

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**Wednesday, 25 June 2025****ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B****Chair:**

Mr E.J. Hughes

Members:

Hon. J.A.W. Gardner

Mr M.E. Brown

Ms L.P. Hood

Ms C.L. Hutchesson

Mr S.J.R. Patterson

Mr J.B. Teague

*The committee met at 09:00**Estimates Vote***DEPARTMENT OF THE PREMIER AND CABINET, \$508,394,000****ADMINISTERED ITEMS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF THE PREMIER AND CABINET,
\$27,324,000****Minister:**

Hon. Z.L. Bettison, Minister for Tourism, Minister for Multicultural Affairs.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr W. Hunter, Chief Operating Officer, Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

Ms J. Kennedy, Director, Multicultural Affairs, Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

Ms C. Hodgetts, Director, Finance and Procurement, Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

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

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

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Yes.**Mr TEAGUE:** 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 Answer to Questions mailbox no later than Friday 5 September 2025.

I propose to allow both the minister and the lead speaker for the opposition to make opening statements of about 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 or 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's website.

I will now proceed to open the following lines for examination: the portfolio of Multicultural Affairs. The minister appearing is the Minister for Multicultural Affairs. I declare the proposed payments open for examination. I call on the minister to introduce her advisers and make an opening statement, if she so wishes.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Can I introduce, to my right, Justine Kennedy, Director, Multicultural Affairs, Department of the Premier and Cabinet. To my left is Wayne Hunter, Chief Operating Officer, Department of the Premier and Cabinet. To my far left is Claire Hodgetts, Director, Finance and Procurement, Department of the Premier and Cabinet. I do not have an opening address; I am happy to go straight to questions.

The CHAIR: Member for Heysen, if you have an opening address then feel free, but otherwise just straight to questions.

Mr TEAGUE: What I might do before going straight to questions is to flag topics that, should there be time, I would be pleased to address across the hour. The first of those is the Multicultural Community Fund, welcome funds that I will ask some questions about shortly.

The CHAIR: What page?

Mr TEAGUE: I will get there in a second; I am just flagging the topics because I think there is a lot to remind ourselves of in terms of the bipartisanship associated with much of this. The second is the languages work that is obviously the subject of highlights and targets. Similarly, in the same vein, expenses, grants and subsidies that the new fund will talk to as well. Fourth is the pilot Empowering African Youth program. I would like to be able to get to each of those topics along the way.

Turning first to the new news, the Multicultural Community Fund. I think that might be best expressed at Budget Paper 5, page 58, the Budget Measures Statement, and we see there at point 5 on the page the Multicultural Community Fund. For completeness of reference, we might just have Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, pages 26 and 27 open at the same time. Am I reading this correctly, minister, that at page 27, where we see the program summary table going over the page, we see the grants and subsidies estimated result and budget and a \$5 million variance there? That \$5 million variance is the first budgeted year of the Multicultural Community Fund kicking in; I presume that is a direct correlation?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Yes, that is correct. Obviously, it was quite a significant announcement in this budget and I am very pleased that we have seen additional expenditure coming into the multicultural affairs budget. Can I particularly recognise that it is a brand-new Multicultural

Community Fund, very much focused on developing and upgrading community infrastructure facilities and also hosting festivals and events.

Just by way of background, we obviously have a very diverse community here of people coming in different ways of migration. We particularly see post World War II migrant communities, which now have established community centres both in metropolitan and regional South Australia. With you as shadow minister for multicultural affairs, we often spend a weekend night. But newer communities themselves would like to have their own community facilities—they are ambitious to have their own space—so part of the drive to have this new fund is how we can work with them to achieve that outcome.

Mr TEAGUE: I thank the minister for that introduction to the topic. So as I understand it from the minister's introduction there, this is new funding and is not consolidated funds from any other former grant program?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: That is correct.

Mr TEAGUE: This is new money to multicultural affairs. I indicate at the outset, like so much in this space, it is welcomed in principle and is likely to reflect the bipartisanship in this space. Just in terms then to address, as far as might be possible at this stage—and I completely respect wherever the government might be at—we have had some recent history at both state and federal levels of examples of where there is an unparticularised fund that is established, and then there are questions about its distribution and the process for qualification for receipt of funds.

We all know that there are very many cultural communities in the state doing all kinds of meritorious things, including their own facilities, events, festivals and so on that are stood up for particular purposes. What can the minister tell the committee at this stage about how the fund will be distributed? Is there a determination that the fund will inevitably be distributed in full each year and, in that sense, aspects of the fund already earmarked, or is there to be a yet to be disclosed published means of navigating that for those that might want to take advantage of it?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: It is more the latter than the former. We are in the process of developing guidelines and programs for expenditure of this new fund. If I can be very open with you about the situation where people have been talking to me over many, many years—and former shadow ministers as well—the process to either purchase or develop community facilities does take some time and, of course, that facility then also has to have planning approval. There is also the opportunity at times for councils to play a role in this.

It is my intention to have a little bit of a different program from what we have, to celebrate and expand facilities that open up. There is a very strict process, however. We would like to understand more clearly people's desires and their intentions, if they already own land, what that would look like, what savings that they have—more of a process where we work through them. The cost of buildings has obviously increased dramatically in the last few years, but the desire for communities to have a facility of their own has not changed.

We will be very clear about those guidelines and the process of the expenditure of that fund, but I just wanted to be clear about where it comes from after many, many conversations with people, because the desire to do this does not always run linear—money saved, land purchased, building built—it sometimes happens over many years.

Mr TEAGUE: The committee has heard the minister, by way of introduction already, address what perhaps I might describe as a long and proud continuum of migration to South Australia post World War II through to new communities. Is there or are there policy and funding objectives that sit behind this in terms of objectives to achieve particular outcomes in what is an extraordinarily diverse range of circumstances and communities? Or, and despite some of the pejorative context of the analogy, is it more properly to be navigated as an analogy to sports facilities type funds where if you have a sporting club and it is in need of a facilities upgrade, it will apply for funds and if it meets the criteria it will attract the funding? That is one version. Is there more to the policy underpinnings about objectives the government is looking to achieve that we might see expressed in the guidelines in due course?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: We have had the Expand program and that has been very successful for quite some time. The maximum amount of money from the government that can be spent is \$100,000 within that grant program, so the focus has often been around toilet upgrades and kitchen upgrades. When communities have sought to buy their own facilities or have more major upgrades for facilities, then obviously that needs more support, and so that is the understanding of the current restrictions that we have around the Expand grant, and the desire for people to have their own facilities with it.

The idea behind this is that we will work with communities to go through the process, because the timing of it often gets pushed out, depending on planning approval and finances that have been sorted. I think the point you are making is the why. The reality is that one in two of us are either born overseas or have a parent born overseas. This is us, diversity is the strength that we have, but people go through different stages of how they want to celebrate that diversity and preserve traditions and cultures. We have had a long-term bipartisan view in South Australia that we support that. Having safe spaces to gather is a key part of making that happen.

Mr TEAGUE: Some nuts and bolts then, perhaps: can the minister indicate to the committee when the fund will start taking applications and providing grants? Is there an anticipated number of recipients and is there any maximum/minimum amount that will be the subject of an individual grant?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: We are in the process of developing those guidelines and programs and they will be clear and they will be available on the website of Multicultural Affairs.

Mr TEAGUE: Okay, we will wait and see. If I could put a plug in at that point, just speaking from my own portfolio interest, I would certainly flag an interest in providing any constructive input to that process, if the government might make that available.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I might even suggest that, in the conversations we have all had with different groups who have indicated that they are interested in facilities, we encourage them, when those guidelines are out, to come and have some conversations, because there is a longevity to making these things happen.

Mr TEAGUE: The minister has addressed this in part already. Again, perhaps by way of analogy, there are funds in other areas of government support where the access to the fund is subject to the applicant making a contribution of some substance to match it or contribute to it. In case there is that kind of criteria or any other, is the government confident, satisfied or maintaining a determination that the amount will be fully subscribed in the first year and each subsequent year, and is there any proviso or hurdle, if you like, that might be a cause for that not being fully expended in any given year?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Yes, it would be my expectation that it would be expended each year. We are very clear, when it is around community facilities, that timelines do move on when decisions have not been made. I am not saying from a government point of view, I am saying from planning decisions, financial decisions, from the association.

The intention would be to expend that money every year, but as we have not finalised the guidelines and programs, that is something we would take into consideration as to what that would look like. That would be a conversation with myself and the Treasurer, I imagine.

Mr TEAGUE: Coming back to the minister's characterisation, which I share, of this continuum of post war and before that—migrant communities that are well established all the way through to new communities—in terms of the maintaining of confidence and transparency in the program, will there be capacity for all who might be applicants and/or interested observers to see the criteria being applied and, therefore, to compare and contrast where funds are going in the space more broadly?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Yes, as with all of our grant processes, there will be very clear guidelines and procedures.

Mr TEAGUE: Is the minister aware of any example of a target for any of these funds, as we sit here now, any particular community or any example of how funds might be applied?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Obviously, we have not finalised those guidelines or procedures. I would say there are probably more than a dozen different communities that have spoken to me over the last five years of their intentions and their ambitions, whether they are ready or not. Obviously, the cost of land and cost of constructions have increased, but there are many who are interested in this program and will await those guidelines and procedures, and they will be very clear.

Mr TEAGUE: The minister refers in general terms there to what I would describe as a capital expenditure, capital project. Will the funds be applied for a mixture of capital and, for want of a better term, operating expense: on the one hand, the building or improvement of a structure, and on the other the funding of a recurring event?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: In general, not, but there is money for festivals and events. I think you are talking about two different things.

Mr TEAGUE: I am trying to identify what the fund—

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: There is the capital, but there is also the ability to assist for festivals and events.

Mr TEAGUE: So to be clear: is the Multicultural Community Fund that is described at page 58 of Budget Paper 5 confined to capital projects?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: No. As I said in my opening remarks, very clearly, the focus is on developing and upgrading community infrastructure facilities and assisting to host festivals and events.

Mr TEAGUE: Yes. I understood the minister a moment ago to be referring to other sources of funds for such events, and that is understood. There are existing sources of funds for other events, of course.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I guess one could say that there is significant unmet need. Whether it is the Expand grant or the Celebrate grant, on average I say to people that only about 50 per cent of the applications that are put in are successful. There is a gap between where people would like to be supported to celebrate or expand their facilities and the amount of money that we currently have.

Mr TEAGUE: Suffice to say it is very clear that the Multicultural Community Fund will provide funds for a mixture of capital and operating expenditure events—a mixture of both. Is there any subdivision of the proportion that is contemplated? Could it all end up going on one of four recurring events, for example? I am not suggesting that it would, but in principle could it, if those were the most meritorious applications, or is there a preset subdivision in the fund each year?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: We are in the process of developing those guidelines and procedures.

Mr TEAGUE: Okay. Similarly—the answer might be the same—is the minister saying that there might end up being a subdivision to ensure that there is not, as it were, 100 per cent capital allocation, for example? Or is the government keeping its options open about that as well?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: We are in the process of looking at those guidelines.

Mr TEAGUE: Okay. I refer particularly to the words of explanation that sit below the table, from which it might be derived that it is not in the nature of the fund that we would expect to see a single payment of the full amount for the year to a single entity for a capital project. Is there any particular guidance that the minister can provide, or explanation to the committee, at this stage about how dispersed the funds might be?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Those guidelines and procedures have been worked out now, but it is not my intention for the fund that that money would go to one outcome only. However, I have to say, when it comes to facilities, \$5 million does not go quite as far as it used to when we have seen average house prices go up.

So if people were looking to purchase a building and we were to support them with a grant for that, it could take quite a bit of that money. But that is not the intention of it, and those guidelines and procedures will be clarified in the near future.

Mr TEAGUE: I appreciate that that is far as it has got. I guess the committee will be alive to the fact that the Multicultural Community Fund, as described and set out in Budget Paper 5, is expressed in very round numbers. That points to the establishment of a nominal amount, as opposed to anything that is earmarked or predetermined and for reasons that are plain. The paragraphs of explanation below the table tend towards what the minister has described in principle being the application of funds for a variety of purposes.

Bearing in mind the minister's response in terms of how far \$5 million goes in terms of capital projects, is there anything else the minister is able to say about perhaps the limits of the draw by any particular application? Would the minister see it as a sign of success if indeed the bulk of that money in any given year went to any single project, as opposed to it finding its way into a whole variety of projects?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: The demand is very clear. There is no intention for it just to go to one person, but the guidelines and procedures are being established now. There is much excitement that the Malinauskas Labor government has put this additional funding for multicultural communities, and that is how it will proceed.

Mr TEAGUE: The minister might understand a degree of pressing the point given that time is always short but is somewhat shorter than one might normally see in terms of an ordinary budget year. There is to be an election before the end of the subject year. Is it the objective of the government to identify the application of all of the funds, indeed, prior to the end of the budget year prior to the election in March 2026?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Once those guideline and procedures are established, then it will be very clear as to what the process will be, just as it is with our others. For example, in the Celebrate Together program that we have, 124 people were successfully supported through that and received up to \$30,000 for festivals and events. That was to run over this last financial year. We have always had quite clear processes, and I have no intention of that not continuing.

For the Expand Together Grants, for example, we have had the two rounds. Round 1 is a smaller group. This is where organisations can apply for funding up to \$100,000 for equipment and infrastructure, security upgrades and community transport. In that situation, we ask for matched funding for anything more than \$50,000. To go to the point of the need, 187 applications were received, but only 69 multicultural organisations were successful.

Mr TEAGUE: Having gone there—I appreciate the minister referring to that process by way of analogy—is there any reason why the government has determined to establish what it describes as a new fund, hence finding its way into Budget Paper 5, as opposed to simply providing more funds to existing programs or more to the budget? We see that expressed in the program summary in terms of the \$5 million extension to the programs and budget.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I go back to what I have already said: that developing and upgrading community infrastructure facilities is obviously something that has been raised with me as the minister for quite some time. For newer arrival groups, particularly those who have come as humanitarian migrants, we hear that the ability to establish their own facilities has been much more challenging. That is why we as a government have made this significant decision.

As I said, there is an unmet need met with the Expand Together Grants, but that is quite minimal in terms of what you can have: it is a maximum of \$50,000 unmatched, up to \$100,000 matched. That is a significant program, but obviously it does not enable the purchase of a community facility or an upgrade. So we are very clear that, in order to support our diverse community—some who have come here in many different ways, as skilled migrants, international students and humanitarian migrants—we want to work with them to establish these facilities.

Mr TEAGUE: I do not read from the minister's answer any flagging of inadvertent bias, in the objective sense, or intent in the application of the Multicultural Community Fund so far as it might

affect those new migrant groups. I hear the minister loud and clear that this is overtly directed at all our migrant communities, from the very first to the most recent.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Perhaps I might even say that those that are quite established are looking to renovate. In the member for Adelaide's area we have just seen a significant upgrade of one of the clubs there, which is very actively used by many other groups as well. But the type of upgrade that is required is higher than the \$100,000, and there are significant upgrades that are required.

Sometimes we find, where we have ageing communities, that the way that they use their community hall is changing. They want a smaller area that they can use more regularly, on a weekly basis, and then have a larger hall area that can be used by other groups as well. So it is not restricted to new people and newer communities. But obviously there is a growing need, and the other groups have been talking to me for some time.

Mr TEAGUE: I would note my gratitude, and I expect the committee's gratitude, for the presence of senior officials with the minister today.

I would ask: is the government flagging a particular virtue, I suppose, in establishing the fund in the budget paper, albeit in general terms for these purposes, to distinguish the fund and its criteria and application from what might otherwise be the sorts of election commitments that can become controversial, where the only grounds upon which the government might subsequently justify the expenditure is, 'Well, it was an election commitment,' and ipso facto that is okay—as opposed to the establishment of a fund that the minister has said will have, if it does not already, published criteria, guidelines and transparency for everybody's confidence and all the rest of it, akin to other programs of that kind where there is oversight in advance and the ability to interrogate application of funds and so on? Is that a fair—

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I think the answer that you are seeking is yes.

Mr TEAGUE: That is in praise, really, of the process. I am endeavouring to—if this is establishing appropriate best practice in terms of the disclosure of the government's intent, albeit in general terms, then I appreciate the minister's positive response.

I have flagged four topics, and I am conscious of time. I will move to the second of them. Just as I do that, might it be presumed, or can the minister confirm, that the minister and/or the department will publish a periodic, perhaps annual, summary of the outcomes?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: In general they are available on the website.

Mr TEAGUE: I thought so. I think we are with Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 26 or 27 for the duration now. At page 26 of Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, keeping an eye on highlights for 2024-25 and targets for 2025-26, I refer to the first of those highlights. It is expressed in terms of a continuation to support communities keep their language alive. What was the total amount spent on community language schools in 2024-25 and how much is going to be spent in this coming year?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: This is an election commitment we made about investing an additional \$4 million over four years for community language schools. The funded one for 2024-25 is \$702,334 ex GST. That supports 93 active and fully-accredited community language schools teaching 48 different community languages. In semester 1 of this year 9,192 students were enrolled in the program. We work very closely with the Department for Education and, of course Community Language Schools South Australia.

If we reflect on 2024-25, the activities have focused around school premises, personnel, and pathways. We have made significant changes, since coming to government in 2022, about proactively supporting community languages to remind ourselves that often there are volunteers who can put up their hand every single week to support their community to keep their language strong.

From the premises point of view, we have continued to top up the funding to government and non-government schools that host our community language schools. That was a significant change in the last few years; previously only government schools received a top up. From a personnel point of view, we are continuing to support additional staffing for Community Language

Schools South Australia and are looking at professional development training for those school leaders.

One of the other areas I was particularly interested in is that we have seen the significant drop out between the ages of 12 and 15 of young people learning a language. Often through primary school they are quite dedicated and their families are committed. The pathway program supports Community Language Schools South Australia on the vocational and SACE pathways for secondary students who study a language at our community language schools with the desire, obviously, to see some increased rates of year 12 SACE language being undertaken but also people continuing with that.

One of the most important changes is that people often quite feel isolated in their different schools, and we have now had the establishment of community language learning hubs at Regency Park TAFE, Salisbury TAFE, Torrens University Adelaide, and at Charles Campbell College at Paradise. These hubs aim to cluster several of the language schools together to share learning spaces, materials and equipment. At the moment these hubs support 12 schools offering nine languages. We are very pleased to anticipate there will be an additional 100 students commencing at the Charles Campbell College hub from term 2 this year.

We have also been supporting a digital language learning hub to create and share teaching via e-resources of Arabic, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Greek and Farsi. With the development of this digital language learning hub there may be an opportunity for Community Language Schools South Australia to have some income separate to government, and to sell that digital language learning hub throughout Australia as well to create some autonomy and some opportunity there. I have approved a funding proposal for the activities for 2025-26, the fourth and final year of this election commitment. That funding agreement will commence on 1 July this year.

Mr TEAGUE: But what is the amount?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Can I just say that this is an area that has been, for me, a rich opportunity to take something that has been around for a very long time and contemporise and support them in a different way to make it accessible to have the hubs for that connectivity with people doing different languages, so I am really pleased with the way it has rolled out, and I look forward to reporting on its successes.

Mr TEAGUE: In terms of the \$4 million, am I right then in understanding the answer for 2024-25 was \$702,000? The minister has indicated signing an agreement for the year ahead.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Yes.

Mr TEAGUE: What is the quantum of that agreement for the year ahead? Is that representing the amount to be spent for that—

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: It is \$1.2 million for 2025-26. Every second year the Community Language Schools have an infrastructure component to support groups that own their own facilities and run classes there. Every second year that happens.

Mr TEAGUE: Therefore, that is a pattern that is repeated, with the outcome that the \$4 million is expended, the result of the agreement that the minister has signed for the year ahead?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Yes, that is correct.

Mr TEAGUE: In terms of the receipt of those funds, will those funds then flow immediately? What is the timeline for that?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Yes, it is a very well established funding pattern. We have the agreement signed and then those facilities would go. Perhaps I can give some breakdown for you here. Funding to Catholic and Independent host schools, \$105,900; to the Community Language learning hubs, \$90,172; and then staffing for the Community Language Schools is \$90,000, so you can see how it is broken up over that period of time.

Mr TEAGUE: Is there such a thing in the data as—the minister has referred to the 12 schools, nine languages.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: In the hubs.

Mr TEAGUE: In the hubs. In terms of the overall and, if possible, broken down according to year, if that is a helpful breakdown, can the minister advise the committee how many students are supported participating in the—

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: There are 692 in the hubs.

Mr TEAGUE: Overall, though—so 692 in the hubs.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I think I spoke about that earlier—

Mr TEAGUE: You might have.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: It is 9,192.

Mr TEAGUE: So 9,192 overall so far?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: For semester 1. That is how many were enrolled in the program.

Mr TEAGUE: That is a point in time for this semester 1 just passed.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: That is correct.

Mr TEAGUE: We can do the maths, but is there a number that the government adheres to that might describe a cost per student?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I will endeavour to get that answer for you. There is a calculation that is worked out that is paid to support per head of student to do that work. That has been worked out with Education over a long period of time. For 2024-25, the education department allocated on a per student basis \$113,730, which is that \$29.55 per student.

Mr TEAGUE: Yes, and the interaction with the Department for Education is clear: the Department for Education is providing advice to the minister's department in relation to those costs per student. Is that the way that is—

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: That is correct. We have an agreement with them.

Mr TEAGUE: And the funds are coming from DPC via the Multicultural Affairs program to the Department for Education for that purpose.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Yes.

Mr TEAGUE: The previous minister is reminding me that the per student funding is education department funding and has been for some time.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: One of the key things with the election commitment was a multicultural lens. Education, obviously, has done the heavy lifting for many, many years in this area and we respect the work that they do. We felt there was an opportunity to lean in more strongly and develop this in a more contemporary manner and that is what that additional funding has done.

Mr TEAGUE: That additional funding in the amount of \$4 million has been applied over the period, as the minister has indicated?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Yes.

