

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Wednesday 25 February 1998

The **SPEAKER (Hon. J.K.G. Oswald)** took the Chair at 2 p.m. and read prayers.

GLENTHORNE

A petition signed by 190 residents of South Australia requesting that the House urge the Government to include an agricultural high school in any plans for redevelopment of the 'Glenthorne' site was presented by the Hon. W.A. Matthew. Petition received.

HOUSING TRUST REFORMS

The **Hon. DEAN BROWN (Minister for Human Services)**: I seek leave to make a ministerial statement.

Leave granted.

The **Hon. DEAN BROWN**: For 60 years the South Australian Housing Trust has played a vital role in the South Australian community. Initially established to provide housing for working families and to attract migrants, the trust has been instrumental in the development of South Australia's manufacturing base and the development of many industrial sites across the State. Indeed, since its inception, the trust has provided housing for one in every five South Australians. Not surprisingly, the Housing Trust has become an icon in South Australia.

Over the years, the trust has evolved to meet changing needs but it now faces a new challenge due to a significant shift by the Commonwealth Government towards funding for private rental assistance rather than capital funding for public housing. Federal funding is increasingly being directed to the Commonwealth Rental Assistance Program (CRA), which provides an income supplement to low income private renters. CRA payments are now larger than Commonwealth funding for the provision of public housing under the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement (CSHA).

This is underlined by the decline in real levels of funding under the CSHA. In 1989-90, total CSHA funding nationally was \$1.03 billion. In 1997-98, this had declined to \$0.975 billion. At the same time, Commonwealth expenditure on CRA has increased threefold from around \$0.5 billion to \$1.5 billion. In other words, the majority of Federal funds are now going to rental assistance and not to capital infrastructure.

The Housing Trust has, in the main, provided low-cost housing to low-income households. Indeed, the long waiting list reflects the fact that public housing in South Australia has been used as a general alternative housing option. However, our social responsibility as a community requires us to better target housing assistance to those with the greatest need—including those with severe disabilities, mental illness, extensive poverty, those fleeing domestic violence, and the homeless—rather than more general housing provision.

Mr Conlon interjecting:

The **Hon. DEAN BROWN**: I would love to have a debate with the member opposite any time on the fact that public housing should be there for those with the greatest need. It is a fundamental social responsibility. This fundamental change in focus and funding for housing assistance poses some real challenges for South Australia. Currently, the cross-section

of people in public housing in South Australia is significantly different from people on the poverty line, with the predominance of singles and aged in trust housing and under-representation of families who are supporting children. In addition, South Australia has the highest proportion per capita of public housing of any mainland State. Our public housing stock, at 10 per cent, is around twice the proportion of the national average of 5 per cent.

South Australia's high level of public housing has meant that less funding is available to the State from the Commonwealth, with South Australia receiving a far smaller share of Commonwealth assistance for low-income renting families than other States. The Commonwealth does not provide rental assistance to tenants of public housing. Only 6 per cent of Commonwealth Rent Assistance is paid to beneficiaries in South Australia, while 23 per cent goes to beneficiaries in Queensland. If this State had the same level of public housing tenancies as the national average, approximately an additional 30 000 South Australian households would receive Commonwealth rental assistance to a value of \$46 million a year—an amount our State is currently missing out on.

In addition, South Australia is penalised by the per capita based Commonwealth State Housing Agreement funding arrangements. With around 10 per cent of public housing, South Australia receives 8 per cent only of CSHA funding, while Queensland, with only 4 per cent public housing, receives 18 per cent of CSHA funding. Also of note is the significant decline in the number of trust tenants paying full market rent—down from 75 per cent in the early 1970s to around 18 per cent today. Around 82 per cent of tenants received rent subsidies, totalling \$129 million, from the South Australia Government in 1996-97.

With a dramatic change in the profile of trust tenants over the years—away from families to predominantly singles—the trust now has a significant mismatch of existing housing stock and tenants. Over 52 per cent of public housing properties in South Australia are occupied by single person households, and a total of 65 per cent of all tenants are singles or childless couples. Almost half of all single tenants are 60 years of age or older, and less than 6 per cent of singles are under the age of 25 years. The minority of tenants are single parents (20 per cent) and couples with children represent only 10 per cent—only 10 per cent are parents with children.

These figures compare with a housing stock which is comprised predominantly of three bedroom dwellings. Of the total trust stock of around 58 500 dwellings, more than 33 900 are three or four bedroom dwellings. Around 30 per cent of the total stock is in metropolitan fringe areas and 24 per cent is in the country. Over a third of the total stock is more than 30 years old (built prior to 1969), and a significant proportion of the stock is on the metropolitan fringe and not in high demand. In recognition of this mismatch and a large ageing public housing stock, urban redevelopment has become a major focus of the Housing Trust to help revitalise its older estates and reduce the concentration of public housing in those areas.

Urban renewal programs—involving the replacement of old trust homes, the construction of new homes, the upgrading of existing trust homes and appropriate street scaping—are under way at Lincoln South in Port Lincoln, Risdon Park in Port Pirie, Hillcrest, Rosewood and Mitchell Park. These redevelopments, involving local councils and the private sector, are rejuvenating areas and providing new affordable housing for a wide cross-section of the community. Given

changing demands and the requirements of the Commonwealth it is appropriate—indeed it is a matter of necessity—that the role of the Housing Trust is re-examined to ensure its future focus is on assisting those in greatest need and that it is able to meet that challenge.

In recent years there have been ongoing changes in policy in South Australia to ensure more housing assistance is provided to those most in need. However, this has been in a context of broad housing policy which maintains public housing as choice for all South Australians, regardless of income levels, with the only exclusion criteria being those people who already own or are buying a house.

The Housing Trust has a priority waiting list; however, applicants in greatest need are not necessarily receiving adequate access to housing in areas of greatest demand. The 'wait in turn' system has been the prime method of allocation of housing. As detailed in the trust's 1996-97 annual report, fewer than 18 per cent of new allocations last year were priority allocations. Furthermore, in 1996-97 only 47 per cent of priority customers were housed within six months.

Those South Australians facing greatest housing need must be able to more readily and rapidly obtain appropriate and affordable housing from the Housing Trust's stock. In line with the national housing reforms, Cabinet has recently approved changes in South Australia's housing policy to ensure all new housing assistance is provided to households on a needs basis, with priority to those in the greatest need. New guidelines for eligibility criteria, tenure and allocation are being developed by the Housing Trust board and Cabinet and will be finalised and announced over the coming months. As part of this process, I have asked the Housing Trust to consult with the broader community and provide suggestions.

I make it very clear and stress that these proposed housing policy reforms will not affect existing tenants, and the waiting list will be managed so that existing applicants are not disadvantaged. New applications lodged from the time of this announcement will be subject to the proposed new guidelines. Current tenants, including those who have lived in their trust homes since the 1950s and 1960s and who have been exceptional tenants and members of their local community, have made life choices based on the Housing Trust's historic role, and those choices must be preserved. The changes, which will be gradually phased in, will see a shift from the current open access policy and lifelong tenure to a policy which assists South Australians on the basis of need, with priority to those most in need for the period of need. This will result in better targeting of those in greatest need, including people experiencing a crisis, emergency or chronic housing need and those on or below the poverty line.

Urban renewal will remain a prime focus of public housing in South Australia, and we will continue to build accommodation that better meets the needs of the tenants. The broad policy changes I have announced today will form the basis for the future provision of public housing in South Australia and ensure that the Housing Trust continues to play a vital role in this State as we move from post-war housing to a new millennium.

Finally, I reassure existing tenants and those people on the waiting list that they have nothing whatsoever to fear from the changes. It will be an interesting test of the Opposition's credibility in terms of whether it goes out and targets those people who have nothing to fear.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

LEGISLATIVE REVIEW COMMITTEE

Mr CONDOUS (Colton): I bring up the fifth report of the committee and move:

That the report be received.

Motion carried.

QUESTION TIME

ELECTRICITY, PRIVATISATION

Ms HURLEY (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Given the Premier's claims that the State must sell its power assets to avoid a potential fall in profits and risks of up to \$2 billion by entering the national market, will the Deputy Premier explain why documents prepared while he was infrastructure Minister, and leaked to the Opposition, show that, despite identified risks of entering the national electricity market, Optima Energy expects a rise in after tax profits from \$29 million this year to \$41 million in the year 2002?

The Hon. G.A. INGERSON: Clearly, I would like to see all the documents addressed to me before they are thrown out in this place and before I give an answer on them. If they have been leaked and if they have not been corrupted I would like to see them—and, knowing the Opposition, that is likely to happen at any stage. In the fast-moving market, as I was advised and as I have said in this House previously, all sorts of issues are put up as theoretical opportunities, and they are put up to me as they were to former infrastructure Ministers in relation to ETSA and the position of Optima Energy. As anyone would know, a theoretical document bears fruit or any action only when it delivers—

The Hon. M.D. Rann interjecting:

The Hon. G.A. INGERSON: Put it out on the table instead of running around with leaks: put it out and let us have a look at it. As I have said to the House previously, I have been in business for about 30 years. Over those years my accountant and all our accountants have put forward programs saying, 'This is the prediction of what will happen.' The only reality in any prediction is when it comes to pass. We have a market within which we have to work. It is a very changing market, as the Premier has clearly stated to this House over the past few days and, more importantly, so has the Auditor-General. Clearly, any suggestions that have been put to me for Optima Energy were suggestions of what might happen in the future: exactly the same as the predictions I receive on a daily basis from the accountants advising me in my own business.

Mr BROKENSHIRE (Mawson): Will the Premier advise the House of the level of interest to date in the Government's announcement regarding the sale of ETSA and Optima Energy?

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: I advise the House that we are absolutely delighted with the response to the Department of Treasury and Finance. Before going on might I say that I am delighted also not to see the *Advertiser* photographer in the Gallery today.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier has the call.

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: At least the readers will be spared tomorrow. Getting to the serious nub of the matter and the question asked by the honourable member, we have been delighted with the response to date following the Govern-

ment's announcement. Over 250 inquiries have been received by the Department of Treasury and Finance in relation to this policy announcement of the Government. Over 200 companies, corporate bodies, have sought information from the Government about the policy that is being put in place. This is just another indication, another sign, that this policy is the right direction. Not only have we had endorsement and support from every senior financial economic writer in the country and the business community in South Australia but also Standard and Poor's has indicated that upon passage of the legislation it will put us on credit watch to improve the credit rating. All this clearly indicates that this policy is the right policy for South Australia.

I again issue a challenge to the members of the Opposition: what is their policy? Here we have one of the most significant policy decisions of a Government in recent times being put on the table. One would have thought that we would have questions from the Opposition on prices—maintenance of; jobs—security of; and reliability of supply. What would be the structure of a retailing business? How do we maintain the provision of networks and subsidies in country and regional areas of South Australia? How do we intend to put in place the continuation of concessions that people are enjoying? One would have thought that, with a serious subject such as this, they would be at least some of the questions you would expect from members of the Opposition. But not one, because they cannot confront the seriousness of the nature of this question. You have a policy black hole.

I would also like to add to the Deputy's response to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, who inferred that this market is not changing all that quickly. I refer to a document which states:

The change in the electricity marketplace to date has been more rapid and far-reaching than Government and others assumed. This stresses the need to act early to preserve the value of the entities and maximise the return to taxpayers. For those who oppose the privatisation of the industry on the grounds of retention of value, these changes are seemingly ignored. Yet the industry is in a state of rapid flux. The only constant state is change and the task is to maximise the benefits of that change for the people. The protection of consumers, the environment and social justice issues is possible if the industry is privatised by improving regulation and through other means.

The author is Bob Hogg, in a report to the New South Wales Government in August 1997. Here we have no less than Bob Hogg clearly indicating a changed nature of the marketplace, and indicating what ought to happen in terms of the industry in New South Wales. I know that members of the Opposition do not like being referred to how their counterparts interstate see reality—Bob Carr, Treasurer Michael Egan; they understand. Even Bob Hogg understands the policy imperative.

There is one other matter that I want to raise, as a result of a question from the member for Hart yesterday—I think it was the member for Hart—who indicated that the Auditor-General had a meeting with me in August.

Mr Foley: That is what he told us.

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: Yes, he did, and he put it on the parliamentary record. But the member for Hart did not refer to what he said we discussed. Is that not an interesting omission? What the Auditor-General said is that he had a meeting with me in August and that we discussed a number of matters. I have confirmed with his office the basis of that meeting and the subjects that were raised—this is in August, remember. Having discussed it with his office, I confirm that

he raised matters totally unrelated, as his evidence says. At the end of the meeting I said to the Auditor-General, 'Are there any other matters that you would like to raise with me?', to which he replied, 'No, there are none.' This is interesting, is it not? Prior to that, Mr Kowalick had been contacted by the Auditor-General and, as the statutory declarations indicate, had not raised it with me. So Mr Kowalick pursued a course, and the Auditor-General, subsequent to that, pursued exactly the same course with me.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr Clarke interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Ross Smith.

The Hon. J.W. Olsen interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order.

Ms HURLEY (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): How many briefings before the State election did the Deputy Premier as Minister for Infrastructure receive from senior public servants, electricity advisers and Treasury officials working on the risks of not receiving national competition payments, and other risks flowing from the inter-government agreement, signed by the then Premier, in April 1995? On Monday, the Auditor-General told the Economic and Finance Committee that these risks were:

... apparent on any close analysis of an industry which is dependent upon markets and national considerations in determining what is going to be its profitability or otherwise.

The Auditor-General added:

I did not see them as anything extraordinary, but I saw them as matters which required very close management.

The Hon. G.A. INGERSON: Yesterday, there was a question and the Auditor-General made a comment in relation to Graeme Longbottom. Graeme Longbottom has already made a statutory declaration that he made no comment to me in relation to that document. I would have thought—and I place the Deputy Leader's integrity very high, unlike that of many other members opposite—that the Deputy Leader would understand clearly that a statutory declaration is the highest single responsibility an individual can make in terms of their own integrity.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. G.A. INGERSON: I know that the Leader laughs about it, because the truth does not mean anything to him. I would have thought that the Deputy Leader, when coming into this new position and recognising clearly—

Members interjecting:

The Hon. G.A. INGERSON: In relation to how many times I have been advised, I do not keep a daily or a minute by minute diary on how many times I am advised on any matter by any adviser. I cannot possibly answer that question.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order, the member for Ross Smith!

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader will come to order. The member for Colton.

Mr CONDOUS (Colton): Will the Minister for Industry, Trade and Tourism advise the House what initiatives he could undertake in his portfolio with an extra \$2 million a day, which is the current interest bill on the State's massive debt—

Ms WHITE: I rise on a point of order, Mr Speaker. I draw your attention to page 293 of the twenty-first edition of

Erskine May, where the precedent is set that questions on hypothetical propositions are inadmissible.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order. I do not uphold the point of order. The Minister concerned, in his ministerial responsibility, can address a question of that nature.

Mr CONDOUS: I repeat: \$2 million dollars a day is the current interest bill on the State's massive debt, a debt that the Government hopes to go a long way towards eliminating with the sale of ETSA and Optima.

The Hon. G.A. INGERSON: I always find it amusing when members opposite laugh about the fact that we have a \$2 million a day debt. They just brush it off.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. G.A. INGERSON: It is \$2 million. I didn't say 'billion' I said 'million'. It starts with an 'm'. It is \$2 million a day in interest.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister will resume his seat. Over the past four sitting days, the Chair has been extremely tolerant of the level of interjections across the Chamber. However, the Chair has appealed to members to accept their responsibilities in this place and allow a question to be answered. If members are not prepared to accept that responsibility and allow Ministers to complete replies, the Chair intends to do something about it. I pointed out to members at the time that Standing Order 142 quite simply provides:

While a member is speaking, no other member may make a noise or disturbance or converse aloud or speak so as to interrupt the member. . .

I also remind members of Standing Order 137(2) which relates to the offence that leads to members being named, that is, their persistently or wilfully refusing to conform to any Standing Order of the House. For the past four sitting days, the Chair has sought members' cooperation in this area to allow Ministers to complete their replies. If members wish to continue in that activity, the Chair intends to take appropriate action.

The Hon. G.A. INGERSON: It is fairly important that we put on record the implications of the \$2 million a day. I want to talk about jobs because, instead of worrying with hypotheticals, we should get down to the real issue of jobs for South Australia. We spend about \$48 million a year on investment assistance in this State, and over the last few years that has created about 3 900 jobs on average per year. If we had \$20 million, and that is 10 days of that \$2 million a time, it is our view that we could create another 1 600 jobs in the community over the next couple years but, more importantly, we could have \$200 million worth of investment in this State.

If we had the opportunity to increase the tourism budget by \$10 million a year, which is five days of interest, it is our view that we could bring forward significantly the 10 000 jobs we expect to create in the tourism industry over the next five years. In five days we could fix up the total infrastructure problem on Kangaroo Island. In 25 days we could build a convention centre. That would create 750 jobs in the construction stage and it would add \$50 million in economic activity to the State. It would create 900 jobs indirectly in the hospitality industry, and in the centre itself it would create between 20 and 30 jobs. In 25 days, about 1 730 jobs could be created. In terms of 45 days of interest, all that work could be done.

An honourable member opposite said flippantly that we are all spending the same. In 45 days we could carry out all that work, purely and simply by becoming debt free and getting rid of the burden of ETSA and all the other assets that are not performing as well as they could be and may not perform as well as they should in the future economic environment of our State.

Mr FOLEY (Hart): My question is directed to the Premier. How many briefings before the State election did the Premier receive from senior public servants and Treasury officials working on national competition policy on the risks of not receiving national competition payments and other risks flowing from the intergovernment agreement signed by the then Premier in 1995? In a briefing session with the Under Treasurer following the State election, the shadow finance Minister and I were advised that Ministers were provided with regular briefings from Treasury on the performance of Optima Energy and ETSA and risks associated with national competition policy. These briefings for Ministers were prepared by the structural reform unit of Treasury responsible for energy policy.

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: That is at least one briefing the Opposition spokesman went to because, interestingly today, the member for Hart cancelled the Government's offer of a briefing on the ETSA and Optima sale.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: It was cancelled. They were offered a briefing to go through the details and they copped out. This is an Opposition that does not want to have the facts. Why do they not want to have the facts? It is because the facts will clearly show them that their no-policy zone is not right and that it is a total abrogation of responsibility. We offered the Treasurer and Treasury officers to go through with the shadow Treasurer the details and a time was set aside, yet he telephoned today and said, 'We do not want the briefing. We will make it for another day.' Let it be seen clearly for what it is.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: Thank you, Mr Speaker. In relation to the competition payments, the head of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet went to Melbourne (I can ascertain the date for the member for Hart if he would like it) some time in December to have discussions with the National Competition Commissioner (Mr Graham Samuel) in relation to their interpretation of the COAG sign-off agreement. Those principles were embodied in the Keating-Hilmer reform.

Mr Foley interjecting:

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: I have not indicated any other. What I have indicated to the House consistently is that, in my view, the National Competition Commissioner is going further than the spirit of the principles that were developed between 1991 and 1993 and signed off in 1995, which had the payments applicable to them. It was at that meeting in December that the real warning bells came to the fore in relation to the attitude that was going to be applied to it.

So great was my concern about that matter that I arranged for a briefing of Cabinet this last Monday based on a detailed assessment of a range of agencies as to the current status of the National Competition Commissioner's report and the risk of those competition payments to South Australia. The assessment for the next tranche is in the last quarter of the current financial year.

Mr FOLEY: I rise on a point of order. I refer you, Sir, to Standing Order 98, which provides that the Premier must answer the substance of the question. He is yet again avoiding answering the question.

The SPEAKER: I do not uphold the point of order.

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: That goes to the core of the question, in determining when the real levels of concern were identified in Government in relation to the payment of the \$1 015 million to South Australia over the next nine years. Following the discussion held in Melbourne in December, I wrote to the Prime Minister, asking for a number of items to be put on the schedule for the Premiers' Conference, not the least of which is the issue involving the National Competition Commissioner, the application and the spirit of the principles, and now the interpretation or proposed interpretation of those principles and the implications for the States. That Premiers' Conference is set down for 20 March, and I hope that Leaders will have the opportunity on 19 March to canvass these issues prior to the meeting.

Mr LEWIS (Hammond): What initiatives would the Minister for Primary Industries, Natural Resources and Regional Development undertake in his portfolio with an extra \$2 million a day? As \$2 million a day is the current interest bill on our State's huge debt, constituent inquiries have been put to me.

Ms WHITE: I rise on a point of order. I ask you to rule, Mr Speaker, whether that 'what if' question from the member for Hammond is a hypothetical question, which should be ruled out of order.

The SPEAKER: I have already ruled on a similar point of order that I do not accept the point of order.

Mr ATKINSON: Can your ruling be more extensive, Sir? Are you ruling that a question that begins with 'What would the Government do' is not a hypothetical question? Is that your ruling, Sir?

The SPEAKER: I take each individual point of order on its merits. In considering the point of order raised by the member for Taylor in relation to the question asked by the member for Hammond, I do not believe that the question is out of order. The Minister should be competent to answer that question. The Chair is prepared to listen to the reply. At this stage the question is not out of order. The member for Hammond.

Mr LEWIS: As \$2 million a day is the current interest bill on the State's huge debt—

An honourable member: We got that bit.

Mr LEWIS: Where did we get it from? Constituent inquiries have been put to me seeking to ascertain the Government's priorities for primary industries, natural resources and regional development if the sale of ETSA and Optima is successful.

The Hon. R.G. KERIN: I thank the member for Hammond for that very important question, and I thank you, Sir, for your vote of confidence in my ability to answer the question. Like the Deputy Premier, I would like to talk about jobs because that is where that extra \$2 million would make the difference within my portfolio. The opportunity to have \$2 million a day is quite mind boggling, given the situation with which we have had to deal involving the level of inherited debt. I can assure the House that I could very wisely invest the \$2 million a day in primary industries and the resources sector. In fact, with \$2 million per day over several weeks we could solve many problems and create many opportunities, particularly in regional South Australia.

We could certainly develop industry attraction packages, which would attract new value-adding technology to South Australia, increase the profitability of our rural sector and, importantly, possibly create much regional employment.

