a lot of challenges.

We know that as a nation we have not been putting enough trees in the ground. When it comes to things like structural timber, of which *Pinus radiata* is the main species here, we needed to address that 30 years ago. Unfortunately, we cannot go back in time. What we can do is look at what we can do going forward and there are a number of things that are occurring already. One of those is really around technology and ensuring that we can utilise every piece of the tree that is harvested. A lot of work has been occurring and continues to occur around genetics so that the trees that are grown, even on an existing footprint, are better able to be utilised for the highest value, which at the moment tends to be structural sawn timber.

So all of those continue. The investment into the Forestry Centre of Excellence is an incredibly important part of ensuring that, as we go forward into the future, we are able to better utilise the resources that we have, as well as those improvements in things like genetics that will assist in that production.

Other initiatives include things such as new sorts of products. In Tarpeena later this year, there will be the opening of the combined cross-laminated timber (CLT) and glue-laminated timber (GLT) plant. My understanding is that this will be the first time in Australia that there has been a plant that is able to produce both of those particular products. They are not simply structural sawn timber but they are able to be used in building and construction.

I was pleased to be able to visit Brisbane earlier this year to look at some of the high-rise buildings there that are constructed out of some of these materials, which are both attractive in terms of the ambience associated with timber products—where the timber parts are exposed—as well as being very strong and environmentally sustainable. Those are just some of the ways that we are addressing the high demand for timber, which I am sure will continue.

**Mr BASHAM:** I am very much aware of that project as I was the minister who was there turning the sod. Surprisingly, getting more trees in the ground was not listed in the targets of 2023-24 in the budget, despite it being a priority for stakeholders. Is getting more trees in the ground a priority for the Labor government?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I think getting more trees in the ground is well accepted across the nation as a goal if we are going to be able to supply into the future. It is not the only way to address that supply. Some of the things that can also assist with that include the things that I have just mentioned. There is limited space to be able to put the priorities into the budget papers, and I think I alluded to that in the earlier session of this estimates committee, so it is something that I think is taken as given by anyone who has any familiarity with the timber industry and with the forest industry.

**Mr BASHAM:** What effort is the Labor government making to secure its share of the federal funding allocated to the trees-in-ground projects?



**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** That program is called the Support Plantation Establishment grants. The details were only released a couple of weeks ago, on 21 June. My advice is that it is a program of about \$73.8 million. The first round will be open until January 2024 and then later rounds until 30 June 2027.

Given that it has only been released within the last fortnight, in terms of the details, PIRSA is promoting the opportunities to stakeholders, to industry and to landholders. Associations such as the South Australian Forest Products Association and others are well aware of it and are also playing their role in ensuring that their membership is aware and able to take advantage of these. We are seeking additional information from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry so that we are able to provide additional advice, where that is appropriate.

It is worth noting that eligibility for the program is no longer restricted to just the Green Triangle, which I understand was the original assumption, so all of South Australia will be eligible. However, it is important to note that when it comes to establishing plantations, I think it has been well recognised in recent years that plantations need to be established either close to manufacturing facilities or close to port facilities. It is not only about how well a tree might grow in a particular environment, but how it might then be processed most appropriately going forward.

We certainly welcome the announcement by the federal government. We know how important getting more trees in the ground is. As I mentioned, I think it is pretty much a given for anyone who has any involvement or interest in the forestry industry and we will continue to work both with stakeholders and with the federal government to maximise the ability for South Australia to participate. Of course, one of the other aspects is the competing interests for different resources. Water is one of those resources here in South Australia. There is currently the review of the water allocation plan for the Limestone Coast and the outcomes of that will also be relevant to the ability to increase the plantations.

One other thing that we are doing in terms of increasing plantations is the Trees on Farms Initiative, which I did mention briefly in my opening statement. Just to expand on that a little bit: the Trees on Farms Initiative targets a range of farm-based forestry activities. We are looking for six different outcomes through that. First is increased future wood fibre supply to regional processors. Secondly, and this is of course a benefit potentially for landholders, is a diversified farm income which potentially can include from carbon markets. An important part of that is for farmers to understand not only the benefits but also the opportunity costs in utilising carbon credits. It is important that they understand how that might affect them in the future but also how it fits into their overall farm business.