Mr TEAGUE: Turning now to the third of the topics, again still on page 26 and 27, I go about two-thirds of the way down page 26, the beginning of the program summary table, and then, following that over the page, the expenses, grants and subsidies. The 2024-25 estimated result is just short of \$7.5 million, at \$7,493,000, and that is 675 I think, just doing the maths, as I look at it over the budget for 2024-25. There is an explanation for that by reference to some carryover, I think, but is there any explanation for that estimated result over budget? While the minister is at it, is there a breakdown of the grants and funding provided and to what groups, including that overrun?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: You are asking about additional expenditure. There was some support for the Ukrainian community support program. There was a return of grant funding in the previous year and a reclassification of expenditure across categories. That accounts for the differences.

Mr TEAGUE: Minister, each of those three categories of spending account for that difference that we see between the budget 2024-25 and the estimated result 2024-25.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Yes, as I am advised.

Mr TEAGUE: Is there any particularisation of the amounts for each of the three categories?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I will have to take that on notice and come back to you and look at that, but they are quite minor.

Mr TEAGUE: In relation to the first of them—

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: The Ukrainian support program?

Mr TEAGUE: Yes.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: That was \$175,000.

Mr TEAGUE: Was that additional to funding that had already been identified and applied for that purpose?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: That was additional. Obviously, you would be very aware of how we have supported our Ukrainian community, particularly in Hindmarsh, where they have a facility that has been operating some programs over the last three years. As you may recall, people had to flee quite quickly. We have had some packages there. When they first came, they were on a visa that did not allow them work rights or access to Medicare and then we announced a package in March 2024 for the new arrivals from the Russia-Ukraine conflict and Israel-Hamas conflict. That was coordinated by the Department of Human Services.

We have been working with the Ukrainian association about other things. Part of that package supported the Refugee Health Service, mental health funding, access to dental care, a free Metrocard and some food vouchers, but the specific one that went to the Association of Ukrainians in South Australia, I understand, that has gone for three years in a row is to provide some language support services and settlement services.

Can I take this opportunity to thank the association, which is very established here. They are an older cohort of people who have opened their arms and their homes and have given lots and lots of volunteer time to support people as they settle here. We have given them additional funding to support that over three years.

Mr TEAGUE: In terms of that \$175,000 featuring in the estimated result, the minister has referred to the March 2024 announcement and unsurprisingly—call it heavy lifting by DHS in this space, given the circumstances. I am not asking the minister to provide the committee with particulars about DHS's involvement. Was there a particular reason for the \$175,000, as it were, being identified on its own as distinct from carryover and the timing of it coming from this program?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: This was a community support program that was specifically run by the Association of Ukrainians in South Australia. I think it was the third year that had been funded with the understanding probably in previous years that funding might not need to happen for the third year, but it did. That is why it was additional, because, obviously, at the end of every year, when that community support program has been conducted and we audit it and we talk to them about it, we then ask about the need and does it continue.

Mr TEAGUE: Then considering the balance of the grants and subsidies that are the subject of that estimated result, we get a clue from the 2024-25 budget because it is a specific number, \$6.818 million, and we have a very specific number in the estimated result, \$7.493 million. Can the minister provide—and it may be convenient to table it in line with committee rules—

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I can give you some more information.

Mr TEAGUE: —in a convenient way what the breakdown is and to what groups?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: One of the other additional expenditures was money to the Adelaide Holocaust Museum, which is \$167,000 per annum for four years, as announced in the budget last year to expand its educational activities. We know that the Adelaide Holocaust Museum

has been a target for antisemitic behaviour. We spoke in the parliament on the use of extremist symbolism. These incidents identified a need for them to increase their security measures and the quantity of their education programs and exhibitions.

This additional funding enabled them to also expand their opening hours and to make sure that there is a knowledge out there among people, and particularly schools have been going in as well. Just by way of background, the Holocaust Museum and the Andrew Steiner Education Centre was launched in November of 2020 at 33 Wakefield Street. Of course, they have a very active education program as well, which can be on site and online as well.

Mr TEAGUE: Did the minister say \$167,000 over four years?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Per year.

Mr TEAGUE: Yes, just to be clear for the committee. That was my understanding as well.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: The budget is \$171,175 because it includes indexation for 2025-26. So that was another change.

Mr TEAGUE: In terms of addressing the question about breakdowns and groups, perhaps there is not time to set those out in full here. I wonder whether it may be convenient—

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I could list them if you like, but they are publicly available.

Mr TEAGUE: Yes, they are publicly available, and I wonder whether, for the sake of the committee's reference, there might be some compliant table that might be included?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: It is fully available on the website.

Mr TEAGUE: If that is the best reference—

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Yes.

Mr TEAGUE: —then I appreciate that from the minister.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: It is very transparent, all on the website.

Mr TEAGUE: The minister has addressed, by way of example, the funding to the Holocaust Museum. In terms of perhaps a picture, a range of quantum, is there a highest single amount that the minister can identify and a lowest, just to give a range of those grants and subsidies?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I have given you two examples: the \$175,000 to the Ukrainians, and \$167,000 to the Adelaide Holocaust Museum. They would be the highest amount per annum.

Mr TEAGUE: Again, I thought so, but it is good to confirm. The minister has indicated that is all publicly available, but those are the two largest amounts?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Yes, they are the largest ones from 2024-25.

Mr TEAGUE: The minister might forgive me if this is completely publicly available already as well, but can the minister advise the committee the proportion of funding that is recurring or multiyear as opposed to one-off capital or event expenditure that is the subject of those grants for the relevant year?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: We do not actually provide a breakdown of how much is for Celebrate and how much is for Expand, but I can tell you that the 2024-25 multicultural grants program budget was \$6.971 million. It moves between those, and the Stronger Together money as well within that. The multicultural grants program budget is \$6.971 million.

Mr TEAGUE: I am conscious of the few short minutes remaining, and I have flagged the fourth of those broad topics. I will just go there, and again we are at page 26 of the relevant volume, Volume 4. Targets 2025-26 might be the focal point, and the pilot Empowering African Youth Program, supporting the early intervention measures and culturally responsive services and programs. What is the quantum of funding for this year coming and over the period of the forward estimates?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: It is \$2.5 million over the forward estimates, which was announced in the state budget of last year. Obviously, we have just completed the first year of that program. The expenditure for the Empowering African Youth Program for 2024-25 was \$617,128 as at 16 June. There may well be some slight change. That is divided up between \$153,000 for the program manager, \$100,000 ex-GST allocated to the African Communities Council of South Australia, \$3,140 to transport students for the launch on 9 May, \$14,000 allocated to Flinders University for the development of a comprehensive monitoring, evaluation, research and learning plan for the four-year program, and \$346,988 allocated to program service providers for the provision of early intervention measures. The 2025-26 budget is \$635,000.

Mr TEAGUE: So it is similar amounts, a slight uptick from this first year. Can I perhaps roll up a series of questions that might be conveniently answered altogether? What programs might be described as constituting the pilot as opposed to ongoing, and will the program as it proceeds be provided by the agency or in partnership with community groups that are funded for the service providers?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: We do not refer to this as a pilot any more—this is now the program that we will have, and it commenced in January of this year. Year 1 of the program focused on seven target schools in northern Adelaide with a high population of students from diverse African backgrounds, including Craigmare High, Mark Oliphant College, Salisbury East High School, Parafield Gardens High School, Playford International College, Roma Mitchell Secondary College and Salisbury High School.

In January of this year, the Department for Education employed an additional African Community Liaison Officer to work in those participating schools. Mentoring, coaching and counselling, which is a culturally specific, non-government service provider, has been funded to deliver the SACE-accredited Village Program in those participating schools.

The Village Program, which we think is something pretty unique and we are getting fantastic feedback so far, is a structured in-school group cultural support for African students, as well as one-on-one mentoring and case management for students who benefit from additional personalised support.

Other non-government organisations involved are STTARS (Survivors of Torture and Trauma Assistance and Rehabilitation Service) and Mission Australia as well. At the moment, commencing in term 1 of this year, 185 students were enrolled in the program across those seven schools.

The CHAIR: The time allotted having expired, I declare the examination of Multicultural Affairs complete. Further examination of the proposed payments for the Department of the Premier and Cabinet is adjourned until 2.45.

Sitting suspended from 10:02 to 10:15.

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN TOURISM COMMISSION, \$66,113,000
ADMINISTERED ITEMS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF TREASURY AND FINANCE,
\$4,403,410,000

Membership:

Ms Pratt substituted for Mr Teague.

Minister:

Hon. Z.L. Bettison, Minister for Tourism, Minister for Multicultural Affairs.

Departmental Advisers:

Ms E. Terry, Chief Executive Officer, South Australian Tourism Commission.

Ms S. Rozokos, Chief Operating Officer, South Australian Tourism Commission.

Ms H. Rasheed, Executive Director Events SA, South Australian Tourism Commission.

Mr E. de Roos, Executive Director Marketing, South Australian Tourism Commission.

Mr N. Jones, Executive Director Destination Development, South Australian Tourism Commission.

Mr C. Burford, Executive Director, Strategic Communications and Engagement, South Australian Tourism Commission.

Mr M. Radcliffe, Chief Executive Officer, Adelaide Venue Management.

Ms M. Carrall, Chief Finance Officer, Adelaide Venue Management.

The CHAIR: The portfolio is the South Australian Tourism Commission and the Adelaide Venue Management Authority. I declare the proposed payments open for examination. I call on the minister to make a statement, if the minister so wishes, and to introduce her advisers.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I will not be making an opening statement, but let me introduce who is here. Steph Rozokos, who is to my right, is the Chief Operating Officer, Emma Terry to my left is the Chief Executive Officer, and Hitaf Rasheed is the Executive Director of Events South Australia.

The CHAIR: Thank you, minister. Over to the member for Frome.

Ms PRATT: I am guessing it is me, the lead spokesperson. Good morning, and thank you to all of the public servants who are here today. With today's new release on the sector plan—for the Chair's benefit, of course, I will be referring to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, at the moment page 126, highlights, where the government or the agency, 'Consulted with industry on the development of the South Australian Tourism Plan 2030 outlining a strategy,' the plan replacing the South Australian Visitor Economy Sector Plan 2030.

Having consulted on and now released that, to achieve the target of \$12.8 billion the sector is going to need to support employment growth and significant visitor growth across those four fields of international, interstate, intrastate and day trips. How will the government go about achieving that growth to reach the target of \$12.8 billion, where on simple calculations it is about \$2.9 billion a year in the next five years to get there?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Obviously, we are quite ambitious here. We spent some time working on our place-based strategy, and we wanted to be clear, along with the industry—and more than 400 people participated in the production of this tourism plan—about what our ambition is and how we would get there. The focus is around where we are in the appeal sector in the Australian market. Currently, South Australia is considered number six for appeal. The goal is obviously to increase tourism expenditure, but to increase that appeal to number three. That is our ambition that we want to do here.

Your question is: how do we go about that? There are many different things about making us a destination that is appealing to Australians and to international travellers as well. We are looking at new and evolving products and experiences. We recently introduced the Experience Development Program. What I call that is part of the business of tourism: you have a great product, but how do you actually get it into international markets? How do you make it part of the itineraries? How does it work in that way?

Other things we have been doing, of course, are around investment. The AHICE Industry Conference has been held here, I think, for four years now, where we have a gathering of all decision-makers for hotel investment throughout South-East Asia coming to Adelaide. We have held

quite a few different events, and we are very excited to be hosting the Australian Tourism Exchange in 2026.

These are different things we have been doing. Investment is part of product and experience, but most importantly it is us working out who we are and what we have to offer to Australians and to people internationally. We know that we are already number one in food and drink and we have a great reputation there. We are also very known for our events and festivals.

One of the areas that we believe is a great area of growth for us is 'tourism for good', or tourism as a force for good, which supports both the environment and people. Our connection to wildlife and to the outback is very strong, but it is not necessarily something that people have known about South Australia, it is not what first comes to mind, so that is one of the areas we are going to lead in to drive demand.

One of the more practical ways of how we build it is we increase international aviation links. I am very pleased to say that we have had all the airlines that were flying here pre-COVID now returning, or they have indicated that they are going to return, plus a few additional airlines as well. I speak specifically to the great announcement about United Airlines coming here, starting seasonally at the end of this year. Those airline connections are incredibly important.

At the moment, we would need to aim to have 20,200 seats internationally coming into Adelaide every single week to achieve that \$12.8 billion, and that is what we are going to look at, focusing on how we get there. That would require 6,000 seats, but we are at about 13,000 seats a week now.

Ms PRATT: Thank you. For the first part of this session, I will just pull apart some of those statistics a bit more. Firstly, let me say on behalf of the opposition and all South Australians, we share the aspiration of the government and SATC to grow the visitor economy to reach that target of \$12.8 billion, to bunny hop other states up the domestic ladder. The challenge, then, for the agency and the sector is the how. Where the target is meant to be reached in five years' time, on average, we are looking at growth of about \$2.9 billion a year.

Coming back to the how, the annual report or the minister's own performance agreement and stretch targets start to document across those different fields the how. The annual report for the financial year 2023-24—because there is not one tabled yet, so it is 12 months old—did reflect a decline of about 1 per cent in that annual growth. How specifically are we going to pursue or achieve, on average, a \$2.9 billion growth per annum for the next five years, factoring in that that is assuming that everything is glowing and rosy and going well and not factoring in global factors, international flight diversions and those sorts of things? How confident can we be that every year is going to show growth?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I think the answer is not every year will show lineal growth. We know, even in the last five years, we have probably not had a normal year. Right now, dry and drought conditions are impacting on our economy, as is the cost of living. We know that tourism is particularly part of disposable income. Because we have a higher percentage here of intrastate travel and day trips, we have actually seen that impact in South Australia more heavily than in other states. That is why increasing our international tourism is incredibly important, to balance out the pie as to where our expenditure comes from, to get more interstate travellers coming here, whether it be for tourism, for holidaying or for business conventions and conferences. That is how we will build out the pie.

I am quite confident in the work that we have done to build our Celebrate the Simple Pleasures place-based strategy. It is very authentic. It is who we are and what we want to represent to the world. We also think there is a need for what it is that we have here, and that was identified through many different interviews taken to form up what was our new marketing campaign. So it will require concentrated effort. Do I think that every single year we will see that \$2.9 billion go up? No, we will not.

Of course, the biggest shock we have ever had in the last few years was COVID, where our borders shut. Then we bounced out of COVID quite well from a regional point of view. Regional tourism went up, particularly when people were prevented from going interstate and overseas. Every year is going to see some changes. Other challenges we have had in more recent times have been

the bushfires at the end of 2019 and in early 2020 and of course the high water that we experienced along the River Murray. So at all times we have to be agile and flexible.

We know what it is that we have to offer, and we think that we are a great answer for the complexity in the world. We know we are good in food and wine. There is a really great opportunity for nature and wildlife to be developed further. It is interesting, because people say, 'Is this what people want?' and we are hearing that this is what people want: they want to connect to nature and they want to connect with their families.

One of the great things about South Australia is that, once you are here, it is very easy to get around. You can be in great wine areas within an hour and you can be in the outback in only a couple of hours, and these are things that we need to keep putting forward.

Regarding the challenges ahead, of course it is a hypercompetitive industry, and every other territory and state minister for tourism, and the federal minister for tourism, is competing for the same amount of pie. So we have to grow the pie and we have to look at those experiences and those products. I feel quite confident that we can do it, and international aviation links are a key part of that story.

Ms PRATT: What do we understand about the South Australian domestic intrastate traveller in terms of the consumer behaviour of South Australians? In the annual report for the year 2023-24 we saw a decline in daytrip expenditure by 14 per cent. How is the Simple Pleasures campaign, or any other campaign, appealing to South Australians?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I will just get you to make your reference to the budget.

Ms PRATT: Absolutely. I refer to page 127, where the final dot point stipulates that additional funding will be allocated for the Regional Tourism Alignment Initiative to bolster regional tourism. When it comes to bolstering regional tourism, have we seen a decline in daytrips and in South Australian travellers interacting with their own tourism experiences?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: We have seen some expenditure falling for daytrip expenditure: it is down 20 per cent from December 2023 to December 2024. I think there are two things that I can talk to about why it is quite significant. The first, of course, is cost-of-living concerns: people have been more limited in their own budget. But it also comes from a great high coming out of COVID. As I spoke to previously in terms of daytrip and intrastate movement, South Australians had much more freedom of movement than other states did, so we saw people discovering their own backyard very quickly and we actually came up high really quickly.

I would say that what we are seeing is normal, except of course with the challenging economic times. Nationally, there was a significant decline in daytrip expenditure of about 7 per cent for the year, but we have seen that that is more of a normalisation of activity for that. At the same time, we have also seen an increase in people travelling overseas. In 2022 and 2023 we saw people still holidaying more in their own backyards and maybe interstate, and then, probably in the last year, we saw a significant uplift in how many people were going on international holidays as well.

Can I say as well that we are seeing some improvements, on a quarterly basis, in regional visitor expenditure. It improved from \$3.9 million in the year to September 2024 to \$4 billion in the year to December 2025. It indicates that the decline that we had there has been arrested. Within that, we see that regional accommodation grew particularly strongly back in March 2025, where we got up to 64 per cent, and we have seen that being quite strong as it goes along. There are lots of different ways in which we look at how things are going, but there is no doubt at all that daytrip performance has been challenged.

Ms PRATT: I refer to page 124, objective, the first paragraph on SATC and the government looking to support industry and businesses to grow the visitor economy and create jobs for the state. I do not have a figure in the budget for private sector jobs, but I understand that the announcement today speaks to jobs growth as well, and setting a target for 2030 calculations I made, again on average, would have been looking for growth by about 2,400 employees in the sector—not agency staff but job sector growth. What target has the agency set for sector growth per annum or by 2030, and what investment is going to support that growth?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: The target in the 2030 strategy is 46,000 jobs, up from 40,600 in June of last year (there is a delay in that figure)—

Ms PRATT: Minister, this is respectful, I am going to reference the annual report just to put into context last year's figure, which was 52,000. We are seeing a shift backwards, so can you speak to that, if you do not mind?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: There is a change. We particularly saw a reconsideration of that data coming out from COVID, where the growth trajectory we were on—which was forecast back from 2019—did presume or project that that is what it would be, in the 50,000s. We have seen that slow down. I think people certainly became more efficient during COVID and there has been lots of training about employment. The net growth in jobs of 5,000 that we are forecasting does remain similar to the previous plan but starting off from a lower base.

If I can just talk about the tourism jobs, the aim is to get to 46,000 and you are asking how we will do that. One of the key things we did on coming into government was have our agreement with the Tourism Industry Council of South Australia. I had been speaking with them in depth about what we wanted to do, and we supported them to develop a careers guide in tourism. We felt there was a lack of knowledge in the wider population about the diversity of jobs within tourism.

People often think about a hotel receptionist, they might think about a tour guide, but there are lots of other different pathways, whether it be within marketing and sales, or the production of conferences and conventions. That careers guide provides a significant diversity of what those jobs are and the training you would need to equip yourself for those roles.

Ms PRATT: In terms of growing confidence within the sector to have the confidence to recruit, obviously the careers guide is there to support that, but we have also seen perhaps greater efficiencies, doing more with less, in the sector. To push the point for regional tourism operators, because I do not know what the split is in terms of workforce, metro versus regional, but what is the industry's approach to supporting regional tourism operators to grow their employment base?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Some of the work the Tourism Industry Council does—and I think they do an incredibly good job—is to do a lot of training sessions to support their members. They also look at those vocational, education and training pathways and at the national tourism micro credential courses.

Over this past year, which is part of our agreement with them, \$1.6 million goes to TICSAs over a four-year program that focuses around business capability, careers in tourism, and cultural development. The deliver 21 workshops across 11 regions and are on track to meeting the target of 30 workshops across nine regions by the end of this financial year. They are getting out there and supporting people within the regions, how they can build their businesses.

One of the key themes I had over the last few years is around collaboration within regions. Often people are very busy working in their own business; it takes a lot of work to run their business, but often it is those collaborations with other tourism experiences and product within that region that can really build out their business even further. So the Tourism Industry Council does a great job within that.

Ms PRATT: Minister, in case I do not get back to it, I think looking at regional tourism operators is an important and fantastic topic to be on. The challenges you have listed over the last five or six years have included COVID, bushfires, the River Murray flood, cost of living, and I will now add the drought. There was a release today that speaks to a Regional Event Fund.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Yes.

Ms PRATT: I am happy to draw the attention of the chamber back to page 127, bolstering regional tourism. In light of the drought and the impact to not just farmers but small businesses in country towns, is the drought not a challenge, a barrier and a limitation now to, currently, agritourism and the Regional Event Fund? How is an approach to agritourism and the Regional Event Fund actually going to bloom and blossom in the middle of a drought?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Agritourism is a particular area that I have championed over the past few years. It is actually a good diversity of alternative farm income. Obviously, none of us want

to be in the situation we are in right now. We are in very difficult situations, but we have the sector plan and the agritourism framework to support people who are interested in building out agritourism within their facilities. We can see that it provides alternative income into the farm.

We know that over the course of time we are going to have dry conditions. We are also going to have conditions where there is too much rain at other times. We know that climate instability is something that is a challenge, so to support people to have alternative income into the business is something that we have looked at.

Today, we announced an additional \$400,000 for the Drought Relief Regional Event Fund to host events in drought-affected regions. People can apply from 1 July for \$25,000 up to \$75,000 per event. This is in addition to the current Regional Event Fund. It is part of the \$73 million drought package that we have as a state.

Ms PRATT: Thank you.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: We want to support the resilience of people in our regions. We want them to know that we hear them and we see them and that they are not alone. Driving visitation to regions is one part of the package that we are proposing.

Ms PRATT: What data do we have about overnight stays currently in the regions? In my region, for example, the Clare Valley and Goyder Burra area, certainly tourism operators, RDAs and councils understand the challenge of housing seasonal workers in accommodation. Are seasonal workers captured in that overnight regional stay dataset? Can the minister speak to that?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: There are some challenges in the way we get the data because you need to have more than 10 accommodation facilities within it. I cannot speak directly to the Clare one, but we know that occupancy is currently at 64 per cent within the regional area, which was up 3 per cent on the same time in the previous month. Over the calendar year, regional hotels saw an occupancy of about 58 per cent, down just 1 per cent from previously. That has been fairly steady for the past few years, as far as regional occupancy goes. Specifically to that question about whether—

Ms PRATT: Are seasonal workers captured in those regional overnight stays statewide?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I would have to take that on notice.