Mr Clarke interjecting:

The Hon. R.G. KERIN: We could also rehabilitate irrigation and drainage schemes—

Mr Clarke interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Ross Smith will come to order.

The Hon. R.G. KERIN:—throughout the State. Rehabilitation is extremely expensive and the schemes have suffered not only because of our limited financing as a result of heavy debt commitments but because the schemes have been run down over the years. Debt relief would also allow us to undertake a major exploration program for minerals and petroleum in South Australia. This would build on the successful exploration initiatives already carried out. That money could be put into creating wealth for the future of the State and, of course, many jobs for South Australians, rather than paying off the debt caused by the mistakes of the Bannon Government. We could also see greater promotion and immediate implementation of all projects identified within the State Food and Fibre Plan, which is about making our wholefood industry more viable and profitable.

Debt relief could be well used to market our produce into the world's markets and to increase returns to our growers. We could also restructure the marine scale fishery with the double impact of not only increasing the returns to our commercial fishermen but also increasing the recreational fishing take. Other areas to benefit would include research and development efforts into a range of commodities and value adding that could see us really go ahead. Certainly, \$2 million a day could solve some capital works projects, such as those involving the Arid Land Research Centre and the Native Food Centre. If my portfolio had \$2 million a day—and this would be of special interest to the member for Hammond—a high priority would be to do something about dog fence funds, which would save the honourable member and me a lot of time.

Mr Clarke interjecting:

The Hon. R.G. KERIN: I must say that, since the member for Hammond shifted places, I hear about it only every second day rather than every day. The difference \$2 million per day could make to the infrastructure of rural South Australia would be quite amazing. It would give country people a lot of what they deserve. Having an extra \$2 million a day in my portfolio is quite beyond imagination. Like my colleagues around the Cabinet table, I have become accustomed to being greatly restricted by the debilitating debt, and I am tired of rejecting constantly the much needed and worthy projects that are put forward. However, the State must address its debt and its future risk of debt, and I am sure that the policy to sell ETSA and Optima will meet those aims quite well.

The Hon. M.D. RANN (Leader of the Opposition): My question is directed to the Premier. Given the Premier's reply to the previous question from the member for Hart, which requirements of the 1994 Competition Principles Agreement and the 1995 Implementation Agreement are putting South Australia at risk of being penalised up to \$1 billion by the Commonwealth for non-compliance unless we sell ETSA and Optima? The Competition Principles Agreement, signed by

the Liberal Government in 1994, when the present Premier was Minister for Infrastructure, states:

This agreement is neutral with respect to the nature and form of ownership of business enterprises. It is not intended to promote public or private ownership.

It further states:

Each party is free to determine its own agenda for the reform of public monopolies.

The Implementation Agreement was signed in April 1995 by Dean Craig Brown, then Premier of South Australia.

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. M.D. RANN: You do not like him, I know, but he is probably making a come back.

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: It is with great trepidation that I rise, for I note with considerable concern that the *Advertiser* photographer has returned to the gallery. Returning to the substance of this matter, I want to correct one other point. I indicated that Mr Kowalick met the National Competition Commissioner in December, but that is incorrect: the date was 22 January this year. I want to put that on the record accurately. In relation to the Leader of the Opposition's question, there is no better authority than the Auditor-General for identifying the risk factor component with competition payments.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: No. It might not suit the Leader of the Opposition's argument today. We are well aware of the practice of conveniently moving your argument around, forgetting a paragraph here or a sentence there to put a political spin on a story rather than going to the substance of it. There is no better authority in this case than the public's watchdog, the Auditor-General—the person to whom the Leader of the Opposition in the past four years wrote regularly. The Leader used to rely on his advice regularly. Well, rely on his advice yet again, is the only point I would make to the Leader of the Opposition. Whilst I am responding to this question from the Leader of the Opposition I will quote him some other well-tuned advice, which states:

... I see the Party for which I worked for almost all my adult life miss opportunities and waste chances. There are two reasons for my melancholy. They are the failure of the NSW branch to approve Premier Bob Carr's plans to privatise the State's electricity industry, and the continued failure of the Party's national executive to do anything about it.

Graham Richardson has written in this week's *Bulletin* that, among other things, 'As usual the ALP found the concept of changing or reforming itself far too hard.' That is what we have here in South Australia. Not only do we have Bob Hogg, Premier Carr and Treasurer Egan, but we also have Graham Richardson, the person whom on occasions the Leader of the Opposition would laud in this House. Graham Richardson is saying that Labor needs to change its policy. The member for Hart is telling the media that, off the record, he supports the sale of ETSA, but he will not say so publicly.

Mr Foley: Name them.

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: What is he saying to his Leader? I am more than happy, out in the corridor, to tell the honourable member to whom he has been speaking. What is he saying to his Leader? Why will he not say publicly what he is privately telling journalists and some of the business people in this town? You cannot have it both ways. The point is that this Opposition, for the fifth day since this policy announcement, has not asked a focused question about the structure, prices, jobs, systems, reliability and the future. Not one

question have Opposition members asked about this most important policy area.

Apart from the throw-away line of the Leader of the Opposition yesterday that the Opposition would block legislation—having refused to answer and walking out of a press conference when pressed on one occasion—the Leader of the Opposition, as an aside, said, 'Yes, we will block the legislation.' If it intends to block the legislation, the simple question is: what could the Opposition do to retire \$7.4 billion worth of debt? What is its strategy? Here we have an Opposition that has no plans and no idea for the future. Its only options are more debt, fewer services or more taxes: which one is it?

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: I call for order on my right.

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH (Waite): Will the Minister for Environment and Heritage advise the House of the initiatives she would undertake in her portfolio with an extra \$2 million a day? My constituents want our resources to be spent on people and on our quality of life—not on debt repayments. Two million dollars a day is the current interest bill on the State's massive debt, a debt the Government hopes to go a long way towards eliminating with the sale of ETSA and Optima.

The SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member is starting to comment. Has the honourable member finished his question?

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH: Yes, Sir.

The Hon. D.C. KOTZ: I thank the honourable member for what is a very important question. We all understand that to each and every one of us South Australia is a beautiful State in which to live, and we especially pride ourselves on our clean and green image. To enhance our clean image, what would \$2 million a day do for this State? On the morning of the first day we would have paid for our new air monitoring equipment in Adelaide to meet national requirements. After five days we would have developed and installed an effective system of air monitoring across the State, including improvements in Whyalla and Port Pirie. We could immediately accelerate water quality monitoring in crucial areas—

Mr FOLEY: I rise on a point of order, Mr Speaker, and draw your attention to Standing Order 107 in respect of ministerial statements. It would seem to me that a ministerial statement is a far more appropriate mechanism to deliver what is clearly a prepared statement.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The House has addressed this issue on two occasions today, and points of order with respect to answers have not been taken on previous days.

The Hon. D.C. KOTZ: I have copious notes, Mr Speaker. We could accelerate immediately water quality monitoring in crucial areas. With \$2 million a day to spend in the Mount Lofty Ranges on catchment works, we could go a long way towards resolving our stormwater problems. It needs to be remembered in projects such as these that they do indeed attract further Commonwealth funds from sources such as—

Mr Clarke interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister will resume her seat. It is becoming very apparent that the member for Ross Smith is deliberately flouting the Chair. The Chair has been extremely lenient for some days with four members opposite because the Chair does not want to deprive members of the

opportunity to represent their electorates. I have warned two members today. There will be no further warnings.

The Hon. D.C. KOTZ: I suggest that it also needs to be remembered that these projects attract further Commonwealth funds from sources such as the Natural Heritage Trust and that that in itself provides job opportunities for young South Australians. We could facilitate the EPA's desire for rapidly improved outcomes in the re-use of sewage, which I know the Leader of the Opposition is most interested in. We could provide further infrastructure development for the Bolivar, Christies Beach, Glenelg and Port Adelaide sewage treatment plants. I am sure the EPA would also be delighted to accelerate resource recovery in the waste management strategies within the State. Step one would be the development of greater markets and products from recyclables and far greater savings in environmental benefits in South Australia.

With \$2 million a day, suitable resource recovery sites could be found, particularly in the area of composting, with large benefits in relation to recycling green waste. Again, we are looking at a growth in jobs. With a mere five days of savings we could fund consistent recycling systems across the State, including a split-bin system for every household. The rapid development of a range of methodologies for cleaner production in industry would result in far greater savings to those industries in this State, thereby again providing economic advantages in terms of increased job prospects for all South Australians. With \$2 million a day we could enhance our green image.

In South Australia we have 21 million hectares of magnificent parks and reserves which contain very unique biodiversity. The importance of preserving this heritage cannot be understated. An additional 100 rangers and training support so that Aboriginal people can gain the necessary qualifications to pick up these positions could be funded from a mere 2½ days of interest savings. Improved access roads could be funded immediately. For example, the important Cape du Couedic Road in Flinders Chase could be built from two days of interest savings. The tourist industry on Kangaroo Island would benefit immensely, and further job creation would be another of these benefits.

Extensive strategies for fully effective pest, plant and weed control could be effected with the release of \$2 million a day. We could also target rare and endangered species above and beyond the Government's commitment through the parks agenda with a mere 2½ days of interest savings on Labor's State Bank debt. With the realised savings from the sale of ETSA we could respond much more fully to Aboriginal needs. For example, we could provide a new access road to Maralinga and, in addition, upgrade the roads and general infrastructure within remote Aboriginal communities, which the Labor Opposition seems to think is entirely humorous. With consideration being given to the new Aboriginal Heritage Act, we could establish quickly a heritage conservation site register and processes for supporting those sites. We could stimulate small business conducted by Aboriginal people, including the development of Aboriginal cultural heritage trails. We could manage all this with an extra five days of savings.

I must remind members that we live in the driest State in the driest nation on earth and that water is a finite resource, a precious resource to be used in an environmentally sustainable fashion. Think of the improvements in water quality and resource allocation that we could achieve with \$2 million a day. We could install water meters for every

irrigator; we could construct automated barrage gates to improve environmental flows in the Murray; we could undertake a wide range of salinity mitigation schemes—

Mr CLARKE: I rise on a point of order, Mr Speaker. As the member for Hart said, this is Question Time. Statements of this type should be made by the Minister in a ministerial statement. This is just a gross abuse of Question Time.

The SPEAKER: Order! Standing Order 98 does require Ministers to attempt brevity and to give sufficient information when answering questions. I believe in this case that the Minister is getting close to that point. I ask her to start winding up her response.

The Hon. D.C. KOTZ: I am quite happy to take this most important question through to its conclusion. We could undertake a wide range—

The SPEAKER: Order! That is quite contrary to the instructions of the Chair. My request was that the Minister start to wind up.

The Hon. D.C. KOTZ: That was not my intention, Sir; I apologise. We could undertake a wide range of salinity mitigation schemes and develop fully efficient and effective schemes for the distribution and access of water to the Great Artesian Basin. This list is by no means complete. I will not go on to outline the improvements we could well make in a range of other areas, but this snapshot does illustrate the manner by which the Labor State Bank debt has placed a stranglehold on all South Australians. In conclusion, I suggest that we have a vision for South Australia that could well and truly be created without the stranglehold of a \$17.4 billion debt. The bottom line question is: what is the Labor Opposition's policy on this? Will the Labor Opposition support the Government—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is now starting to debate the matter.

Ms HURLEY (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): My question is directed to the Premier. What has changed since the Industry Commission's 1996 advice to the now Premier on how to restructure ETSA to comply with national competition policy agreements? The Industry Commission stated:

The issue of competition in electricity supply is independent of whether Government should continue to own its own electricity utilities.

The current Premier invited the Industry Commission to review the structural arrangements of the ETSA Corporation in January 1996. The commission reported back in April 1996 and stated:

The South Australian Government would not be prevented from continuing to own the various businesses which would be created by restructuring ETSA along the lines proposed.

Following the report, the now Premier (then Infrastructure Minister) announced on 29 April 1996 the formation of what was to become Optima and said 'there are no plans to privatise'.

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: Yet again today the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is not very fast on her feet. The simple fact is that, first, that was included in the ministerial statement that was tabled Tuesday week ago, and I would invite her to go back and read it if it had escaped her attention. Secondly, the Auditor-General's Report clearly identifies why the matter is of significance now compared with when the Industry Commission report said so. Thirdly, Mr Bob Hogg also confirms that view. Fourthly, Mr Graham Richardson also puts that view forward. If the Deputy Leader

is so insulated from all this information around her, there is no hope for the Deputy Leader. I can see the member for Ross Smith girding the loins, having an opportunity to come back as the Deputy Leader. I do not know who is giving these questions to the Deputy Leader but they have no substance: they are repetitive and simply asking questions on information that has been given to the House in the past week.

COUNTRY FIRE SERVICE

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON (Heysen): Given the statement of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services yesterday, will he now advise the House what improvements the Government hopes to make to the Country Fire Service in the very important areas of equipment and training? In regard to equipment, I understand that during the Ash Wednesday bushfires in 1983 up to 50 per cent of the CFS appliances used suffered some form of mechanical breakdown.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: I acknowledge the close working relationship that the member for Heysen has with the emergency services agencies in his area. The member for Heysen represents the Adelaide Hills area, and one cannot be the member for Heysen without having a very good working relationship with the emergency services agencies. They have suffered a number of major fires throughout the history of South Australia, and the emergency services certainly play a very important role in that area. It is very appropriate that the honourable member asks this question because it was only two weeks ago that the member for Heysen and I attended a ceremony recognising people who, unfortunately, lost their life 15 years ago during the 1983 Ash Wednesday fire.

During that fire 28 people died; 383 homes were either destroyed or damaged; and some 159 000 hectares of South Australia were destroyed by fire. The statewide damage ran into absolute millions of dollars. The member for Heysen has raised the very unfortunate fact that during the fire somewhere between 30 and 50 per cent of the CFS vehicles that were called to attend that fire simply broke down. It has taken Governments of all persuasions 15 years to try to correct that error. Even last year's annual report of the Country Fire Service suggested that 70 vehicles are still petrol driven. The danger is that during days such as Ash Wednesday the petrol in these vehicles vaporises and they stop, which puts the volunteers and paid professionals at risk.

It has taken Governments 15 years to try to address that problem. We simply cannot wait another 15 years to address changes in the emergency services area. That is why we are addressing matters such as the Government radio network and the computer aided dispatch because they are critical to the future of emergency services in South Australia. It is important that the emergency services have a coordinated approach concerning the dispatch of their vehicles. It is critical that the emergency services agencies have the capacity to communicate through the Government radio network. One of the other problems that existed in the 1983 fire was the fact that the officers in MFS vehicles could not talk on the radio to officers in CFS vehicles and they could not talk to the police. There were even examples of officers in CFS vehicles not being able to communicate with other officers in CFS vehicles.

We simply cannot let that continue. I know that previous Governments have slowly but surely addressed that problem. The Government radio network is the next step. Yesterday's announcement was about the Government being pro-active

in trying to plan the future of emergency services, planning in advance, if you like, for the next tragedy if and when it occurs. It was all about better funding, better training and better equipment. I do not think any one of us wants to come into this House and say, 'If only the Government had funded emergency services. If only it had put in a decent radio network. If only it had put in decent equipment then this tragedy may not have happened.' None of us wants to be in that position, and that is why we have to address emergency services funding; it is why the Government has made the announcement; and it is why we are concerned with better funding for emergency services, better training, better equipment and better service.

ADDRESS IN REPLY

The SPEAKER: I have to inform the House that His Excellency the Governor will be pleased to receive the Speaker and honourable members for the purpose of presenting the Address in Reply at 3.15 p.m. this day. I ask the mover and seconder of the Address and such other members as care to accompany me to proceed to Government House for the purpose of presenting the Address.

[Sitting suspended from 3.5 to 3.50 p.m.]

The SPEAKER: I have to inform the House that, accompanied by the mover and seconder of the Address in Reply to the Governor's opening speech and by other members, I proceeded to Government House and there presented to His Excellency the Address adopted by the House on 24 February, to which His Excellency was pleased to make the following reply:

To the honourable Speaker and members of the House of Assembly, I thank you for the Address in Reply to the speech with which I opened the first session of the Forty-Ninth Parliament. I am confident that you will give your best consideration to all matters placed before you. I pray for God's blessing upon your deliberations.

GRIEVANCE DEBATE

The SPEAKER: The question before the Chair is that the House note grievances.

The Hon. R.B. SUCH (Fisher): Today I return to one of my themes, that is, the need to train sufficient trades people not only for South Australia but for Australia as a whole. If one looks at the statistics over the 1990s—and obviously this spans Governments of different persuasions—a steady decline in the number of apprentices has occurred; yet, on the other hand, a dramatic increase has occurred in the number of trainees in traineeships. As we know, traineeships tend to be the shorter term way of training people but, as a general rule, they do not encompass the traditional trades areas such as motor mechanics, carpentry and all those areas. The decline during the 1990s has been of the order of about 50 per cent in the number of young people entering apprenticeships. This is a situation which Australia cannot allow to continue.

In the brief time available I will add to the continuing theme that I have raised previously in relation to this matter. The reason for raising it again—and I have had some media coverage—arises from a letter to the editor of the *Sunday*

Mail last week from a Mr Bob Day in which he took me to task. When you are in politics you become used to this and have to expect it. He said that I still do not get it. One could have some fun with that suggestion but, in short, he was implying that young people are paid too much. When you analyse what he is suggesting, an apprentice would receive less than \$3 an hour.

Young people who are working at Hungry Jacks and places such as that and who are younger than the apprentices about whom we are talking are receiving three times that amount an hour. I cannot see the incentive for young people to enter into apprenticeships when the suggestion is that they are paid less than \$3 an hour. I will give a personal example. One of my lads who is an apprentice chef in Brisbane and who is aged 21 receives \$3.15 an hour. He works from 7 in the morning until 10 at night with a couple of hours off in the middle of the day. In addition, he has to supply his own uniform, his own kitchen knives and so on and his own transport—no concessions. That is hardly an incentive. Although he is older than many young people entering apprenticeships, nevertheless it illustrates the point.

Although Mr Day did not say it in so many words, he implied that the answer was, 'Let the market take care of it.' The fact is that the Federal Government and the State Government subsidise State universities and TAFE, and we should also subsidise the training of people entering the trades. It is particularly important now that organisations that trained a lot of people, such as the railways, the former E&WS and so on, no longer take on apprentices as they did previously. So we have—and I am not exaggerating—a potential crisis, not just for this State but for all of Australia.

What do we need to do? We need to increase the subsidies. We need to improve and extend the prevocational training, because a lot of employers—where they do take on apprentices—take on the academically inclined. There is nothing wrong with that, but those who have completed year 12 in high school are, in most cases, without any trade skills whatsoever. That is in contrast to the old technical high school system—and I have said on many occasions, and I am proud to say, that I went to Goodwood Tech. It was a mistake to get rid of that system, and we should restore it in a more modernised format. When people are taken on as apprentices, the boss wants them to be able to do something from day one, not just look pretty or have a good year 12 score. We need greater pre-vocational training so that, when someone starts an apprenticeship, they can actually do things, such as brazing pipes if they are an apprentice plumber, and so on.

I believe that we need to look at the possibility of a bonding system in which apprentices stay with the person who trained them for one or two years after the completion of the trade. A lot of small business people say they train someone only to have them flit off, and they do not receive the benefit of having trained that person. I believe that is something we ought to look at. We need to change attitudes in the community. Many parents—and I have seen parents do this—pull kids away from displays or exhibitions highlighting apprenticeships and say, 'That is not for you', and I believe that is a retrograde move.

The SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Ms STEVENS (Elizabeth): I want to place on the record a few comments in relation to the revelations that were made in the House last week about the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Last Tuesday, the Premier, in his statement about the sale of

ETSA, told us that the Queen Elizabeth Hospital is crumbling before our eyes for want of an \$80 million upgrade, which is possible only if ETSA is sold. Following a question from me later in the week, the Human Services Minister (the former Premier) admitted the Government's failure over the past four years to deliver anything positive for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. He confirmed that the private sector arrangements were now off and, instead of a \$130 million development, as was promised, there would now be only an \$80 million development.

It is important to reflect on what has happened regarding the Queen Elizabeth Hospital over the past four years. During the last term of Parliament, I sat here and was lectured by the former Minister for Health and other Government members about what Labor did or did not do with the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, and now I believe that we need to look quite clearly at what this Government has done.

So, what did happen regarding the Queen Elizabeth Hospital? Like all public hospitals, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital was inflicted with very large cuts to its budget, which started straight away, with the introduction of casemix funding in the first budget brought down by this Government. It was severely hit. That situation continued over the years, with the Government taking out \$230 million or so from the State's health budget. In the latter half of 1995, the amalgamation of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and the Lyell McEwin Hospital was announced with great fanfare, the virtues being extolled far and wide by the Minister for Health. This was a massive task: amalgamating two large organisations such as these is no mean feat.

Following very closely behind that, in 1996, was the great \$130 million announcement, when the former Minister talked about the private sector involvement, the brave new world that he was going to deliver to our health services. Following on from Modbury Hospital, the Queen Elizabeth was the next hospital to be privatised, bringing all these benefits to the western suburbs. At the time, the former Minister backed up his claims with a survey, and he said that people in the western suburbs welcomed the privatisation of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Of course, all of us who are involved with people in the western suburbs, and certainly the new members on this side of the House, know that the privatisation of public hospitals was something that people definitely did not want.

This became such a debacle, with the hospital coping with cuts, trying to amalgamate with the Lyell McEwin Hospital and then trying to undertake this massive bid that, finally, reason was seen and privatisation bid mark 2 was introduced. This was a scaled down privatisation under which only surgery instead of the whole hospital was to be outsourced for private management. Last week, we finally found out that that is off too, and we are back to the starting blocks. In fact, we are further back than the starting blocks, because the Premier said that development now depends on the sale of ETSA.