We are looking also at further regional investment in plantation and processing capacity through Trees on Farms, increased employment opportunities and support for regional communities, greater investment in forestry research and better partnerships for the forest industry supply chain, especially between landholders and companies.

One of the challenges of the forestry industry for farmers is the long-term nature of the harvest. If you are looking at a radiata pine, you are looking at least 30-odd years. There will be thinnings along the way that can provide an income stream through that period of time but, generally, farmers' expertise is not in forestry. Part of the Trees on Farms Initiative is about how we link up farmers with the expertise that they need to ensure that their crop—in this case, timber—can be successful for them over such a long time period and then potentially who their customers will be at the end of that time.

Establishing a program such as Trees on Farms that enables all of that information to be gathered and made available to farmers so that they can make an informed decision about the potential that they might have is a really important part of that initiative. Towards the end of last year I hosted a breakfast meeting in Mount Gambier with industry and farmers which was really about starting some of that dialogue with the primary production sector and exploring what sort of information they want from that to be able to make more informed decisions and really gauging a bit of the interest there. It is only the beginning.

It is important that it is acknowledged as that because whether it is the items I have mentioned, whether it is the benefits to livestock, whether it is the benefits to other aspects of a farming enterprise, all of those things need to be considered in order for a Trees on Farms Initiative

to be beneficial to the farmer as part of their overall business, their agribusiness, as well as hopefully providing additional resource for processing here in South Australia and into the future.

**Mr BASHAM:** You touched on water allocation in your answer. In that space—forestry being a water-affecting activity and needing to have access to water—what are PIRSA and the minister doing in relation to making sure what access is available under the water allocation plan for forestry work?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** The goal of any water allocation plan is to ensure an appropriate mix of access to resource for all water users. The fact that it is being reviewed I think speaks to that whole question. The review is continuing: PIRSA is involved with that; the forestry industry is involved with that, as are other primary producers.

**Mr BASHAM:** From a PIRSA perspective, how do you deal with that conflicting water use demand?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** It is not for PIRSA to deal with that conflicting demand. PIRSA's role is to provide input and information subject to what is within their purview and then that will be considered through the review process. PIRSA, of course, is not running that review process.

**The CHAIR:** We will move to the member for Newland as she has been waiting patiently to ask a question. I will get back to you, member for Finnis.

**Ms CLANCY:** I refer the committee to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, and the portfolio of forest industries, page 49. Can the minister outline the economic and social benefits of the TreeClimb facility at ForestrySA's Kuitpo Forest Reserve?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** ForestrySA and TreeClimb SA have partnered to develop the TreeClimb Kuitpo Forest which is an aerial adventure course facility located in Kuitpo Forest Reserve. The facility delivers various outcomes, including providing a positive example of multi-use forestry, showcasing the broad benefits of our forest industries to a wide audience. The project also demonstrates positive environmental and regional growth outcomes.

I am advised that in the first six months, since it opened in January this year, TreeClimb Kuitpo has hosted over 23,700 participants. The initiative expects to attract approximately 30,000 to 40,000 visitors annually, which is a significant boost for the local community and economy. I noted that in the benefits it forgot to also mention fun—good, clean fun out in the forest.

TreeClimb Kuitpo is providing local jobs for young people: 28 of the 35 staff live within a 25-minute drive of Kuitpo, and the majority are under the age of 25 years, which I thought was particularly interesting. Further local economic and employment benefits of TreeClimb Kuitpo include five local businesses engaged to provide services such as drinking water cartage, food and drink provisions, and septic services.

In keeping with sustainability principles, most of the wood products used at TreeClimb Kuitpo are locally produced from South Australian sustainably managed plantation forests. The facility currently has four advanced courses and two children's courses and, importantly, it hosts Australia's first inclusive aerial net course which has been designed to enable users with disabilities to participate unharnessed and accompanied by family or carers. A nature play area and up to eight new picnic sites will be free and accessible to all visitors to the precinct.