Ms PRATT: Would you mind?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: This is national data that is captured so it measures apples with apples, so I would have to—

Ms PRATT: It would be a national challenge anyway.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: It would be a national capture. It is sometimes challenging to capture within regions. You need a cluster of accommodation to be able to compare that, but I will take that question on notice.

Ms PRATT: Moving on to aviation, page 126, 'Collaborate with Adelaide Airport Limited, airlines and key stakeholders to further increase international and domestic airline capacity', we note and welcome the introduction, of course, of Cathay Pacific, United Airlines, Qantas International and additional Air New Zealand services in Adelaide, but on the face of it it looks like they are seasonal routes, with the majority of them running between October this year and March next year. What is the government doing to attract these airlines for a continuous permanent international service?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: We have actually seen a change since COVID when new airlines are entering into a jurisdiction. We are not alone in this situation. An airline, whether previously flying here or whether it is a new airline into our state, considers year 1 as one of the more challenging years. In year 2, things solidify, with the ambition by year 3 that you would have a year-round service. We have seen that with China Southern, in the way it has come back as seasonal, the same as Cathay Pacific, and then our brand-new one with United as well, and Qantas flying to Auckland will be seasonal. This has become the new norm as to how airline aviation routes start up in a jurisdiction now. This has been a significant change since COVID.

We feel quite confident because of the cooperative marketing that we do with these airlines that we can build that capacity and that we will get to year-round with all of those airlines. That is depending on what other global shocks there may well be. In the past two weeks, we have seen the volcano in Indonesia, which disrupted some airlines, and then of course we have seen the instability in the Middle East interrupt. We are in a hypercompetitive global environment. The agreements that we have are very strong. We have a pathway forward and we have a strong belief that we will get to year-round with all of the different airlines, but the reality is that we live in a world with lots of challenges and changes.

Ms PRATT: Accepting the new normal for startups returning to hosting some of these carriers, are there other states in Australia in a similar situation where they are reduced to seasonal arrangements in the interim, or is Adelaide unique in Australia in really having to rebuild its international flights?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: No, we are not unique at all. The other thing to add is there was a global shortage of aircraft, and they have to prioritise their routes between the markets. What we actually find is that you will have an airline here during our summer period that will then go to northern Europe during their summer period. These are a big bit of kit, all of these airlines that we have here, and airlines have to make a decision about maximising the use and the efficiency of that aircraft.

Ms PRATT: Regional tourism, regional flights: we have noticed in recent years that access to areas in various regions like Whyalla and Kangaroo Island have been reduced with Rex being pushed out of the market by Qantas. Can the minister outline if visitation numbers have increased or decreased in these regions since Rex ceased operations?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I would have to get some information for you. On 23 June, we have 111 regional flights scheduled per week within South Australia, so that is 6,000 seats per week. That is 5 per cent higher than at this same time last year. I know we are not talking about international tourism right now, but for international flights we are up 20 per cent in seat numbers, year on year, so we have seen substantial growth in that.

From a regional point of view, there was a particular, I guess, contemporisation of the aircraft that is flying here now for Qantas in the regions—the Q400 aircraft. They fly to Port Lincoln, Whyalla and Mount Gambier. They are 30 per cent faster than the previous Q300 aircraft and that saves time for customers travelling and also there are fewer breakdowns, which is one of the challenges we have been having. Just yesterday, Whyalla was opened, so that can take the full load of the Q400, so that is quite good. Rex is operating 63 regional flights across South Australia each week: seven to Ceduna, three to Coober Pedy, 17 to Mount Gambier and 36 to Port Lincoln. That is from the beginning of this week.

Ms PRATT: Sorry, I was listening, because the next part of that, I guess, advocacy is that we all want to bring to the importance of regional flights around supporting business freight but also health. So what advocacy do you bring, or what can be done to limit the number of cancelled flights we sometimes see to those regional areas like Port Lincoln, Whyalla, Mount Gambier, particularly where the knock-on effect is an impact to health services?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I go back to the point to say there is a 5 per cent higher number of seats than there was this time last year and we have improved quality of aircraft. So the Q-400 is a big upgrade, much more efficient than we had previously.

Ms PRATT: Thank you.

The CHAIR: With that question, the time allotted having expired, I declare the examination—sorry, I am getting ahead of myself here.

Ms PRATT: There is half an hour to go, please, Chair.

The CHAIR: Maybe it is because I did not get a coffee at the last break!

Ms PRATT: I can ask a question about Whyalla Airport to wake you up, Chair.

The CHAIR: They are excellent questions; I am very interested in these.

Ms PRATT: Having reset my heart and the clock, I would like to move us onto cruising. I am just looking for a reference for the chamber, but let's go for page 126, 'Delivered a Cruise Ship Welcome Program' but also a target at the bottom of the page, 'Develop and implement the South Australian Cruise Action Plan 2030'. How many cruise ships are currently booked to return to South Australian ports in 2025-26—

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Fifty-five cruise ship visits.

Ms PRATT: —so this financial year and next, noting that the *Seabourn Quest* will dock in Wallaroo in March next year for a single day trip?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Let me talk about cruising. Cruising has been a real success story in South Australia. Particularly this year, I was thrilled to see the diversity of new ships that were coming here. Just to remind ourselves, the cruise season goes from October to June of every year. This 2024-25, which has just finished now, we had 114 cruise and expedition ships visit across Australia, with 206,200 passengers onboard.

They go to the Port Adelaide Passenger Terminal. We had 38 cruise ship visits to Port Lincoln and to Kangaroo Island, but we also had 40 ship visits to expedition landing sites or anchorages in unique and remote coastal destinations. For the first time since 2010, we had an anchorage at Victor Harbor, which was really exciting for us to have there.

There were 16 different cruise lines and 20 individual cruise ship visits here, including 21 first-time visits. That really is the story of the day: the 21 first-time visits. They used the term 'maiden voyage', a very old-school term. For the first time we had the Princess Cruises' *Diamond Princess* to Penneshaw and Port Lincoln, Holland America's *Westerdam* to Port Lincoln, Norwegian Cruise Lines' *Norwegian Sun* to Penneshaw and Adelaide, and MSC Cruises' *Magnifica* went to Adelaide and Penneshaw.

I have been leading the South Australian Cruise Attraction Working Group. We are the first state to form that. We hosted the Australian Cruise Association conference in September last year. We see that cruising is a great opportunity for us and I particularly am interested in the regional dispersal aspect of it.

I go back to those key things about us as a destination: food and drink are number one, festivals and events are very well known, but nature and connecting to the outback, being immersed in nature is something that we really see is a great area of growth for us. Those anchorages and remote locations really work very well for those expedition ships.

We have had some great engagement with SATC. The luxury cruise line Silversea have confirmed quite an extensive cruise season in South Australia for 2025-26. They are very high-end cruises that are very focused on food and drink and unique experiences, and it really does match what we have in South Australia.

Ms PRATT: What has been the estimated visitor spend generated in that season? You say it is from October to June, so it is not a full financial year. What do we know about the visitor spend?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: There is a delay for that figure to come out. That comes out in September. It will be released by the Cruise Association in September of this year, but I am trying to remember—off the top of my head, it was more than \$200 million for the last cruise season. I will get you that answer.

Ms PRATT: Thank you, minister.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: It was \$227 million for 2023-24, so it is worth quite a substantial impact.

Ms PRATT: And we would be hoping to see that increase when the figures are released for this season?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I will be really honest with you, there are some changes that are happening because of the changes that P&O made. Of course, we made many representations to them, but that was a decision globally. We see a great opportunity for us to lean into those

exceptional experiences, those intimate experiences, immersive experiences, particularly in the regions.

As you mentioned, there are some ships coming to Robe and to Wallaroo, I think in two years' time. These are unique experiences that people remember. What I keep saying about cruising is it is a taster for people. They absolutely love what they experience and then they come back and they book two weeks' holiday here as well. This is a long-term plan for us. There will be some challenges this cruise season (2025-26) because of that decision, but ultimately we are in a really good position.

The Cruise Attraction Working Group has been fantastic to get everyone around the table, whether it be from Flinders Ports to one of the key leaders, Phil Hoffmann, who has been working with us, the Department for Infrastructure and Transport and, of course, ACA have been part of that as well. It has been a very good opportunity to understand what we can do and what we cannot do, what are the limitations around the difference between the Northern Hemisphere and the Southern Hemisphere, border control challenges, and having an economy of scale of people, particularly the Melbourne Port, which is where people are more likely to come out from. There are great opportunities for us, particularly working with WA and Tasmania as well, so I think this could be quite fruitful into the future.

Ms PRATT: Does leaning into those opportunities then look like a government intention to invest in infrastructure or expand infrastructure in regional cruise ports and anchorages, and what might that look like? Does the government have plans—

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Obviously, we will continue to talk to Flinders Ports—they are on the Cruise Attraction Working Group—about what that might look like as well. Can I tell you one thing that makes a difference is international aviation links. Silversea, which is a fantastic cruise line that really fits our market, said having direct access to the US from Adelaide would be a game changer, and that is going to happen, and we delivered on that.

Ms PRATT: As you mentioned the working group, I am going to assume that is different to the Cruise Development Team, which I think is referenced in the cruise document.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Yes.

Ms PRATT: What would the FTE allocation be for the Cruise Development Team?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: It is within existing resources through Destination Development. There are three FTEs that are dedicated to that.

Ms PRATT: Chair, we are going to move to the omnibus questions for the moment.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Minister, these are the omnibus questions:

1. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, how many executive appointments have been made since 1 July 2024 and what is the annual salary and total employment cost for each position?
2. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, how many executive positions have been abolished since 1 July 2024 and what was the annual salary and total employment cost for each position?
3. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, what has been the total cost of executive position terminations since 1 July 2024?
4. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, will the minister provide a breakdown of expenditure on consultants and contractors with a total estimated cost above \$10,000 engaged since 1 July 2024, listing the name of the consultant, contractor or service supplier, the method of appointment, the reason for the engagement and the estimated total cost of the work?
5. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, will the minister provide an estimate of the total cost to be incurred in 2025-26 for consultants and contractors, and for each case in which a consultant or contractor has already been engaged at a total estimated cost above

\$10,000, the name of the consultant or contractor, the method of appointment, the reason for the engagement and the total estimated cost?

6. For each department or agency reporting to the minister, how many surplus employees are there in June 2025, and for each surplus employee, what is the title or classification of the position and the total annual employment cost?

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

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

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

- (a) What was the actual FTE count at June 2025 and what is the projected actual FTE account for the end of each year of the forward estimates?
- (b) What is the budgeted total employment cost for each year of the forward estimates?
- (c) How many targeted voluntary separation packages are estimated to be required to meet budget targets over the forward estimates and what is their estimated cost?

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

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

12. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, what is the total budgeted cost of government-paid advertising, including campaigns, across all mediums in 2025-26?

13. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, please provide for each individual investing expenditure project administered, the name, total estimated expenditure, actual expenditure incurred to June 2024 and budgeted expenditure for 2025-26, 2026-27 and 2027-28.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ms PRATT: Returning to destination management plans, page 126, and the target 'Complete the delivery of destination management plans across the regions to identify regional priorities and increase strategic alignment', are we on track for that phased approach of stages 1, 2 and 3? How many regional tourism organisations so far have progressed to nominate for that pilot, as described in stage 2?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Can I just answer a question you had before about seasonal workers? If they are staying in an hotel they are then captured under that data, but only if they stay at an hotel.

Ms PRATT: Only a hotel, to be compared to a B&B, an apartment or short-term rental?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Short-term rental or taking a sublease somewhere.

Ms PRATT: Thank you.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: The strengthening regional tourism process we have been doing is something that I have been championing quite strongly, to look at that strategic and operational alignment. It has been a very good process that we have been going through. I think we have had some very robust conversations. At the same time that we were putting together the tourism strategy plan for 2030, we were going through this review.

So far, apart from the destination management plan, which you asked about, that is processing quite well. We have different groups. We have a plan of going through all the different destinations. Group 1 was Clare Valley, Yorke Peninsula and Southern Flinders. That was collected, and I think you participated in the industry engagement yourself. That should be completed by August of this year. The next group, group 2, is Kangaroo Island and Limestone Coast. They have just done a consultation, and we expect that to be done by October of this year.

Ms PRATT: Just checking: are they one zone or separate, KI and Limestone Coast?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: This is different things. This is the destination management plan. This would be the 12 different management plans, with people having individual ways that they want to represent their area, consistent ways so they can prioritise and identify. Group 3 will be Barossa Valley and Adelaide. Group 4 will be Flinders and Outback, Eyre Peninsula. Adelaide Hills is in Group 5, which will be the Riverland, Murray River, Lakes and Coorong.

Separate to that, of course, is the conversation around zones. I am pleased to say that the pilot zone working group has appointed the board of directors, including the chair and six directors, for what I think we are calling SAMNI, which includes the Clare Valley, Yorke Peninsula and the Southern Flinders. That is the first group as a management zone. I am really pleased that Sandy Verschoor will be the chair of that zone. Anne Minion, who runs Copper Trails Bike Hire, Angela Ruddenklau, Bridget Johns, Belinda Heinrich, Dylan Strong and John Bell are also there.

There will be some learnings from that pilot. I recently saw advertising for a CEO for that working group.

The next ones are in consultation. These are happening now. This is not a mandated way. This will be regionally led, going ahead with the zones, and we are learning from this first pilot how that works and how that comes together. At the moment, I understand there are conversations particularly around the Fleurieu Peninsula and Kangaroo Island, and my expectation is that the Limestone Coast will be included within that very soon.

Ms PRATT: Going back a step from the review that was kicked off in 2023 and the models that were put forward—I think there were five—was there broad support for option 5, this regional tourism model that the industry wants to see being led by the regions? How confident are you that all of our regions will opt in to establishing zones?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I am very confident that they will all opt in, but it is because we want to show that there is purpose behind it and strategic alignment to achieve what we want to achieve, to increase our appeal factor, to grow our tourism expenditure to \$12.8 billion. I wanted it to be regionally led, because I want people to feel confident in the zones that could be created and, of course, separate to that, the destination management plan that will be individual for different areas.

We want to think about how tourists move through our state. In particular, there is a lot of connectivity through coming through from Melbourne to the Limestone Coast, around Fleurieu Peninsula and on to Kangaroo Island. Tourists who are here do not see council boundaries. International tourists often do not even see the state boundaries, so we have to be thinking about the products and the experiences that they are having, first to be drawn to a destination and then within that region, within that zone, to experience.

Ultimately we say, we want people to linger longer in that region. For example, one of the conversations with the Barossa Valley is that it is great that it is so accessible, but it means that it is harder to get people to stay overnight. So if we have more products, more experiences, more diversity of experiences, then people are more likely to stay overnight. If there are different things for people to do and the collaboration is there, that will work very well.

Ms PRATT: Have there been any changes to funding arrangements in the following context—funding for any zone will be based on the needs for consolidated regions as an entity; and marketing support to each of these 12 regions this financial year appears to be about \$100,000—and are regions being incentivised to opt in where the SATC will increase current funding arrangements by an additional 50 per cent to support the development of those destination management plans?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: In last year's budget, there was \$20 million additional money for tourism. The majority of that, of course, went to additional marketing money, but a key portion of that was about supporting regional development and regional tourism. The amount paid to each region is \$882,800 for the financial year, which is \$80,254 each. Then that will go up slightly to \$82,261 each. That is allocated to each region, which is up from \$52,000, so that is a significant increase there.

Additional funding will be provided to the new destination management zone as they form the pilot program. Final funding is to be allocated as we work out the establishment of the zone, but it will result in a net increase in funding to those regions. We are not just reviewing without additional support; we are reviewing it and then adding additional support.

Ms PRATT: That would also capture current funding arrangements for the local contact person in that role?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: That is correct. Currently, those agreements have gone for 2025-26. That is part of the \$82,261.

Ms PRATT: Thank you. To clarify, is that for this financial year and the next? Is it ongoing?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Yes—until the zones are established.

Ms PRATT: Which could be 2027?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Yes. There is a guarantee of funding, but there is additional funding once a zone is established.

Ms PRATT: As part of a commitment to transparency about this process and that it is regionally led, will results of the pilot, which is taking place capturing my region, be not just released with the other regions but publicly released so that the sector more fully can see progress being made? In this staged approach where the end date is meant to be 2027, what is the timing around the pilot being completed and results being shared before 2027?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: We are implementing at the moment those recommendations from the review that was commenced in July 2024. There is definitely significant interest around South Australia in how this works. Perhaps if I could feed some history back, when we did this review we looked internationally and we looked throughout Australia about how tourism bodies support regional tourism operations.

There was significant research done to try to find the best practice. There was not one solid-gold model about which everyone said, 'This is the best way to do it.' So this is the process that we are doing, which is why it is a pilot zone. We will be very open with people, and we will look at that. The pilot officially establishes in August this year, 2025. There will be a review on that establishment, and they have a deliverable check-in in March 2026.

Ms PRATT: To look at this a different way, we are supremely confident that all regions will opt in and participate. They are watching closely for the pilot and the results to guide them and their experience. Should there be a region that makes a decision not to embrace a destination management zone, is there an inverted consequence around funding arrangements that regions may be incentivised to participate or their funding arrangement increases where they have a zone; in the absence of a zone, will they be out of pocket?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I can assure you that their funding will continue, as I have committed to it being continued. As far as what will happen after that, we will assess the reason as to why and work with them directly. This is not a retrograde step and this is not an act of 'you have to be with us or you are not with us'. This is about us all having a shared ambition to get to \$12.8 million for the tourism economy, and we all want to be working together and pulling in one direction.

My rationale for doing the review is that I felt we had some absolutely fantastic people working in tourism in the regions who were getting burnt out, who were not being supported adequately and who were having a diversity of expectations placed upon them by different players within the region and within the industry. What I wanted to do is provide more capacity, more capability and more collaboration and, ultimately, to drive us as a destination and to get that appeal factor up.

Ms PRATT: In the five minutes we have left, I move finally to marketing: on page 130 the first three dot points refer to the new campaign, Celebrate the Simple Pleasures, and 'Travel. Our Way' and 'Winter. Our Way'. Is the 'Travel. Our Way' campaign still running and is 'Winter. Our Way' from the last financial year still running, or were they one-off campaigns?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: 'Travel. Our Way' and 'Winter. Our Way' have finished. They were obviously a holding place, to some extent, while we were doing this significant place-based work that we have done, which of course we announced in April.

Ms PRATT: Just out of interest, what were the results, particularly for 'Winter. Our Way'? What did we learn about that as a campaign?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: We know that winter is a challenging time for us. April through to August last year we did that—we wanted to look at our unique winter tourism offerings, which is probably something we have not really done a lot of. We focused and leaned in on Illuminate Adelaide and the heli-camping at Rawnsley Park Station. One of the ones that I think goes to nature, engagement and immersion is the swimming with giant cuttlefish in Whyalla on Eyre Peninsula. I have had the chance to go and do it myself. It was absolutely stunning. Obviously, the photography that comes from it—and I am sure our Chair has done it—is really great. We are hearing that it is going to be a very good season this year.

'Winter. Our Way' was really important to us in looking at the low off-season and having a technical measure and message about awareness and greater demand. We certainly learned a lot from it. The campaign performed quite strongly. We will obviously have a winter element with our campaign Celebrate the Simple Pleasures: we are calling it The Simple Pleasures of Winter, and we will be doing that this year and in the foreseeable future.

Ms PRATT: Minister, just to jump around for a moment—to page 128, under tourism events, regarding the Santos Tour Down Under. What advice have you sought about any need for naming rights, given recent reports about the sponsor?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: We have a contract with Santos for three more years. That was signed last year, and I am confident that contract will continue. I thank Santos for their contribution here. Their partnership has been incredibly important for us to develop the Santos Tour Down Under, particularly in regard to the elite women whom we now see coming here. Without that continued investment it would have been very difficult for us to offer equal prize money for men and women, which we were one of the first to do. As I said, they are contracted as our naming rights partner until 2028. We are in regular contact with them and so I do not have any concerns at this point.

Ms PRATT: This is probably my final question. Jumping back to the April launch of the Celebrate the Simple Pleasures campaign, what evidence do we have, since April, that that is starting to drive growth in the visitor economy?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I am sure all the other tourism ministers in the other jurisdictions are very jealous of our campaign! Obviously, we will continue to monitor that, and we have production investments as part of the long-term investment to do that. It is too early to tell at this point to have those statistics, but, as soon as I do, I will be sharing them widely in terms of what we are seeing as a pick-up and a recognition.

Ms PRATT: If we do not know that, and I accept that it is a bit too early—I think it was a \$9.8 million spend. Can you confirm the spend and the allocation and give a breakdown of how we have spent or allocated that across the sector?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: In 2024-25, the spend for Simple Pleasures was \$9.7 million, and that was part of the domestic marketing and digital marketing budgets. In 2025-26, the forecast spend for Celebrate the Simple Pleasures is \$9.1 million, which of course will enable us, from July this year, to go into international markets with Celebrate the Simple Pleasures. We monitor everything. It is very data-driven in what is a very hypercompetitive field. Every tourism minister believes they have the right thing to encourage destination management, to have destination development and to create a demand for people to come to their area.

A lot of work was done, and I thank the South Australians who participated in the interviews that got us to this point of having it reflect who we are. But there is a lot of work still to do, and one of the key things is longevity in the market with the same line, the same brand, and a recognition of that. What I think is particularly exceptional is our use of art and South Australian artists: it is something unique, it is something different and it is very eye-catching. So I am quite positive about us fielding excellent results, and of course I will come back and share them with South Australians as well.

Can I take the opportunity to thank the officers from the South Australian Tourism Commission and Adelaide Venue Management, who did not get a question asked but who nonetheless prepared for today as well. It takes a lot of work to do this. We have done some excellent stuff in the last 12 months, but it only comes because we have such a dedicated team in the Tourism Commission. I feel like Celebrate the Simple Pleasures is a moment in which we are authentically representing who we are to Australia and to the world. I am ambitious that we achieve the tourism expenditure that we want to achieve to help us see tourism as very important and as something that continues to be important as an economic driver for our state.