They were the major hurdles placed before this organisation and the people of the western suburbs over the past four years. But what did it mean for people in reality? It meant dozens and dozens of beds being closed down, enormous staff losses and people waiting in trolleys for the emergency section. It meant a dirty, dilapidated hospital. It meant continued and increased reports of the effects of these things on patient care. It meant low staff morale and it meant an inability of that hospital to be able to attract the new staff that it needed. So, I believe that this Government—and the former Minister, in particular—have a lot to answer for. The people

of the western suburbs need to know what is to happen, as \$80 million is a lot less than \$130 million. What will happen to the Queen Elizabeth? Is it going to be bulldozed? Is it going to be built somewhere else as a cheaper model of the original? What will not be done now that the project has had a cut of \$50 million? It is about time that the Government came clean. We have had enough of playing with the truth over the past week. It is about time the Government came clean on this hospital.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON (Heysen): On Monday, 9 February, 130 Australian car component manufacturers showcased their capabilities to the world when they unveiled the aXcess australia concept car, a vehicle which can be described only as the most innovative and technologically advanced car ever produced in Australia. The car is the centrepiece of a united export development and marketing program by the components industry which, under the name of aXcess australia, aims to increase export sales of components technologies and services. Our component manufacturers are an industry with a 100 year history of innovation and invention in automotive design and manufacturing, and they have developed an impressive record of export performance. Australian designed and manufactured components are used by virtually every vehicle maker in the world. We currently earn \$2.2 billion from the export of cars and components, and this has happened in only a relatively short period of time. If we think back to the mid 1980s, we note that the Australian automotive industry made little contribution to the nation's export earnings and was barely recognised as a force in the global industry. Until then, the industry was immune from significant import competition and under little pressure to improve its quality or efficiency. In fact, the industry was complacent.

That all started to change in 1984, a time when we entered structural readjustment, a time when quotas were questioned and a time when the systematic reduction in tariffs was introduced. The time came when the auto sector could no longer exist behind protective walls, building cars and components largely for local consumption. With the formula for tariff reductions and the ending of quotas came a system of inducements and enhancements that rewarded companies that lifted productivity and output, rationalised their operations to make them more efficient and, crucially, developed export business.

So, with the car component industry taking the lead itself, it has gone from being an inward looking protected player to having a mindset of an industry with global potential. What this demonstrates is that, as well as building cars to a car maker blueprint, our component manufacturers are easily recognisable as design and development experts in their own specific fields, be it production, engineering, glass, engines, gearboxes, climate control, electronics, safety systems or brakes. The concept car demonstrates that the design and manufacturing process within the automotive industry has reached a point where component manufacturers within Australia are capable of designing and building a car in their own right.

At this point, I believe it would be remiss of me not to pay a tribute to the man who conceived this idea to build a fully functional prototype show vehicle that would demonstrate the full capacities and capabilities of the Australian automotive components industry to the world. That man is Mr Gary Millard, the principal of Millard Design Australia. Mr Millard's vision was in response to the radical changes taking

place around the world in the way car makers and major suppliers approached product development, simultaneous engineering and purchasing that was driven by the transformation towards a truly global industry. Gary Millard saw the urgent need for a united effort by the Australian component industry to expand its export base and find other ways to secure a prosperous and sustainable future for all its members.

Today, 130 component manufacturers share this vision, including some of our own South Australian component manufacturers such as Britax Rainsfords, Australian Arrow, Bridgestone Australia, Bridgestone T.G. Australia, Britax Asia Pacific Lighting and Electrical, BTR Automotive, Bundy Tubing Company, Castalloy Limited, Hella Australia, Henderson's Automotive Group, Munroe Australia, ROH Wheels Australia, TRW Steering and Suspension Australia Ltd, and the South Australian Centre for Manufacturing.

The aXcess concept car incorporates numerous design features and technologies never seen before. The industry has placed particular emphasis on expertise in the area of energy efficiency, its being lightweight and recyclable and environmentally friendly. The car is now on its way to Detroit, where it will make its international debut at the global automotive industry's most prestigious technical event, the Society of Automotive Engineers International Congress and Exposition. From here, the aXcess concept car will return to Australia to appear at the Melbourne International Motor Show and the Australian Grand Prix. It will then spearhead an industry road show throughout South-East Asia.

Every employee in our car component industry should feel proud of what they have helped to achieve. It is because of the skills of the Australian workers that opportunities are there for component manufacturers, tool makers and designers to become the most sought after people in the global automotive market.

Mr WRIGHT (Lee): I congratulate some of the clubs in my electorate of Lee that have been successful in getting money from the Active Club Program. The clubs I would like to acknowledge and congratulate today are the West Lakes Bowling Club, the Seaton Ramblers Football and Community Club, and SMOSH/West Lakes Football Club. I will speak briefly about each of those clubs. I have had the good fortune—

Mr Lewis: Haven't you got any Kindergyms?

Mr WRIGHT: I thought they were all in Murray Bridge.

Mr Lewis interjecting:

Mr WRIGHT: As the honourable member would know, Kindergyms do not qualify for that funding.

Mr Lewis: Yes, they do.

Mr WRIGHT: No, they don't; you should get a briefing from your Minister. The West Lakes Bowling Club, which was formed in 1981, has about 250 members. I am pleased to tell the House that I spoke to the President, Mr Mart, last evening, and he was delighted to be informed that the West Lakes Bowling Club is to receive \$2 500 under the Active Club Program. This money will be used to hold a major tournament: the club will be looking to attract country clubs from around South Australia to West Lakes for a 3½ day major tournament. It will draw a number of people to the local community and will obviously have benefits well beyond the area of bowling. Hopefully local commercial interests and some of the local residents will have people staying with them, and this should be of major benefit to the local community.

The West Lakes Bowling Club has had to work hard over a number of years and, to the best of my knowledge, this is the first grant it has received, and I am sure it will put it to good use. The club has seven men's teams and four women's teams and has also been successful with the night owls, as it has introduced many learners to the game of bowls in the local area. In particular, I would like to thank and acknowledge the President, Mr Frank Mart, and the President of the women's bowling club, Mrs Shaw, and perhaps it might also be time to acknowledge the Secretary of the men's club, Mr Jack Foley—and I emphasise that for the honourable member. I know that in the past in this House he has received a little criticism in previous Parliaments for his work in the local community. However, we can certainly rectify that today.

Another club that has received money is the Seaton Ramblers Football and Sports Club. It is receiving \$4 000, which will be used to buy new guernseys for both the seniors and the juniors. I am sure that it will be put to good use. Once again, that is another sporting club in the western suburbs that has never received a grant. When I informed the Secretary, Mr Artillo Cavuoto, he was delighted to know that the club will receive some money. He assures me that that will be put to very good use. The Seaton Ramblers Football and Sports Club is in division 2 of the South Australian Amateur Football League, and some members might have played at Seaton Ramblers in their earlier days.

The last club I would like to pass on my congratulations to today is the SMOSH/West Lakes Football Club, also in division 2. The member for Hart is a former player of the West Lakes Football Club. He is a bit like the member for Mawson—not very successful, but at least he had a go. They would have been very good if they could have stood each other on a wing. They would have needed a lot of room on the flanks—a bit like me. It might be of interest to members to know that SMOSH/West Lakes amalgamated in 1996, two clubs coming together to try to make a success. When I informed the President today of the money it was receiving, he was, once again, extremely delighted to know that money was being made available to the club. Members may be interested to know that this money will be allocated to a new team starting up this year, that is, the under 17s. This will be their first year in the competition, and the money for SMOSH/West Lakes is \$3 500. It will be spent on new guernseys and medical expenses for the other teams. The amount of \$10 000 will be allocated to clubs in the western suburbs, and I am certain that all members share this good news with me.

The SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr BROKENSHIRE (Mawson): I rise in this House this afternoon to defend an industry in my area that has done a great deal about helping and improving the economic wealth of and, indeed, job creation in the south. It is an industry that was brought to South Australia by the Liberal Premier of the time, the right honourable Sir Thomas Playford. The person I want to have a go at is a Democrat, so the Opposition can sit back and have a rest. I have raised this issue before in this House: the Democrats do not ever seem to do any homework before they criticise matters in this State. I have had enough of the Democrats, and in this case Ms Kanck, causing undue alarm and, in a sense, defaming Mobil Refining Australia Pty Ltd.

In the Upper House last Thursday, 19 February, the Hon. Sandra Kanck advised the President of the following: that required incident notifications between the refinery and the regulatory authorities may not have occurred; that there were two spills rather than one; that specific action taken in the course of managing the incident, for example, the decision to water flush the hose was taken for specific commercial reasons and, therefore, by implication without due regard for environmental and other factors; and that up 140 000 litres of oil was spilled. These allegations were subsequently reported in the *Adelaide Advertiser* of Saturday 21 February in an alarmist nature.

What concerns me is that I know for a fact—and I have it in black and white—that the Hon. Ms Kanck did not even bother to contact the refinery to get its side of the story, to raise any concerns she might have had or to check the veracity of her allegations. Had she done so, the issues could have been quickly clarified. By not doing so she has unnecessarily caused the competence and reputation of the Adelaide refinery and its people to be called into question.

The real facts are far different: first, the refinery at all times kept the regulatory authorities notified of the incident, thus conforming to the statutory requirements and sound oil spill management procedures; and, secondly, all decisions in relation to managing the incident, including the water flush of the hoses, were taken in conjunction and with the full endorsement of the regulatory authority. Moreover, the regulatory authorities were physically on site for the duration of the incident, thus allowing close cooperation between all organisations. The September 1996 oil spill related to one single incident, not two. The failure of one of the refinery's floating SBM hoses was the cause.

The refinery totally rejects any implication or suggestion that commercial considerations determine either the manner or the method of oil spill management processes. The key concern for both the refinery and the regulatory authorities was obviously the safety of the personnel involved in managing the incident and the care of the environment.

Finally, following the incident, the Department of Transport, the EPA and Mobil conducted a thorough incident investigation, from which it was estimated that 10 000 litres of oil was spilled. I am the first one who wants to see the right sort of standards and practices in place when it comes to our magnificent southern beaches, and I am the first one who wants to see best practice standards at Mobil Oil. However, it is not easy to refine oil in Australia these days.

All members would be well aware that there is always the risk that, if we do not support these industries, it would be easy for them to consolidate in Singapore and other places and refine that product overseas, and bring in the processed products to South Australia and Australia. That would not be good for the blue collar workers in my electorate who are battling to pay off their mortgage, to buy their Mitsubishi and GMH cars, and to provide a good education and put bread and butter on the plates for their children.

In conclusion, I call on the Democrats not to be alarmist, not to mislead the public and to have the guts and initiative to find out what the other side of the story is. If there is one thing that I have learnt in Parliament in the last 4½ years, it is that there are always two sides to the story. Indeed, there are often three, and the third story is usually the most honest story and sits in the middle. Bashing an industry for the sake of a headline and to appease a particular group of people is not the way to go.

It is up to Mobil to be very careful with the environment. I have inspected its facilities lately and it is very conscious of best practice. In fact, recent university tests showed that the environment in the sea has improved.

Ms BREUER (Giles): On the first day of this session last week I was surprised when members opposite came into the Chamber wearing purple and green ribbons. At first I thought that they had become born-again feminists, despite the fact that there are only three women on their benches compared with the excellent number on our side. Then I thought that perhaps it was some secret handshaking society of abseilers who had bonded together after three days of mateship and deep and meaningful reflection on their lives. Then I thought after the Premier's announcement of the sale of ETSA that day that perhaps it was the society of 'Look you in the eye and tell you one thing but perhaps mean something else'—prior to an election.

Then I was told that it was something to do with domestic violence. I am still not sure what it was but I believe that there was a policy launch at Elizabeth that day. I consider that to be ironic because I want to address the House on the situation of domestic violence in Coober Pedy. I will read from a letter that I received from a person in Coober Pedy, which begins:

Tonight a woman, her daughter and granddaughter walked about 2½ kilometres to my place as the husband was drunk and frightening them. The woman was already ill and in a near state of collapse by the time she had walked here in the dark.

The letter was from a person in the Coober Pedy community who had worked for many years in the Aboriginal community and with many women in similar situations. Coober Pedy is isolated from Adelaide and Gepps Cross. The nearest women's shelter is about 500 kilometres away and the nearest town is 300 kilometres away. It is totally isolated and, currently, the only bus service leaves the town at 1 a.m. Recently, dry area legislation was introduced, forcing people in the town to leave the town area and go back to their homes to drink. I am not particularly questioning that, but I want to highlight the problems that it has caused in the community. I will also quote from another letter that was written to the Hon. Trevor Griffin on 17 October last year, as follows:

I need go no further than the matter which has been the subject of some correspondence between yourself and myself. The wide-ranging dry areas legislation in Coober Pedy has been allowed to be implemented and extended even though it was obvious before its inception that there would be grave ramifications for many people. In the last 15 months since its inception, it is well known by those who are in touch with the situation that there has been a huge increase in disruption, violence and even physical injury in the lives of many Aboriginal citizens in Coober Pedy.

What is happening is that people go off drinking and then go home. There is no women's shelter in Coober Pedy, nor is there a safe house for women. There is nowhere these women and children can go for safety. There is no sobering-up centre or rehabilitation place in Coober Pedy. There is no drying-out centre. There is no pick-up service for drunks and, as we all know, mental health facilities are almost non-existent in rural South Australia.

At Umoona, where a lot of people drink, there is no outside telephone, so if women get into trouble they cannot go out and call for help. As a result women go to the house of the worker who wrote these letters. Police are sometimes called, but they can only lock up the people concerned for 24 hours. Nothing else can be done. The domestic violence services in Coober Pedy are very limited. A small service has

done an excellent job with very few resources. The only thing that can really be done is disseminate information in the community. The Women's Statement that was issued in 1997 by the Liberal Government states on page 16 that there will be development of a statewide strategy to combat domestic violence. I believe that 'statewide' means as far as Gepps Cross.

I have highlighted the problem for Aboriginal women in Coober Pedy, but many other women from other ethnic groups in that community suffer violence and have similar problems. A personal friend escaped from Coober Pedy and had to go to the women's shelter in Whyalla, uprooting her children from their school and herself from the community in Coober Pedy. This situation needs addressing urgently. It is not good enough to fund workers in the metropolitan area or in areas isolated from other communities and expect that service to be taken to those communities.

MUTUAL RECOGNITION (SOUTH AUSTRALIA) (EXTENSION OF OPERATION) AMENDMENT BILL

Returned from the Legislative Council without amendment.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (MEMORIAL DRIVE TENNIS CENTRE) AMENDMENT BILL

The Hon. G.A. INGERSON (Deputy Premier) obtained leave and introduced a Bill for an Act to amend the Local Government Act 1934. Read a first time.

The Hon. G.A. INGERSON: I move:

That this Bill be now read a second time.

I seek leave to have the second reading explanation inserted in *Hansard* without my reading it.

Leave granted.

This Bill provides the basis for facilitating the upgrade of the Memorial Drive precinct into an integrated tennis-based leisure complex.

Memorial Drive is widely recognised as the centre for peak local and international competition tennis in South Australia.

This is reflected in the presence of the centre court stadium, the Memorial Drive Tennis Club and the annual staging of the Australian Men's Hardcourt Championship – Adelaide's event on the men's professional tennis circuit.

The complex adjoins the world-renowned Adelaide Oval to create a peak and community sporting resource that has the potential for shared benefits through resource management, hospitality facilities and event marketing.

In recent years, the quality of tennis infrastructure at Memorial Drive has lagged behind community demands. Centre court facilities for players, spectators and the media are below standard with possible impacts on Adelaide's ability to stage major tennis events. The Memorial Drive Tennis Club is not meeting current expectations in terms of the quality or range of services and facilities.

Not addressing these issues could result in the loss of the Australian Men's Hardcourt Championship and cause Adelaide to be overlooked as a venue for international and peak national events (such as the Davis Cup). This unfortunately, has been the recent experience for Brisbane and Perth.

Tennis SA and the Memorial Drive Tennis Club have responded to these challenges with a proposal that draws together their assets, with those of the SA Cricket Association, to create a new focus for tennis and leisure in this state.

The proposed upgrade of Memorial Drive involves three discrete elements:

- the upgrade of the centre court stadium,

- the redevelopment of the Memorial Drive Tennis Club, and
- indoor tennis centre/ function room within the boundaries of Adelaide Oval.

The centre court upgrade will involve new seating to the north and south grandstands and a new roof to be placed over the south grandstand. Funds will also be used to improve the internal areas for the media and players.

The Government has approved \$1 200 000 to be spent on upgrading the centre court stadium before the next Hardcourt event in January 1999.

The proposed redevelopment of the Memorial Drive Tennis Club will involve demolishing the current clubrooms and their replacement with a purpose-built centre having squash courts, indoor/outdoor lap pools, outdoor tennis courts, fitness centre, child care and undercover car parking. Three indoor courts and a function room are proposed within the SACA lease on the site of under-used bowling green.

The construction cost is between \$16—\$19 000 000 with some 70 people being employed at the centre. This project will be funded entirely by the private sector.

Memorial Drive will be the first in a network of tennis leisure centres proposed in other capital cities across Australia by David Lloyd Leisure Australia.

Reflecting the significance of the projects, all three have been declared a “Major Development” precinct by the Minister for Transport and Urban Planning.

Tennis SA and the Memorial Drive Tennis Club operate from land that forms part of the Adelaide parklands.

Under the Local Government Act, the City of Adelaide has granted separate leases to these groups for the maximum permissible term of 21 years. These separate leases both commenced on 1 July 1994 and conclude on 1 July 2015.

Tennis SA and the Memorial Drive Tennis Club have expressed their requirement for lease terms that are longer than the current 21 years.

The reasoning for the longer lease terms involves:

- consistent land management framework in a “Major Development” precinct,
- security of tenure for future investment,
- consistent timings for proposed agreements between the parties, and
- amortising private sector funding of the Memorial Drive Tennis Club project.

The Government’s consultation with stakeholders such as the City of Adelaide and SA Cricket Association has identified in-principle support to the proposed lengthening of the lease terms.

It is noted that the Local Government Act currently provides for the granting of long term leases for specific instances—such as the SA Jockey Club for Victoria Park, and the SA Cricket Association which has been granted a 50 year term over the land comprising Adelaide Oval.

The Bill will empower the City of Adelaide to deal with Tennis SA and Memorial Drive Tennis Club to negotiate fresh leases of up to 50 years in duration.

Key points arising from this amendment are:

- the land affected by the amendment will remain part of the Adelaide parklands
- no new areas of parkland will be brought under lease by this amendment
- public access will remain on a user-pays basis,
- an increase in the range of recreation facilities and services within the parklands with new water, fitness and racquet sport areas.

Not extending the lease terms will significantly harm the progress of the Memorial Drive Tennis Club redevelopment because of the difficulty in securing private sector financing on a shorter lease time frame. This may have the impact of stopping the proposal because of the reduced viability arising from a shorter lease.

The proposed redevelopment of the Memorial Drive precinct is an important element in the growth of tennis and the recreation industry in this state. It will act to retain the Australian Men’s Hardcourt Championships in Adelaide and assist in future bids to bring Davis Cup fixtures to Adelaide on a more frequent basis. The vitality of the precinct will add to the tourism experience around the River Torrens and create fitness and leisure opportunities for residents.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Explanation of Clauses

The provisions are as follows:

Clause 1: Short title

This clause is formal.

Clause 2: Insertion of s. 855b

It is proposed to insert a new provision in the Act that will allow the council from time to time to lease certain land at Memorial Drive for a term of years not exceeding 50 years for certain specified purposes. The land has been identified by a G.R.O. plan. The provision also contains certain express powers that may be included in a lease, including the power to erect new facilities on the leased land, to regulate admission to the land, and to authorise a sublease of the land (consistent with the specified purposes). The provision will operate to the exclusion of section 457 of the Act.

Mr CLARKE secured the adjournment of the debate.

INDUSTRIAL AND EMPLOYEE RELATIONS (DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION) AMENDMENT BILL

The Hon. M.H. ARMITAGE (Minister for Government Enterprises) obtained leave and introduced a Bill for an Act to amend the Industrial and Employee Relations Act 1994. Read a first time.

The Hon. M.H. ARMITAGE: I move:

That this Bill be now read a second time.

I seek leave to have the second reading explanation inserted in *Hansard* without my reading it.

Leave granted.

This Bill proposes to:

- permit industrial inspectors to be able to pass time and wages records received from employers to the employee to whom the records relate; and
- ensure that former employees are able to obtain their time and wages records from a former employer.

The *Industrial and Employee Relations Act 1994* (“the Act”) requires that an employer who is bound by an award or enterprise agreement must keep time and wages records for each employee to whom the award or agreement applies.

The Act also provides that an employer must provide, upon the reasonable request of an employee or an inspector, a copy of the records to them and permit the employee or inspector to make copies of the records.

The Act has various confidentiality requirements in it, including one to the effect that an inspector must not divulge information received in the course of his or her employment to other parties, except in certain limited circumstances.

It has been long standing policy of industrial inspectors in cases in which an inspector advises an employee that the employee has grounds to file an underpayment of wages claim, to provide to the employee concerned copies of the wages records relating to the employee. However, the Crown Solicitor recently advised that this is not permitted (and may be prohibited) by the Act. As a consequence the Act must be amended to reflect the long standing policy.

Whilst the employee concerned has an independent right to obtain time and wages records from his or her current employer, forcing employees to exercise this right themselves instead of getting the records from the inspector who already has them—

- is an unjustifiable departure from past practices of industrial inspectors;
- results in an employer having to be approached twice for the same set of records;
- will result in employees and unions (and some employers) not being able to see any rationale for the necessity for the employee to separately approach an employer to obtain copies of records already obtained by an inspector.

The Bill ensures that an inspector may, if the inspector sees fit, provide to the relevant employee a copy of the time and wages record obtained from an employer.

The Bill also makes it clear that a former employee has a right to make a request of a former employer to obtain a copy of employment records and to make copies of, or take an extract from, the records.

The current situation according to the Crown Solicitor is that, irrespective of the entitlement to make an underpayment of wages claim up to six years after the event, (and indefinitely in the case of a superannuation claim) and also irrespective of the obligation of the

employer to keep records for at least six years after the date of the last entry made in the record, a former employee would not actually have a right to obtain a copy of the record other than by seeking an order from the Industrial Relations Court in the context of an underpayment of wages claim.