There is also an interactive education element, which includes promoting ForestrySA's role as a sustainable commercial forestry manager, and that has been included. This will serve to both attract more school groups to TreeClimb Kuitpo and also educate those who visit. In a final piece of good news, a conservation dividend has been included in the licence agreement with ForestrySA. Part proceeds will go towards ForestrySA's recovery program for the nationally endangered southern brown bandicoot at Kuitpo Forest.

**Mr BASHAM:** My question follows on from previous questions in relation to water. When is the review likely to be completed?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I can certainly check with the Department for Environment and Water and bring back a response.

**Mr BASHAM:** I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 58, sub-program 1.5, descriptions/objectives, where it states, 'Works closely with industry'. Is the Forest Industry Advisory Council that was established—that is listed there—the same as the one that was established under the former government back in 2018?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** One of the election commitments was to expand the role of the Forest Industry Advisory Council of South Australia, and that was an election commitment that we have now done. The idea of FIACSA, as it exists under this government, is to really be able to reflect the contemporary needs of industry, based on feedback that I have had and the government has had over the effectiveness of the former council. The individuals who were on that former council were absolutely well respected and regarded, but there was a sense that not a lot had been achieved and that was not the fault of the council.

One piece of feedback I received was the desirability of having the involvement of senior executives of government departments, so that in regard to some of the things that could be effected by those government departments, there were people in the room who could actually make the decisions. New terms of reference have been developed and I think have been adopted by the council. The idea of the council is that it will provide a clear ongoing platform for government and industry to work together. They are progressing the development of the Forest Products Domestic Manufacturing and Infrastructure Masterplan, as I mentioned in answer to a previous question. They are also looking at a number of other aspects, with workforce being a particular one.

The new FIACSA includes persons nominated by associations. That includes a number of different ones: the South Australian Forest Products Association, the Green Triangle Forest Industries Hub, the Green Triangle Forest Contractors Group, the South Australian Timber Processors Association and the National Timber and Hardware Association. There is also the skills and training sector, employees in the forest industry, and government departments: the Department of Treasury and Finance; the Department for Environment and Water; the Department for Industry, Innovation and Science; the Department for Infrastructure and Transport; and the Department of Primary Industries and Regions.

The goal of that revised structure is to really be able to represent the entire supply chain within the forest industries sector. That goes right through from growers, harvest and haulage, and processors to as far as retailers. That is a different approach. My engagement with individual businesses that are predominant businesses in the timber sector indicated that they would be very happy to have the associations forming a good part of that membership. I am very pleased to be able to work with the new FIACSA, and I look forward to what they will be able to contribute.

**Mr BASHAM:** The new FIACSA promoted that they had their inaugural meeting recently. Did the old FIACSA meet in the meantime or not?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** No, they did not.

**Mr BASHAM:** Why did it take 16 months to get the new one up and going?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** There were probably a number of reasons. First of all, there was a lot of work happening in the forest industries space as a result of the \$19 million of commitments to the forest industries sector that were committed by the now Labor government as election commitments.

There has been a lot of work happening on that, in particular around some of the things we have mentioned: the centre of excellence, the engagement with industry around that centre of excellence and also around the interaction with the new technical college that will be built in Mount Gambier, and also the upgrades to TAFE. There was a \$5 million commitment for upgrades to TAFE. Workforce is a big issue for the industry, so things like development of the regional skills fund have also incorporated a lot of engagement with industry. There was a sense that there was a lot happening.

People are very busy within their own businesses as well as engaging with these multiple commitments from the Malinauskas Labor government, so a lot of that work continued while we also explored what was going to be the most appropriate and supported type of structure for FIACSA. I have had interaction with almost all the industry members of FIACSA throughout that time as

individuals. It was important to consult and look at different ways of structuring that body to ensure that it gave the best benefit to the industry, the state and those individuals concerned who are members of it.

**Mr BASHAM:** How often will this group meet?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** There is a requirement to meet a minimum of four times a year. It can meet more often than that. There is a minimum requirement that at least one of those meetings must be in Mount Gambier. The inaugural meeting was held in Mount Gambier. As well as that, under the new structure there is an opportunity to create subcommittees. Those subcommittees do not necessarily have to be made up solely of members of FIACSA but can bring in outside expertise as well. They were some of the other changes that were made in terms of the restructure for this council.