The CHAIR: Thank you, minister, and thank you to all the public servants who have made a contribution to this process. Obviously, there is a lot of work behind scenes that is done in order to prepare for today. The time allotted having expired, I declare the examination of the South Australian Tourism Commission and the Adelaide Venue Management Corporation complete. Further

examination of the proposed payments for the Administered Items for the Department of Treasury and Finance will continue after the break. Once again, thank you to the minister and to the advisers for their attendance here today.

Sitting suspended from 11:18 to 11:30.

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

Membership:

Mr Fulbrook substituted for Ms Hood.

Mr Cowdrey substituted for Mr Patterson.

Mr Whetstone substituted for Hon. J.A.W. Gardner.

Minister:

Hon. E.S. Bourke, Minister for Emergency Services and Correctional Services, Minister for Autism, Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing.

Departmental Advisers:

Ms K. Taylor, Chief Executive, Office for Recreation, Sport and Racing.

Mr T. Nicholas, Director, Corporate Strategy, Office for Recreation, Sport and Racing.

Ms K. Faulkner, Director, South Australian Sports Institute.

The CHAIR: Welcome back to today's estimates committee hearing. I understand the minister and the lead speaker for the opposition have agreed an approximate time for the consideration of proposed payments, which will facilitate a change of departmental advisers. Can the minister and lead speaker for the opposition confirm that the timetable for today's proceedings, previously distributed, is accurate?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I am happy with it.

The CHAIR: I remind members that 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 or referenced. Briefly, I also advise that if the minister undertakes to supply information at a later date, it must be submitted to the Clerk Assistant via the Answer to Questions mailbox no later than Friday 5 September 2025. Members unable to complete their questions may submit them as questions on notice for inclusion in the assembly *Notice Paper*.

The rules of debate in the house apply in committee. Ministers and members may not table documents before the committee but may supply them to the Chair for distribution. I will allow both the minister and the lead speaker for the opposition to make opening statements, if they so wish, and I call on the minister to introduce her advisers.

I now proceed to open the following lines for examination: Office for Recreation, Sport and Racing. I declare the proposed payments open for examination and call on the minister to make an opening statement, if she so wishes, and introduce her advisers.

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: Thank you, Chair. I will not be making an opening statement today, but am most happy to introduce the incredible people either side of me, starting with Kylie Taylor, who is the Chief Executive, Office for Recreation, Sport and Racing. Tim Nicholas is

the Director, Corporate Strategy, Office for Recreation, Sport and Racing, and behind me is Keren Faulkner, who is the Director of the South Australian Sports Institute. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the incredible people who helped pull all this work together: Mallory, Adam, Thomas, Ben, Elise and also Jed and Emily from the Power Sports Unit as well. I also thank the people from my office and the team that has helped bring this together.

Mr WHETSTONE: Welcome, minister; first estimates?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I cannot wait, Tim.

Mr WHETSTONE: I will be kind. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 143, workforce summary. How many of the department's FTE is allocated to the Office for Recreation, Sport and Racing?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: The FTE number on page 166 of 80.7 is the FTE count for sport, rec and racing.

Mr WHETSTONE: At page 144, program services 2024-25, the recreation, sport and racing program had an overspend in its budget by \$7.2 million. Can you give the committee an understanding as to why?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I am advised that that is not an overspend, it is a revised budget, and that is how it has come to the total amount indicated in the budget line.

Mr WHETSTONE: Can you give me an understanding as to why it was a reallocation of funds?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: My advice is that the budget is set at the start of the year and then there may be adjustments along the way. It could be that funding is made available through the commonwealth or grants that we were not anticipating had then become available, or maybe even in the Mid-Year Budget cycle.

Mr WHETSTONE: I presume the disposal of the Gepps Cross land was the land acquired for the police Mounted Operations Unit. There was \$1.6 million received for the sale, so where did that \$1.6 million go?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I am advised that the \$1.6 million went back into general revenue.

Mr WHETSTONE: Under highlights at page 165, regarding the greyhound racing industry reform, can you provide an update on the outcomes achieved since the inspector was appointed, please?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I thank the member for his question and interest in greyhound racing. I enjoy going along to events and seeing him there as well, so thank you for your support into this industry. As you would be aware, we have appointed Mr Sal Perna AM as the Greyhound Industry Reform Inspector, and his appointment occurred in July 2024. Mr Perna has spoken and met with, I believe, 270 stakeholders and industry participants, attended races and meets, conducted site visits and established the Greyhound Racing Reform Advisory Group.

Greyhound Racing South Australia was given two years, as you would be aware, to implement the recommendations that were provided. As of 10 June 2025, Mr Perna has verified 20 recommendations and two partial recommendations as being completed. This includes 19 recommendations and two partial recommendations responsible to Greyhound Racing South Australia, and one recommendation responsible to the state government. This is an ongoing process and one that is an important process. I know that Greyhound Racing SA is working through and finding out ways they can get through this program.

Mr WHETSTONE: As I understand it, 16 out of the 86 recommendations have been achieved. Are you confident that the 86 recommendations will be achieved within the time allocated of 24 months?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: Apologies, I just mentioned that Mr Perna has verified 20 recommendations, and two partial recommendations have been completed, so the numbers that

you might have just referred to could be outdated. This is really in the hands of the greyhound racing industry and it is one I know they are focused on.

Mr WHETSTONE: Minister, obviously there is a long way to go. We are getting close to being 12 months into the reform. Would you anticipate extending the reform period should all recommendations not be met?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: We are not speculating on that at this point because we do have time still and this is really, as I said, dependent of the greyhound racing industry in South Australia. Mr Sal Perna has also been working with them to see how these recommendations can be achieved.

Mr WHETSTONE: Is there a budget measure specifically allocated for the reform inspector?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I understand that this is cost recovery from the industry, so the costs are associated with the industry.

Mr WHETSTONE: So the industry is paying for the cost of the inspector?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: Correct.

Mr WHETSTONE: Is there a budget line anywhere for the reform process should there need to be expenses incurred?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: It is my understanding that they are expected to be undertaken by the industry.

Mr WHETSTONE: What portion of The Power of Her—Infrastructure and Participation Program was allocated to recreation infrastructure?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: As the member would be aware, this is a very popular grant program in South Australia. It has come from the legacy of the outcome of women's sport, particularly with the World Cup that was here. It enabled us to be able to reinvest back into the community and give women and girls the opportunity to participate and have the infrastructure required for them to take away those barriers.

We know with this program that, because it did come from the legacy of the World Cup and getting women involved in team sports, it was important it have a focus on participation around team sports and how we get people more involved in our community, so really, at the end of the day, this program has that focus. It is for sport and particularly, when we look at participation, our team sports.

Mr WHETSTONE: How much of that program has been represented in the regions?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: My understanding is that it is hard to break that down right now with the information I have available to me—

Mr WHETSTONE: You can take it on notice, if you want.

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I can look into it and see what we can bring back, but, in regard to the grant programs, when I have been going through and seeing where the grants were being awarded, it is really great to see how well regional communities do from those grants and, I guess, not just with this grant but also with our most recent dedicated drought relief grant that we have just been able to make available to make sure that our regional communities are getting those opportunities to participate in our grant programs.

Mr WHETSTONE: Do people who can apply for the drought relief grant program have to be on the Farm Household Allowance? What is the qualification to be eligible?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: In regard to that grant, it is a really incredible grant program that has come about because, as we know, there have been many who have been struggling in regional communities, and it was an opportunity for us to participate in the drought relief packages. The program that we often see, the Active Club Program, is a grant that is very well known across South Australia. I guess what we asked, being a country kid myself, was: how do you bring a little bit of opportunity to our regions to be able to participate as a community and come together? We thought we would do an extra bonus round of the Active Club Program.

This is not a competitive grant; it is a grant that you can apply for if you are a club that does not have fewer than 20 members, and you are a not-for-profit organisation amongst a few other requirements as well, and that you have been a club for more than 12 months. But this is really not a competitive grant process; it enables people to participate and apply for grants of up to \$5,000. Usually, the Active Club Program is only for \$3,000 but we really wanted to get that boost into the regions and make sure that we could get money in there that they could use for things like water infrastructure—some have used it for irrigation purposes—and some have also used it for uniforms.

The other thing that we included was whitegoods because we wanted clubs to not just have a one-off sugar hit but also invest in infrastructure that can be ongoing. We thought whitegoods enabled them to put that into their canteens, so they can continue to raise money for their community and also their sporting club.

Something unique that we have done with these grants is a rolling approval. It has been roughly a week that we have been approving those grants that have been coming in and getting those approvals and required information to Shared Services. So we have not waited until the grant closed; we have tried to keep that moving.

Mr WHETSTONE: When does it close?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: It has closed now. We also extended it because we wanted to make sure as many people as possible could participate. I am really glad that we did extend it because it was quite unusual to see that after we extended we had this huge burst of applications. They must have realised that maybe they missed out and were excited to hear that they had another couple of weeks to participate.

Mr WHETSTONE: If the drought was to continue, would you consider it being given another life and going again?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: As I said, because we were able to extend it and get to 626 organisations through this, this is an incredible outcome from this grant process. Something that we have been really excited about is the Active Club Program. We went to Riverton and we were doing a community forum there, and one gentleman started filling out his application at the forum. He said, 'I have just been trying to fill this out while I am here,' and I did not think it was going to be a good news story, but he said, 'It was so easy, I completed it very, very quickly,' in the time that we were holding that forum.

The good thing that has come out of it is that for those who have been reapplying, their information is already in the system, but what we have found is a whole heap of organisations that have not applied for this grant before that now have. When we do reactivate the normal Active Club Program, their details will be in that system already and it will be easier for them again to participate when we hold those rounds in the future.

Mr WHETSTONE: The establishment of the Para-Sports Hub is listed as a target. Will the hub include recreational opportunities?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: The Para-Sports Hub is something we are very proud of in South Australia. It is there to deliver and look for our future champions, and that is something we really are focused on with the investments, not only in our SASI Para Unit but also in our SASI building, the South Australian Sports Institute. This combination has enabled us to not only have a program that is enabling us to focus on our para-athletes but is also enabling us to have the infrastructure that can really wrap around them to make sure that they can be the very best athletes.

For those who we are identifying might not make it to a Paralympic level, we also have the opportunity to find other sporting opportunities for them, either through other levels or getting them back into the grassroots community sport participation as well. This is something we are really focused on, and I guess why we have put that effort behind the Paralympic unit, and also Para-Sports Hub. I think we were one of the first places in the country as a state institute to have a Para Unit put together, and it is something that has been recognised by Paralympics Australia, and has been called a leading example of what other states should be aspiring to do.

I know also in South Australia we have talked about not just our future opportunities but our current Paralympians as well, and what we can be doing to support them. I know the Team Appeal was committed to just recently by this government. We are the first state, again, to be providing money equally to not only the Olympic athletes but the Paralympic athletes through the Team Appeal. We are the first state to do that. We have provided \$1 million, and what we have done is make sure that that support is split equally between the para-athletes and also the Olympic athletes.

Mr WHETSTONE: What consultation was done with disability advocacy organisations on the scope and accessibility of the hub?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I understand that the driver of the strategy is a strategic plan from Paralympics Australia, but I think the exciting part about this is that we have Jed and Emily who are Paralympians who really run this program on the ground in South Australia. That lived experience is vital to the success of this program, and what they can do to not only share their stories but provide that motivation for others to be able to participate is an incredible asset of this.

As I said earlier, our program in South Australia has been recognised at that senior level with the chief executive, Cameron Murray. I will just quote what he has said here in a recent media release:

As the first state institute in the country to establish a dedicated Para Unit, the progress made by SASI to help drive advancements across the Australian Paralympic movement has been outstanding, and the SASI team is demonstrating what's possible with strong focus and commitment.

I think what we are achieving has been recognised not only in South Australia but also at a national level.

Mr WHETSTONE: Was there any consultation with the member for Colton? That can be a yes or a no.

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: My understanding is there has been broad consultation at a community level, and people were welcome to participate. I do recognise the incredible achievements of the member for Colton, which I often recognise when I go to events and where we are together at those events, because we know that the member for Colton is one of our most decorated Paralympians in the country and that is very much recognised and we appreciate what he has been able to achieve at not only a state but national and world level. Feedback is welcome, and that is why those consultations have been open to the community.

Mr WHETSTONE: Between us we share 13 Olympic gold medals.

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: Between the three of us.

Mr WHETSTONE: And lots more. Has the government made any progress in its review of the boxing and martial arts legislation?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I understand the Tuck coronial inquiry findings are out but have been delayed because of the circumstances surrounding that situation. We need to work through that process, but the Office for Sport, Recreation and Racing regulates the boxing and martial arts industry in South Australia through the Boxing and Martial Arts Act 2000. We want this to be a safe environment for everyone involved, so we need to make sure that time is given to make this successful.

Mr WHETSTONE: Moving on to program summary, pages 166 and 167: last year's budget committed approximately \$6½ million per year to the racing industry from the betting operations tax. Is that allocation still maintained in full and where does it sit in this year's allocation?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I appreciate the member's question. We get to spend lots of time together at the races and we both know how important this industry is to South Australia, with nearly 5,000 people employed, which injects around \$400 million annually into the economy. Racing in South Australia is respected not only at the economic level but with the opportunities it presents to come together as a community.

As you have highlighted, the BOT tax, which this government increased from 10 per cent to 20 per cent, has enabled the racing industry to meet new standards that it had not been able to

previously. With the changes in income through the BOT tax, unfortunately it comes from a betting tax and is very much out of the government's control. It depends on what income is coming in through that betting tax.

The CHAIR: The keen sportsperson, the member for Florey, has a question.

Mr BROWN: Keen, but not very talented. My reference is to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 147. My question to the minister is: will she inform the committee about the government's plan to upgrade the netball facility at Mile End?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I thank the member for his question. I know his family, like my family, are big netball fans and very much were watching the Thunderbirds play last year's grand final. It was incredible that we were able to have that game in South Australia, to be able to get out the pink army, get behind our team and see that back-to-back win, which was an incredible outcome.

Like many people, I was out the front before the grand final started and was handing out flyers about the government's commitment to invest in our Mile End stadium. We know that netball in South Australia is the most participated in women's sport, with over 35,000 members and 500,000 who visit the Mile End stadium every year. It is a busy site, and one that is looking very, very tired at this point in time.

This is an opportunity for us as a government not just to see the incredible outcome from the Thunderbirds' success over the last few years. There is an opportunity for us to provide a legacy, where we can invest in grassroots sport. That is what we have been able to achieve, with over \$90 million to redevelop this site at Mile End. It is a site that is not just used by metropolitan people. It is a site where we see many carnivals from the regional areas played as well, so really everyone in our state gets to benefit from this investment, which makes it that little bit extra special.

We know that this will have to be done in stages. It is a large project that we are taking on here. Stage 2 will commence in the coming months, in September, with the outdoor courts. There are 26 outdoor courts. Anyone who has been there knows that it is a very, very busy spot to be on nights when netball is being played. We see the different codes and levels that are out there as well being able to participate in this facility.

There are 26 courts that need to be resurfaced, but we also know that other things need to be changed. That is why we have made sure that we have done community consultation about what this could look like. I have been lucky enough to be able to go along to those consultation periods that we have been holding over the winter season to hear from community what they want. Time and time again, it often comes back to the simple things that people want.

More water fountains seems to be very, very popular, and first aid facilities to be made available. At the moment, we are seeing people get fingers hit at one end of the court and people are having to run into the cafe to get ice right at the other end, and it is a long run across those 26 courts. There was also a popular request for gravy to be made available in the canteen for the hot chips. Hopefully that one comes through, because I quite like gravy on my hot chips.

The important part of this is that it really is a site for the community. Having that consultation with the community has enabled us to see some of those things that we take for granted, which may not have been considered if we did not ask those questions. That has been ongoing. Obviously, with the works that need to be undertaken there will be disruption for the summer season, and that is something that needs to be considered here. That is why we did a YourSAy survey, which I believe over a thousand people participated in. Through that survey, we have been able to see whether people want the summer season to go ahead. The answer to that was, I think, always going to be a yes. How do we then support everyone so that they can participate if they so choose?

It is really important that we are taking that feedback on, because people love their sport. They want to continue to play, and we need to find ways to make sure that we can keep people on our courts. We are looking forward to being able to share the outcomes from that survey soon, about where the summer season will be played.

A big part of this is not just the outdoor courts; it is also what we are doing with the stadium that is there at the moment. It is exciting to say that that is where the majority of this investment will

be going, with over \$80 million to go into investing in a new stadium, which will have a 3,000-seat show court. We know that this will enable us not just to have netball with bigger crowds played on these incredible facilities. It will also open up the opportunity for volleyball and pickleball, which most of us are now hearing more and more about becoming a very popular sport.

Also, just recently, I was at the wheelchair rugby and was able to see how successfully this is being played in that stadium but also what opportunities would come from a new stadium that has extra seating. This is a really exciting project that is coming to life, and we look forward to seeing the opportunities that will come not only from the extra seating but from the new higher standards that will now be available to netballers in South Australia.

Mr WHETSTONE: Back to the program summary, with the betting tax share absorbed into the base funding lines, how can South Australians track whether their racing industry is still receiving its committed boost? Have you, as an avid racegoer, given any consideration to lifting the POC tax above 20 per cent to match that of other states?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I understand that this is in the grants and subsidies line. Obviously, this is always going to go up and down. This is what this tax is. It is not one that can be controlled. It is a percentage. As I said earlier, this was previously sitting at 10 per cent, and it was this government that increased that, doubling it to 20 per cent, so there has already been an increase. It is one that, as I said, will continue to go up and down because it is a percentage of the betting tax.

Mr WHETSTONE: There was a \$3.7 million cut in the Racing Industry Fund 2024-25. What programs or grants will be affected by this cut, and will there be any further cuts?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: As I mentioned earlier, this is based on a percentage of betting. If betting goes up, it goes up; if betting goes down, it goes down.

Mr WHETSTONE: So if you put the POC tax up, betting goes up.

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: The percentage but not necessarily how many are betting.

Mr COWDREY: I will ask a couple of further questions in regard to the earlier line on the Gepps Cross facility. Minister, did the amount that was settled on, \$1.6 million, represent fair market value?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I might just throw to Tim.

Mr NICHOLAS: The \$1.6 million is not the market value. The market value was \$7.5 million. The \$1.6 million represents the difference between what our book value was and what the market value was, so it is just an accounting treatment, the \$1.6 million. The \$7.5 million was market value.

Mr COWDREY: In terms of the disposal, as opposed to sale—the transfer of the site—how does that impact the broader master plan for Gepps Cross and the sporting precinct? Obviously, for a period of years there was a view that Gepps Cross would become a hub for state sporting infrastructure. Does the disposal of that land have any impact on what can be done from a sporting perspective at Gepps Cross moving forward?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I think the Gepps Cross site is quite a unique site. It is a site I go to quite regularly as I play hockey out there. We see that there are opportunities not just for hockey but also for cycling. I myself, after going there for so many years, recently went out with the ORSR team and was quite surprised at how big this space is. There is an incredible opportunity that we have here in our state.

I know that master plans can be adjusted, and that is what will happen here in terms of what this site can achieve. What we already see is that it provides an opportunity for many people to be able to stay active. As I have said, I think there is also archery appearing soon, right next to the hockey field. So the site is not just staying in one form; it has changed over many years, and archery will be the new sport that is arriving there very soon.

Mr COWDREY: Will there be a revised master planning exercise undertaken? Has that started yet? Has there been a budget allocated to undertake that?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I am not sure which particular budget line the member is referring to, but this is a unique site, one that I think has seen different forms and different ideas over many years. We can continue to look at what the best opportunities are for this particular site.

Mr COWDREY: In regard to the disposal and general revenue that was generated from that—that was mentioned earlier in the minister's answer, as I understand—was there any consideration given to quarantining some of that money for perhaps a revised master plan for the area or for an upgrade of some of the other facilities that I know have been crying out for funds, at the very most for redevelopment and at the very least for maintenance?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: As I have just highlighted, there are discussions that can be had, and they will be ongoing discussions. This is not a site that has just stayed in one form; it has changed over the years and, as I have just highlighted, archery is one of the newer sports to join that facility and that sporting hub. It will provide new opportunities by bringing more community members to a site that is being increasingly activated over the years as it continues to grow.

Mr COWDREY: Did the minister make any representations to the Treasurer or present an argument that perhaps, rather than providing the full amount to general revenue, there should at the very least be some portion of that put back into the facility at Gepps Cross?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I think the honourable member would know that we do not usually discuss what things are said in cabinet or between ministers, necessarily. As I said, this is a site that has had opportunities over many years, even when the previous government was in, to be able to achieve different outcomes. We have just recently seen soccer join, and now we have archery also coming onto this site. It has provided many opportunities for different sporting codes, and I am sure there will be other opportunities in the future.

Mr COWDREY: Perhaps I will rephrase. Was there any advice provided to the minister by ORSR in regard to keeping some of those funds for the maintenance or refurbishment of facilities at Gepps Cross?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: In regard to this site, as I have highlighted, there are lots of opportunities where we have seen change, and there will be opportunities in the future as we think about what could happen on the site. Those conversations will be ongoing, and we look forward to seeing a new boost in activity coming about from having archery there. We have seen the incredible outcome of having soccer now included on that site. We look forward to seeing where these discussions can take us.

Mr COWDREY: I will shift to the highlights and targets, regarding the per capita representation in selections to teams. I reference the announcement made earlier in the budget cycle—although it is missing from the budget papers themselves—in regard to the Olympic and Paralympic Legacy Committee. Can the minister provide more detail to the committee in regard to what form that committee is going to take, whether it will be entirely public sector employees who will be represented on that committee and what the government is planning in regard to both the composition and how it will operationally function?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: This is an incredible opportunity. As I have said previously, as a state we are finding ways to not just invest in our current athletes in a grassroots sport but also in how we can make sure that we are best placed for the Brisbane Olympic Games in 2032.