This clearly has the potential to waste the time of the Court in employees having to make applications for underpayment of wages even when they are uncertain as to whether or not an underpayment of wages has actually occurred. In addition and because of the cumbersome nature of the procedure which would have to be followed to obtain a copy of the employment records, it has the likelihood of bringing the system into disrepute.

The Bill will rectify this anomalous situation.

I commend this Bill to the House.

Clause 1: Short title

This clause is formal.

Clause 2: Amendment of s. 102—Records to be kept

The amendment ensures that a former employee is able to obtain access to employment records.

Clause 3: Amendment of s. 219—Confidentiality

The amendment allows a person involved in the administration of the Act to disclose information relating to an employee or former employee to that employee or former employee without a breach of confidentiality.

Ms KEY secured the adjournment of the debate.

DANGEROUS SUBSTANCES (TRANSPORT OF DANGEROUS GOODS) AMENDMENT BILL

The Hon. M.H. ARMITAGE (Minister for Government Enterprises) obtained leave and introduced a Bill for an Act to amend the Dangerous Substances Act 1979. Read a first time.

The Hon. M.H. ARMITAGE: I move:

That this Bill be now read a second time.

I seek leave to have the second reading explanation inserted in *Hansard* without my reading it.

Leave granted.

The Dangerous Substances Act provides for the keeping, handling, packaging, conveyance, use, disposal and quality of toxic, corrosive, flammable or otherwise harmful substances. This Bill concentrates on the transport of dangerous substances (commonly referred to as 'dangerous goods') and it offers many advantages to South Australian industry in terms of consistent requirements based on national and international standards.

Regulations under the Dangerous Substances Act dealing with transport commenced in South Australia in October 1981. These regulations applied the Australian Code for the Transport of Dangerous Goods By Road and Rail (ADG Code), a national document which is now used by all States and Territories of Australia. This Code has been revised several times and has served South Australia and the nation well as a common basis for State Regulation and a focal point for uniform and mutually acceptable state wide decisions on matters which affect the transport of dangerous goods.

The transport industry, in its widest application, plays a central part in the efficiency of our industries and our national and international competitiveness. For these reasons, agreements were reached between state governments and the federal government regarding micro economic reform for the transport industry. The National Road Transport Commission has been developing nationally uniform road transport law since 1992, under the Heavy Vehicle Agreement signed by Heads of Government. In South Australia the Minister for Transport has supervised these developments through the Australian Transport Advisory Council and the Ministerial Council on Road Transport.

In relation to dangerous goods, a uniform regulatory regime based upon a comprehensive set of regulations and a new 6th edition of the Australian Dangerous Goods (ADG) Code has been drafted at national level with extensive consultation with all interest groups.

In addition to national road transport reform, rail transport has also been reviewed (by other national groups) and private rail companies now operate rail transport systems. Although the National Road Transport Commission has responsibility for road transport, rail issues are included in this uniform regulatory regime.

The requirements of this Bill are drawn from the Commonwealth Road Transport Reform (Dangerous Goods) Act 1995 and it provides South Australia with a nationally consistent scheme which will support transport regulations and the ADG Code. It recognises that the South Australian Parliament should control South Australian legislation and the provisions of the Commonwealth Act have been applied in this Bill in a manner best suited to South Australia. For example, the South Australian Expiation of Offences scheme will be used in preference to the Commonwealth scheme but penalty levels are to the same as the Commonwealth in order to preserve national consistency.

Transport requirements are part of a broader range of issues addressed within the Dangerous Substances Act. Accordingly, administrative issues (such as appointment of officers and power of delegation) and enforcement matters (such as expiable offences, notices to remedy non compliance or a dangerous situation) will be consistent with the Commonwealth requirements but applied in this Bill to all Dangerous Substances issues. This ensures that officers authorised under the Act may deal with storage, handling, autogas and transport matters under one Act utilising one set of provisions. This simplifies administrative process, training, removes duplication and ensures efficient administration of the Act.

A further example of the application of the Commonwealth Act provisions in a manner best suited to South Australia may be found in the regulation making provisions. Certain of the regulation powers are only required for transport and these are separate in the Bill. Other powers are more general and are incorporated into the main regulation making powers within the Dangerous Substances Act. One extension issue is included. For transport, prohibition powers are available to identify and control substances which are too dangerous to transport and to allow the courts to prohibit a person from being involved in the activity of dangerous goods transport. No such equivalent power currently exists for storage and handling. An equivalent provision for storage and handling is included in the Bill. This provision does not allow an officer to prohibit a substance, but will allow the Minister to take this action should it be required in the future.

Key features of the dangerous goods transport reform include:

- a national licensing scheme for drivers and vehicles;
- clearer duties and responsibilities for all parties;
- greater legal liability on prime contractors and consignors;
- compulsory training for all dangerous goods tasks;
- rights for industry to appeal decisions;
- national coordination of exemptions, approvals and other administrative decisions.

The reforms proposed by this measure will not apply to certain activities covered by other specific or special legislation. In particular, the new regulations will not apply to the transport of any radioactive substance or radioactive apparatus that is subject to the operation and control of the *Radiation Protection and Control Act 1982*.

In conclusion, this Bill gives effect to uniform requirements for the transport of dangerous goods by road and rail. The development of these requirements is supported by intergovernmental agreements and extensive national consultation was undertaken during development.

This Bill will ensure that safety issues in dangerous goods transport continue to be addressed in a manner consistent with international developments. It will establish legislation in a manner best suited to South Australia but it will apply the national perspective in a manner which will allow the transport industry to operate efficiently and effectively in South Australia, across Australia and internationally.

Explanation of Clauses

The provisions of the Bill are as follows:

Clause 1: Short title

This clause is formal.

Clause 2: Commencement

The measure will be brought into operation by proclamation.

Clause 3: Amendment of long title

The long title will now make specific reference to the transporting of dangerous substances (in addition to the concept of 'conveyance').

Clause 4: Amendment of s. 5—Interpretation

It will be necessary to revise various definitions, or to introduce new definitions, in connection with the enactment of this measure. Many of the definitions will provide consistency with the Commonwealth legislation on Road Transport Reform. The concept of 'transport' is to be introduced, separate from 'conveyance'. It will be possible to apply the Commonwealth *Acts Interpretation Act 1901* in connection

with the adoption of the Road Transport Reform package in prescribed circumstances.

Clause 5: Substitution of s. 6

It will be possible, in prescribed circumstances, to extend the application of the Act to the Crown in its other capacities (so far as the legislative power of the State extends).

Clause 6: Substitution of Part II

The introduction of the Road Transport Reform package has prompted a revision of the Administration provisions of the Act. The role of the Director under the Act is now to be undertaken by one or more 'Competent Authorities' appointed by the Minister. The term 'inspector' is to be replaced by 'authorised officer' (consistent with the Road Transport Reform package). Other provisions have been up-dated.

Clause 7: Substitution of s. 12

The general duty of care under the Act has been revised, and the penalties have been increased to provide consistency with the comparable provision in the Road Transport Reform package.

Clause 8: Amendment of s. 12a—Duty in relation to plant

Clause 9: Amendment of s. 15—Licence to keep dangerous substances

Clause 10: Amendment of s. 16—Term of licences

Clause 11: Amendment of s. 19—Licence to convey dangerous substances

Clause 12: Amendment of s. 20—Term of licences

Clause 13: Amendment of s. 21—General ground for not granting or renewing licences

Clause 14: Amendment of s. 22—Surrender, suspension and cancellation of licences

These provisions all contain consequential amendments.

Clause 15: Insertion of new Parts 3AA and 3AAB

This clause provides for the insertion of two new Parts into the Act. New Part 3AA is necessary in order to allow the Road Transport Reform package, and especially the relevant regulations, rules and codes under that package, to be adopted in South Australia. The result will be a new Part in the Act that specifically deals with the transport of dangerous goods under the national scheme. New section 23AA is modelled on the regulation-making powers in the Commonwealth Act. New section 23AB replicates various offence provisions in the Commonwealth Act (with the same levels of penalties). New section 23AAC replicates section 45 of the Commonwealth Act. New section 23AAD has the same effect as section 41 of the Commonwealth Act. New Part 3AAB provides for up-dated powers of inspection and operation for authorised officers. The intention is to allow authorised officers to act in a manner comparable to authorised officers in other jurisdictions, but under provisions that are consistent with other legislation that applies in this State (e.g., the Environment Protection Act 1993).

Clause 16: Substitution of Part IIIA

The introduction of the Road Transport Reform package has prompted a review of Part IIIA of the Act. It has been decided to combine the concept of 'improvement notice' with the concept of 'prohibition notice' to provide easier administration and control in cases where action must be taken under the legislation. Other associated sections have also been revised.

Clause 17: Substitution of ss. 24 and 24a

The exemption and appeal provisions must also be revised. A Competent Authority will be required, in deciding whether to grant an exemption from a scheme that involves the uniform application of laws on a national basis, to take into account any effect that the exemption would have on the operation of that scheme. Notice of an exemption will need to be given in the *Gazette* in certain cases (consistent with the national scheme). Notice will also need to be given to corresponding authorities in prescribed circumstances. The appeal provisions are also to be adjusted to accommodate the scheme under the Road Transport Reform package.

Clause 18: Amendment of s. 25—Evidentiary provisions

These amendments provide for various evidentiary presumptions and provisions in view of the inclusion of 'dangerous goods' under the Act.

Clause 19: Insertion of ss. 25A and 25B

New section 25A introduces the ability to approve codes of practice for the purposes of the Act. The scheme is based on comparable provisions in the Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare Act 1986. Section 25B relates to the ability to use approved codes of practice in proceedings under the Act.

Clause 20: Insertion of s. 28A

New section 28A will allow the recovery of certain costs relating to the institution of proceedings and the investigation of an offence

from a convicted person, in a manner similar to section 43 of the Commonwealth Act.

Clause 21: Amendment of s. 29—Proceedings for offences

These amendments provide for the recasting of section 29 of the Act to provide consistency with similar provisions in other Acts in view of new arrangements associated with the commencement of proceedings for offences that are expiable, and the provisions of the *Summary Procedure Act 1921*.

Clause 22: Insertion of ss. 29B, 29C and 29D

Express provision is to be made with respect to the protection of authorised officers or other persons engaged in the administration of the Act from personal liability. (Liability will lie with the Crown.) Furthermore, in a manner similar to section 49 of the Commonwealth Act, no personal liability will attach to a person for an honest act undertaken to assist with an emergency or accident involving a dangerous substance. New section 29D will allow the Minister to prohibit a person from engaging in an activity involving a dangerous substance, or using a dangerous substance in a particular manner, or having a dangerous substance in his or her custody, possession or control.

Clause 23: Amendment of s. 30—Regulations

It is necessary to make various changes to the regulation-making powers under the Act.

Clause 24: Insertion of s. 31

New section 31 replicates section 34 of the Commonwealth Act so as to allow the Minister to make various orders consistent with the scheme that applies under the *National Road Transport Commission Act 1991* of the Commonwealth.

Clause 25: Further amendments of principal Act

Various consequential or statute law revision amendments are also to be made to the Act.

Clause 26: Renumbering

Due to the extensive number, and nature, of these amendments, the sections and Parts of the Act are to be renumbered in consecutive order.

Schedule 1

All penalties under the Act have been reviewed on account of the introduction of various penalties under the Road Transport Reform package and to bring the penalties in line with general policy.

Schedule 2

Various statute law revision amendments will be made to the Act, especially to ensure gender neutral language and to remove antiquated language.

Schedule 3

Various transitional provisions are included to ensure smooth transition to new terminology and arrangements on the enactment of this measure.

Ms KEY secured the adjournment of the debate.

TECHNICAL AND FURTHER EDUCATION (INDUSTRIAL JURISDICTION) AMENDMENT BILL

The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY (Minister for Education, Children's Services and Training) obtained leave and introduced a Bill for an Act to amend the Technical and Further Education Act 1975. Read a first time.

The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY: I move:

That this Bill be now read a second time.

I seek leave to have the second reading explanation inserted in *Hansard* without my reading it.

Leave granted.

In a majority decision in August 1997, the Full Industrial Relations Court of South Australia expressed a view that the provisions of the *Technical and Further Education Act 1975* evinced an intention on the part of Parliament for employment matters to be within the Minister's domain and not that of the Industrial Relations Commission of South Australia.

The views expressed by the majority judges has raised a question that employees appointed under the Technical and Further Education Act 1975 may thus not be entitled to recourse to the *Industrial and Employee Relations Act 1994* despite those employees having been subject, for many years, to awards and agreements made under State industrial legislation.

An amendment to the *Technical and Further Education Act 1975* is required so as to make it abundantly clear that there is no intention to displace the general operation of the *Industrial and Employee Relations Act 1994* and to make clear that it is the intention of Parliament that each of the *Technical and Further Education Act 1975* and the *Industrial and Employee Relations Act 1994* operate. The amendment will also make clear that awards and agreements currently operating are not excluded from having effect.

This amendment will therefore put beyond any doubt that persons appointed under the *Technical and Further Education Act 1975* will continue to be entitled to have recourse to the Industrial Relations Commission of South Australia, as has been the case for many years.

Explanation of Clauses

Clause 1: Short title

This clause is formal.

Clause 2: Insertion of s. 39AA

A new s. 39AA is inserted into the principal Act designed to make it clear that the principal Act does not exclude (and is to be taken never to have excluded) the operation of the *Industrial and Employee Relations Act 1994*, in relation to officers or persons employed by the Minister under the principal Act, and an agreement or award, order or other determination under the *Industrial and Employee Relations Act 1994* Act has effect (and will be taken always to have had effect) subject to the principal Act.

Mr CLARKE secured the adjournment of the debate.

BARLEY MARKETING (APPLICATION OF PARTS 4 AND 5) AMENDMENT BILL

The Hon. R.G. KERIN (Minister for Primary Industries, Natural Resources and Regional Development) obtained leave and introduced a Bill for an Act to amend the Barley Marketing Act 1993. Read a first time.

The Hon. R.G. KERIN: I move:

That this Bill be now read a second time.

I seek leave to have the second reading explanation inserted in *Hansard* without my reading it.

Leave granted.

The purpose of this Bill is to amend the *Barley Marketing Act 1993* to extend, for one year, the marketing powers of the Australian Barley Board.

The *Barley Marketing Act 1993* has complementary legislation in Victoria. A one year extension to the Victorian legislation is being proposed by the Government in that State.

The Bill proposes to extend Part 4 and Part 5 of the Act. It is from these provisions that the Australian Barley Board is granted single desk authority in export marketing of barley and oats and the authority to issue licences and permits for domestic marketing of barley. Currently, these Parts are due to expire on 30 June 1998.

Part 4 and Part 5 of the Act are the principal components being considered for reform under the National Competition Policy Review of Legislative Restrictions on Competition. This review is now ongoing and is expected to be completed by September 1998.

The one year extension of the marketing powers of the Australian Barley Board will permit the best possible accommodation of the outcomes of the National Competition Policy Review. Extending these provisions for one year will permit the Australian Barley Board to continue to operate, without disruption to barley and oat markets, while the Competition Policy review is completed and any resulting reforms are put in place.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Explanation of Clauses

Clause 1: Short title

This clause is formal.

Clause 2: Amendment of s. 5—Application of Parts 4 and 5

Section 5 currently applies Part 4 (Marketing) and Part 5 (Stockfeed Permits and Maltsters Licences) of the Act to barley and oats harvested in the season commencing on 1 July 1993 and thereafter for each of the next 4 seasons. The amendment proposes to extend the application of those Parts for a further season (*ie*: that season commencing 1 July 1998).

Mr CLARKE secured the adjournment of the debate.

ABORIGINAL LANDS TRUST (NATIVE TITLE) AMENDMENT BILL

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 11 December. Page 283.)

Mr CLARKE (Ross Smith): I am the Opposition's lead speaker with respect to this measure. This is not a particularly long Bill, the reasons for which are clearly set out in the Minister's second reading explanation. I do not have many questions, which are best left to Committee. I simply indicate to the Minister that the Opposition will support, in this House at this time, the second reading. However, our shadow Minister in another place is still consulting with certain representatives of the Aboriginal community, in particular the Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement. The shadow Minister may express views in that other place, depending upon certain answers given by the Minister today and the response from organisations such as the Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement. The Opposition supports the second reading and is happy to move straight to Committee.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Clauses 1 and 2 passed.

Clause 3.

Mr CLARKE: I refer the Minister to the last paragraph of her second reading explanation, in which she states:

The transfer of land to the Aboriginal Lands Trust is one way in which native title claims over some areas of land may be dealt with by the State. Some native title claimants have expressed the fear that their native title rights may be affected by transfers to the trust. This Bill makes it clear that future transfers to the Aboriginal Lands Trust, and dealings with land by the trust, will not affect or extinguish native title unless specifically agreed to by the native titleholders.

The Opposition's concern, and I am seeking information on this from the Minister, is that, from my reading of the Bill and the second reading explanation, it seems that, by agreement between the Aboriginal Lands Trust, the Minister and native titleholders, if there are any, native title could be extinguished with respect to land even though there may be native title claimants. The Opposition's concern, or what I am trying to clarify with the Minister, is whether that is in fact the case. For example, if there are no native title holders, it will be simply an agreement between the Minister and the trust to extinguish native title, even though there may be claimants but their claims have not been resolved; or, alternatively, the trust, the Minister and the established native titleholders could do a deal to extinguish native title, but claimants could still be out in the ether, so to speak, either now or potentially into the future and their rights could be affected without their having a say as to whether or not native title should be extinguished in the first place.

The Hon. D.C. KOTZ: The honourable member has certainly identified the very concerns that should be addressed, and that, of course, is one specific reason why this Bill is before us today. The insertion of the new section clarifies that, in future, the vesting of land in the trust, or any dealings with land of the trust, will not affect native title in the land. The new section expressly recognises the potential for the trust to enter agreements with the holders of native title and the Minister under which native title may be affected or extinguished. Such agreements are contemplated by section 21 of the Commonwealth Native Title Act 1993. As the honourable member correctly states, new section 16AAA(3) provides:

... the trust may, by agreement with the Minister and the holders of native title in land, deal with the land so as to extinguish or affect native title in the land.

If the honourable member's concerns are that the Minister can take a forward role in this matter to enable extinguishment of native title, that is not correct. That is expressly why this provision has been inserted. In effect, clause 3 requires three different and quite rigorous processes to take place, and the Minister would be involved in the last of those processes. In the first instance the trust, in agreement with the holders of native title, would go to the Federal Court to perhaps confirm that, in the first instance, there was a native title claim situation.

The second step would require a rigorous process of establishing whether the claim was correct and, if the Federal Court accepted that that was the case, discussions would then take place between the trust and the Aboriginal people involved. The agreement that would be made would involve that group of people. The Minister would then become involved to enable the agreement reached to come to fruition. With respect to people who in the past have felt or feared that any land transfer to the trust would, in effect, negate any of their holdings or claims, this clause ensures that that does not happen and that their native title claims will be secure when the land is transferred to the trust.

Mr CLARKE: I understand what the Minister is saying. New subsections (1) and (2) provide:

The vesting of land in the trust does not extinguish or affect native title. . . No dealing by the trust with land vested in it extinguishes or affects native title. . .

The trouble with respect to new subsection (3) is that if you are a native title claimant any rights which you think you have or which you may subsequently be found to have in law can be affected by the Minister, the trust and any native title holders who are recognised as such at that point in terms of extinguishing native title. A claimant may still have their hand up wanting the courts to determine whether or not they have any legality in law to be regarded as a native titleholder. You could have a situation where as of today the Minister, the trust and any native title holders—and there may not always be native title holders—agree to extinguish native title while there is a group of claimants out there who are still seeking to establish their legal right to be native title holders.

This issue may be resolved in 12 months but by that time it could be determined that they are not a claimant but a holder of native title, but by then it could be too late because an agreement had been entered into which extinguished native title rights. For those claimants, who as I say some time up the track may have established their rights, it is rather superfluous to have rights when the ground has been cut away from under them. Does the Minister see what I am getting at? What protections are there for prospective native title claimants in the future?

The Hon. D.C. KOTZ: It is extremely important that the honourable member understands in the first instance that the Commonwealth law is very much a part of the whole process of getting to the stage of whether or not a claim is even accepted as a native title claim. The Commonwealth law overrides State laws. Any of the determinations on native title are required to go through the process of a Federal court. It would then be entirely up to the Federal court to take into consideration the claims or the fact that a claim has been established. This clause enables us as a State to take part in ensuring that all aspects which relate to people in our State are considered. But the main area of consensus or decision

making will come from the Federal court. Until that happens we as a State have no say in whether native title can be extinguished or established.

Mr HANNA: I am proud to have made some contribution to the formulation of the South Australian native title legislation and am proud to be a member of a Party which upholds and respects native title. The Labor Party respects the property rights of pastoral leaseholders and owners of freehold interest in land and all the other property rights recognised in our society. First, my question relates to something the Minister just said in relation to the process for determining native title where there seems to be a suggestion that this was entirely a matter for the Federal courts and Federal processes. Is it not the case that with our State legislation and, in a sense, with the permission of the Commonwealth legislation, we have our own State system through the Environment, Resources and Development Court to resolve issues of native title in South Australia?

The Hon. D.C. KOTZ: The honourable member is quite correct; that is accurate. I believe that at this stage our courts have not been used by any claimants to native title.

Mr HANNA: My question in relation to clause 3 is a drafting matter that the Minister may be able to clarify. I leave aside the first part of new section 16AAA, which clause 3 proposes to insert, because I do not think anyone here would argue, given the purposes of the Aboriginal Lands Trust legislation, that a vesting of land in the trust should in any way extinguish or diminish native title in that land. I leave that part of clause 3 to one side. With respect to the other two operative parts of the clause, it seems to me that there might be a contradiction where new subsection (2) provides that no dealing by the trust with land vested in it extinguishes or affects native title in the land; but clause 3 clearly provides that dealings with such land can extinguish or affect native title on the proviso that there is an agreement with the Minister and holders of native title. Is that not a contradiction? Is it intended that clause 3 is more or less an exception to the preceding clause?