**Mr BASHAM:** Does the group have KPIs that they have to meet? If they do, who monitors those KPIs?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** There has been discussion around the KPIs. The main KPI will be around the development of the work plan. The council is developing a work program, which will be considered and endorsed by me as Minister for Forest Industries, and the members of the council will contribute to achieving that work over the course of their term. Obviously, I would expect them to keep me abreast of progress as we go, in addition to providing an annual report, which is also, I think, a new requirement.

The KPIs will be associated with priority areas, which include providing advice on the domestic manufacturing and infrastructure master plan, providing advice regarding future workforce requirements, developing the annual work plan, as I mentioned, and undertaking any additional tasks that I might request in my role as minister.

**Mr BASHAM:** How many members were chosen to sit on the new group, and were they ministerial appointments?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I have to count up exactly how many. I invited associations and other bodies to put forward some potential nominees, and then I chose from there. Whilst they are nominated by the relevant bodies, they are not strictly speaking representing them. They are there because of their expertise, and I approved the overall membership, so in that sense I guess they are ministerial appointments. There are a total of 15 members.

**Mr BASHAM:** Are the non-PIRSA or department positions paid positions?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** None of the positions are paid.

**Mr BASHAM:** Is the revised charter completed?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** There is not a charter; there are terms of reference. I am not sure whether you are using the terms interchangeably, but the terms of reference have been adopted, yes.

**Mr BASHAM:** Who was responsible for developing the terms of reference?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** A draft was prepared by the department and my office and I gave additional input into that to come up with the final version.

**Mr BASHAM:** Was there stakeholder engagement in the development of those terms of reference?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** There has certainly been informal engagement around what we want FIACSA to achieve. The terms of reference were sent out to the members of FIACSA prior to their inaugural meeting for discussion last week. If I recall correctly, there were no proposed changes to those terms of reference. The engagement has been more informal, but all the discussions, as well as my long association with the various parts of the value chain within the forestry industry sector, have contributed input into those terms of reference.

**Mr BASHAM:** Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 59: in March 2022, Heroes on the Homefront were approved for funding from PIRSA for their work at the Bennett Reserve, which was included in an allocation under the Regional Growth Fund. Was this funding honoured by the Labor government?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I was clarifying that Heroes on the Homefront disbanded, and that has been confirmed.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** Back to the Trees on Farms Initiative, industry and SAFF have called for the early removal of the 600-metre water rule, which is under review nationally to support the planting of trees on farms, in particular in the Adelaide Hills and Fleurieu regions. Has the South Australian government formed a view on that request?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** The 600-millimetre water rule has not had a practical application here in South Australia because of our water allocation plan. In that respect, as far as I am aware the government has not formed a view. The advice I have is that PIRSA advised that the proposed changes to the water rule were unlikely to result in material changes to how forest water impacts are considered in South Australia, so, yes, it is not really expected to have any impact because of our different water allocation.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** On a similar budget line, regarding the election commitment, the forest industries policy document, in last year's estimates you indicated that you were hopeful the new fire towers and technology would be in place. Has that happened?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I appreciate that question because, yes, fire towers are an incredibly important part of fire protection for the South-East. Under a four-year agreement, a total of \$2 million is being utilised by the forest industry in maintaining and operating the fire towers, as well as delivering a full camera-based fire detection system across the Lower South-East. That funding delivers on our election commitment to provide a landscape-level fire detection program, ensuring ongoing protection of the Green Triangle's forestry assets and communities as the transition to new fire detection technologies continues.

As I mentioned in my opening statement, the funding includes \$1 million to the Green Triangle Fire Alliance, comprising all major forest plantation growers in the region, to implement new technologies aimed at improving the early detection of fires. That early detection is absolutely key to protecting the 130,000 hectares of plantation estate, as well as obvious benefits to local communities. The new camera-based fire detection system across the Lower South-East of the state is expected to be installed in time for the 2023-24 fire season, as I think I also mentioned in my opening statement.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** So it is behind schedule?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** No.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** I think the highlights were that it would be in place during the 2022-23 period. They were your words last year.