Mr COWDREY: And the Paralympic Games.

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: Sorry, yes; and the Paralympic Games. This is an opportunity for us to be thinking about not only how we participate necessarily as a state and a country, but what we could be doing in the lead up to that incredible opportunity being in Australia. It provides an opportunity for us to be thinking about what we are doing across government.

That is why we have brought together a steering committee to be looking at just that: what does the 2032 Olympics and Paralympic Games mean for Australia, and also for South Australia? That is why we have brought together varying ministers, including myself, the Minister for Tourism, the Minister for Trade and Investment, the Assistant Minister for Junior Sport Participation, as well as staff and agencies from across government, including the Department of the Premier and Cabinet,

the Department of State Development, the Department for Education and Multicultural Affairs, and also the Departments of Treasury and Finance and Human Services.

Mr COWDREY: Is there any view to outward consultation for that committee, if it is entirely made up of public sector employees or appointed government officials?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: With all government committees there is always an opportunity, as there should be, to be able to broaden out those conversations to community. That is something we would look forward to being able to achieve, because this is an opportunity for us to be thinking about what we could be doing differently in South Australia and how we can be engaging in this conversation.

As I have said already, at a government level we have shown that commitment and support through the Team Appeal funding, making sure we can take away as many barriers as possible to getting people to the LA Games to be able to participate. Again as I said, we were the first state to step in and lead the way, to set the example that we need to be investing in our Olympic and Paralympic teams and provide that \$1 million.

As I also mentioned previously, that \$1 million is not going to one team over another but is being split equally between the Olympic team and the Paralympic team, so that our South Australian participants can have those barriers taken away and can go on to not only represent our state but our country as well.

Mr COWDREY: I am not going to get into a backward tit for tat with the minister—

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I did not know we were.

Mr COWDREY: You have noted the investment in terms of this cycle, and I welcome that without any problems at all. It does not make up for the fact that there was no commitment in the last cycle. Again, it is a bit rich for the government to run the line they have to this point that the expectation was that the former government provided funding before the Olympics had even taken place or the Paralympics had taken place for that year. Again, I am happy to put that to the side. We are here to talk about something which should be bipartisan in approach in terms of what we are trying to achieve.

Further to that, what are the requirements in terms of documents that will be created, reports that will be provided, out of that committee? Are there going to be any public-facing documents prepared in terms of outcomes from the across government Legacy Committee?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: In regard to that Team Appeal support, my understanding is—and I am happy to look into this further and get more information—that the South Australian Labor governments, when they have been in, have been the governments that have been committing to that Team Appeal. I think there has been only one government that did not necessarily commit to that, and it was not a Labor one.

Regarding the outcomes from the group we are bringing together, the opportunity here is to make sure that we start to figure out where we are going and the direction in terms of the opportunities available to us. That is where we will be commencing with this group that is coming together. We are not going to be working in silos. We are going to be bringing agencies together from across government to figure out what is our pitch as a state, how do we participate and how do we compete to make sure that South Australia can be a part of the Olympic and Paralympic story when we have it in 2032.

This is something that we are really proud of, not that we have just started this conversation through this committee work, but I know a lot of agencies have probably been having that discussion for some time. Now we all get to come to that one table and start thinking about what we can achieve in South Australia.

Mr COWDREY: Again, no answer to the question in terms of what is going to be provided, but an annual report? Is there going to be something that will be public facing in terms of the outcomes?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: As I have just highlighted, the reason why we come together and start those conversations is we need to know where we are going. There are lots of opportunities for each of those agencies to be able to present what they have been able to achieve so far, and then we can start developing what we can do as a plan. It is about asking: where are we going to be able to not only participate in South Australia but also around the world, what training opportunities are here in South Australia, how can we support Brisbane during the games, and how can we play our part in the Olympics and Paralympics?

Mr COWDREY: I will shift to the dot point regarding the Para-Sports Hub and ask a very direct question. In terms of the expectation from PA in setting up these hubs, my understanding is that there is a target of sorts in terms of the number of athletes that we need to have, both classified and then shifting to representation. Are you able to provide to the committee the details in terms of the requirements that are being sought by way of representation and athletes identified?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I understand that Paralympics Australia has 10 new categorised athletes per year—that is their target at a national level. Our goals, that we have set at SASI level through the Para Unit, include that more than 50 athletes attend para-sport talent identification sessions each year, with more than 24 para-athletes per year, and a sample range of new sports at SASI through an eight-week introduction program. That is the launch pad that was discussed this week.

As I mentioned earlier, with the more than 10 that are coming, new South Australian para-athletes are categorised per year at a national level, and three or more new para-sports are sampled at SASI each year, and that provides an opportunity for us to find new areas for people to be able to participate in new sports. Our goal is that in LA in 2028 and Brisbane in 2032—the Paralympic Games—SA achieves 10 per cent of Australian team representation, and South Australian athletes contribute to 10 per cent of the medals that are won.

Mr COWDREY: So 10 nationally-classified athletes, or 10 athletes nationally each year?

The CHAIR: Can you just refresh what page and line we are on?

Mr COWDREY: The Para-Sports Hub dot point.

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I believe it is 10 South Australian categorised.

Mr COWDREY: Thank you. Finally, a very quick question—again, I will go to 167—in regard to athletes on scholarship. There has been some public reporting regarding hockey in South Australia and the changes that have been made to the hockey program. How many formal complaints were received in the past financial year or prior to regarding the hockey program at SASI?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: In regard to numbers, I do not have that information available to me today, but I did meet with Hockey SA yesterday with Kylie, and Keren from SASI, to be able to run through the success of the hockey program through SASI. It is really important to note that a new deed of understanding has been signed to ensure that this relationship and partnership between Hockey SA and SASI continues. It is an incredible opportunity for the 12 athletes who are part of this program where they can get access to advice and support to become the best athletes possible to participate in our national-level hockey team. That is an important partnership that we continue.

I know that SASI and Hockey SA have contributed equally to this program so our athletes can participate. Hockey SA has also made in-kind support so we can get our individual members out there not only training through SASI and building that strength and their capabilities to be great athletes but also to be able to get them out training through that Hockey SA support of space for them to do that.

Mr COWDREY: I know you said you do not have the information with you today. Are you happy to take on notice the number of complaints and the nature of those complaints?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I am happy to see what information we can bring back to you.

Mr COWDREY: So that is a yes?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I said I am happy to see what information we can bring back to you.

Mr WHETSTONE: Referring to Performance indicators, of the 30 facilities targeted for development or maintenance, how many are located in regional South Australia?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I might just get Kylie to run through this.

Ms TAYLOR: Most of those facilities are state-level facilities, so by their nature they are located in the metropolitan area. They are things like SAALC and the SA netball centre. The couple of facilities that we do have are things like recreation trails. We have a couple of them. We also have the State Shooting Park. They are probably the examples that are regional, but, by and large, the nature of the ones we look after tend to be those state-level sport facilities. They are more metro-based than regional.

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: Just to expand on that, because they are state based they provide opportunity for people to participate from around the state at those facilities.

Mr WHETSTONE: There were 2,128 grant agreements managed in 2024-25. Are you able to tell me how many were for racing? Were there any for racing?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: In regard to racing, I am happy to just touch on something that was new in regard to providing a grant for racing in South Australia and that was the drought program that I mentioned earlier. It was a new initiative and it came about because when I have been out in the community chatting with our racing clubs they highlighted similar things to other regional communities in that they are a destination for people to come together in our regional towns. I think for the first time the Active Club Program has had racing codes involved in being able to receive funding, so, just like other sporting clubs, they were able to receive grants to up to \$5,000 in ways to best support them to make sure they can continue to have a space for people to come together in our regional communities.

Mr WHETSTONE: Just moving on to sports vouchers, we all love a good sports voucher. Can you give me an indication of how many sports voucher applications were successful in 2023-24 and how many applications were successful in 2024-25?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: While we are getting those numbers, I guess you are correct in saying that the Sports Voucher program is incredibly successful and I know there is not really a community that does not have people talking about how welcome the sports vouchers are. I know that just last weekend we made an announcement about how already this year we have achieved more vouchers being applied for than in the entirety of last year, so we know this has been incredibly popular.

I think that just this year alone, \$11 million—correct me if I am incorrect there, Kylie—has been put back into the back pockets of families this year already. It has already gone up since then, as \$15 million has been provided back. I know that in 2023-24, there were just over 95,000 vouchers that were redeemed and that puts \$9.45 million back into families and caregivers' pockets. Also in this 2024-25 financial year, we have already broken this record, with just over 155,000 vouchers, totalling \$15.43 million, and that was by 23 June 2025. So it has been an incredible program and one we continue to see grow.

I know that music has also been included—I think that has been a popular activity in your community—which we have seen pop up as well in the top 10. It provides that opportunity for people not only to participate and not be on their screens at home but just provide a bit of extra support back into families' pockets.

Mr WHETSTONE: Minister, can you explain why the office failed to meet its targets for those sports vouchers redeemed in 2024-25 and how it might ensure it reaches its target in the 2025-26 year?

Ms TAYLOR: I suspect that the target has been set because the two vouchers came in 1 January, not 1 July. I suspect the target has been set for a full year of two vouchers, rather than six months of two vouchers.

Mr WHETSTONE: That is very aspirational of you.

Ms TAYLOR: Correct.

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I blame Tim.

Ms TAYLOR: It has been growing exponentially end on end. Every time the program expands, the numbers get bigger and bigger, and I do not anticipate there will be any difference there.

Mr WHETSTONE: So is the two-voucher program eligible for winter and summer sport?

The CHAIR: I think we are now getting overtime. I was very generous. I gave you an extra question. Once again, thank you to the minister and to the public servants who have contributed to this process and all the work that gets done behind the scenes. The time allotted having expired, I declare the examination of the Office for Recreation, Sport and Racing complete. The examination of proposed payments for the Department for Infrastructure and Transport is now complete.

Sitting suspended from 12:33 to 13:30.

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES COMMISSION, \$700,000

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN METROPOLITAN FIRE SERVICE, \$3,538,000

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE, \$100,000

**ADMINISTERED ITEMS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF TREASURY AND FINANCE,
\$4,403,410,000**

Membership:

Hon. J.A.W. Gardner substituted for Mr Cowdrey.

Minister:

Hon. E.S. Bourke, Minister for Emergency Services and Correctional Services, Minister for Autism, Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr C. Beattie, Chief Officer, State Emergency Service.

Mr B. Loughlin, Chief Officer, South Australian Country Fire Service.

Mr J. Swann, Chief Officer, South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service.

Mr M. Stratton, Acting Chief Executive, South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission.

Ms J. Best, Chief Financial Officer, South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission.

Mr P. Seager, Deputy Chief Officer, South Australian Country Fire Service.

Ms A. Tajnikar, Finance Manager, South Australian Country Fire Service.

Mr J. Cibich, Finance Manager, South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service.

Mr G. Tundini, Business Manager, State Emergency Service.

Mr P. Sinclair, Public Safety Solutions, Attorney-General's Department.

The CHAIR: Welcome, everybody. The portfolios are SAFECOM, Country Fire Service, SA Metropolitan Fire Service, State Emergency Service. The minister appearing is the Minister for Emergency Services and Correctional Services. I declare the proposed payments open for

examination and call on the minister to make a statement, if she so wishes, and to introduce her advisers.

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: Thank you, Chair. I would first like to introduce the advisers who are with me today: Chief Officer of the Country Fire Service, Mr Brett Loughlin; Chief Officer of the South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service, Mr Jeff Swann; and Chief Officer of the South Australian State Emergency Service, Mr Chris Beattie. I also have with me today Mr Mark Stratton, the Acting Chief Executive of SAFECOM; and Julie Best, Chief Financial Officer, SAFECOM.

Also with me is Paul Seager, Deputy Chief Officer of the Country Fire Service; Peter Sinclair, Public Safety Solutions, Attorney-General's Department; Avril Tajnikar, Finance Manager, South Australian Country Fire Service; Gabriel Tundini, Finance Manager, South Australian State Emergency Service; and Jarrad Cibich, Finance Manager, South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service.

I would also like to thank all executives present for their hard work in assisting with preparation for this examination today, and volunteers across the emergency service sector. I thank each and every one of them for their ongoing service to the community. It is our emergency services that play a vital role in helping South Australians when we are in need.

From the Hills to the sea, from metro areas to regions, emergency services everywhere help keep our community safe, connected and protected. Just last night and over the last 24 hours or more, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers who have given their time and personnel across our emergency service sector to support our community with the severe weather that we have been experiencing.

I believe over 140 incidents have been responded to by the SES. The CFS has been called out 75 times, and the MFS has responded to 170 calls in just the last few hours across our state. Our government, too, recognises this service. That is why we are increasing the total emergency service budget in 2025-26 by \$21 million, delivering additional investments to support frontline responders who step up when it matters most. We cannot control when emergencies strike, unfortunately, or how many we will face, but we can control how well we are prepared, and that is what this funding is all about.

This year, the fire season was longer and harsher than expected, extended by a long, dry summer that hit areas already suffering through drought. That is why we have allocated an additional \$11.1 million to extend the aerial support where it is needed most. We do not have a crystal ball, unfortunately, but we are investing in smarter tools to stay ahead of the risk.

We are investing \$2.8 million over four years to improve bushfire risk mapping, which will give our services better insight, coordination and strategy, helping us tailor responses to the unique conditions of diverse communities and landscapes. We are also supporting the development of the Bushfire Hazards Overlay Code Amendment, which means better guidance in land planning, design and emergency preparedness, giving our communities the tools to build and rebuild with resilience in mind.

Importantly, we are investing \$5.9 million over four years to act on longstanding calls for more support in structural firefighter training for our CFS volunteers. We know that training saves lives. I would like to thank the CFS Volunteers Association, Sonia St Alban and Jeff Clark for their fierce advocacy in this space. When I first started in this role, they welcomed me with honest, insightful feedback, which was invaluable. We listened and now we are delivering.

As we have heard, heading into winter we had over 11 heater-related fires in just May this year, more than two a week. It is clear that this investment in structural firefighter training is a key part of prevention. This was showcased at a recent exercise at the Angle Park Training Centre, where we saw firsthand the MFS firefighters extinguish a heater fire within minutes.

What one of our agencies receives in budget measures will benefit all. For example, through the budget, the government has invested over \$2 million over the next four years to ensure the SES drone program can meet rising demands across searches, rescues and other emergencies. In this budget, our government is also investing \$687,000 over three years to continue supporting volunteer marine rescue associated in providing their rescue capabilities.

We have also answered the calls for Surf Life Saving South Australia to invest \$250,000 in 2025-26 toward the replacement of the Surf Life Saving Lifesaver 3 Jet Rescue Boat, which I believe has been very much long called for. This funding means stronger defence, smarter planning and safer communities. It is an investment in the people who show up when we need it most, and the communities that they protect.

We have seen that our agencies work incredibly well together, something that I think should be celebrated and we should be very proud of in South Australia. When an emergency happens, agencies stand side by side and work together to provide help where it is needed most. I want to say thank you to each and every one of them. Whether you are wearing yellow, navy or orange uniforms, we appreciate your service and congratulate each and every one of you. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you, minister. Member for Chaffey.

Mr WHETSTONE: I, too, want to thank all of our emergency service personnel in uniform or volunteers for putting their life in harm's way to keep us safe, and also to the public sector that have put their life on hold to furnish the minister's folders with copious notes to try to help make her look the best she can be. Budget Paper 3, page 23, operating expenses 2024-25: CFS and SAFECOM overspent their budgets by \$12 million. Can you just furnish us with an explanation?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: As I indicated in my opening remarks, we do not have a crystal ball, and we do not often know what emergencies will happen throughout a year. Aviation support is one of those such items where we do not know what supports will be needed and where they will be needed. That is why you will see that in this budget—because we do not exactly know what will be happening in the year ahead—we have allocated in this budget line \$11.1 million to support the extension of the aerial support that was required.

There were incidents such as the Wilmington fire, which ended up being quite a large fire in South Australia and which required a lot of support, not just from the CFS but across agencies. I guess that is where those numbers come in to be different. That is also why we continue to invest in our CFS. Quite a substantial amount of money has been put in through this budget cycle, and I think that structural firefighting training is one of those key elements that has been called for for some time. Also, there are mapping tools so that we can have a better understanding about where we need those supports. It does come down to a bit more of a guided response in the future about what supports and where supports might be required.

Mr WHETSTONE: Thank you. Does that explain why in last year's budget, SAFECOM's estimated operating expenses for 2025-26 were \$32 million and that has now been increased to \$42 million in the budget? Is this a contingency, should there be extra call on our emergency services, natural disasters or keeping communities safe? Maybe you can just outline what that \$10 million increase in the budget will particularly be spent on.

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: As we discussed, I guess also in our previous estimates briefings regarding grants and opportunities of when funding is made available, we know that with the funding there has been a carryover from the DRF funding grant that has come from the commonwealth, which is why you will see that there is a significant difference between the two where it has been carried over.

Mr WHETSTONE: Is the extra \$10 million into the budget state funding or is that a component of commonwealth money?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: Commonwealth.

Mr WHETSTONE: The same goes for CFS and MFS, which both have increases of \$3 million and \$2 million respectively. Can you give me an understanding there?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: That would be the additional budget for aerial support. As I said, new funding has been made available of \$11.1 million to support that aerial support, which is something quite unique in South Australia. I could get Chief Officer Brett Loughlin to expand on that. I do not think other states quite do aerial support like we do in South Australia, where we do provide it earlier and we do make sure that we invest in that, because we know that, if we get there first with

our aerial support, we do provide that support to the people on the ground to then get that fire under control. It is unique to South Australia, but I will ask if Brett would like to expand on that.

Mr WHETSTONE: Minister, are you able to give me a breakdown of what component is state funding and what is commonwealth funding with the budget lines for CFS, SAFECOM, MFS and SES?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: If I understand this correctly, the commonwealth funding we receive is primarily for the DRF funding, which is a grant that comes through federal government, which is then administered through SAFECOM and provided to organisations in South Australia, is my understanding. There is a small number of commitments that come from federal government that help government bodies, mainly the buildings that they are in, but the majority of it comes from state government in regard to the support that is given to our emergency services sector.

Mr WHETSTONE: Are you able to give me a breakdown of the components, what is federal money and what is state money?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: As I have highlighted, the majority of the commonwealth funding is that DRF funding, and that is about the \$10 million figure that I have just suggested.

Mr WHETSTONE: What is the majority? Is there a number? Can you put a number to the majority?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: The DRF funding that I have just mentioned of \$10 million is from the commonwealth.

Mr WHETSTONE: Over the page, in Budget Paper 3, page 24, regarding the \$26.8 million decrease in SAFECOM's operating expenses, which disaster resilience grants are coming to an end?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: The fund that I have been referring to, that I think is the one that has got your interest here, is the Disaster Ready Fund. This is the third round that has been made available through the Australian government's Emergency Response Fund, and it is a fund that has ongoing investment in our programs in South Australia, where organisations can receive funding through that grant program. I understand that there will be another round of the DRF, with round 3 applications, that will be known in late September or early October of 2025.

Mr WHETSTONE: How much of that \$26.8 million relates to other components outside of disaster grants?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: As we have come back to, the funding that is available there is providing support to the DRF, and that is through the commonwealth, and then the remaining is provided through state-based incomes like the ESL to provide support to SAFECOM.

Mr WHETSTONE: Thank you. Moving on to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 32, workforce summary, the 2024-25 budget for CFS was 187.4 FTEs; the 2024-25 estimated result was 191. Can you give me an understanding of what roles those additional FTEs will play?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: My understanding is we have seen an increase in FTEs as a result of this budget because of the Statewide Bushfire Hazards Overlay Code Amendment that has been implemented. We anticipate three FTEs come about because of that investment through this budget measure and also one FTE related to the 2023-24 budget measures that were being expired for an IT program. That is where we see those differences, but I do not know whether, Brett, you want to expand on anything in that space.

Mr LOUGHLIN: Thank you for the question. The additional staff for the bushfire hazard code overlay do important work. When people do developments in bushfire-prone land, it is CFS staff who go out and undertake those assessments and make sure that that development is occurring in line with Australian standard 3959, which relates to building in bushfire-prone lands. They also work with local government, developers and property owners to make sure that those properties are done. Through the major planning reform process that has been ongoing, I believe, for a number of years now, we are seeing a wider application of the areas that are declared bushfire-prone for the purpose of development, so that increase will enable us to deal with the increased workflow there.

It is really important work. I have just been over in California with a Department of Foreign Affairs trip and having a look at the Los Angeles fires that occurred, and the building codes that we have in Australia and the Australian standard that I referenced are actually a really good thing for our nation and hold us in good stead. Our properties tend to be that bit more resilient against things like wildfire, and that is a good thing, so we are quite excited to have that enhanced capability.

Mr WHETSTONE: That was for the 2024-25 increase in FTEs. While I have you on a roll, there is an additional 4.6 FTEs for 2025-26. Can I have an understanding of what role those will play?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: That comes back to new budget measures for the structural firefighting. As we said earlier, this is an investment that has been really well fought for by the Country Fire Service Volunteers Association. We have enabled \$5.9 million over four years to improve how we respond to structure fires in South Australia through the CFS. It is an investment, as I mentioned earlier, when we see the heater fires that already occurred in May. More than two fires a week were happening because of heaters and people trying to keep warm and getting their heaters out for the first time and maybe not having them checked properly.

If we are seeing those fires happening not only in metropolitan areas but in regional South Australia as well, giving those new skills to our volunteers so that they can support their community with confidence and also so that they are kept safe as well is our priority, because we do not want people going into an area without the training that is required.

Mr WHETSTONE: In your backyard, minister: the completion of the Maitland CFS/SES facility that was originally scheduled to be in February 2026 has now been delayed until the end of the year, to December 2026. Can I have an understanding of why the delay occurred?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: Can you give me a budget line?

Mr WHETSTONE: Yes, sure: Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 34.

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: As you have highlighted, this is a project that is listed in the budget paper as being one where we are looking forward to seeing some action happening. It is works that are being carried over. It is a joint site between the CFS and the SES, one that we look forward to being a purpose-built co-located facility that will enable us to have a service that is co-located. I know they are very close together at the moment, but this will enable us to have a much more coordinated collaboration between the two services.