The Hon. D.C. KOTZ: Again, the honourable member is quite right in his reading of the two clauses but, in effect, they both do separate things. New subsection (2) quite clearly sets that out in terms of the mere fact of a land transfer to the trust. That action alone will not extinguish or affect native title in the land. It is extremely important to establish quite clearly that, if there is any land movement or transfer to the trust, that in itself will secure for any native title claimant or native title holder the fact that that action cannot extinguish the rights, either perceived or agreed upon.

Clause 3 deals with different terminology and a different means of enabling the claimants at least to identify that fact so that their native title claims can still be made and held outside of the fact that the initial agreement to transfer land does not extinguish native title. Clause 3 enables those claims to be available to them so that arrangements can be made through the Federal process and through the eventual agreement among all the stakeholders, if you like. That includes the trust, the people who may have native title claims and, indeed at that stage, the Minister.

Mr HANNA: As I understand the Minister, one could interpret new subsections (2) and (3) as providing that native title in Aboriginal lands trust land will not be diminished in any way unless and until there is an agreement with the Minister and the holders of native title which so diminishes that native title.

The Hon. D.C. KOTZ: That is correct, remembering that part of that process, too, is to include the Federal Court for any established native title claim.

Mr CLARKE: I know I am belabouring the point, but I followed with interest the Minister's answers to the questions from the member for Mitchell. I understand all of that, but with respect to native title claimants they are left out like a shag on a rock, so to speak; they have no standing in this exercise. If the Minister decides to extinguish native title and she has the agreement of the holders, if there are any, and the trust, the claimants do not get their nose through the door.

The Hon. D.C. KOTZ: I am afraid the honourable member is picking up a point that is not valid. In fact, this Bill in its entirety secures the rights of future, past and current claimants. It is open at all times for those claims to take place, and there is a very strenuous and rigorous process before it would reach the point where any land area would then have an extinguishment placed on it over native title. I assure the honourable member that in all areas of the law the rights of those who may claim native title has been protected quite solidly.

Clause passed.

Title passed.

Bill read a third time and passed.

WORKERS REHABILITATION AND COMPENSATION (SELF MANAGED EMPLOYER SCHEME) AMENDMENT BILL

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 11 December. Page 283.)

Ms KEY (Hanson): I notice from the Minister's second reading explanation on 11 December 1997 that self managed employers have been linked to exempt employer status employers and also self insurers. Although it is admirable that the Minister, or his advisers, say that employers having a hands on approach to workers' compensation claims in their workplace will advantage workers, I will be interested to hear the evidence that the Minister has gathered to back up his claims. My experience in the workers' compensation area is that often that makes matters worse for workers rather than better, but I am sure that he has evidence to support his claim.

I am pleased to hear that what is thought to happen with self managed employers is that claims will be dealt with more promptly with the full knowledge of the work situation. I can certainly see some advantages of claims being coordinated through the workplace. Hopefully, the claims manager will have an understanding of the range of duties available, especially when people are not able to fulfil their full capacity, having been injured or suffering from an illness associated with their work. Having spoken to the trade unions that have members or employers that are under the workers' compensation scheme, I note that there has been reluctant support on their behalf.

I share the trade unions' philosophy that, unfortunately, our WorkCover system has been destroyed to the point where yet another amendment allowing more contracting out or more privatisation of WorkCover will only make our WorkCover system the worst system in Australia, whereas previously we had the best WorkCover system for workers and employers in Australia. I guess we continue to wreck what was a very good system. Certainly from where I stand as an ex-workers' compensation advocate, I believe that this is just another nail in the coffin to ensure that we have a

workers' compensation scheme that is worse than we had, if it is possible, pre-1986.

Certainly, I could continue making other comments for a couple of hours without reservation, but it would be more appropriate if most of the questions I have regarding this Bill are dealt with in Committee. Therefore, I will ask specific questions at that time.

Mr HANNA (Mitchell): I support the second reading of this Bill but, at the same time, I wish to place on the record some concerns I have about the implications of it passing through Parliament. I note that the Labor Party is not being obstructive about this, and indeed the union movement has not jumped up and down about it, but nonetheless there are some concerns. At the outset I say that the concerns, to some extent, are for small employers, that is, businesses where there are not that many employees, as well as the workers who will be affected by this legislation. It is true that workers' compensation rights are not to be changed by this Bill: it is purely to change the class of people who can administer workers' compensation claims.

However, by opening up the administration of claims to small businesses, even if it be groups of small businesses, the danger is that that licence will be given to people who do not have the requisite expertise, let alone compassion, to deal with the claims. We have already struck one problem when the last raft of workers' compensation amendments passed through this Parliament a couple of years ago. I remember that there was a particular debate about the privacy of medical records. To the Liberal Government's shame, a clause was inserted into our workers rehabilitation and compensation legislation which permitted an employer, upon request, to obtain all the medical records of an injured worker. This caused grief, anguish and suffering to many people, particularly those who work in a relatively small workplace in terms of employee numbers and everyone knows each other and sees each other on a daily basis.

For example, when a worker turns up for work the next morning and their employer has just been reading their detailed psychiatric history, it is a real infringement on a worker's dignity, particularly when it details their marital history, sexual problems and all the sorts of things a psychiatric report covers when there is mental injury as well as physical injury in a workers' compensation claim case. The issue of privacy and dignity is not so much of a problem in major corporations. After all, for many years now corporations such as Woolworths, the *Advertiser* and many others have run their own workers' compensation scheme, albeit with the rights and entitlements stipulated by legislation. In those cases specific officers within the employer organisation are experts in human resource issues, occupational health and safety and workers' compensation law, and they are able to look at the claims relatively impartially, although there will always be a tendency to minimise a worker's entitlements, but that is the law of the jungle.

The problem becomes acute in a workplace that is small in terms of numbers. Where there are only have three or four employees, and everyone knows each other and deals with each other on a daily basis, I believe that it is an infringement of workers' rights if the boss has an intimate knowledge of not only physical injuries but mental, emotional and sexual history. It becomes an additional problem when the boss in that situation not only has access to your personal medical records but also is in control of the claim itself. It will be very difficult for many employers in that situation to be as

impartial as a trained and knowledgeable person in the workers' compensation field. There will be personal issues that cut across a fair assessment of workers' claims in that situation, and my prediction is that that is what we will see, unless the application of the criteria, which do provide some safeguards in this Bill, is very carefully measured in terms of each application for an employer to become self-managed.

I said at the outset that my concern is for not just injured workers in this situation but also employers. I can tell you what I mean by comparing this measure to the unfair dismissal legislation, in relation to which for decades there has been much anguish on the part of small business owners and managers, simply because they do not understand the rules. In many cases—this is certainly not universal—they just do not understand the rules dealing with fair dismissal. Consequently, when it all blows up and the matter goes to the Industrial Relations Commission, there is a big fight and, in cases where the employer is rapped over the knuckles, they are left blaming the system, blaming the law and running to the Liberal Party to make regulations like the unfair dismissal regulations which were knocked out twice by Parliament in the past six months or so because of their blatant unfairness, whereby unfair dismissal laws were simply not to apply at all in businesses of 15 employees or fewer.

The point is that, with unfair dismissal laws, if employers were fully versed in the proprieties and the laws surrounding dismissal, the Industrial Relations Commission would hardly have any work. But in too many cases, particularly the suburban shop, small factory or petrol station, there is not sufficient knowledge about how to go about these things; there is not best practice in terms of human resources procedures. I am afraid that this will happen here, too, in terms of workers' compensation claims. That is why mistakes will be made, corners will be cut and there will perhaps be ignorance about how to run things. I am afraid that, unless those safeguards, in terms of criteria, are very carefully administered, we will have players in the market—in terms of managing workers' compensation claims—who will cause grief not only for the injured workers but for themselves as well. So, I just sound that note of concern. When this system is up and running and we have self-managed employers working under these workers' compensation schemes within their workplaces in the next few years, we will see how that prediction is borne out.

The Hon. G.M. GUNN (Stuart): I am pleased to follow the member for Mitchell. He at least has some idea of what we are debating, unlike his Leader, who was not aware of what we are debating on this occasion, like—

The Hon. M.D. Rann interjecting:

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: Mr Deputy Speaker, I ask that the Leader of the Opposition withdraw that comment in relation to me.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will require the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw that remark when he returns to the Chamber.

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: Mr Deputy Speaker, you have the authority to order him to come in forthwith. The Leader deliberately left the Chamber with a view to avoiding his responsibilities to this Chamber.

Mr HANNA: I rise on a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. Having heard your wise ruling on the matter, I believe that the member for Stuart is now questioning your order. Is that not improper?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, there is no point of order. I have not made a final decision on the matter that the member for Stuart has raised. I ask the member for Stuart to continue with his speech and I will seek counsel on the necessary action to be taken.

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: In relation to the Bill before us, I was referring to the fact that at least the member for Mitchell is aware that we are debating an important issue. This legislation sets out in some detail the types of employees and the responsibilities that go with it if people are to qualify as an exempt employer under the Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act. The honourable member went on at some length about the unfair dismissal laws, and that is a matter which I will be happy to debate with the honourable member. However, I believe that I might not get the same latitude that he had in relation to this matter. This is an important matter and it relates directly to the ability of employers to offer employment to inexperienced people, something which I believe we all want to encourage. Therefore, the provisions of that Act are important, as are the provisions of this legislation.

As I read the legislation, it allows a group of employers to band together to become an exempt employer. I would envisage that something like a group training scheme which employs apprentices would qualify as an exempt employer, and I would like further information from the Minister in relation to that matter.

One of the issues that has caused considerable concern to employers over a long time has been the administration of the Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act—the manner in which it has been administered and the cost involved. No reasonable person would expect or want to have people who are employed to be unfairly discriminated against. However, one has to recognise that employers must have a system in place which is fair and reasonable, which is not cumbersome to administer, which is simple and which does not get in the way of the efficient operation of the business or make it difficult for employers to employ people. Where there are difficulties, where there are high costs or where you have unnecessary bureaucracy, particularly in small business, they take the easy way out and say, 'We will make do without employing someone. We will reduce our output, we will reduce production, and we will not put up with humbug.'

I am pleased to say that, since the amendments to the Act, there have been considerable improvements in the way in which the scheme has operated. I believe that, in the long term, the best possible solution for the administration of the scheme is for it to be privatised. I believe that, in the long term, that is the best way, in the interests of the taxpayers and of those people who are going to be in receipt of the benefits. That is—

Mr Koutsantonis interjecting:

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: I do not know whether the honourable member who is interjecting and carrying on has had any experience whatsoever of employing people, or whether he has had any experience in the real world. If he had, I do not believe that he would make those sorts of comments because, at the end of the day, what we should be working towards is the best result for the citizens of South Australia, and the best result for the people who are injured and who need compensation rehabilitation, and I believe that those two very important objectives can be obtained at the minimum cost to the employer—and that is to the community of South Australia—because that gives us the best opportunity to ensure that we have the maximum number of people

employed. That has to be the end result—not some ideological debate.

Members interjecting:

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: That should be the prime objective of every member in this Chamber. That should be the reason why members come into this Chamber—to ensure that we have in place flexible and sensible laws which encourage employment and which deal fairly with the people who have been unfortunate enough to be injured or maimed or have some other problem. We should make sure that the scheme is easily accessible and operates quickly, in the interests of both the employee and the employer.

A rehabilitation industry has grown up with the introduction of this legislation. It has been suggested to me that it is in the best interests of some of these people to keep these matters going *ad infinitum*. Constituents have come to me most distraught that the whole scheme has become bogged down with their lawyers and with the corporation's lawyers. When they hand you a file of paper two or three inches thick, you think, 'Where are we at?' If the Bill can short circuit and streamline this operation, that would be in everyone's interest. After I have gone through the wad of material of some of my constituents who have come to see me, I have felt extremely frustrated on their behalf, because it is a serial that has gone on for longer than *Blue Hills*. Some of the difficulties—

Members interjecting:

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: One could be uncharitable and say that the honourable member has not been here long and he has not gained any wisdom in that time. The honourable member has developed the skill of nonsense, buffoonery and everything else that goes with someone who really does not have an original thought to put forward. However, he is an expert in disruption: I give him full marks for that. The honourable member should have some kind thoughts about me. I gave him more publicity than he could ever hope to get. I put him on the front page of the *Advertiser*, and he never appreciates it. What I cannot understand is that he has never appreciated the help and assistance I gave him. He would sit there some days with a pencil in his mouth. That reminds me of when we used to trim the teeth of horses: we would put a gag on them. I would have liked to give the honourable member a gag.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member should return to the Bill.

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: I was unfortunately sidetracked on the issue—and I am not easily sidetracked, because I am rather shy and retiring when I get on my feet.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: Unlike the honourable member, I am constructive. Unlike the Leader, who makes irrational comments and then runs away like a spoilt child—

Members interjecting:

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: Let me say to the honourable member, we all know that, the more desperate he becomes with regard to his position, the more irrational, vindictive and vicious he will become.

Members interjecting:

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: One of the things the honourable member never wants to address is the real issues or the real facts. He has no real regard for the welfare of the people of South Australia: he has regard only for his own misplaced

position in history, which will not treat him very kindly. At the end of the day, whether we are debating this Bill or any other matter, the prime consideration of members in this place should be to ensure that whatever we do is in the long-term best interest of the people of South Australia. That is what we are here for. Whether or not the honourable member likes it, I have been sent here 10 times. He has tried very hard to get rid of me, but he has not succeeded. I can recall when they ran two candidates—

Members interjecting:

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: One of the things the honourable member loves is to hear his own voice.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I ask the member for Stuart to come back to the Bill.

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: Certainly, Mr Deputy Speaker; I have been somewhat provoked. We know that the Leader is getting a little frustrated because he has lined up the television cameras, and he has—

Mr WRIGHT: I rise on a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member is out of his seat and cannot speak.

Mr WRIGHT: My apologies for being out of my seat, Mr Deputy Speaker. I ask that your ruling be upheld and that the honourable member return to the Bill.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I have asked the honourable member to do that, and I trust that he will do it now.

Members interjecting:

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The debate would be helped if the member for Ross Smith remained silent.

The Hon. M.D. Rann interjecting:

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! That goes for the Leader of the Opposition as well.

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: In conclusion, I sincerely hope that this measure is a success. I hope that the Government continues to be flexible in this matter and to make changes to the Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act which assist with the administration by employers and assist people working in those instrumentalities, because we should ensure that there are no impediments to the employing of people, particularly young people. As someone who has had some experience in this area, I know that the last thing employers want is unnecessary bureaucracy and paper. These organisations have the ability to require a huge amount of unnecessary filling out of forms, completing of reports and various other requirements that take a great deal of time, particularly of self-managers. Therefore, I commend the Minister for bringing forward the legislation, and I look forward to seeing it being implemented.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Before I call on the next speaker, I ask the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw the words that he uttered in regard to the member for Stuart.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: This poses me with a conundrum, because—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I want a withdrawal.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: What did I say?

Mr Brokenshire: You called him a liar.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. M.D. RANN: Did I say that?

Mr Brokenshire: Yes.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: I am a bit confused about this, because I have here a quote of what I said: 'At least I don't lie to my electorate.' I will not withdraw, 'I don't lie to my electorate,' because I do not. However, I am prepared to

withdraw 'at least' if that causes offence to the member for Stuart.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Chair recognises that as a clear reflection, and I ask the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: I am happy to withdraw this, but on the basis that it is not taken that I am withdrawing comments that I do not lie to my electorate, because I do not.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I want an unqualified withdrawal from the Leader of the Opposition.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: An unqualified withdrawal, Sir.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I want an unqualified withdrawal.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: I have just given an unqualified withdrawal, Sir.

The Hon. M.H. ARMITAGE (Minister for Government Enterprises): This is an important but small piece of legislation with potentially large effects. By allowing self-management by the employer through the delegation of WorkCover's powers, it means that employers will have direct control over the determination and management of claims. The thinking behind this Bill is that it will encourage joint action between employers and employees to prevent and manage work injury.

A number of matters were raised by the Opposition indicating that self-management has led to the wrecking of a good system, yet clearly where there are palpable benefits to the system with unfunded liabilities decreasing and hence a better ability of the Government to fund the scheme on behalf of injured workers, I find that an amazing claim. I understand that a number of matters will be addressed in the Committee stage, so I look forward to responding to those questions. This is an important piece of legislation extending a pilot program that has been very successful.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Clauses 1 and 2 passed.

Clause 3.

Ms KEY: I seek a reassurance from the Minister that this self-managed employers' scheme is to have association with the exempt employer status provisions. I am seeking information on whether the performance indicators and the tests that are used for employers to get status as exempt employers or self-insurers will be translated into the provisions for self-managed employers.

The Hon. M.H. ARMITAGE: I am informed that very similar criteria will be utilised. In the first instance there will be approval of employers and assessment and monitoring of performance if they become self-managed employers.

Clause passed.

Clause 4.

Ms KEY: How will the scheme be monitored and reviewed? Again, will it be in the same form as the exempt employers or self-insurance system?

The Hon. M.H. ARMITAGE: The process will be very similar. Anyone who is approved will be subject to audit. They will have to comply with the criteria under the Act and their case workers will have been credited by WorkCover. The intent of the honourable member's question is whether there will be sufficient controls, and we believe there will be. The member for Hanson inquired whether there are benefits for workers. I am informed that, under this scheme, the return to work occurs in a considerably diminished time, we think because of the exclusion of a third party and the necessary

administrative load that goes with that. We believe there is a definite benefit to workers in that instance.

Clause passed.

Remaining clauses (5 and 6) and title passed.

Bill read a third time and passed.

SUPPLY BILL

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 17 February. Page 325.)

The Hon. M.D. RANN (Leader of the Opposition): Today I want to speak in favour of supply, a very important supply—this State's electricity supply. On Tuesday of last week, Premier Olsen walked into Parliament and told South Australians that he would sell their electricity supply. That is despite more than two years of denials from John Olsen, first as Infrastructure Minister and then as Premier, in the face of leaks. This is despite further denials in an election campaign just a few months ago in which privatisation, explicitly electricity privatisation, was a key issue. I said at the time, 'Let's make this election a referendum on ETSA's privatisation,' but the Premier would not have it. The Premier would not put that question to the people because he said that he had no plans to sell ETSA or Optima.

The Premier has no mandate for these electricity sales. The Olsen Government has no moral authority to make these sales and, as I said during the debate in the final week of the election campaign, 'Premier, South Australia is not yours to sell.' Instead of putting this policy before the people we have seen a grotesque pattern of deceit for which this Premier and this Government will pay a political price. It is not hard to work out why the Premier lacked the courage to put his electricity privatisation to the people. He would have been defeated because of the public reaction to his disastrous water outsourcing contract.

Let us remember what we were all told would happen under the Premier's water deal. We were going to get cheaper water, more jobs and a world-class water industry. It would be majority Australian owned and service would be the world's best practice. These were more than political promises, we were told: this was guaranteed. It was all in the contract. But what did we get instead? Our water is now more expensive, with prices for the average household use increasing 25 per cent. We have fewer jobs. The new operator, United Water, cut the work force dramatically, and we are still waiting for all these other jobs to arrive. It is 100 per cent foreign owned by the French, British and now the Americans who have taken over Kinhill and, instead of world's best practice, we have the Bolivar pong—a stench that covered our city for weeks leading up to the election; an all too pungent symbol of the Premier's failure.

It seems that nothing we were told about the water deal by John Olsen actually came to pass but then, of course, there was the bungling: final bids arriving four hours late while the probity auditor was out to dinner; and the tape ran out in the security camera. There was the shabby involvement of the 'spivs', such as Terry Bourke and Kortlang who were showered with taxpayers' money. With all this experience, is it any wonder that South Australians have reacted so negatively to the Premier's sale of ETSA and Optima? They know that they will pay dearly again. There is also a tremendous anger about just how blatant that breach of trust was.

South Australians have been the victims of a clear conspiracy to deceive over the water contract, and here we go

again with electricity. Let us recall some of the iron-clad guarantees that South Australians received from Minister and Premier Olsen that our electricity system would not be privatised. Let us listen to this: in April 1996 Labor revealed documentation showing detailed legal work being done to plan a privatisation of ETSA that avoided State Parliament. The Premier, on ABC TV news, responded with this unequivocal guarantee:

The Government is not considering, nor ever will it be considering, privatising, either in full or part, the Electricity Trust of South Australia. [Not ever].

That is what the Premier said—no ifs, buts or maybes. On 16 September 1997, the Premier was still in denial mode on Channel 9 news when he said:

We are not pursuing a privatisation course with ETSA.

On 21 September, the Adelaide *Advertiser*, in relation to power during the election campaign (when we again said that ETSA would be privatised after the election) quoted the Premier as follows:

I have consistently said there will be no privatisation and that position remains.

In response to allegations from Labor that the Liberals would privatise ETSA and Optima after the election, the hapless Deputy Premier told Channel 9:

This is obviously part of a Labor lie campaign.

That is what the Deputy Premier said: 'a Labor lie campaign'. The Deputy Premier told ABC TV:

There is no sale of ETSA. There is no plan for the sale of Optima Energy—full stop.

Does the Deputy Premier remember that? He said, 'Full stop.' Then, suddenly, on 17 February 1998 the Liberals announce that they will sell ETSA and Optima—the biggest broken promise in South Australian political history and a pattern of deceit of breathtaking proportions. No wonder that South Australians do not trust their Premier any more. In fact, they are using just those words about John Olsen: 'How can we trust him?' They are the very words that have come up in Liberal Party focus group polling in recent weeks. That was the polling, by the way, that was withheld from the Liberals' love-in—its Party room stay-away, with bungy jumping—a few weeks ago. The people are saying that they do not trust this Premier. That was the bit of the poll that was left out. Imagine what they are saying now.

The Premier is now actually trying to convince South Australians that he made the decision to privatise ETSA no earlier than December of last year, just like the stories with the water contract that just do not bear scrutiny. The Premier is claiming that two distinct reports convinced him to privatise: the first was the Auditor-General's assessment that there was a potential risk of \$1 billion to \$2 billion in the new electricity market; the second was an apparently secret report, allegedly prompted by the Auditor-General's Report and commissioned for an undisclosed amount of money by the Premier from a person or persons unknown. The Premier claims that he did not see the Auditor-General's Report, nor was he briefed on it, until December when it was tabled.