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I think that may have been in relation to the maintenance of the existing towers. It is an integrated type of policy. We have the existing fire towers, some of which had ceased to be fit for purpose, hence part of the election commitment was around maintaining fire towers while we transition to camera based. It is also dependent not only on the availability of equipment but also the level of technology that is available. I think the whole integrated program has been continuing on time.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** On a similar budget line, sub-program 1.5, regarding OneFortyOne Plantation's compliance with the lease of the state government's plantation in the Green Triangle, has OneFortyOne completed their annual audit?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** I am advised that the annual audit is based on a calendar year. My advice is that it has been completed, but, of course, as the honourable member would know, it is not a public document.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** Moving along, on the same reference point, minister, can you update the committee as to where the government's election commitment was to investigate feasibility of incentives to ensure that arrangements favour local processors who may have been locked out of contracts with larger forest growers?

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** Yes, certainly, and I think it is an important point, which is why it was included in our election commitments. It is not an easy issue to overcome. We are aware that,

obviously, large processors have advantages in terms of economies of scale and being able to purchase large packages, if you like, of wood, whereas small timber processors face more difficulties if they do not have plantations of their own.

Part of the commitment was to investigating how we can assist the smaller processors to have access to resource, noting, however, of course, that this is a market—we are in a free market—so there are limitations, particularly around, for example, the ACCC requirements around competition and so on.

In October last year, I wrote to the federal Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Financial Services and the agency head of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) seeking advice on determining what the optimal role might be that government could play to assist industry. The response to my request included advice that the ACCC can provide necessary guidance to assist industry participants to develop a voluntary code of conduct that addresses key issues.

They can also grant an exemption to specific collective bargaining in the public interest, and that exemption removes the risk of breaking competition law. That is where there is an opportunity for potentially a number of the smaller processors to work together. They do not need to necessarily be in a formal cooperative arrangement, although that is also an option, but as a collective bargaining position they are able to work together for that. So I think that is one option that the smaller processors are able to continue to pursue.

PIRSA has also been looking at the feasibility of incentives to improve the capacity of the small local processors to be able to compete. Again, the voluntary code of conduct is one possible option there as well. A voluntary code could be something that industry develops and implements as quickly as possible, which would look at the interactions, I guess, between forest growers and timber processors. The only proposal I have had, as far as I recall, is for a voluntary code of conduct. There have not been any calls for a mandatory code of conduct.

I have initiated discussions with a number of my interstate counterparts—ministers for forestry in other jurisdictions—around the level of support and indeed the perceived level of need for that. Those discussions are continuing. It is something that I think continues to be a challenge, and I am certainly committed to continuing to investigate any other opportunities that might arise to address it.

**The CHAIR:** Being a generous Chair, I will allow one more question.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** Thank you for indulging me, sir.

**The CHAIR:** Just one more.

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** Generous to who, might I ask?

**The CHAIR:** Well, you are doing so well, minister.

**Mr WHETSTONE:** No, it is an easy question. I am sure the minister will read this one too. Minister, what are the government's plans for identifying and fostering carbon opportunities within the industry? Come on; you do not have to read that one.

**The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN:** They are widespread. We know we have the carbon farming road map. We know that trees sequester carbon, so they are well ahead of many other competing products in terms of the opportunities there—the abilities to look at carbon credits within an overall context not only for forest industries but, as I mentioned earlier, for farmers as well as part of the Trees on Farms Initiative. They are many and varied. I suspect at this time of the day we do not have time for a 30-minute exposé of all the carbon opportunities, so I would invite the honourable member to perhaps put a question on notice if he wants further detail.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, minister. The time allotted having well and truly expired, I declare the examination of the portfolio of ForestrySA completed. The examination of the proposed payments for the Department of Primary Industries and Regions and the Administered Items for the Department of Primary Industries and Regions are now complete.

I would like to thank everybody for their contribution: the opposition, the government, the minister. I would like to thank the advisers and the agencies for the work you do throughout the year, but especially the work that you have to do in the lead-up to estimates. Once again, I thank the parliamentary officers for having to sit here over these extended periods of time. I especially want to thank our security, which has to sit up there through hours and hours of deliberations.

At 13:19 the committee adjourned to Wednesday 5 July 2023 at 09:00.