Mr WHETSTONE: I do like to see you putting more money into regional centres. Minister, can you also give me an understanding of why the project cost has blown out by almost \$1 million?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I will hand over to someone else in a second to run through that in a bit more detail. In regard to that, we want to make sure that we can get this right. We see blowouts in projects where costs can go up or down, but we want to make sure that we do get this right. Having that opportunity to work through what that project could look like and to be able to carry that funding over, as we have done, to work through whether having both services on the one site can work is important. I will get Brett Loughlin to run through those details.

Mr LOUGHLIN: Thank you, minister, and I thank the member. It is an exciting development. It is something we are keen to see to see delivered. We continually work through DIT and the Ventia process to ensure that the costings are updated by the cost assessors so that we can continue to ensure that we have the budget to deliver the project.

Mr WHETSTONE: Thank you. On the same reference point: the replacement cost of telecommunications equipment was over budgeted in 2024-25 at \$2.1 million, versus the \$719,000 spent. Why is there an overestimation, and where will those remaining funds be reallocated?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: My understanding is that this is an accounting treatment. It will be reallocated and still made available for the operations of telecommunications in South Australia.

Ms HUTCHESSON: Will the minister inform the committee about the recent interstate deployments of emergency service volunteers?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I want to thank the member for her question, and also for her service as a volunteer in our community. We really are proud of the efforts she makes not only in juggling her work but also with the volunteer service she provides, like many others do in our state.

It is one thing when volunteers give up their time to serve and protect their local community, but it is another for volunteers to give up their time, take leave from work, say goodbye to their loved ones, and jump on a plane to sometimes go to another state they have never been to before. That is what nearly 290 volunteers and staff from the SES, CFS and MFS have done in recent months providing crisis support to communities right across the country.

Extreme weather events interstate, including devastating flash flooding in North Queensland, cyclones in Western Australia, and bushfires in Victoria and Tasmania have prompted South Australian personnel to answer the call for help. Three deployments were sent to flood areas in Queensland, assisting with emergency response and recovery efforts in Townsville, Ingham and other parts of the state.

The five-day rotation comprised about 70 frontline personnel from the SES, CFS and MFS, reinforcing South Australia's commitment to collaborate across our emergency services to support interstate agencies. The SES crew also helped with the Victorian staging areas for significant fires in and around Horsham and Halls Gap, supported by the CFS brigades in the state's South-East and the Department for Environment and Water, with their specialised firefighters.

This help does not just stop at our Australian borders, and I would also like to acknowledge the eight South Australians—six from the Department for Environment and Water and two from the CFS—who are deploying to Canada later this week. Our commonwealth friends are again experiencing major fires across their vast and beautiful landscapes, and South Australia is answering the call, for the second year in a row, to provide much needed support.

Our emergency services are highly regarded both nationally and internationally, and this is reflected in the request for support from our interstate and overseas friends. Our firefighters deploying to Canada will be working in remote and difficult conditions where fires are not the only risk; something we would not be used to here are bears, which present a real danger. Their courage and the support of their families is incredible, and we are so grateful for them for stepping forward to take on the call to support Canada.

These deployments highlight not only the dedication of volunteers but also our state's ability to quickly respond to requests and work with other agencies, coordinating with the National Resource Sharing Centre while also ensuring local resources can respond to local needs.

Many of our volunteers quietly go above and beyond, showing up time and time again whenever help is needed, like Mick Grant from the Keith SES unit. In just the first half of this year Mick has answered the call six times, being deployed to the Horsham Base camp in Victoria, the flood-affected communities in Far North Queensland, in the response to Tropical Cyclone Alfred, the Lower South-East fires, and in support of the CFS. Whether severe weather in NSW or most recently the inland river flooding near Innamincka, his dedication and the dedication of so many across our services, including the SES, is both humbling and deeply appreciated.

As minister, it is a privilege to serve a portfolio supported by volunteers who continue to give so much of their time to protect others in the community. It was also a privilege to be able to meet a number of them and of deployed volunteers as we have been going through to the airport.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank Adelaide Airport, Qantas and Virgin, who have given not only their services and space to acknowledge our volunteers in the lounge before deployment but also to the captains who have taken the time to give a shout-out to our volunteers and personnel who have been on those planes. It is a really good reminder to others who are in the airport at the time or on the plane with them, that we do have incredible people who give their time and, hopefully, they might also think about volunteering their time to join this incredible force that protects our community. I would like to thank each and every one of these people who have been deployed to support other communities and who continue to support our community as well.

Mr WHETSTONE: Supplementary question on that: what criteria or training capabilities do volunteers have in order to be deployed or exported to particular disaster areas or disaster sites? Is there a skill set that a volunteer is specifically trained to, or is it just a level of experience?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I will hand over to a couple of people who I know will be quite interested to talk about the service of their volunteers. As a reflection, I think it was in my first week of being the minister that I went to the airport and saw how many volunteers were giving their time. There were quite a number of rotations that were deployed, and it was remarkable to see how many times the same volunteers and personnel came back to give their time to go interstate and support others.

What I think is missed by a lot of people is that most of them are volunteers. Most of them are also self-employed and they have no income whilst they are away. It does not seem to even be a factor, it is in their DNA that they just want to help people, and it is a remarkable asset that we have as a state in that no matter where people are coming from, whether it is Mount Gambier or metropolitan areas, they are putting up their hand to go and help other states. I will pass firstly to Chris Beattie and then to Brett to expand on the training that goes into this.

Mr BEATTIE: It is an important question. Australia is a federation of independent states and has a very long and proud history of the states and territories supporting each other during times of crisis. Nationally, we coordinate through the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council and through entities such as the Commissioners and Chief Officers Strategic Committee. Through those forums we establish benchmarks around capability and capability requirements for our personnel.

Across our sector, all three agencies are registered training organisations, and the qualifications and skills that our members are provided are benchmarked nationally in terms of the public safety training package and the standards to which they are trained. When a jurisdiction requests resources from another state there is a very explicit requirement around what the skill set and role requirements will be. We have well practised arrangements for states and territories to offer up suitably trained and experienced personnel for those particular roles.

Mr LOUGHLIN: If I can add to that, I am currently privileged, in another role, to chair that CCOSC committee that was referred to. A state or territory can make a request of the rest of the agencies in Australia for support and assistance for major flooding, storm events, fire events, etc. We can have people departing airports within 24 hours thanks to their robust nature.

We have good frameworks for who is covering our people, how they are deployed and the commanding control arrangements, and they are well understood. We coordinate this, the physical logistics of it, through what is called the National Resource Sharing Centre located in Melbourne.

That same efficacy and expertise that we do interstate extends to international. With the recent request for assistance to Canada, within the request being made we had an Australian liaison officer on the way to the relevant state headquarters in Alberta in less than 12 hours. That is a six-week deployment, so that is a pretty awkward conversation when you get home to say, 'By the way, I have to pack now and I am disappearing for the next six weeks.'

But we have these wonderful pre-planned MOUs and arrangements that translate those standards, and those RTO standards that Chief Officer Beattie referenced, into our Canadian and United States counterparts' terminology so that we can seamlessly deploy.

Mr WHETSTONE: Thank you. I wanted to get that on the record because I think it is important that we have volunteers who are aspirational and would ask those questions. I must put my hand up to say that I was a poor example of a volunteer to CFS because I was never at home when the pager went off, but it is what it is.

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: It is never too late.

Mr LOUGHLIN: Any day of service we are grateful for.

Mr WHETSTONE: I offered, but as a regional MP I spend very little time at home. Moving on, we will come back to highlights, Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 36. Which CFS units received Distress Signal Unit upgrades?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: Thank you for your question. I understand that a number of these appliances came to the end of their service, so we have had to then find opportunities to roll them out and where best to. I believe that 199 brigades have had the opportunity to have access to them, but I will get Chief Officer Brett Loughlin to expand on them.

Mr LOUGHLIN: A Distress Signal Unit you wear on the shoulder of your breathing apparatus unit, as the member for Waite knows. They activate after several seconds of someone not moving. They are worn on breathing apparatus by CFS and MFS firefighters and are designed that, if you are inside a burning building and you have become incapacitated and have stopped moving, it sounds a very pleasant tone to alert everyone around you that you are potentially incapacitated to help them find you.

DSUs are present on every single set of breathing apparatus that we have across our 199 brigades that are equipped with that capability. The system we were using did reach its end-of-service life, so we had to do an upgrade of that. We used the collaborative procurement framework that we can get through AFAC to purchase a Distress Signal Unit that is already in use by a number of other fire services in the commonwealth and that was a pretty good project. It is why, when you see a group of firefighters at a structure fire, you see everybody constantly shuffling and doing the firefighter shake. It is to try to stop your DSU from going off because, once it goes into alarm, you have to go get a key to manually deactivate it. That was probably more than you wanted to know.

Mr WHETSTONE: No, I am happy with that, thank you. On the same reference point, under targets, when will the CFS cadet review be finalised?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: It is my understanding that this project has concluded and they are going through the process of working through presenting those details, and it is our aim that that will hopefully be happening some time this year. Just to highlight the importance of our cadet programs, as I am sure you are very much aware, when we see that we have young ones putting up their hand to be involved in not only the CFS but other organisations, it is an incredible asset to have because we know that we want new people coming into our service. We want them to learn early and fall in love with the CFS family.

We do see this time and time again. I have seen it at Naracoorte where I was challenged by the cadets there to put on a jacket as quickly as possible, which I failed miserably at, and it was highlighted how the chief officer, Brett Loughlin, was much faster than me at that particular challenge. But the outcomes of this project are something that we are looking forward to seeing and something that I think will be beneficial to many.

Mr WHETSTONE: Minister, have you seen the draft of the review, the findings of the review?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: As I said, it is in the process, so we are working through this and it is something we look forward to looking into.

Mr WHETSTONE: I am hoping that the government will implement all of the recommendations in the review to help our cadets.

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: As I said, we are working through the review process at the moment and the whole purpose of a review is to see what comes of it and to work through it.

Mr WHETSTONE: I refer you to the same reference point under activity indicators. CFS volunteer numbers fell short of their projection by 500 in 2024-25. Can you give me an understanding of why that fell so far short of the target?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: This has been an interesting one, which, again, comes back to something I mentioned earlier. It has been a really interesting combination of having sport, rec and racing and emergency services as an overlay in portfolios, two areas that are very volunteer focused, in relation to what works and what does not work. I think consistent across two of those portfolios is that volunteer numbers do come and go. They sometimes rise and sometimes drop a little bit, but, as they have with the CFS, have stayed relatively stable.

I think full credit to the CFS family for what they are able to achieve by working to not only support each other but also, as the government has been able to do, invest in their training so that

they can be retained and get not just the ability to be with other like-minded people but also get a skill set that they may not have had before and be able to use those skills not only to protect our community but to use them in employment opportunities as well.

We know that being a part of the CFS is an incredible thing to do, as it is with all of our emergency service sector, because it goes far beyond just keeping each other safe; it is also about learning new skills and upskilling. But as you could appreciate, this is an area that is of interest to me because if we can be looking at our volunteers and how we can better support them, I think there is a lot to learn from across those two portfolio areas about what is working in one area and how we can maybe use those learnings in another.

Mr WHETSTONE: Minister, I understand that the CFS are doing all they can to attract volunteers, but what is the government doing? There is a trend. I note that the number of CFS volunteers fell by 326 in 2022-23, in 2023-24 the shortfall was up to 500, and now there is another estimated 121 this year. So why has that number of volunteers declined so rapidly, and what is the government doing to help our emergency services attract more volunteers?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: As I mentioned earlier, there are opportunities for the government to provide support. As much as we recognise the incredible role that they play, we also know that there are multiple agencies that we are talking about and that is where SAFECOM can start providing some extra supports and deliver outcomes that can help support our volunteers as well. SAFECOM, I know, have been coordinating a review into this space, a strategy, and that will enable us to find out what we can be doing. That has been supported by the government.

I will just confirm a list—it is just not popping out at me. I am trying to find the list of the training that is available, of the initiatives. There is a number of reasons for those up and down numbers. It could be retirement as well, as another factor to be considering, but as I was suggesting through SAFECOM, I know that the CFS and the SES use a range of tools to assist in increasing volunteer retention rates. These include:

- a survey of existing members to provide them with the opportunity to raise any issues and identifying the reason for ending their voluntary capacity. As I said before, that could be for retirement, it could be for work reasons;
- the delivery of soft skill training sessions to the CFS and the SES volunteers, which aid in promoting effective and harmonised brigades and units;
- award systems to recognise the commitment and dedication of emergency service volunteers. There are a number of different types of awards, including service medals and ministerial awards as well; and
- recognising supportive employers and businesses for emergency service volunteers.

I think the last point is a really important part of this process. As I said before, they are volunteers, and a lot of them are having to leave their workplace to be able to provide support. Being able to recognise those employers is an important part of the volunteer process as well.

Mr BEATTIE: Further to the minister's comments where she highlighted a range of tools and interventions the two key volunteer agencies implement to support and foster a strong volunteer workforce, it is true that at a national level there is a long-run trend in declining volunteerism, and that hits hard for the fire and emergency services sector that relies on the best part of 270,000 volunteer firefighters and first responders across the nation. I think in South Australia, notwithstanding those ups and downs, we have been blessed to see a very strong commitment from our communities in terms of sustaining the brigades and the SES stations across the state.

I would say, further to the minister's points, that the government has also invested in new volunteering facilities for the Northern Adelaide Plains community with the new Gawler SES unit and, to that end, we have recently recruited over 35 new members to the SES from that community who have been in training for the last six months and are looking forward to that station opening and serving their community when it comes online later this year.

Mr WHETSTONE: With due respect, we have seen four years of decline in volunteer numbers. I visit a lot of CFS stations and, yes, there are a lot of aged volunteers, but I would like to

know if the government is looking at putting in a youth volunteering program, or some form of initiative that will attract the younger set in South Australia. I do not want to get off track, but I would just like to make the comment that there are programs now where there is an incentivisation for volunteers, particularly for emergency services, to be incentivised to come and volunteer by having a discount on their HECS debt.

There are a number of initiatives that I think the government should be working harder on in prioritising volunteer numbers, whether they be old or new, but if you are looking for a younger set, I would really urge you to look at some of those models. You have to have a carrot and stick approach. My concern, speaking to CFS captains and CFS stations, is that they are all very concerned about the lack of volunteers, the aged volunteers and some of those stations that are having to close because of no volunteers. I know that is not a question. It is a comment, but I am genuinely concerned for the volunteer exercise.

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: To expand on that—and I appreciate your feedback—I believe the average age of a volunteer through the CFS is 47. There are opportunities here to be thinking about how we recruit more people, and I agree that this is a conversation that needs to be had and one that I am looking forward to continuing in this role. As I said earlier, you go to regional communities—I grew up in a regional community—and you often find the same five people volunteering everywhere.

Just recently when I was in Two Wells seeing the member, Tony Piccolo, we visited the brigade there and I then went to the netball and the cricket up the road and was surprised to see pretty much the same people. It is a sporting hub and there is cricket, netball and football at that hub. It was a good reminder. We need to think about how we attract other people into these roles. I agree with your thoughts that there is a conversation that does need to be had and one I look forward to having.

Mr WHETSTONE: Moving on to activity indicators, Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 39, the number of accredited training course participants for incident management was projected to be 900, but CFS only reached 650. What was the reason for the shortfall and why is the agency projecting 1,000 for 2025-26, given last year's result?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: My understanding is that we are merging two programs together to make them more efficient. When we bring those resources together we can have a better outcome for the people we are providing that service to.

Mr WHETSTONE: CFS intergovernment transfers, Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 40: the 2024-25 estimated income results for intergovernment transfers is significantly higher than the budgeted amount of \$104 million versus the \$132 million. It suddenly drops again this year to \$106 million. Can you explain that variation, please?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: This is coming back to that crystal ball moment. Funding is made available for aerial support in the 2024-25 estimated result. Depending on the outcomes, that could change again when we come back to these budget papers. It is usually to do with aerial support and incident management support.

Mr WHETSTONE: MFS targets, Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 53: one of last year's targets was to modernise MFS policy. One of this year's targets is to deliver new initiatives and key infrastructure projects. Which agencies will MFS partner with, and what new initiatives and infrastructure projects are planned?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: Can you repeat the budget line, sorry?

Mr WHETSTONE: It is under MFS targets 2025-26, Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 53.

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: Something that I have been pleasantly surprised to find is how well these agencies all work together.

Mr WHETSTONE: They talk.

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: They do, they talk a lot actually. This is the quietest I have ever seen them. They do work together and it is across those agencies that they are able to get better

outcomes. This is what this is highlighting. We know, for example, PPE cleaning has an opportunity there for them to work together about how they can better use those resources but also capital works as well on how they collaborate across all the agencies to get better outcomes through, as I have highlighted, the simple thing, which might seem simple but it is not really, of cleaning our PPE and having better outcomes for the safety of our volunteers and personnel.

The CHAIR: Thank you, minister. The time allotted having expired, I declare the examination of the proposed payments for SAFECOM, Country Fire Service, SA Metropolitan Fire Service and State Emergency Service complete. The further examination of proposed payments for the Administered Items for the Department of Treasury and Finance is referred to Estimates Committee A.

Sitting suspended from 14:33 to 14:45.

DEPARTMENT FOR CORRECTIONAL SERVICES, \$488,712,000

Membership:

Mr Batty substituted for Hon. J.A.W. Gardner.

Minister:

Hon. E.S. Bourke, Minister for Emergency Services and Correctional Services, Minister for Autism, Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr D. Brown, Chief Executive, Department for Correctional Services.

Ms S. Taylor, Executive Director, Corporate Services, Department for Correctional Services.

Ms K. Smith, Director, Finance, Department for Correctional Services.

Ms S. Borrillo, Senior Adviser, Government and Jurisdictional Affairs, Department for Correctional Services.

The CHAIR: The portfolio is the Department for Correctional Services. I declare the proposed payments open for examination. I call upon the minister, if she so wishes, to make an opening statement and to introduce her advisers.

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: Thank you, Chair. I would like to start by introducing Mr David Brown, the Chief Executive of the Department for Correctional Services, and Ms Sarah Taylor, the Executive Director of Corporate Services. On the table behind me are Ms Kerri-Anne Smith, the Director of Finance, and Ms Sofia Borrillo, Senior Adviser. I am grateful to all the DCS staff for their hard work in assisting with my preparation for this examination today, and also to the team that supports me every day in my office.

Correctional services is a portfolio that performs a critical public safety service. Today, I am pleased to highlight some important new strategies and initiatives in the ongoing pursuit to reduce offending by 2026 and beyond. The 2025-26 state budget provides \$6.8 million over four years to improve security at prisons in metropolitan Adelaide and regional SA.

As part of this \$6.8 million, the department received \$1.6 million for technology-driven security measures, including new body scanners, with Port Augusta Prison being a priority site. A body scanner was installed last August, in 2024, at the Adelaide Women's Prison, a state-of-the-art scanner that enables the detection of objects on or inside a person's body without the need to remove clothing. You can understand the many benefits that would come from that.

There are three body scanners at the Yatala Labour Prison, also resulting in improved outcomes, as scan results take less than half the time of traditional searches, boosting efficiency in the prison system. As part of this budget, new screening will be installed on the perimeter fence of the Adelaide Women's Prison to prevent contraband such as tennis balls from entering the site. This will help to improve safety for the prisoners, staff and the community.

In addition, there is \$72.4 million over five years to increase prison capacity by an additional 116 beds by undertaking expansion across various prison facilities. This brings the total additional beds to 468 over the previous two budget cycles. Also, \$1.4 million over two years has been invested to set up and operate an additional 19 transition beds at Mount Gambier Prison to provide immediate additional prison capacity.

These new beds across the state are in addition to the \$227 million, which is a record amount invested from last year's state budget to deliver 312 high-security beds at the Yatala Labour Prison and an extra 40 beds at the Adelaide Women's Prison in a secure and more rehabilitative environment. The 40 additional beds at the Adelaide Women's Prison are programmed to come online in June 2026, and the 104 high-security beds at the Yatala Labour Prison are scheduled to come online in June 2027, with a further 208 beds for men scheduled to come online in July 2029, also at Yatala.

Importantly, in the 2025-26 state budget, \$8.1 million over four years has been allocated to establish an additional 30-bed Bail Accommodation Support Program (BASP), which will create a remand to bail pathway. This will provide participants with case management to transition to longer term housing, increasing their likelihood of meeting their bail conditions, maintaining their links to services in the community and, in turn, reduce recidivism and contribute to Closing the Gap targets.

Investment in contemporary accommodation, security measures and bail assistance supports the department to continue to focus on rehabilitation efforts and our commitment to reducing recidivism by 20 per cent by 2026. DCS has already seen great success through the initiatives such as the Reducing Reoffending: 10% by 2020 Strategy, also known as 10by20, which was started by our now Premier in 2016. Now DCS is again leading the way with the current target for a reduction of 20 per cent by 2026 (20by26).

The 2023-24 report on government services (RoGS) shows that the state's recidivism rate fell to 35.8 per cent, a more than 1 per cent decline in the last year's rate and well below the national average of 52.5 per cent. Contributing to this is prisoner participation in education and training, with 82 per cent of education and vocational programs successfully completed. Increase in employment is another focus, with more than eight of 10 prisoners (84.3 per cent) participating in job-ready activities, up 9 per cent on 2022-23 figures in SA and above this year's national rate of 79.1 per cent.

Initiatives as part of the 10by20 and 20by26 are contributing to a safer community and increased opportunities for people in contact with the criminal justice system to contribute positively to the community. Since becoming minister, I have had the privilege to help launch two strategies which aim to improve outcomes for prisoners, offenders and to help recruit staff. The women's action plan 2025-30 was launched in March, and the Ubuntu strategic framework and action plan was launched last month in May. The Ubuntu strategic framework is a pioneering initiative within the Australian correctional community aimed at improving outcomes for both staff and justice-involved individuals of African heritage.