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. M.D. RANN: I will be dealing with that in a few moments. The Premier claimed that there was a convention whereby Ministers were not told what was said about their departments in the Auditor-General's Report before it was published. Of course, no such convention exists. The Auditor-General, in his evidence before the Economic and

Finance Committee of the Parliament on Monday, certainly had not heard of such a convention.

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. M.D. RANN: I will be dealing with Mr Kowalick in a moment. He said that he supplied details of his concerns in relation to the electricity markets risks and the national market to no fewer than seven agencies in July last year. That is what the Auditor-General said. While it was to remain confidential within Government, the Auditor-General said that he did not care to whom it was shown. But apparently this convention prevented people, such as the head of John Olsen's own department, from telling him about this matter.

Mr Kowalick issued a statement that told us he was concerned about the upcoming election and the potential for lobbying in the audit process. Pretending for the moment that such a convention exists, how do we then explain Mr Kowalick's failure to advise the Premier between the election date of 11 October and the first week of December—a six week gap? The election was no longer an issue after 11 October. Lobbying could hardly influence the audit process given that the Auditor-General's Report was completed, printed and held under lock and key in the offices of the Speaker of the House and the President of the Legislative Council from late September.

It beggars belief that the head of Premier and Cabinet, the Under Treasurer, the Office of Energy Policy, ETSA, the SA Generation Corporation and others would all collectively fail to pass on the Auditor's concerns to the Premier, Treasurer or Infrastructure Minister for four months. Let me be very clear: I do not believe that Mr Kowalick, in his statutory declaration, is telling the truth but, if he is telling the truth in his statutory declaration, then his statutory declaration is a signed confession of incompetence. Here is a man who had a senior position at the former State Bank (he was in charge of its prudential management) now admitting that he learned nothing from that experience, or the royal commission that followed, and failed once again to pass on crucial information.

Let me point out that I was a Minister with seven portfolio areas and more than a score of Government agencies. The role of the Auditor-General is not only to report historically on problems but to be proactive in identifying problems as they emerge to enable Ministers to deal with those problems. The Auditor-General has senior staff working permanently in departments, such as the Department of Education, and departments such as TAFE and the former EWS. The Auditor-General also periodically visits chief executive officers and Ministers to point out serious problems that will be reported on and to advise Ministers on pre-emptive action so that they can avoid an adverse reaction in his report by taking steps to remedy the problem.

For instance, when the Auditor-General advised my chief executive officers of problems or potential problems, they told me immediately so that we could take the appropriate action. The convention was that the chief executive officer, under the Westminster system, had to advise the Minister immediately so that we could take action. If the Auditor-General warned, for instance, one of my chief executive officers of a \$20 million problem, let alone a \$2 billion risk, in my portfolios and this was not passed on to me as Minister, I would have sought their resignation immediately. Are we to believe that Mr Kowalick, the Under Treasurer and ETSA chiefs—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. M.D. RANN: —are collectively so incompetent—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader will resume his seat. Some of the comments I made in Question Time are equally applicable this afternoon. When the Chair calls members to order, they will observe that request, remain at order and not continue to interject across the Chamber. The honourable Leader.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: Are we to believe—

An honourable member interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. M.D. RANN: —that Mr Kowalick, the Under Treasurer and ETSA chiefs are collectively so incompetent as to remain totally silent on this issue for four months? I will watch very carefully to see whether any of these top public servants receive a bonus on top of their hefty salaries, because if they do it will not be for protecting the public interest but for protecting their bosses—the Ministers.

Let us return to the Auditor-General. The Premier has made that story harder to believe by the extraordinary importance he has placed on the Auditor's findings. Let us remember that it is the Auditor's advice in his report that has been quoted by the Premier as being one of the major reasons for his need to sell. But what weight does the Auditor place upon these risks? There are two areas of risk he does identify. First, there are risks to our competition payments of \$36 million a year from next year's budget onwards for 10 years, and risks to another \$600 million or so in Commonwealth grants over that period; in other words, \$1 billion over 10 years. I will have more to say about these risks later. Secondly, there are the normal commercial risks anyone in a free market experiences. When asked about these matters by the Economic and Finance Committee of the Parliament earlier this week, the Auditor-General said:

The risks that we identified were risks which . . . are apparent on any close analysis of an industry which is dependent upon markets. I did not see them as anything extraordinary but I saw them as matters which required very close management. . . they are generic risks to anybody involved in commercial activities.

The Auditor is saying that when you enter a competitive market, when you lose your monopoly—a monopoly pricing power—there are risks, risks that he says are obvious and nothing extraordinary. It is also worth remembering that while the Auditor considered his concerns about the role of parliamentary secretaries so significant—the Joan Hall soccer stadium business—he went directly to the Premier. That is an extraordinary situation. He went straight to the Premier. But apparently he did not feel so motivated about the issue of the risks in terms of ETSA. Why? I suppose it is because in his assessment the risks while serious and requiring appropriate attention were also obvious and, in his words, nothing extraordinary.

The Premier, who as Infrastructure Minister was involved intimately in setting up the new national electricity market, says that apparently, even though he claimed he was part of the process of setting it up, he knew absolutely nothing about these risks until the Auditor mentioned them or until he read the Auditor-General's Report when it came down in December. The fact is that these risks date back to the agreements to enter into international electricity markets, agreements signed in 1994 and 1995 by the then Premier Dean Brown. The Auditor was asked whether these risks would have been capable of being identified for at least a couple of years. His response was:

The short answer would probably be yes, they have.

So much for the Minister for Infrastructure who became Premier. But John Olsen wants us to believe that he did not know anything of these risks until December 1997. John Olsen was certainly advised about those risks well before the October 1997 election. The Industry Commission, in the report that John Olsen personally commissioned—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader will refer to honourable members by their title or electorate.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: The Industry Commission, in the report the Premier personally commissioned in January 1996 and which was brought down in April of that year, referred to the commercial risks of entering the market. It said—and I want to quote this to the House—as follows:

With greater competition in generation in South Australia, the substantial investment by South Australia in ETSA generation will be at greater risk. If the value of this investment is eroded by competition, the Government could see a reduction in the stream of dividends and tax revenues it currently receives from ETSA.

That was the report which the Premier commissioned when he was Minister for Infrastructure while the other Premier was in power in January 1996 and which he reported upon in April 1996. If he does not read the reports, why does he commission them? We understand that there were many other occasions in which the issues of commercial risk were discussed in front of the Premier and the Minister for Infrastructure and others. In time, this conspiracy of deceit on this issue will become clearer and clearer, as it did with the water deal.

Now, what of the threat that we will not receive our competition payments unless we sell? One billion dollars is at risk over about 10 years, but it is not just a matter of commercial risk: there is a political risk—or a threat. The Premier has said that, unless we sell, the National Competition Council will withhold payment of our competition money, money already factored into budget estimates. Well, it will not do that because it cannot. The only people who have the power to withhold competition payments from South Australia are John Howard and Peter Costello.

The competition council will make a recommendation to the Federal Treasurer and to the Federal Government which will then choose or not choose to take action. I guess the question to ask of the Premier is: when did John Howard and Peter Costello threaten him that they would withhold these funds? Perhaps he could detail what they said, because I can assure the Premier of bipartisan support in the fight against the Howard Government if it tries to withhold this money.

The Hon. G.A. Ingerson interjecting:

The Hon. M.D. RANN: Just tell me this, Deputy Premier: why in the lead up to a Federal election is the Federal Liberal Government—Trish Draper, Chris Gallus, Susan Jeanes, Barry Wakelin and Trish Worth—threatening to rip \$1 billion from South Australian hospitals, schools, universities and so on unless we sell ETSA? Is that what you are telling us to believe in an election year? If that is the case, I can tell the House this: if the Premier did not want the last State election to be a referendum on ETSA, this Federal election will be in this State. Are we being blackmailed by the Liberal Government in Canberra? It would be blackmail against the agreements signed—and I saw the signature saying it did not require privatisation—by the former Premier Dean Brown in April 1995. Let me read from the COAG competition principles signed by the then Premier in February 1994. Clause 1 (5) states—and I am sure the Deputy Premier has read the agreement—

The Hon. G.A. Ingerson interjecting:

The Hon. M.D. RANN: Let me quote directly just to explain it to him. This agreement—

The Hon. G.A. Ingerson interjecting:

The Hon. M.D. RANN: Well, you keep referring to the agreement that has got us into trouble. Let me read the agreement to you, as follows:

This agreement is neutral with respect to the nature and form of ownership of business enterprises. It is not intended to promote public or private ownership.

So, in order to dud South Australia, your Government in Canberra will break the deal that you signed. Let them face South Australians at the polls in Federal seats. Under the heading 'Structural Reform of Public Monopolies' the same agreement states:

Each party [meaning each Government] is free to determine its own agenda for reform of public monopolies.

That is the Federal Government now breaching this agreement by demanding that we sell our power assets. Of course, the Premier has indicated that he is willing to stand up to the National Competition Council. He is very brave. He said that it is an unelected body and that he will stand up to it—but not about our electricity industry, not about that vital section of our economy. In that area the Premier has indicated that we must just roll over to these unelected bureaucrats to whom he refers. The issue where he is prepared to stand up to the National Competition Council and where he is prepared to fight it is over our casino monopoly. They are his values; they are his priorities. He is willing to fight over pokies but not over our power industry and its workers. This is what the Premier said about fighting the National Competition Council to defend our casino monopoly.

The Hon. G.A. Ingerson interjecting:

The Hon. M.D. RANN: Let us listen to what your present Premier says—not the former and future Premier but the present Premier—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. M.D. RANN: He said:

I propose to take it up. I do not think it is appropriate for a non-elected body that sits across and presides on major policy issues in Australia should be dictating to duly elected State Government what they can and cannot do.

Bingo! He is prepared to say that about the pokies but he is not prepared to take them on over electricity industry. How about showing the same courage in taking on the big fight for our power industry? This Premier is prepared to go to the barricades over our casino monopoly but he raises the white flag on ETSA and Optima. The message to Port Augusta and all the ETSA and Optima workers and their families is clear: the Premier does not care about your jobs or your welfare.

Let us look at national competition policy. The Premier says that we have not done enough to earn the competition payments, the payments that his predecessor, Dean Brown, negotiated on behalf of this State and signed up for. How is it that we have not done enough? I have already quoted the COAG competition principles that say you do not have to privatise. I now refer to the Industry Commission—hardly a left wing pro-nationalisation think tank. The Industry Commission says:

The issue of competition in electricity is independent of whether Government should continue to own its electricity utilities.

When it reviewed the structural arrangements of the ETSA Corporation in January 1996 at the invitation of the now

Premier, the Industry Commission passed its view on whether a structure that maintained our power in public hands met competition guidelines. The Industry Commission said it did—and this is the Premier's Industry Commission, the Premier's Liberal mates—and stated:

The South Australian Government would not be prevented from continuing to own the various businesses which would be created by restructuring ETSA along the lines proposed.

So what has changed? Why do the changes we have made, which the Industry Commission says meet the national competition formula, no longer meet that formula? If the National Competition Council has changed the goalposts, why are we tolerating it? Why do we stand up to it over casino monopolies but not over ETSA? The real issue is this: the Premier is not selling ETSA and Optima because the NCC says he has to; he is not selling them because of the risks the Auditor-General identified; and he is not even selling them because he thinks he can get a premium price—he is selling them because he wants to sell them. He has wanted to privatise them for years.

Remember the 1985 election campaign when the first political leader in this country, the present Premier of this State, advocated the sale of ETSA and the privatisation of everything else that moved. He was absolutely rebuffed at that election—rolled back, lost seats, did not gain them. He has wanted to privatise them for years and he has been actively planning and working towards selling them for the past two years at least. The Premier has tried to hide it. He has ducked, weaved, dissembled and deceived. The Premier is ideologically committed to privatisation: it is no more or less than that.

The Premier has committed the taxpayers' funds to a massive public relations and advertising campaign to try to sell his broken promise to repackage his deceit. His public defence is not a defence of his decision at all but to ask Labor what we would do. Premier, we are not a policy free zone. We have a policy, and I will tell members about the policy. It is the bipartisan policy that the Premier took to the last election, that is, to enter the national market with ETSA and Optima in South Australian hands. It was the Premier's public policy until last week when he came clean finally on his secret plans and announced that he would sell it.

Mr Venning interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Schubert is quite discourteous to the House and to the Speaker to continue to interrupt when the Chair has called the House to order. I caution the honourable member.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: In short, Labor's position is that the sale of ETSA and Optima will make South Australians poorer not richer and weaker not stronger. Our power utilities have contributed substantially to the budget and the net worth of the South Australian Government and community over many years. Over the past three years our power utilities have returned \$613.8 million to the Government in dividends and tax equivalent payments. In this year's budget speech Stephen Baker said:

Improvements in the performance of Government owned businesses, particularly the ETSA Corporation, have also exceeded expectations.

But the value of our power utilities is greater than even these figures suggest, because they do not take account of their retained earnings which need to be considered in any orthodox accounting perspective.

The current profits of Optima and ETSA would, if privatisation were to make financial sense for the Govern-

ment, need to be exceeded by the interest savings after sale. But there is precious little guarantee of this and plenty of reasons to believe we will be worse off. In the longer term what this means is that the Premier's privatisation will mean less money—not more—for schools, hospitals and community safety. The Premier of this State takes the people of this State for fools. He said that our assets will halve in value over the next couple of years, yet the next sentence was 'We can get top dollar for them if we sell now.' He is talking them down and talking them up. He says they will go down in value by half but we will get top dollar if we sell them now. What private investor will pay top dollar for an asset the Premier (formerly a used car salesman) says is about to be halved in value? He says he will guarantee no forced redundancies when we all know he cannot.

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. M.D. RANN: There was an interjection about Professor Cliff Walsh. Cliff Walsh has come out as an independent commentator praising the Government and attacking the Opposition about the privatisation of ETSA. Cliff Walsh, when he was in Canberra two weeks ago advising the Premier on national competition policy, came up to me and referred to the Premier as 'the boss'. He is paid by the Premier's office, by the South Australian Government, and then masquerades as some kind of independent commentator. Next we will see Alex Kennedy on the bandwagon writing in the BRW, or somewhere, about what a great surprise this was and what a great deal it is for South Australia.

Once the private owner takes over, redundancies are no longer something the Government can influence. He says 'We will get a good price while maintaining community service obligations to low income earners and people in the country.' He cannot guarantee these things under private ownership and he knows it. Labor will retain Government ownership of our power utilities to:

- provide an ongoing financial return to South Australians for generations to come;
- guarantee security and continuity of a reliable electricity supply;
- keep profits from our energy utilities in South Australia. We all know that the likely buyers to the Premier's deal are foreign owned and that they will repatriate profits overseas rather than reinvest them in South Australia for South Australians;
- ensure that people on low and middle incomes are not disadvantaged and that our regional South Australians are not slugged higher prices.

Labor will maintain public ownership of ETSA and Optima because these are the basics and these are the fundamentals, and that is what we promised the people of South Australia in the recent election campaign.

There is a difference, of course, between a modern community in charge of its destiny and a community under this Premier, at the mercy of private firms overseas, with no real attachment to or interest in the South Australian economy or society. The pictures from Auckland on our T.V. screens this week are a warning to South Australians. I reject the rubbish spoken by the Liberals and by—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The Leader will resume his seat. I am sorry to interrupt the Leader. Members on my right will come to order. If they disagree with the content of the speech of the Leader, they will have ample opportunity to make their views known in the course of their contributions on the Supply Bill.

In the meantime, I request that members respect the Standing Order on silence while members are speaking.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: I reject the rubbish spoken by the Liberals and some senior management in Optima and ETSA that the private sector is always more efficient. We remember Bolivar, and so do the people of South Australia. What they are saying is simply an admission of failure by this Government and those managers. What the bosses of ETSA and Optima are saying is that they do not know what they are doing. Under Labor, the management of these utilities will either equal or exceed private sector performance or they will be told to make way for managers who can.

The Premier says that the national competition policy and the additional risks accompanying it give South Australia no choice but to sell. That is another dishonest statement by the Liberal Party. The very competition principles the Premier says require us to sell our power utilities state categorically that we are not required to sell. The Premier says that his number one reason for this sale is the risk identified by the Auditor, the stunning revelation that he claims first appeared before him in December last year. To follow the Premier's logic is to sell the asset to lose the risk. But the risks do not go away if we sell. If the private owner fails to maintain the infrastructure and there are blackouts—as there have been in Victoria and even worse in Auckland—we all, including South Australian businesses, carry the cost. If the private owner goes into liquidation, it will be the Government and the South Australian taxpayer who will have to pay to ensure continuity of supply.

The Premier's plan to privatise our power is not what it claims to be. The Premier claims that it is a strategy to protect South Australians from risk. It is in fact a policy that exposes South Australians to more and more risk in the future. This is the Premier's policy: privatise the profits, socialise the risk. The Government will not get away with this conspiracy to deceive. The people will not accept such treatment, no matter what statutory declarations the Premier or his men sign. Labor will not allow John Olsen to get away with his deception and his backflips.

Labor will be lodging a comprehensive series of freedom of information claims. We want to know what the Premier and his Ministers planned about electricity privatisation and what they knew and when. If there is an attempt to block these freedom of information claims, then we will take the Premier to court, as we did over the water documents. But let us remember that we did finally get those water documents, and what they showed is what we suspected and what we predicted. They showed that the people of this State were deliberately and cynically misled, deliberately and cynically lied to.

The Premier says that he wants this issue to be debated. He talks about policy free zones. I challenge the Premier again tonight to debate me on television in Port Augusta, so that we can both be tested on policy, credibility and honesty.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. M.D. RANN: I will debate him, but he will not enter into a debate, because he knows what happened last time—and I know what he said last time about the privatisation of ETSA. During the State election campaign, I pledged to work in a bipartisan way for the good of the State. I wrote to the Premier after the election on two occasions suggesting a meeting so we could cooperate on jobs. I renew that pledge now, but I will not cooperate with dishonesty and I will not cooperate with the contempt for the people of this State. I will

work with the Government to rebuild this State but not to sell it off or sell South Australians out.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. G.M. GUNN (Stuart): I am pleased to participate in this debate on the Supply Bill. We have seen a theatrical performance this evening, not based upon—

The Hon. M.D. Rann interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: It was not based on—

The Hon. M.D. Rann interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The Leader will stop—

The Hon. M.D. Rann interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will resume his seat. I direct my remarks to the Leader. The Leader will desist from displaying—

The Hon. M.D. Rann: I was heavily provoked, Sir.

The SPEAKER: Order!

An honourable member interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order, the Deputy Leader! I am talking to the Leader. In future the Leader will refrain from displaying material in the House. When members of his own Party have taken points of order in the past, they have been upheld, and I expect the Leader to set an example in this Chamber.

The Hon. M.D. Rann: I will certainly do so, but I point out that—

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no need for the honourable member—

The Hon. M.D. Rann: —during the whole of my speech I was interrupted and abused by members opposite.

The SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will resume his seat. The honourable member for Stuart.

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: We had a theatrical performance this evening. The comments made bore no relationship to the facts and completely ignored the long-term interests of the people of South Australia. You can engage in political exercises and semantics, and you can drag over all the smoke screens that you want to put, at the end of the day, the responsibility of Government and of members of Parliament is to make the right decisions, no matter whether they are difficult, whether it requires Government to change policy direction—

Mr Koutsantonis interjecting:

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: I ask that that comment be withdrawn. It is unparliamentary.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Chair could not hear the interjection from the honourable member. What was the remark that was offensive?

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: The honourable member said, 'Even if it is to lie', and that is unparliamentary.

The SPEAKER: If the honourable member used the word 'lie', I ask him to withdraw it immediately.

Mr KOUTSANTONIS: I withdraw it.

[Sitting suspended from 6 to 7.30 p.m.]

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: Prior to the dinner adjournment, I was addressing the privatisation of our power utilities. Let me make it clear: if people want to direct criticism at me, I am happy to wear that. However, I will not wear the accusation that we sat idly by at the expense of the South Australian people. I have been in this Parliament long enough to have seen that process take place, where warnings were ignored, and we all know the sorry saga associated with that. Govern-

ments may receive criticism for changing a policy direction in the interests of the people of this State, but that is the course of action they should adopt. It is the height of irresponsibility and it shows a lack of courage if people are not prepared to accept the facts as presented to them.

Mr Foley interjecting:

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: For a long time the honourable member has tried to get rid of me, but he has not been successful. It will not be the Labor Party that causes my retirement from politics: I will make that decision if and when I think it is necessary. One thing I will not do is to turn my back on the people I have had the pleasure of representing or on the Liberal Party, which has given me the great honour and privilege of serving this House. One thing we can say about the member for Ross Smith is that he is a rather colourful character. He is full of exuberance, and he expresses himself—sometimes not very coherently—at length. If one makes the comparison between the current Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the previous Deputy, one sees that there is no comparison.

The SPEAKER: Order! Part of this contribution has nothing to do with the Supply Bill: it is more a grievance debate contribution. I ask the honourable member to come back to the broad subject of the Bill.

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: Certainly, Mr Speaker, if you so direct. I was always of the view that a Supply Bill, which deals with the appropriation of revenue—

Mr FOLEY: I rise on a point of order, Mr Speaker. The honourable member is now reflecting on a ruling of the Chair. I would ask you, Mr Speaker, to rule accordingly against the honourable member.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Chair was listening carefully to see how that was being developed, but I do not think it had quite got to that stage, as yet. I trust that the honourable member will not get to that stage.

Mr Foley interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The Chair does not need any protection from the member for Hart.