While our state leads the nation in reducing reoffending, including being well placed to achieve the 20by26 target, the department continues to seek out evidence-based initiatives to reduce reoffending and boost alternatives to custody. This includes remaining steadfast in Closing the Gap. Aboriginal people in South Australia are 12 times more likely to be imprisoned when compared to the general population and 10 times more likely to be under a community corrections order.

Aboriginal South Australians are also over-represented in the remand population. Nearly 57 per cent of Aboriginal people in prison are on remand. This is 16 times higher than the general population. This disproportion requires collaboration from all areas of the government and society. This is why our government is establishing a remand issues working group, bringing together key government agencies at the one table to review the shared opportunities and challenges that influence remand.

This builds on the work DCS has already successfully implemented in alternatives to custody, positively impacting prisoner numbers and improving reintegration outcomes. DCS has commissioned WorkPlace at Jonal Drive, Cavan, which has provided 36 beds for men who had no suitable accommodation available upon release.

Not-for-profit agency OARS Community Transitions has been engaged to deliver the WorkPlace program and manage the facility, and OARS has engaged Workskil Australia to provide support to program participants to help them achieve employment outcomes. I am also pleased to advise that the federal government has also committed \$6.7 million over the next five years to ensure participants have wraparound case management support, along with suitable housing at WorkPlace.

Lemongrass Place in Port Augusta, operated by the Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council, also provides 20 supported beds for Aboriginal men from regional and remote South Australia in a community transition centre to support their reintegration and return to country.

I now would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the staff of the department and highlight the agency's continued workforce planning. Correctional staff hold an important dual role of ensuring the safety and security of the prison system, an incredibly complex environment, while also prioritising rehabilitation and integration to help offenders build the skills and experience needed to change their lives and avoid returning to prison.

Frontline staff serve a critical function, and I am pleased to report that, for the period of June 2024 to May 2025, DCS recruited a total of 131 new trainee correctional officers. The next trainee correctional officer school is planned to commence on 30 June 2025, and I look forward to welcoming more recruits soon. Once again, I would like to thank the DCS staff for all the incredible work they have done and for all the work they do across our system.

Mr BATTY: Thank you for that comprehensive opening statement, minister. I might begin with some questions on the new budget measures. I refer to Budget Paper 5, page 18. I want to go through a couple in turn, starting with the initiative to expand prison capacity. This is a new initiative that will see an additional 116 beds. Where will those 116 beds go?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: As you can appreciate, this budget announcement is only recent. We are working through where we want these beds the most, and this provides us an opportunity to do just that. We know that this is a system that is joined together by nine prisons. It enables us to look at the flexibility of how these 116 beds will be made available and gives us the best opportunity to provide support where it is needed most.

It is a unique ability to have a correctional system where nine prisons are connected, because it really depends on the support that is required for those individuals. It is giving us the flexibility of getting the new 116 beds, and, since coming to government, we have had the opportunity to either open or invest in over 700 beds. This has been an incredible outcome for our system, one that will have many benefits in the time to come. These 116 beds are a big part of that story.

Mr BATTY: So you have no idea into which prisons the 116 beds will be added?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: No, those are definitely not the words that I just used. These beds will be coming online and be made available, as I said in my opening remarks. We already have beds that are being made available at Mount Gambier as part of an immediate transition point of view that we could get them online as quickly as possible. We are working across the system. It is a connected system, and it will enable us to have the beds where they are needed most.

Mr BATTY: Which of the nine prisons has capacity to add 116 beds?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: As I suggested earlier, we have identified priority size. This is really enabling us to know where the priority is. Also, there is an opportunity now, because this is a connected system, to have flexibility as to where else the beds could be going. I think this is an opportunity—when we are investing in more beds than ever before, with the record amount in last year's budget announcement and then increasing them again in this budget cycle—to give us the ability to put the beds where they are required.

As I said just earlier, over 700 beds, just since we have been elected, either open or invested in is an incredible change to the system.

Mr BATTY: I am trying to get a bit of an idea of what this investment actually looks like. We have nine prisons. Are there some prisons where there is a spare room to put hundreds of beds, or is this investing in additional infrastructure at those sites? You cannot just announce 116 beds and not have any idea of whereabouts they going to go.

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: As I said earlier, there are changes that are happening across the system. In Mount Gambier, in particular, we have the opportunity to invest in new facilities. It is not just new beds being put into the prison, there is also an opportunity to build infrastructure in this process. It is a connected system and it enables us to have that flexibility to increase beds but also change built infrastructure as well.

Mr BATTY: But this is separate to the Mount Gambier Prison additional capacity, which is also a budget measure. That is listed on page 19. I am still at a total loss as to where these 116 beds in the system are going to go.

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: If you look at the announcement, 19 beds are for transition as well. That has been allocated to support the immediate requirements within our prison system, and the package you were referring to, the \$72.4 million over five years, is enabling us to not only increase beds but also make infrastructure changes.

Mr BATTY: At which prisons will those infrastructure changes be?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: As I have said, this enables us to have the opportunity to look at our prison system and find the appropriate sites for them to be going to and the priority areas we will be putting them into.

Mr BATTY: When will the first of these 116 beds come online?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: There is a combination of things going on here: the immediate support we can provide and also the new beds and additional facilities. Our aim is to try to get that happening as quickly as possible, so between now and the middle of next year, 2026, is what I have been advised we are aiming to achieve.

Mr BATTY: So the middle of 2026 is when the first beds will come online from this announcement?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: No; I said 'now'. Some beds will come online now.

Mr BATTY: Whereabouts?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: As I said earlier, Mount Gambier provides those transition beds that have been invested in. We can get them up and running pretty quickly.

Mr BATTY: I am just referring to this discrete budget announcement called 'Expanding prison capacity, adding 116 beds,' which I think is separate and different to the Mount Gambier announcement.

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: As I said, it is our objective to have them online by the end of next financial year, so June 2026.

Mr BATTY: But you do not know where yet?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: No; that is your comment. As I have said, this enables us to know what our priority areas are. We know what our priority areas are, considering the incredible investment we are making as a government in this space which enables us to have flexibility because of this new budget measure.

As a government we have made it pretty clear that we are willing to invest, and not just invest but make record investments, as we did in the last budget. That was a record investment in bed numbers. We are again increasing on that record amount with 116 new beds, which gives us the opportunity to not only invest in our priority areas, which we are looking to do, but also to have a look at the prison system as a holistic system and see where best to put that support.

Mr BATTY: I really am not trying to be tricky; I am just trying to understand what those priority areas are and whether one prison is a priority over another. Is it 100 beds at Yatala or is it

100 beds at the Women's Prison? What is the priority? The next question is: is there space to put these beds at those prisons or is this just a random, aspirational goal with not much thought put behind it yet?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: As I said earlier, we have made record investments in our prison system. We have seen those investments go into Yatala and the Women's Prison, beds that I know are welcome and that have been long called for. That is why we have invested heavily in this space, that is why we continue to do so, and that is why these 116 new beds will be available across our prison system.

Mr BATTY: Will that be at the new prison?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: As I said earlier we have nine prisons, and these 116 beds will be invested within our system.

Mr BATTY: Does this funding for an additional 116 beds include additional corrections officers or is it just additional beds?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: As is the case when new beds are coming online, the new beds are made available and then the operational costs are made available as well, so those FTEs are supported through those operational funds becoming available.

Mr BATTY: I will detour to workforce for one moment on the back of that question, at page 102 of Budget Paper 4, which is the workforce summary. It shows the 2024-25 estimated result as being 2,059, and then that number is budgeted to decrease over the coming budget year to 2,030. Is it the case that over the next year you intend to add prison beds to the system but you intend to have fewer Department for Correctional Services employees?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: This comes back to the point I was making earlier regarding when a bed is delivered into the actual prison and then operational funding is made available as well to support the staffing measures that come with that. Also, in regard to the numbers you have highlighted, there is a shift in FTE also because of an iSAFE project. That is like an IT program that is being delivered. It is underway and close to being implemented. Those 20 FTEs were really about generating that program and now it is at the point of being made available.

In regard to other opportunities to invest in FTEs, I guess that has been made available in previous years as well. In 2022-23 an operating budget of \$33 million was received which resulted in an increase of 126 frontline staff, and we saw those increases as well in 2023-24 with six new frontline staff, and in 2024-25 which resulted in an increase of 13 frontline staff, I have been advised, because of those budget investments.

Mr BATTY: To use your words 'frontline staff', how many frontline staff do we have now in this financial year that is about to end?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: My understanding is that we have about 2,098 which can be broken down across our system. There are other supports that are available in funding available through either not-for-profits that provide support but also across our community corrections system as well. I will get David to run thorough those in detail for you so you get a better understanding of where that headcount is placed.

Mr BROWN: As of 30 April this year, there were 2,098 people working for the Department for Correctional Services. More than half of those staff, 1,058, are frontline correctional officers paid in the CO stream. We have 187 staff employed in the ops stream, who are also overwhelmingly frontline staff. Then we have allied health staff—psychologists, social workers and other professionals—working the frontline, with a headcount of 180. We also have 546 staff paid in the administrative stream. Some of those staff obviously have corporate functions, but a number of those staff are also working in frontline locations and may not be eligible to be paid in the AHP stream, for example. That is a bit of an overview of that staffing.

Mr BATTY: If I take perhaps just one of those streams, I think it was 1,058 in one stream of frontline corrections officers, what is that projected to be for this coming budget year?

Mr BROWN: I have not got that specific number, but it fluctuates depending on the cycle of our recruitment. For example, we have a trainee correctional officers' school running at the moment. We have another trainee correctional officers' school about to commence. Our workforce goes up and down based on the timing of our recruitment. On top of that, as we bring additional beds online in the system, we will review the establishment for the affected site and as we bring on additional frontline staff they get added to the establishment.

Mr BATTY: What is the attrition rate for correctional officers for the financial year that is about to end?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: My understanding is it is 10.83 per cent, but that is across all staff, just to keep that in mind.

Mr BATTY: That is an increase from last year?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I am advised it is an improvement on last year, where it was 13.91.

Mr BATTY: I might just return to the prison capacity announcement, which is Budget Paper 5, page 18. What is the current approved capacity across the system?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: As I am sure you can appreciate, this number will go up and down regularly. As of June 2025—I am not sure exactly of the date—the capacity sits around 3,560.

Mr BATTY: What is the current prison population?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: Again, I am sure you can appreciate these numbers will change as we see quite significant movement across our prison system. As of 20 June 2025, there were 3,398 people in custody. This was broken down and includes 11 in James Nash House. That is across our system.

Mr BATTY: I appreciate that number must fluctuate quite a bit. Over the last 12 months, what is the highest that has been; where has it peaked?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I guess the most recent peak that I am aware of is 3 April 2025, which I am advised was 3,485 across the system.

Mr BATTY: So that is just 75 surplus beds in the system?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I guess you can appreciate why we are investing in our beds in our state. We have invested more than ever before. But as I have said, those numbers will peak and will change throughout the year. It also, I guess, comes to the point that I mentioned in my opening remarks about: what does our prison system look like, and having the ability to bring together that remand group that we talked about, a strategic group that we are bringing together across government.

We know that prison numbers will fluctuate, but we also know that we are investing, as I said earlier. Since coming into government, over 700 beds have either been opened or invested in. We can talk about those numbers—that is a lot of beds that have been opened. I think, by anyone's standards, no matter what side of politics you are on, that is a lot of beds.

But what are we doing, I guess, about that story at the beginning? That is why we are bringing that remand group together, because we know that the remand population is a high number and a big percentage of our prison system; I think it is around 45 per cent. So if we cannot think about what we can do differently to support the remand community, we are not going to necessarily address what we are doing within our general prison system as well.

The CHAIR: I will just go over to the member for Waite, assuming the minister is finished the answer?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: Yes.

Ms HUTCHESSON: I refer you to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 105. Will the minister inform the committee about the government's 20by26 strategy to reduce reoffending?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I thank the member for her question and her interest in this important topic. I am proud to share that South Australia is continuing to lead the way in reducing reoffending. As some may know, in 2016, the then minister for correctional services and now Premier of South Australia, the Hon. Peter Malinauskas, launched a bold initiative to reduce the rate of reoffending by 10 per cent by 2020.

Through increased government investments and the efforts of the Department for Correctional Services staff and its community partners, the 10by20 target was not only met but exceeded, resulting in South Australia having the lowest rate of recidivism in the country. But importantly, we did not stop there.

In 2022, the Malinauskas government committed to a new target of reducing reoffending by 20 per cent by 2026 against the 2016 baseline. The key to the 20by26 strategy is the government's investment in a range of initiatives, including Closing the Gap strategies, rehabilitation programs, alternatives to custody responses and contemporary policies and infrastructure.

The latest Report on Government Services (RoGS) shows that the 20by26 strategy is working. The state's recidivism rate has fallen to 35.8 per cent, well below the national average of 52.5 per cent. The report shows we also lead the nation in prisoner participation in education and training, with around half of DCS prisoners (49.7 per cent) engaging in those activities, well above the national rate of 25.7 per cent.

Last year's budget invested \$6.3 million to expand the Work Ready, Release Ready program to help support more prisoners return to employment upon release and reduce the risk for reoffending. Work Ready, Release Ready is delivered through a contract with Workskil Australia. Workskil Australia is a South Australian not-for-profit community organisation and one of Australia's largest providers of employment services. The key aims of Work Ready, Release Ready are to:

- support participants to build job skills in prerelease through education, vocational training and employment readiness training;
- help participants to gain financial security, purpose and social connections due to returning to work and mitigate against the likelihood of reoffending and breaches of community-based orders; and
- assist participants to find and maintain employment post release.

I am advised that as of 11 June 2025, Work Ready, Release Ready have had just over 1,300 employment placements, with 749 individuals obtaining ongoing work from the program.

As outlined in my opening statement, this budget also includes \$8.1 million over four years for an additional 30 beds for the Bail Accommodation Support Program, to create a remand to bail pathway for people who would be eligible for bail but also lack suitable accommodation. The BASP will provide accommodation for up to 21 days and provide participants with case management to transition to longer term housing, increase their likelihood of meeting their bail conditions and maintain links to family, employment and education.

As a government, we are committed to continuing this work started by the Premier in 2026, and I am proud that as a state we are leading the way.

Mr BATTY: On average, how many prisoners enter our system each week? Even roughly.

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: While we are pondering that answer—we might need to come back to it—it is one of those ones where it really does fluctuate. It also depends, I guess, on who is also exiting the prison system. As I said, this is across all the prisons. It could vary week to week. Also, who is exiting the system is just as important as who is entering the system.

Mr BATTY: I am after just an average.

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I guess as a quick calculation, and something we can look into further if we find that this is not quite on the right mark, I am advised it is around 115.

Mr BATTY: So you have 115 new prisoners entering every week and, at its worst, we have had only had 75 spare beds?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: You are missing a very important part of that story, and that is how many people are leaving the prison system.

Mr BATTY: People are leaving each week as well. I understand.

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: As I said, this is not a system that you can just say: this is what is happening, and it will be same thing that is happening tomorrow. It is a system that is very much connected and it has many variables across it.

Mr BATTY: The timing of people leaving prison is entirely separate and not reliant on the timing of people come coming into prisons, I assume. What contingency planning has the department done if one day there are not 75 beds, one day soon?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I do not know if you missed the opening statement, but we are having 19 transition beds come online as quickly as possible, if not already online. We are making those investments so that we can make the changes and increase that flexibility across our system. As I have highlighted a number of times, having 700 beds either open or invested in just over the period that we have been elected has enabled us to start finding ways to provide that flexibility.

I know I have already mentioned it, but having those discussions, I think for the first time that are not just in silos, about what we are doing and how we can address this by bringing multiple government agencies together, from housing to Treasury to many other areas, to say, 'What can we do differently?' is an important process here, because otherwise we are going to keep asking the same questions, and that is why we have to think, 'Who is the biggest population? It is people on remand, so what can we do differently there?'

It is important to realise that it is not just about investing in our prison beds but also about investing in bail accommodation, alternative accommodation, because that is what takes pressure off our prison system. When you see things like the \$8.1 million investment we have just made in this budget cycle as well, that is also taking the pressure off our prison system. I know you are potentially getting frustrated with me saying that this is a connected system, that it all works together, but that is why we make these investments: to take one pressure off the other.

Mr BATTY: I understand and I appreciate the investment the government is making in adding additional beds to the system and welcome it. My question more is that some of these are not coming online for another year, most of them you cannot even tell me where they are going to go. Does the department have any contingency plan if, next week, a handful fewer people leave the prison than you expected and a handful more enter than you expected and there are no beds? What happens?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I feel like I have just answered that question in regard to the fact that the numbers will fluctuate, people will enter, people will leave. They are alternatives available in regard to not just our prison bed numbers but also the accommodation through bail support.

Mr BATTY: Is that the contingency plan—if the prisons are full we offer more people bail or alternative methods? Is that what would happen?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: That is not what I have just said. As I said, it is a connected system. When you say what prison numbers will look like one day, potentially it will be very different the next. That is why we have made those investments in multiple areas across the prison system, some within with those new 116 beds and some without it, and outside of that prison system with our bail accommodation, so we can make sure options are available to take pressure off our prison system.

Mr BATTY: I totally understand that, but the investment is trying to make sure we never reach a situation where our prisons are full—it is adding capacity to the system. What happens if we do not do it quite quickly enough, particularly in a situation where we only have 75 spare beds at the moment and 115 prisoners entering the system in any given week?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I will refer this operational question to David.

Mr BROWN: As an agency we plan for a range of contingency scenarios, including capacity constraints within the system. Capacity constraints can be driven by a number of factors: they could

be driven by an unexpected growth in the prisoner population, it could be caused by an infrastructure failure that requires an accommodation unit to be taken offline, it can sometimes be caused because we are doing upgrades to infrastructure. For example, the government invested just over \$30 million to allow us to upgrade the secure accommodation at Port Augusta, so we have had a sizable number of beds offline to allow those infrastructure works to occur.

In the event that we exceed capacity at a given point in time, we would deploy those contingencies. To give one example, we recently converted a unit at Port Augusta Prison back to being a unit to accommodate women, thus giving us some additional capacity in the women's system. A second example the minister has already mentioned was we brought an additional 19 beds online at the Mount Gambier Prison. So there are a range of scenarios we can implement.

Finally, I will add that we have quite robust prisoner projections methodology. We operate with a fair degree of confidence that the actual population is going to sit within those projections. That is what we plan for and give advice to government on, which is reflected in the positive investment in new beds.

Mr BATTY: Are you able to provide any other examples of what that contingency planning looks like, were we to, for whatever reason, have this problem tomorrow?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: We are talking in hypotheticals at the moment.

Mr BATTY: No, it is not a hypothetical. I am asking whether the department has contingency plans for—

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: What is the budget line?

Mr BATTY: The budget line is expanding prison capacity. I am asking whether the government has any contingency planning for what would happen when our prisons reach capacity and, if so, what those contingency plans are. We have heard one small example from one. I am just wondering what the rest is.

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I think I have highlighted a number of times that we are investing in our prison beds. We are investing, and we have heard now that there are processes in place. We also have highlighted a number of times in this chamber today that we are doing something that no other state is doing, and that is reducing reoffending. If we look at what we need to be investing in, it is not just our prison beds but making sure that when people do leave our prison system we do not have them come back again.

When we have the lowest recidivism rate in the nation, we know that we are doing something right in that space. It is not just about investing in a bed; it is about investing in the programs that go with that bed. That is exactly what we are doing as a government, so that when people leave our system and go back into the community we know that we are leading the nation in that space by making sure that they have the skill set that can help set them up to go and seek employment and opportunities that they may not have had before that.

I know that David would be able to find examples, but a simple thing like getting a licence has had a big outcome for people, being able to get themselves to a job, knowing how to participate in a job interview or how to write a CV. These are skills that people can leave prison with, to make sure that we can continue to have that low reoffending rate, and not just a low reoffending rate but the lowest in the nation.

Mr BATTY: What does the department project the prison population to be in five years' time?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: It is rather a hard thing to predict prison numbers. As I said earlier, they will rise and fall. That is why we are investing in prison beds at this very point in time and having a lot that will be coming online to be able to support our prison system. It is really important that we do make those investments, not only in prison bed numbers but also in the programs that help support them. If we are having more people in our prison system in the sense of entering, we also need to be investing in that prison system. That is exactly what we are doing with those new beds that are coming online.

Mr BATTY: With respect, we just heard from Mr Brown that the department has, I think in his words, relatively robust projections for prison capacity. I am just asking what they are, whether you know what they are, minister, over the pretty short to medium term?

The CHAIR: Which budget line are you referring to?

Mr BATTY: This is Budget Paper 5, page 18, expanding prison capacity.

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: In the current budget, we are expanding the prison capacity. We are expanding it to have 116 extra beds, as you would have heard already. That is what we have invested in in this budget.

Mr BATTY: Over the forward estimates then: what will prison capacity be at the end of the forward estimates?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: In the budget line?

Mr BATTY: In the system. How many prison beds will we have in 2028-29?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: Which budget line are you referring to?

Mr BATTY: Budget Paper 5, page 18, expanding prison capacity, or if you do not know the answer we can go to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1 and Program 2: Custodial Services, page 108. I would have thought somewhere over those forward estimates is money for prison beds.

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I think I have made it pretty clear there is money for prison beds, that we are investing in record numbers of prison beds. I think I have repeated quite a number of times in your questioning today the fact that since being elected we have invested in or opened over 700 beds in our system. That is a record number of investments in bed capacity and one that we have been able to achieve in a relatively short period of time to ensure that we have beds coming online but also beds that are being invested in for the future.

Mr BATTY: What will prison capacity be in one year's time?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: As I have highlighted already, it is very hard to predict prison numbers. It depends on, I guess, what is happening in the community at that time as well. We know that we have quite a number of beds coming online which will be able to support prison growth, which we believe would be around 3,663.

Mr BATTY: Those are beds—that is capacity.

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: Yes.

Mr BATTY: And you do not have figure for future years? That is all I was asking earlier.

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I have been able to provide a figure for next year to be able to accommodate the beds that we have announced. That is why we have been able to provide a figure for you in regard to why we are investing in those numbers. We have 116 beds that will be coming online. We are also investing quite broadly in bed numbers in the sense that we have, as I have highlighted, 700 beds either opened or invested in since we have been elected.

Mr BATTY: So in one year's time we will have capacity of 3,663 beds. What does the department project will be the prisoner population in one year's time?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: It is much easier to understand what bed numbers are invested in and what has been made available. I guess estimating numbers of who is going to be in prison is a lot harder. That is why we are investing in these prison numbers so that we know that we can have capacity. We are investing heavily in this space—record amounts—so that we can make sure that we have the—

Mr BATTY: I understand investment, minister.

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: —prison system that is capable, and also investing in the programs that go with them as well.

Mr BATTY: Again, with respect, I thought we just heard earlier that the department had robust ways of projecting prison population. I also think the department might have given this

evidence to the Budget and Finance Committee before. I am not trying to be tricky. Is it a number you genuinely do not have, or you just do not want to tell me?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: On page 110, in regard to the daily average prisoner population, that number is highlighted in the budget paper: it is 3,426 projected.

Mr BATTY: Why did the government choose to not proceed with building a new rehabilitation prison?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I do not know which budget line that refers to. If you could highlight which budget paper page and line that is from.

Mr BATTY: Budget Paper 4, page 108, custodial services: is the government—

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: This is not question time, so if you could just refer to a budget line and page number.

Mr BATTY: As I have just done.

The CHAIR: Is it a budget line?

Mr BATTY: Yes, it is, sir. On page 108 there is a budget line on custodial services. My question is: are you going to build a new rehabilitation prison? Is that included in here?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: In regard to investing in a system, I think we have made it pretty clear that we have. If we are going to talk about the budget papers that are in front of us, that is what we have been able to achieve by investing in 116 beds across our system. I know you might be getting tired of hearing about this, but it is a connected prison system. Enabling us to spread out those beds and not necessarily have them all on one site sometimes does create flexibility, because we do not have everyone in high security, we do not have everyone in low security, and we do not have everyone in medium security. It is a connected system, and having the ability to spread those beds out where required enables us to continue to know where best to put people in that system.

Mr BATTY: Did the department recommend proceeding with a new rehabilitation prison?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I know you want to keep continuing on with what seems like question time, but if you could refer to the budget line that you are suggesting this is coming from.

Mr BATTY: It is the same budget line, minister. It is custodial services, and these are fairly simple questions.

The CHAIR: You are asking something that is very specific. Clearly, a rehabilitation centre is not flagged in this budget and, as the minister has indicated, you are at liberty to ask these questions in other forums.

Mr BATTY: But, Chair, my question is: why is it not included in this budget line? It is interrogating—

The CHAIR: You can ask about all sorts of things that are not included in a budget line.

Mr WHETSTONE: If he provides a budget line it is a fair question

The CHAIR: No, he has not provided a budget line in relation to this. I would suggest that there is limited time, so I would advise that you move on.

Mr BATTY: I will take your advice, Chair. I will move back to Budget Paper 5, page 19. There is a budget line titled 'Prison security enhancements'. This is to reduce contraband entering prisons. There was a reference to drug-filled tennis balls going over prison fences. On how many occasions have drug-filled tennis balls landed in the Adelaide Women's Prison over the last 12 months?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I do not have those numbers available. My understanding is that we have invested in this because we want to have the opportunity to not only be able to keep our prisoners safe but, most importantly, our employees safe as well. That is why having the ability to invest in multiple security options is important. We have seen across our prisons, particularly the

Women's Prison where we have been able to invest in body scanners already, the significant changes that can come about from those.

Obviously, a strip search does not sound appealing to anybody, and that is why we have invested in those body scanners at the Women's Prison, where people do not have to remove their clothing to be able to see that they are carrying contraband, illegal products or products that just should not be coming into a prison system.

Having these investments in our security system is an important part of the budget measures that have come out of this paper. They will provide opportunities for us to not only build on our security systems but come up with new forms as well—as we hope to with the Women's Prison, where you have suggested that maybe tennis balls are coming over the perimeter fence. It is about putting up new options there as well. I do not know if we have used them before, but we are looking at new options such as netting there as well—no, not in Australia apparently—as an option to provide better security measures at the Women's Prison.

It is not necessarily that what works at one will work at another, but this will enable us to have a bit of—my favourite word for the day—flexibility in what we do to better support the security measures at each of these prisons.

Mr BATTY: How long will it take to see these measures in place at the Women's Prison, a higher fence or netting or whatever it is going to be?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: Our aim is to be able to achieve this in the 2025-26 financial year. The Women's Prison is a unique prison in the sense of the body scanner used there. I am sure these measures will also be appreciated not only by the community but also by the staff who work there in making sure it is a safer workspace as well.

The CHAIR: The time allotted having expired, I declare the examination of the proposed payments for the Department for Correctional Services complete.

Mr BATTY: I will read out the omnibus questions:

1. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, how many executive appointments have been made since 1 July 2024 and what is the annual salary and total employment cost for each position?

2. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, how many executive positions have been abolished since 1 July 2024 and what was the annual salary and total employment cost for each position?

3. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, what has been the total cost of executive position terminations since 1 July 2024?

4. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, will the minister provide a breakdown of expenditure on consultants and contractors with a total estimated cost above \$10,000 engaged since 1 July 2024, listing the name of the consultant, contractor or service supplier, the method of appointment, the reason for the engagement and the estimated total cost of the work?

5. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, will the minister provide an estimate of the total cost to be incurred in 2025-26 for consultants and contractors, and for each case in which a consultant or contractor has already been engaged at a total estimated cost above \$10,000, the name of the consultant or contractor, the method of appointment, the reason for the engagement and the total estimated cost?

6. For each department or agency reporting to the minister, how many surplus employees are there in June 2025, and for each surplus employee, what is the title or classification of the position and the total annual employment cost?

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

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

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

- (a) What was the actual FTE count at June 2025 and what is the projected actual FTE account for the end of each year of the forward estimates?
- (b) What is the budgeted total employment cost for each year of the forward estimates?
- (c) How many targeted voluntary separation packages are estimated to be required to meet budget targets over the forward estimates and what is their estimated cost?

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

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

12. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, what is the total budgeted cost of government-paid advertising, including campaigns, across all mediums in 2025-26?

13. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, please provide for each individual investing expenditure project administered, the name, total estimated expenditure, actual expenditure incurred to June 2024 and budgeted expenditure for 2025-26, 2026-27 and 2027-28.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The CHAIR: Thank you, member for Bragg. I would like to announce that the former member for Mount Gambier's record is safe for another year, so you will have to practise in the intervening year, or potentially we will have to practise in the intervening year. Who knows? We will see in March.

DEPARTMENT OF THE PREMIER AND CABINET, \$508,394,000

**ADMINISTERED ITEMS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF THE PREMIER AND CABINET,
\$27,324,00**

Minister:

Hon. E.S. Bourke, Minister for Emergency Services and Correctional Services, Minister for Autism, Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr W. Hunter, Chief Operating Officer, Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

Ms J. Pisani, Executive Director, Strategic Engagement, Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

Ms C. Hodgetts, Director, Finance and Procurement, Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

Ms S. Kemp, Director, Office for Autism, Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

The CHAIR: The portfolio is the Office for Autism. I declare the proposed payments open for examination and I invite the minister to make an opening statement, if she so wishes, and to introduce her advisers.

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I would like to introduce the members who are with me today: Jessica Pisani, Executive Director, Strategic Engagement, Department of the Premier and Cabinet; Wayne Hunter, Chief Operating Officer, Department of the Premier and Cabinet; Claire Hodgetts, Director, Finance and Procurement, Department of the Premier and Cabinet; and Sarah Kemp, Director, Office for Autism, Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

Mr WHETSTONE: Welcome, everybody. I will start off with assessment and diagnosed training support, Budget Paper 5, page 58. The assessment and diagnosis training support initiative aims to help address the barriers to autism assessment and diagnosis. Have specific barriers been identified, and how will this funding directly contribute to reducing those barriers?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I thank the member for his question. I guess this is a space, if you talk to members in the community, as to why we came about with a policy agenda in this area and that is that having access to autism assessments can be tricky. We have learnt that there can be many reasons behind that. Some could be just not having a knowledge of where to start. Some could be if you go to a GP they might refer you to a certain space because that is where they have been referring you to for the last however many years.

We also know that, as a person seeking an assessment, knowing where to start is hard. I guess that is why we made the commitment to invest in a policy that would start addressing autism assessments and what they are in South Australia.

At the start of this year, for the very first time—I think we are the first state to achieve this—we are bringing allied health professionals together, the allied health professionals that participate in autism assessment, to start finding some answers to these questions about what is an autism assessment, where do you start that journey in autism assessment, and also what happens next after you might get a diagnosis of being autistic?

If we do not answer these questions we are never going to take that pressure off the system. It is a really important thing to be able to achieve. What we are hearing is that sometimes our health providers might not have the confidence to be able to provide those assessments. This investment that we are making is going to give us great flexibility in enabling us to invest in maybe micro-credentials, maybe other supports that enable people to build that confidence, to provide an autism assessment.

But really we have to wait for this committee, the strategic group that we have brought together, to tell us what is required because, at the end of the day, they are the allied health professionals and they know what is needed. The community is also a part of that, so it is really important that we include them in this feedback and hear how their experience has been when they have been seeking an autism assessment. We are hoping that, by the end of this year, we will have a really clear understanding of how to address some of those concerns and having this budget line enables us to invest in those changes, too.

Mr WHETSTONE: How many individuals are expected to benefit from this initiative annually?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: In the autism assessment funding?

Mr WHETSTONE: Yes.

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: It really would be hard to put a number on that. We know that one in four Australian families has an autistic family member and, as I highlighted earlier, this is really about upskilling and bringing knowledge to not only our allied health professionals but also the broader community about what an autism assessment is. This is not necessarily about going to find a new workforce to be able to provide autism assessments; it is about giving that knowledge to the existing workforce. We feel that it will have an incredible impact on what this autism assessment journey looks like, but it also enables us to complement other investments that we have made.

If you look at our school system, for example, we gave over \$300,000 to provide autism assessments in the northern suburbs that are free assessments for children who are already on the CDU waitlist so that we can take them off the CDU waitlist and get those assessments underway and hopefully enable them to know who they are as individuals so we can keep engaging them in the school system.

We are trialling new things that have not been done before and we are doing things that people have spoken about for a very, very long time when it comes to getting answers to actually understand what an autism assessment is in South Australia. How do we find the workforce? We actually have the workforce already. It is just about getting the knowledge to them.

Mr WHETSTONE: I will just come back to that question about how many individuals are expected to benefit from the initiative. You have a set budget and that will curtail how many individuals can benefit from the initiative. Do you have a number? Do you have an aspiration?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: In regard to just clarifying what this funding could be made available for, it is not necessarily only for doing an assessment. It might be upskilling people so they can participate in the assessment process. It could be providing knowledge to people about what happens after an autism assessment so they have a greater understanding of what services they would also require. So it is not necessarily about this funding going to individual autism assessments; it is actually about opening up the opportunity for more assessments to be made available because we are giving that skill set and that knowledge to the workforce.

Mr WHETSTONE: How will the effectiveness of this initiative be evaluated and by whom?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: With a number of our programs, we do assessments of how they have been successful. If I look at one, the Solasta program I referred to previously, that is in regard to the up to 100 people who can now get an assessment and my understanding is that we will be doing an assessment on that process.

So there are opportunities, but the point of this funding is really about us being able to upskill a workforce so they have the opportunity to provide assessments. I do not know how many a GP would see a day or how many a speech pathologist would see a day.

At the moment, there are people in our community who are available who could make an autism assessment, but they just do not have the confidence to do it, so where we are really trying to focus is going back to the beginning of the story. If someone wants to seek out an autism assessment, they quite often do not know where to start. This enables us to give the confidence to say that, if you go to an occupational therapist, they will now have the skills and knowledge in how to provide an assessment as well because we have come together as a group to provide opportunities to gain skills.

Mr WHETSTONE: Will there be training provided for those people to assess? A typical GP would need some level of upskill to be able to assess autism.

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: That comes back to what I said before about the advisory group. We need to know why this confidence is not here at the moment for them to be able to provide assessments. This is why I keep coming back to the fact that this investment can help us.

Maybe one of the recommendations is a micro-credential, and that micro-credential could enable this workforce that we have already that is available that can participate in autism assessments. They could participate in that micro-credential. The recommendations and what they look like from this advisory committee will also determine where these investments are made.

Mr WHETSTONE: Moving on to program net cost of services summary, Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 13, the Office of Autism overspent its budget by \$860,000 in 2024-25. Can you give the committee an understanding of why?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: Just as we have heard throughout the day, that would not be an overspend; it is just where funding has been made available, through the commonwealth, for example. Commonwealth funding has been made available for a program called Inklings, and that is an incredible investment for a really small team from the Office for Autism and what they have been able to achieve in gaining access and funding through the commonwealth government. That funding was put towards the Inklings program so that we can get that underway in South Australia.

That program is an initiative that is a partnership between federal and state government and will be supporting babies between the age of six and 18 months of age. This has been a project that has been called on by many in the community who have previously said to us that you often find out when you are at child care and a speech pathologist or a childcare worker says to you, 'You might need to go to see a speechy,' and it is a bit much for the parent to take on at that point. Then you get told the same thing once they start school and they are in year 3 and you hear something similar about your child and that you might be interested in going to see a speech pathologist. Then, before you know it, your child is in year 5 before they have received a diagnosis.

So what we have done is invested in a project called Inklings. If a parent has an inkling that their child has a communication difference, they can go into this free program that is being funded by federal and state government to work with trained professionals in how to change the environment around a child so that they can thrive. This is a unique project that has not been invested in elsewhere as it has been in South Australia, and one, again, where we are leading the way.

Mr WHETSTONE: Minister, can you give me a breakdown of what component of the Office for Autism is funded by state and what component is funded by the commonwealth?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: If you refer to page 31 of the budget papers, you can see the breakdown of the commonwealth revenue, which is highlighted there as between 2025-26 and 2024-25.

Mr WHETSTONE: Is there a commonwealth-funded component of your programs within the Office for Autism? You obviously have a number of support initiatives, programs, grants. I am looking for a breakdown of what component the state are funding and what component the commonwealth are funding.

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: My advice is they contribute to the funding of the Inklings program because, as I said, that is a jointly funded program. My understanding is the remaining of the funding comes from state government.

Mr WHETSTONE: What is the commonwealth's component of that funding?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: It is the full amount that is stated in the budget papers.

Mr WHETSTONE: Full amount?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: In the commonwealth revenues line that is stated in the budget paper on page 31.

Mr WHETSTONE: Thank you. This year's budget sees an increased allocation of \$646,000. How will this additional allocation be spent?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: Sorry, can you just repeat that question?

Mr WHETSTONE: Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 13, program net cost of services. This year's budget sees an increased allocation of \$646,000. How will this additional allocation be spent?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: My understanding is there is an increase from indexation but also the program that I mentioned earlier, the \$2.1 million over five years for the assessment and diagnosis training supports.

Mr WHETSTONE: The same reference point. Regarding the South Australian Neurodivergent Public Sector Employee Network, how many members have joined the network to date?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: As you have highlighted, this is a new network and we have, I have been advised, 180 members.

Mr WHETSTONE: How many public sector employees have completed autism awareness training in 2024-25, and what is your target for 2025-26?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: Just while we are looking for those numbers to help you with those answers, this is an initiative that has come about from the Autism Strategy in South Australia. This is our first strategy that was delivered in our state regarding the autistic community.

The important part of this is it has been co-designed by the autistic community from the very beginning, even from what the questions would be when we went to consult the community, and then the number of forums. I think I held 25 forums in three weeks to make sure that we could get out to as many people as possible, and hear how we should be shaping our strategy.

From that strategy came the charter. The charter is important to mention in regard to the training because the charter was signed up to by every government department to say how they were going to make change and be more inclusive in their workplaces. Considering the state government is one of the biggest employers in our state, it was a good place to start to build that knowledge about what it is to be autistic, and how we go about changing our environment that people work in to make them more inclusive.

You may not have heard this before because you are not in the same chamber as I am, but it was disappointing that the only political party in this parliament that did not sign that charter to seek change was the opposition. It is an opportunity for us as a state not to play politics, particularly with a significant agenda that was designed by the autistic community for the autistic community. This charter has enabled us to roll out training across government, where it is often run by an autistic person. I believe, in the short period of time that we have had, almost 4,000 people have been trained in knowledge, and that is an incredible outcome.

When people are making policies, we do not want it to be an afterthought. We want it to be an opportunity where they have been given those skills and new learnings to be thinking about it when they are writing those policies. We know there is a long, long way to go, but this is a significant start. Not only have we done this in government, but this training has been rolled out in the private sector as well.

Just recently, we held an autism employment summit called Autism Works because we believe in our state that autism does work. We had almost 500 people at that forum, where we also gave free training to them as well. This training is free and enables it to be rolled out in areas where we feel it is needed, and is something that has been really well received not only across state government but by the employers and also by community groups.

Mr WHETSTONE: Minister, which South Australian universities partnered with the Office for Autism to enhance disability and inclusion components in the teaching degrees and what changes have been implemented so far?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: All that provide a teacher's degree have participated. This has been a significant change. It is not usual to have all universities come to one table and sit down and, as competitors, tell us what is in their teacher's degree, but that is what they did because they realised as a government that we were investing so heavily in upskilling our current workforce. We now have autism inclusion teachers in our public primary schools, an investment that we have made of \$28.8 million so that we can take a teacher out of the classroom, have the ability to backfill them because of that funding investment, so that they have the time to learn.

What we learnt from that role is that something had to happen before people enter our school system as teachers. They wanted to learn about it when they were studying to be a teacher, so that is why we brought those universities together. Each South Australian university that provides a teacher's degree came to that table, and we were able to invest in a micro-credential through Autism CRC that they could utilise and provide to their students while studying a teacher's degree. We know that has been complemented by the Positive Partnerships training that is now also available to university students.

The feedback we have been receiving is, 'I can't believe I was going to start my job as a teacher without this knowledge beforehand.' It has been an incredible outcome, but it has also come about because, as a government, we decided to invest in that autism inclusion teacher, which really triggered the opportunity for us to realise something had to be done before people even entered the classroom as a teacher.

Mr WHETSTONE: Thank you. How many students have been involved in the free autism assessment pilot to date?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: To clarify, is this in regard to the ones that have been provided in the school system?

Mr WHETSTONE: Yes.

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: My understanding is that 30 have been through that assessment process already and 70 will be rolled out over the life of that funding.

Mr WHETSTONE: Just moving to targets, page 31. When are the Autism Assessment and Diagnosis Advisory Group's recommendations expected to be finalised?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: We are aiming to provide recommendations in September.

Mr WHETSTONE: Will the recommendations be made public?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: We obviously need to work through that with cabinet to start with. It is a cabinet approval that would have to be undertaken first.

Mr WHETSTONE: So that is no? If it is cabinet, it will not be made public?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: That is your analysis of my answer. That is not what I have said.

Mr WHETSTONE: No, it is cabinet-in-confidence, as I understand it.

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: If you were to look at what we have achieved in autism in South Australia, when we have provided information to the community we have always started with the community as well, and that is what we have done here. The people participating in this round table first need to be able to see and be a part of that review process, the outcomes and the recommendations. That is our priority at the moment and that is what we will continue to do. It has always worked with the people who are providing that feedback first.

Mr WHETSTONE: On behalf of the families, if it is going to be cabinet-in-confidence, across all of the office's targets and initiatives how is the office ensuring that autistic individuals and families have a direct input into the program, and how will they receive feedback?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: As we have done across the autism strategy charter and our advisory groups is we have people with lived experience from the autistic community. We also have autistic people on our committee with regard to the autism assessment committee. The lived experience is also at the table, but we will be making sure that we can have the opportunity to go through the review and the feedback with people from the autistic community.

We have also provided a survey that has just recently gone out to the autistic community asking: what was an autism assessment like for you? What was the experience? How did you find the knowledge of the person providing the assessment? That feedback will also be then included in those recommendations. We have tried to make it that at no point in our policy decisions have we not gone back to the autistic community. It is something that we have really invested in, and we have the advisory group, the Autism Advisory Group, as well.

Mr WHETSTONE: Minister, there was—

The CHAIR: Last question; definitely the last question.

Mr WHETSTONE: Definitely the last question.

The CHAIR: I have been generous.

Mr WHETSTONE: Thank you. There was a budgeted income of only \$4,000 for grants under program summary income in 2024-25, but over \$1 million received. Where was this income derived from, and is it the same expected for this year?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: I understand that is an Inklings contribution from the Department for Education. Because this is a program that can help support across so many different agencies, we have been able to make sure that we are not just working as a silo. It is something that has been an incredible asset, being based in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. It has enabled us to work across agencies and departments to really get some policy change, as we heard with the universities, bringing them together as well. We really are trying not to work in a silo with these policy outcomes.

The CHAIR: Thank you, minister. The time allotted having expired, I declare the examination of the Office for Autism completed. Examination of proposed payments for the Department of the Premier and Cabinet is now complete. I would like to thank the minister. I would especially like to thank all the public servants who have been involved in preparing for the last five days of committee hearings. It is a lot of work in the background, preparing for these days, so it is greatly appreciated.

I would like to thank the opposition, also, over the last five days, for the very civil and constructive approach taken to the questions asked, always following the direction of the Chair, limited though that was. Thank you to the members of the government for your patience. It can feel like a very long time.

I would like to thank also the parliamentary officers for their able assistance and Hansard, busily working away in the background. I always like to mention the long-suffering security people up there, sitting, sitting, sitting for such an extended period of time. I know there has been talk at times about reforming estimates, and maybe one day we will get around to doing it, but it is an important mechanism for holding the government to account, for going through the budget. Like many of these different approaches, it is all part of having a decent and open democratic society where questions can be asked. With those few words, I lay before the committee a draft report for Estimates Committee B.

Ms HUTCHESSON: Thank you, Chair, for all of your work over the last few years. I move:

That the draft report be the report of the committee.

Motion carried.

At 16:19 the committee concluded.