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: He is choosing his words very carefully, and I have had some experience with people like the member for Hart, who often has not chosen his words carefully. We are debating the appropriation of many hundreds of millions of dollars for the general services of the State, and that is an important element of what this House should be examining. It is important that the taxpayers of South Australia be provided with the services they require and that the moneys appropriated are prudently invested. In the course of the expenditure of that money, the Government will have to continue in the process of getting our energy utilities in order so that the people of South Australia can get the maximum benefit. I again say to the House that the role of Government is to make the hard decisions, not to make out that a problem does not exist. I suggest to all those people who are making a great deal of noise about nothing that they read what Graham Richardson had to say. It is most enlightening. I will make sure—

Mr Clarke interjecting:

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: I have always considered myself a moderate in political terms. Occasionally, I may err on the side of conservatism but basically I am a moderate. I draw to the attention of the honourable member an article that appeared in today's *Australian* which puts in a clear light the nonsense we have heard about Auckland and Queensland. I do not think any member in this Chamber wants to sell an asset just for the sake of selling it. We are confronted with

real facts, not political rhetoric and hype. I will explain what brought me to this conclusion. I am one who has a reasonable knowledge of the energy industry in South Australia. Over a long time, I have had a lot to do with the Leigh Creek coalfields. I have been a very strong supporter. I have seen large amounts of money—

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: If the honourable member listened for once, she might learn something. I have been a strong supporter of extensive investment in the Leigh Creek coalfields—nearly \$60 million in recent times—to put in place two 140 tonne dump trucks and to provide new shovels and bulldozers, and other facilities. However, after I got the Auditor-General's Report, when it was tabled in the House, I went through it very carefully. I was most—

Mr Clarke: It was after the Premier's announcement; that's the first time you read it.

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: The honourable member is in cuckoo land. I drew the report to the attention of the senior management in one of those utilities and asked whether he had examined it and what were his views on it. At the end of that conversation, the upshot was, 'You've got no alternative; you either have to float or privatise.' That came as a considerable surprise to me. I knew the individuals very well, having been involved with them doing whatever I could to ensure that Leigh Creek remained operational. I have always been of the view that Leigh Creek provides not only a good basis for employment but also facilities for the rest of the community that it would not otherwise have, such as hospitals and supermarkets. I then took it upon myself to get all the information I could and examine closely why the New South Wales Government was going down that line.

I am quite prepared to admit that I have changed my views because there was overwhelming evidence. The attitude adopted by the Labor Party reminds me of someone going to the doctor, who says to them, 'You have to have a heart bypass immediately,' and the individual says, 'I will not have it done.' We all know what the results will be. We also know what the results will be if we do not proceed down the track outlined by the Premier. If Labor Party members want to wear that odium, that is up to them. They have already misled the people of South Australia for years and mortgaged—

Members interjecting:

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: The honourable member can dredge up all sorts of things.

Mr Foley interjecting:

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: The honourable member is talking drivel. I have already explained the situation. I want to turn to two other matters. First, last Saturday I had the pleasure of briefly chairing a meeting at Hawker concerning the Beverley uranium mine. The previous week when I was walking down the corridor in this place, the Hon. Terry Roberts indicated to me in a jocular fashion that I was in for an interesting afternoon, but I did not take much notice of that. When I was in my office at Port Augusta some Aboriginal people came in and said, 'We are pleased that you are coming up to Hawker to chair the meeting.' One of them was well known to the Labor Party—Mr Gordon Coultard, who I understand has handed out how-to-vote cards for the Labor Party. He came to express his pleasure and I was flattered with his endorsement.

I proceeded to Hawker. I was not there for the first part of the meeting when I understand that videos and slides were shown. I arrived just before lunch when they were completing

that process. After lunch I was asked to chair the question and answer process and that was—

Mr Clarke: Did you have a few people removed from the audience?

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: I will give you the full story.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the House that the warnings and cautions applied in Question Time remain in place until 10.30 this evening.

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: We commenced the meeting and it was pretty hot in that ironclad building at the racecourse. More than 200 people were present. When I stood up to invite questions, it became evident to me that one or two people were not particularly pleased with my presence. Being a humble fellow, I proceeded in my usual amenable way to conduct the meeting. One gentleman, who may have been trying to resemble Fred Astaire, was jumping up and down, waving his arms, so I suggested to him that, even if he did not want to participate, others did, and I would invite him to leave.

In a very humble way I invited him to leave. He did not seem inclined to do that. He was racing up and down, aided and abetted by a white lady who for some reason was not at all keen on me. I ignored her and I eventually beckoned the constabulary, who quietly took the gentleman in question outside and had a little chat with him.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: On another occasion. At that stage a lady came to the microphone and said that she would like to say a few words. She said that most of the people present wanted to ask questions and she thought it was very rude of these other people to disrupt the proceedings, and I entirely agreed with her, so we proceeded. There was a bit of shouting going on, which was all very interesting. I understand that the constabulary said to the gentleman, 'Go outside and calm down a bit. If you want to come back in a moment you can; otherwise you will be put in the paddy wagon and that will not be very pleasant.'

A few minutes later another fellow who I think had been participating in products made in Bali came to the front and tried to wrestle the microphone from me. I suggested that was not a very sensible thing to do and that I would be pleased if he would resume his seat. He did not seem inclined to do so, either. Being a retiring character, I sought the assistance of the constabulary, who acted properly and efficiently and escorted—

Mr CONLON: I rise on a point of order. I do not want to interrupt such an entertaining discourse, but what does it have to do with the Supply Bill?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Chair upholds the point of order that the member for Stuart is again straying away from the terms of the Bill before the House, so I ask him to come back to the subject.

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: Thank you, Mr Speaker. My concern about this project is that, when the mine at Beverley is operating at full capacity, considerable royalties will be generated for the people of South Australia and that money will go towards the supply of services to the State. Aboriginal people will benefit, there will be jobs and money will be provided. After the meeting, some members of the Aboriginal community came up and thanked me for being so reasonable and tolerant. I was most appreciative, I had a cup of coffee and I met a number of people whom I knew quite well and quietly proceeded with my business.

However, it has been brought to my attention that an enlightened member in the Upper House has made some

disparaging comments about me. All I can say to that honourable member is that I do not know who informed her and I do not know who advised her, but true to form she has completely misrepresented the facts. It is a pity she was not there, because she may have learnt something.

Mr Clarke: Who was this Upper House member?

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: The Hon. Sandra Kanck has taken this upon herself. If she had taken the trouble to walk across to this side of the building I would have explained things to her and given her the pamphlets that were provided without any trouble at all.

The second matter that I want to raise is the provision of health services in country areas. It is hard to get doctors in rural areas. Some time ago, the Coroner carried out an investigation into some unfortunate happenings in my electorate, but he got it completely wrong. He took the word of a convicted child molester.

Mr Foley interjecting:

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: He may be, I have never met the gentleman. On this occasion he got the facts wrong. He and the *Advertiser* levelled criticism at a hardworking doctor who had given outstanding service to the community at Orroroo. That doctor took decisions in the best interests of a patient who was sick and being cared for at home by an individual who had been charged with interfering with his grandchildren. The only reason he was kept out of gaol was that he pleaded that he had to look after his wife. He did not want his wife to go to hospital and be properly cared for or he would become the guest of Her Majesty, which is the proper place for him. Stan Hart is a real scoundrel.

Many years ago, I was the unfortunate member who had to deal with him. Very few people lived at Yatina. There were Stan Hart and Jim O'Dea. When they were not fighting one another they were causing trouble in the rest of the community. I well recall the occasion when the local constabulary came to me and said, 'Your problems and mine are going to disappear.' One was charged with growing marijuana and the other with interfering with his grandchildren. I thought the problem had been solved. This poor doctor who has given great service is now the victim and unfortunately the Coroner has taken the evidence of a convicted child molester against an outstanding person who has the support of his community.

The SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr FOLEY (Hart): Before I commence my contribution, I must say that I thought it was inappropriate and very poor form for a former Speaker of this House to cast such a slur on the character of the Coroner of this State.

The SPEAKER: Order! The very form of words that the honourable member has used cast an aspersion on the office or position of Speaker. The Chair can accept debate across the Chamber when members refer to each other in their role as a local member, but it is certainly contrary to the traditions of Parliament to refer to an honourable member's former position as Speaker.

Mr FOLEY: Thank you, Sir. The point is that this man has denigrated the office of the State's Coroner. Very few jobs are as difficult as that of the Coroner of this State, and the member for Stuart should be ashamed of such an attack on the State's Coroner—a person I know personally. He is a fine officer of this State. He has a very difficult job and should not be subjected to such attacks under privilege in this Parliament. If the member for Stuart feels so strongly about the State's Coroner, as the Premier is always quick to tell us,

I say to him, 'Step outside and repeat your allegations.' Of course, we know the honourable member will not do so. I suppose the Coroner will just have to cop this attack by a very senior member of the Liberal Government, a former Speaker of this House, and someone who should know better.

I want to make a contribution on a number of aspects relating to our economy. I start with ETSA. Much has been debated about ETSA over the course of the past two weeks; no doubt much will be debated over the course of the next two or three years as we count down to whatever final action will be taken. How the members for Stuart and Hartley, and others, can reconcile with their community saying one thing at an election three or four months ago and what they are saying now will be something individual members will have to deal with.

Some of the excuses being trotted out by the Premier are quite ridiculous in the extreme. We are already seeing, through the work of the Opposition and comments by the State's Auditor-General, a shattering of the Premier's reasoning, that is, that the Auditor-General had made some startling revelation about which he was not aware. We have already all but dismantled that element of his reasoning for the policy backflip. I think we will see more of that emerge over the next few days. The notion that, somehow, senior officers of Treasury, Premier and Cabinet, the Office of Energy Planning, and the heads of ETSA and Optima were aware of all these problems but never briefed their Ministers is an absolute nonsense.

I am confident that, over time, we will see that many senior officers of Government did in fact brief their Ministers and the current Premier about concerns relating to ETSA and Optima in terms of trading in the national economy. That will occur. One other excuse the Premier trots out as his reason for such urgent action in terms of the sale of ETSA and Optima is apparently a State budget problem. I have just come through an election—

Mr Hamilton-Smith interjecting:

Mr FOLEY: I am glad that the member for Waite chips in because I have just gone through an election campaign where his predecessor, the Treasurer, and I locked horns on many occasions. Over the course of the past 12 or 18 months, many a time the Treasurer and I locked horns, and do members know what? Whenever we debated the budget, do members know what the Treasurer told me? 'It's all okay. The budget is okay.' When the State budget was brought down in May 1997 it forecast a surplus for this year. It forecast surpluses for the next year, and the following year.

The forward estimates, the out years of the budget, had budget surpluses—growing budget surpluses. Rhetoric in the second budget of this Government three years ago said that there was a light at the end of the tunnel when it came to debt; that we had done the hard yards; that we had broken the back of debt; and that we had broken the back of budget deficits in this State. Throughout the election campaign the then Treasurer, the predecessor to the present member for Waite, was telling me on radio, television and head to head that we do not have a budget problem. Now, following an election, we suddenly have the Premier's having to justify his extraordinary policy backflip.

He is now saying that we have major budget problems. I challenge the Premier—he is good at issuing challenges to us—to come in tomorrow and detail to the House the current state of the budget. Do we have a \$100 million, \$200 million or a \$300 million deficit?

Mr Hamilton-Smith interjecting:

Mr FOLEY: The member for Waite says that I am close. The honourable member must know more than I. If the member for Waite is now saying that I am close when I predict a \$300 million deficit, he had better tell us, because the Government's budget estimates for the next three years forecast budget surpluses. The Government's next three budgets forecast a reduction in the level of debt as a percentage to gross State product. So, there is a declining debt in relation to the size of the economy; the Government, according to its budget figures, has budget surpluses. Please tell me.

Which figures do I believe? Do I believe the Government's 1997-98 budget? Do I believe its former Treasurer? Do I believe the current Premier? Whom do I believe when I am trying to assess this State's finances today and in the future?

The Hon. D.C. Kotz interjecting:

Mr FOLEY: The Minister for Environment and Heritage chips in. She scrapes into Cabinet at number 10; they give her a couple of portfolios—

The Hon. D.C. Kotz: Number nine.

Mr FOLEY: The Minister tells me number nine. I apologise. Who is number 10?

The Hon. D.C. Kotz interjecting:

Mr FOLEY: I do not particularly care. I do not care who is number nine or 10, but it obviously concerns the Minister that she is at number nine and not number 10. I bet it concerns her more that she is in Cabinet and not one of those junior Ministers.

The Hon. D.C. Kotz interjecting:

Mr FOLEY: Then I had better stop picking on the Minister. We are witnessing a very depressing state of our economy. We are seeing now unemployment at 10 per cent—

Mr Hamilton-Smith: Thanks for that.

Mr FOLEY: The member for Waite says, 'Thanks for that.' The honourable member's Party has been in Government for four years. You are now well into your second term. You have been the Government of this State for the past 4½ years. The Government cannot keep slinging back to the former Labor Government. It ran four weeks of that during an election campaign. It hit the State Bank as hard as it could and it still lost 13 seats. The Government ran advertisements talking about \$2 million a day and it still lost 13 seats.

We see in the Parliament the Government's thundering strategy to attack the Opposition, namely, \$2 million a day. Keep doing it. It was very effective during the election campaign. You almost lost Government. So, if that is all you have to attack the Opposition over, good luck to you. If you cannot be smart enough and imaginative enough to think up a new approach to dealing with the Opposition, well, bad luck.

Mr Scalzi interjecting:

Mr FOLEY: The member for Hartley chips in. As I have previously said to the honourable member, for the next four years sit there, be quiet and enjoy your final four years as a member. He is sitting on 100-plus votes. The honourable member nearly cost Government for his own Party. Does the member for Hartley realise that he nearly cost Government for his Party? He has not had a big couple of years.

Mr Scalzi interjecting:

Mr FOLEY: At the end of the day the primary vote does not really matter. What counts is the final two-Party preferred vote and, as the most marginal member in this Parliament and someone who suffered one of the biggest swings against any sitting member in this place, I do not think that I would be

interjecting. Quite frankly, I would be sitting there copping it sweet and trying to think how I can somehow make an impact over the next four years. As I have said to the honourable member—

Mr Hill interjecting:

Mr FOLEY: Perhaps an Independent may well be the solution. But, at the end of the day, this Government is not delivering for this State. We have 10 per cent unemployment. We have double digit unemployment in this State at a time when we are 1.7 percentage points ahead of the national average for unemployment. When will this Government address our most fundamental problem, that is, unemployment? When will we see a Government deliver economic policies that will move this economy forward? Members opposite will come in and say, 'We are trying to sell ETSA and, by selling ETSA, that will kick start the economy.'

The Government said that when it sold the bank and other assets. The reality is that it has done nothing to stimulate this economy, to give us jobs growth that we so desperately need. This State's growth rate is abysmal. Effectively, for the first term of this Liberal Government, we are teetering on the brink of recession. The Government is continually blaming the former Labor Government for our problems which, quite frankly, is a lazy way of avoiding the issue.

Mr Scalzi: What about interest rates?

Mr FOLEY: Interest rates are very low. I know that the honourable member would not really watch these figures closely, but over the past 12 months South Australia has had a negative CPI. Inflation and interest rates are very low but the Government still cannot kick-start this economy. This week alone, the ANZ bank retrenched 160 people, and last week Wills Industries did the same to 170 people. Large slabs of our work force are being put on the dole queue, with no decent policy to arrest that decline. We had the pathetic sight today of Ministers—even the Minister for the Environment—having their scripts written for them by the Premier's office or the media unit. Today, the Minister for the Environment, the Minister for Primary Industries and the Deputy Premier all read from prepared scripts which referred to \$2 million a day. They can keep singing their \$2 million a day but, if that is all the Government has to offer by way of a strategy, I feel sorry for South Australia.

In terms of the Government's policy backflip on ETSA, it has to deal with that. The Government has to explain to the community why a policy backflip was undertaken. If that was the Government's policy position and philosophy and if that was the Premier's intent, why did the Government not do the decent thing and tell the electorate that at the last State election? Why did the Government wait until the first opportunity after the election to do the policy backflip in the hope that in four years the electorate would somehow forget what was a fundamental breach of promise by the Premier?

I refer to another issue of concern to me, that is, the current waterfront dispute at Webb Dock in Victoria. As members would appreciate, within my electorate I have the Port of Adelaide and Outer Harbor. I raise this issue during the Supply Bill debate because the Ports Corporation is one asset which has been listed for sale. It is relevant to point out that, in respect of the Port of Adelaide, we do have a very productive port, and that is why I raise this issue of the Government's intention to sell the Ports Corporation. I might add that this is somewhat more relevant than talking about an issue involving the Coroner.

The point is that the Port of Adelaide has a very progressive employer in Sealand. We also have a very progressive

trade union, the Maritime Union of Australia, which has worked with Sealand to produce ship lifts that outstrip the nation. It is a very productive port. Sealand is very comfortable in terms of its ability to make a good return on assets there. Sealand believes that a cooperative approach with the union involved is very important in terms of reaching that productivity level.

The disgraceful attempt by the Farmers Federation to wage a philosophical battle on the waterfront in Victoria will impact on our port. In terms of waterfront reform we are not talking about the issue of labour but about the issue of competition. Who does not like competition? If you believe the farmers, the poor old wharfie does not like competition. I will tell you who does not like competition: the barley growers and the wheat growers. They want single desk marketing to remain for wheat and for barley. If you want competition on the wharves, let us have competition in the paddocks. I have a press release dated 20 February from the South Australian Farmers Federation entitled 'Time to Fight for the Australian Barley Board Single Desk'. It states:

Growers invited to attend public meeting.
Is the Australian Barley Board's export single desk a thing of the past? That is the core issue in an important round of public grower meetings being held across the State in March.

I am glad that the member for Schubert is here, because this could be a bit of an education for him. Further, the press release states:

We must remain united in our stand to have the single desk marketing arrangements for the Australian Barley Board retained.

It goes on to quote a Mr Lush, the Chairman of the Grains Council in South Australia, as follows:

If the Australian Barley Board's export single desk was eliminated alternative Australian barley exporters would compete for the Japanese barley quota bidding down the price premium for Australian barley.

That puts the lie to this notion that the Farmers Federation is all about competition and that it sees driving down the costs on the waterfront as some great benefit for exporters. What the farmers are saying in terms of single desk marketing is that they do not want competition, because if there is competition in the marketing of grain crops they will lose their premium. In essence, this press release says, 'Look, we are able to extort a premium from the market because we all sell as a bloc to Japan. They have to pay what we are prepared to provide the grain or barley at. We really would not want individual marketing arrangements because you could do all your own deals and then all of a sudden someone in Japan would play one supplier off against another supplier and drive down the price of grain.'

That is why the Farmers Federation does not want competition in the barley and wheat industries; but it wants competition in the labour market when it relates to the waterfront. The Farmers Federation is a pack of hypocrites. If the farmers really want competition, we will give it to them. I would like to see a nice, decent Industry Commission report go right through every element of primary production. Let us have a good, decent Industry Commission report into wheat, barley and all those restrictive and monopolistic marketing arrangements that featherbed the farming community. If you want to open up the economy on the waterfront—

Mr Venning interjecting:

Mr FOLEY: Well, good on it. If you want to open up the waterfront, open up the farm gate. The reality is that you do have market intervention in the Australian economy. You

have market intervention with barley and wheat to sustain our barley and wheat growers. There is market intervention with respect to rural adjustment grants, and most of those interventions are necessary tools to address social and economic objectives. But when it comes to the waterfront, the waterside worker in my electorate, who earns \$17 an hour for a 35 hour week—

An honourable member interjecting:

Mr FOLEY: He may take home more because the employer will not employ more labour, and the worker ends up working 70 or 80 hours a week. If you asked the constituents in my electorate who have to put in 70 or 80 hours a week whether they would rather spend their time at home with their families, out on the golf course or doing other things that normal working people do, they would take that option. In most cases, they are forced to work double, triple or back-to-back shifts because that is the only option put to them by employers who run the wharves of today with a minimal amount of unit labour. Let us get some balance into the debate. If you want a fight on issues of competition, we are ready to fight. But, at the end of the day, be decent about it. I understand that the average earnings of a waterside worker in my electorate is \$17 hour, which is not something that one would call excessive.

Mr CLARKE (Ross Smith): It is always a pleasure to follow a statesman such as the member for Hart and, prior to that, the Leader of the Opposition. I also want to refer briefly to the Government's decision to sell ETSA. To date, that point has been very well covered by the Leader of the Opposition in his contribution this evening. I will not go into much greater detail except to say that I, too, was on the campaign trail a fair bit during the election campaign. As a result, I was told constantly by the Liberal Party and by the then member for Eyre (the current member for Stuart) that I was scaremongering by spreading fear amongst the employees of ETSA at Leigh Creek and Port Augusta when, as Deputy Leader of the Opposition and shadow Minister for Regional Development, I said that a vote for the Liberal Party would be a vote for the sale of ETSA. I remember only too well the Liberal member for Stuart getting on the radio and in the *Transcontinental* debunking what I said and claiming that what I and the Labor Party were saying concerning the Liberal Party's secret agenda to sell ETSA was a lie. Well, we know only too well that we spoke the truth.

Of course we also had the Deputy Premier who, I might add, was noticeable by his absence in that election campaign. I would refer to him as the 'Scarlet Pimpernel'—we sought him here, we sought him there, we sought him everywhere, but we could not find him. The Deputy Premier of the State, the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party, was nowhere to be seen during the election campaign—except on one occasion when I happened to see him on some television news footage holding an umbrella over the head of the Premier as he was seeking to escape the Croydon Primary School children while eating a sausage in a piece of bread with a bit of sauce dribbling down his chin. That was the only time I saw the Deputy Premier do any work whatsoever during the election campaign.

The reason for that was very simple: he cannot help but stumble and tell the truth occasionally, as he did in a speech he gave in Melbourne in September last year when he said, 'The sale of ETSA was on the agenda.' We all remember how furious the Premier was. He immediately had him recant and issued a statement saying, 'Nothing could be further from the

truth'. Occasionally, the Deputy Premier cannot help himself and he staggers in and reveals the truth. In any event, the fact is that tonight the member for Stuart claims that he had this revelation about ETSA only after he read the Auditor-General's Report.

Frankly, I do not think he or any other member of the parliamentary Liberal Party, except maybe one or two Ministers, knew what was in the Auditor-General's Report. They certainly did not know of the Government's blinding revelation that it would sell ETSA until their Caucus meeting last Tuesday at about 1.30 in the afternoon because the Premier, quite rightly, cannot trust his own troops not to leak information. We saw an example of that only the other day when the Leader of the Opposition brought out a Cabinet submission put forward by the then Minister for Infrastructure (now Premier) in 1996 saying that amongst the policy options he wanted the Dean Brown Government to consider was the sale of ETSA.

This Government has no credibility whatsoever on that issue, but that has been dealt with more than adequately by the Leader of the Opposition and it will further unfold over the coming months as the water contract did. I have no doubt whatsoever that our victory at the next election is utterly assured because there is no way the public of South Australia can ever believe a word said by the current Premier. The difficulty for members opposite is that they do not have a ready replacement for him.

The Hon. M.K. Brindal interjecting:

Mr CLARKE: The member for Unley says, 'Rubbish.' I know that the member for Unley has been counting numbers on his own behalf. That is how desperate the Liberal Party has become, and indeed I have even been invited to put myself forward to their Caucus at a later date, but I did not think they were that desperate so I thought I would let them wait a little longer just to tease them. I want to deal more particularly with the employment aspects of this State in my role as the shadow Minister for Employment, Industry, Trade and Tourism. I refer to a ministerial statement dated 18 February by the junior Minister for Employment. In the third paragraph on page 2 she says—

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There are no junior Ministers in this Chamber, and members are supposed to be referred to by their title.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The point of order is upheld.

Mr CLARKE: I can understand the sensitivities of the member for Unley who, quite aptly, was described as the Minister for Wasps by his counterpart in the Opposition. I wish the honourable member would eradicate the wasps and leave the conduct of this House to those more able to do so. In the third paragraph on page 2 the Minister for Employment said:

In addition, Mr Speaker, the Government has created a more positive and optimistic investment environment which has been much welcomed by the private sector.

The Minister further said:

Mr Speaker, the Government is in the business of creating the right conditions for employment growth and development for the long-term haul.

A very interesting paper was published earlier this week by the University of Adelaide Centre for Labour Research. It was a report commissioned by the Public Service Association of South Australia. In my view, its conclusions regarding employment prospects for this State are indisputable. I refer members, particularly members opposite, to a few of the very

salient points in this report to highlight what a complete hash of the State's employment market this Government has created in its too long period in office—four years. At page 8 the report states:

South Australia is consistently going against the national trend—this relates to employment—

when it should be showing signs of improvement. While the national unemployment rate eased down by 0.5 per cent the State rate increased by 0.5 per cent. This signals the collapse of jobs growth and an economy which is ailing. . . South Australia has the highest proportion of under-employed people. Over 7 per cent of the South Australian labour force or 52 000 people would prefer to be working more hours than they currently are.

The Hon. M.K. Brindal interjecting:

Mr CLARKE: An interesting observation. On page 9 the report states:

There were less people employed in South Australia in January 1998 than there were in January 1997. The foundation of secure jobs in South Australia is being undermined by the loss of around 720 full-time jobs per month over the two years to December 1997. . . State public sector employment has historically made a vital contribution to the provision of secure employment to South Australians. This contribution has been eroded significantly in recent years. In 1991 around 18 per cent of employed people in South Australia were in State public sector employment. Over the 1992-97 the State public sector share of total employment declined to 14 per cent. . . Perhaps one of the most disturbing features of the current crisis are very high levels of long-term unemployment in South Australia (those people unemployed for more than 12 months). Nearly 42 per cent of unemployed South Australians have been unemployed for 12 months or more. This is by far the highest level in Australia, exceeding even Tasmania.

The report goes on in greater detail in relation to the Government's budget forecasts and its constant promise by the Premier and the Minister for Employment that somehow this Government's policies will cause the State level of unemployment to average out at the national level of unemployment by the year 2000. Page 14 of the report states:

South Australia's share of national production is forecast to continue to decline as we continue to under perform the national average over the next five years by nearly 1 per cent.

On page 15 it further states:

Employment growth in South Australia is likely to be significantly lower than the national average, ensuring that unemployment remains consistently higher than the Australian rate throughout the remainder of the century. A widening gap between the national and South Australian unemployment rate is emerging reflecting the deteriorating performance of the South Australian economy relative to that of the nation.

The document includes a report from BIS-Schrapnel dated 1997, which states:

Forecast lower economic growth in South Australia will translate into weaker employment growth compared with total Australia. Falling tariffs and increasing competition in the manufacturing industry will contribute to slower employment growth, as further restructuring in the industry occurs. We expect—

and I highlight this—

the unemployment rate will remain well above the national average over the next five years despite weak population and labour force growth.

It gives me no joy to read these gloomy forecasts from such reputable economic think-tanks, because we all want a more dynamic economy and greater employment in this State, not only for our younger people but for our mature aged unemployed, who are desperate for work.

The Hon. M.K. Brindal interjecting:

Mr CLARKE: The Minister for Local Government asks the rhetorical question, 'How?' That underscores the

bankruptcy of ideas in this Government with respect to unemployment. Every time a State or Federal Government privatises or outsources one of its major arms, or agencies, the privateer that takes over knows that the only way they can make the sort of profit that they want, to placate their rapacious shareholders, is to shed more staff and to give poorer service. When the Government outsourced—privatised, I should say—the water supply, the first thing that happened was that the consortium shed several hundred jobs. With respect to ETSA, if that is privatised—and it will not be privatised, because it will not get through, in the sense of a sale, both Houses of Parliament, although a shonky deal will be done, no doubt, to try to lease out the assets of the State—the private entrepreneur will shed more employment—direct employment—which will only further depress employment.

Since this Government has been in office, it has shed nearly 19 000 persons from the State public sector payroll. Whilst the Government would argue that that helps reduce its recurrent expenditure and hence enables it to look after the debt, the fact of the matter is that, when you gut the Public Service to the extent to which this Government has, it affects the economic viability of every community in which there are significant cuts in public employment.

This is considerably so in rural communities. In my role as shadow Regional Development Minister travelling around the State, I knew that there was a big swing against the Liberal Government in Adelaide, because people in the bush were far too tired of being taken for granted. They were always being taken for granted because they were regularly expected to vote—80 per cent or so—for the Liberal Party. But this Liberal Government consistently cut services and employment numbers in rural communities, and the community backlashed. Hence, we see three—I will not call them Independents—members of Parliament who are not members of the Liberal Party, at least in the formal sense, and who were able to get in on that sort of ground swell of discontent with respect to the performance of this Government. As happened when the Howard Government cut back services to the rural community, that only exacerbated their feeling of outrage.

So, the debt level can be controlled. It was being brought under control under the former Labor Government and, yes, there were to be modest reductions in the State public sector. However, you do not throw out the baby with the bath water. What we effectively did was to gut the services, and I doubt very much whether we have saved money in terms of the type of work that is done. I know, for example, that SACON has been gutted, and much of the work now done by private contractors has to be redone because the work done in the first place is not of a good enough standard. When the subcontractors come in they are told, 'This is your price; take it or leave it', so they cut the level of service that they give to the community to make their profit margin, and that means that someone has to go back in and fix it up a second or a third time around, and so on down the line.

Likewise, you do not want to believe that, just simply by privatising ETSA, we will not have any responsibilities left in this State for the supply of power. If a privatised power company takes over the distribution and generation of electricity and makes a hash of it because it cannot play the market, and if it looks as if it will go broke because it cannot pay its bills, who will step in and ensure that there is a continuity of power supply not only to domestic users but to business users in this State? The Government will have to do it, and the Government will have to make up any shortfall that

may arise, or the costs of ensuring the continuity of power supply. That is a simple matter of fact.

You do not privatise natural monopolies. There are not two or three water mains running under our streets so that we can choose to which water company our tap is connected. There are not several different power lines going down our streets so that we can choose which power company we, as domestic consumers, take our power from. That is a non-sense. The power industry is a natural monopoly. The public of South Australia understands that better than this Government and knows that any natural monopoly must be controlled by the people through the Government.

When this Government privatised our water supply, it promised a reduction in the cost of water to the punters. What we saw was a 25 per cent increase in the cost of water supply to domestic users, not a reduction. The same will apply with respect to electricity. It has occurred in the United Kingdom and it has occurred in every nation that has privatised natural monopolies. And it is foolish, particularly for the rural rump of the Liberal Party—

An honourable member: The National Party.

Mr CLARKE:—effectively the National Party—to want to privatise those natural monopolies. You are basically agrarian socialists. You want Government intervention. You hate State intervention except, as the member for Hart pointed out, if it happens to be for the wheat, the wool or the barley boards. At the end of the day, your own constituents have more sense than has any one rural member on the Liberal Party side in this House. They know that to sell ETSA means massive price hikes.

The SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr McEWEN (Gordon): The member for Hart asked earlier tonight, 'Who can you believe?' You certainly cannot believe the Labor Party, but you cannot believe the Liberal Party either. What has amazed me is that, in four hours and 50 minutes of Question Time over the past five days—and Labor members spat the dummy today: they could have had the extra 10 minutes if they had come back into the House, as we would have moved for suspension of Standing Orders—

Ms White interjecting:

Mr McEWEN: The Deputy Premier does not run this House and, if you had tested the House, you would have found support this afternoon. Put that to one side: it is a lesson for you to learn. We are Independents—

An honourable member: They take a bit of time learning.

Mr McEWEN: They take a bit of time; thank you. Let us come back to the fact that in four hours and 50 minutes of Question Time, the Labor Party has not landed one punch on the Liberals in terms of ETSA. Why?

Mr Clarke interjecting:

Mr McEWEN: The member for Ross Smith may well interrupt. Earlier you called the Deputy Premier the scarlet pimpernel but, over dinner, I had to defend you. Somebody called you a bloated toad fish, and I defended you: I said it is totally unfair on the fish.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: I rise on a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker.

Mr McEWEN: It is totally unfair on the fish.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Hon. R.B. SUCH): Order! There is a point of order. The honourable member will resume his seat.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: Sir, whilst the member for Gordon is a new member and usually some disposition and discretion is given to new members, his words were quite unparliamentary. If he wants to join the Liberal Party, why does he not get it over with now. We know it is going to happen.

Members interjecting:

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! The member for Mawson is out of order.

Members interjecting:

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition is out of order. The ruling is that, if an honourable member takes offence, the honourable member rises, not someone else.

Mr CLARKE: I have been called worse by my own side, Sir.

Members interjecting:

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! The member for Mawson is starting to get a bit excited. I call on the member for Gordon and hopefully the House will return to order.

Mr McEWEN: Thank you, Mr Acting speaker. I am delighted that the Leader of the Opposition could join us. The point I was making was that, in close to five hours of questions on the ETSA issue, they have not drilled down to the fundamental issue: that is, we are not talking about retiring \$2 million a day of debt. At best, ETSA is worth \$4 billion. If we subtract that from \$7.2 billion, we see that at best it will retire \$1 million a day. It still has another \$1 million a day of debt servicing. So members should stop the silly questions about what they will do with \$2 million a day. They do not have it, and they will not have it.

The more fundamental question is: what is the best deal for this State—to retain the cash flow or to sell at a premium on the cash flow? That ought to be the only question. This nonsense about risk is nothing more than nonsense. There are plenty of financial instruments to protect risk. They can hedge, and they can do all sorts of things in terms of the marketplace to protect that risk. Let us get back to the fundamental question: what is the best deal for South Australia, economically, financially, socially and employment wise? If that is the approach that the Labor Party had taken over four hours and 50 minutes of questioning, it might have got closer to the crux of the issue.

Mr Brokenshire: They are not interested any more.

Mr McEWEN: You may think so. Let us turn briefly to other economic issues. Early last week we had the opportunity to put some sanity into the water debate in the South-East. It was Mark Twain who said that whisky is for drinking and water is for fighting wars over. It is close to that; we have to bring some sanity to that debate. Water is crucial to the future of this State, and we must ensure that, as we move through the next few months and as we debate this issue, we actually put in place long-term strategies to manage that fundamental resource. There will be more on that.

Over dinner, people said to me, 'You might well argue that there is some merit in selling ETSA. What about the forests?' Well, what about the forests? It is a fundamentally different issue from that of ETSA. ETSA does not have enormous value in terms of vertically integrated jobs and manufacturing in this State. We need to realise that 60 per cent of the manufacturing jobs in my electorate are underpinned by the forest resource. That forest resource is not a resource in its own right: it is something that underpins value adding in this State. That is the key to job creation. So when we think about privatisation, it is very important to single out

those entities that are stand alone in competition terms in their own right and those that are simply the starting point, the raw resources, for value adding and job creation in this State. I do not want to hear people in the same breath talking about ETSA and forests. ETSA may well go: forests will not go. Forests are too important to this State—too important an opportunity in terms of vertical integration and value adding.

An honourable member interjecting:

Mr McEWEN: Thank you for that. I intend to be re-elected. You worry about your own electorate.

An honourable member: He has cause to.

Mr McEWEN: I wouldn't know about that; I have not made a study of it.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! The member for Gordon will resume his seat. There are too many interjections. I know that the member for Mawson has been recuperating but he needs to restrain himself, as does the member for Hartley: it seems to be infectious over there. Let us hear the member for Gordon in silence.

Mr McEWEN: Thank you for that privilege, Mr Acting Speaker. We are talking about the importance of regional South Australia to the economy, yet today I find a letter signed by Ray Blight, from the South Australian Health Commission, who, in justifying the closing down of another service in rural South Australia, says:

The remoteness of regional offices continues to be a barrier to proper management and coordination of the section, and some changes are inevitable.

What he is saying is that it is time to withdraw more services from the bush and consolidate more bureaucracies in Adelaide. The key to South Australia's regional cities is the IT strategy. There is no reason why you cannot reverse what Mr Blight is talking about and put more people in the bush, because IT means you can operate irrespective of time and place. Over the next 12 months, let us embrace IT as a key strategy not only for the way we communicate in this place but for the way we redevelop non-urban South Australia, which will be our engine driver over the next few years. Let us reinvest in that part of our State. Too much has been suffered for too long by those people living outside the city. Let us have a look at IT, let us put a strategy in place, and we will never again see such nonsense as Ray Blight has written today.

Ms WHITE (Taylor): I support the Supply Bill. In the lead up to formulation of a State budget, it is important that we take stock of where we are and where by might be going under the Liberal Government. Of course, the context in which the next State budget has to be framed is a climate of cuts from the Federal Government, as well as from the State Government over the last term of this Parliament. From the Federal Government, we have seen millions and millions of dollars cut out of the South Australian health and education budgets. Last week, I questioned the State Education Minister on the impact of the \$34 million cut over the next four years to the South Australian public school system. That cut comes about as a consequence of the new funding formula that the Federal Government will apply to the States according to its new enrolments benchmark adjustment scheme. That means for South Australia \$34 million out of the education budget over the next four years.

This year, we saw between 700 and 1 000 extra enrolments in our State school system, and this additional cost to the State, in connection with the massive funding cut by the Federal Government, has to be picked up by the State.

However, when I asked the Education Minister whether this would occur, all he could guarantee was that \$3 million of the \$34 million would be picked up by the State. Obviously, State budgets over the next four years will have to be formulated accordingly.

Child care is a subject that has reached critical importance in this State. The sum of \$820 million has been cut out of child care in this nation over the past two Federal budgets. In South Australia the impact is quite severe. In less than 12 months, we have seen eight child-care centres close in South Australia. This Friday, two centres are about to shut their doors permanently. We have seen massive increases in the fees that parents and carers have to pay to support their children in child care. That is having a massive influence on families; it is stressing families. The loss of operational subsidies from the Federal Government and the heavy administrative loading on child-care centres is having the net effect of decreasing the quality of child care in this State and increasing the cost at the same time.

Over the last term of the Liberal Government, \$130 million has been cut out of our education system. Fees for public schools have increased massively. They far outweigh the fees and charges that parents in other States pay to educate their children in the public system. It reflects a deliberate shift in the funding responsibilities for education from the Government to parents. Class sizes have increased and, tragically, the number of young people finishing year 12 in this State has plummeted. Currently only one-third of our young people finish year 12. That goes to show that, for the Liberals, education is seen simply as a cost rather than as an investment, as it should be seen, in our young people's future. Increasingly under the State Liberal Government school closure decisions have become more about dollars and cost savings than about the provision of quality education outcomes.

In the area of health, to paraphrase the Premier's own words, we have seen our hospitals crumbling, although it is interesting to note that, according to the Premier, they have only started to crumble now, not months ago. In my own electorate, the Lyell McEwin Hospital—

Members interjecting:

The ACTING SPEAKER: There is too much background noise. The member for Mawson seems to have recovered too well from his sickness.

Ms WHITE: The Lyell McEwin Hospital, which has been promised a \$28 million upgrade for the past two years, still has not seen that upgrade commence. In fact, its intensive care unit is closed. Recently the Holden's company, a large employer and an important corporate citizen in the Salisbury-Elizabeth area, donated \$33 000 towards a \$40 000 kidney dialysis machine. Unfortunately, the machine was not even unpacked before it was couriered down to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and it is not accessible to my constituents and the people of the north. That is what is happening to health in South Australia under this State Liberal Government.

Members interjecting:

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! The member for Schubert and the member for Mawson are both out of order.

Ms WHITE: Thank you, Sir. As to the Housing Trust, the responsible Minister revealed today that there are to be changes in the way that public housing is organised in this State, with a sale of public housing stock. An interesting argument was used by the former Premier in justifying that decision. One of his arguments went something along these

lines: because we have a good public housing stock in this State, we do not get as much money in rental assistance from the Commonwealth; therefore, to shift our responsibility on to the Commonwealth, we will sell off some of it and decrease our public housing stock.

The Minister guaranteed that current rental tenants would not be disadvantaged. He talked about new guidelines for people coming onto the waiting list and said that people currently on the waiting list or in public housing would not be disadvantaged. Does that mean that everyone currently on the waiting list—I think it is something like 33 000 people—will be placed ahead of those coming onto the new list? I do not think so. How the Minister ensures that people currently on the waiting list or in public housing are not disadvantaged will have to be seen to be believed.

One of the main points that came out of the last election was a cry from the people of South Australia for jobs, particularly for our young people. Over recent years our State has had a consistent youth unemployment rate of 30 per cent, and the cry has gone out to find jobs for our young people in this State rather than their having to go across the border to get job security, initial opportunities and chances at a job, which this State just cannot provide.

The employment strategy of this Government clearly is not working, yet with a new term beginning for this Government we have not seen any indication that the Government recognises that its strategy is not working. It has not changed course.

Mr Brokenshire: Says who?

Ms WHITE: So said the people of South Australia at the last election. We have seen increased downsizing, corporatisation and privatisation of the work force in South Australia, and people are feeling insecure and vulnerable—

Members interjecting:

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! The members for Mawson, Elder and Hart are making trouble in the Chamber by interjecting. They will cease immediately.

Ms WHITE: Thank you, Sir, I enjoy your protection. Obviously we will see job losses with the privatisation of ETSA. Privatisation, leasing—whatever we call it—will mean job losses for South Australians. Clearly—

Members interjecting:

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! We like a bit of lighthearted discussion in the appropriate place, but I ask members to allow the member for Taylor to continue with her remarks.

Ms WHITE: We have seen that the privatisation, corporatisation, contracted management or outsourcing of our water supply has meant fewer jobs and decreased maintenance. To deny that, given the experience of the Bolivar pong, is just fanciful.

Mr Brokenshire: That was your fault.

The ACTING SPEAKER: The member for Mawson is not a ventriloquist. He needs to listen rather than try to project his voice across the Chamber.

Ms WHITE: After the experience in Auckland, which as we speak is a city that has basically closed down because of power failures caused by a lack of maintenance of its power system, we can only think what lies ahead with the privatisation of ETSA. A lot of the discussion about the privatisation of ETSA has focused on risk. The Premier's story is that suddenly, after the election, risk was identified which had not been identified before. Of course, that is wrong and we all know that is wrong. The Auditor-General's Report 18 months ago identified the very risks that are being spoken of now as

if they are recent revelations. As my Leader, the Hon. Mike Rann, pointed out, what is the size of these risks and what does the Auditor-General say about them?

When the Auditor-General was questioned on Monday about the significance of the risks that could lead to a loss of \$1 billion in Federal moneys to this State, he had a view on those risks totally different from that of the Premier. It was put to Mr MacPherson that he had found it important enough to approach the Premier directly in August about his concerns with the appointment of parliamentary secretaries. He found his concerns about the application of public works in this State sufficiently important to take that to the Government. However, he did not find it of sufficient import to take to the Premier this risk, which Premier Olsen says is of such substance and import that, now he has suddenly discovered it, we must quickly sell ETSA. That goes a little—

The Hon. M.K. Brindal interjecting:

The ACTING SPEAKER: The Minister for Local Government will come to order.

Ms WHITE: The Minister asks, 'Why did he put it in his report?' That is a good question. The Auditor-General says something quite specific about the import of that risk, and I will quote for members a couple of sentences from the section about ETSA. In his concluding comments, the Auditor-General states:

Audit's concern is not so much—

The Hon. M.K. Brindal interjecting:

The ACTING SPEAKER: The Minister for Local Government will come to order.

Ms WHITE: —

that the identified risks exist but more that they are a necessary and unavoidable consequence of the restructuring of the ESI and the entry by South Australia into the NEM [national electricity market].

What the Auditor-General is saying more than anything else is that the import of the risk did not warrant taking his concerns directly to the Premier. I noticed that on tonight's 6 o'clock news the Premier in his killer punch, so to speak, today in Question Time told us exactly that: that the Auditor-General, when he came to him with another issue of concern, did not find these issues important enough to raise back in August. But the Auditor-General is saying that the real question here is a risk management strategy. My colleagues have pointed out tonight that if something goes wrong under a privatised ETSA system it is ultimately the Government that must step in and absorb that risk.

The Government must ensure that taxpayers are shielded from unnecessary and fluctuating costs in electricity. Obviously, it is the Government that has to bear the cost if anything goes wrong. The message from the Auditor-General is quite clear: rather than, as has been the case in this debate, focusing on the risk of selling or not selling the asset, the real challenge for this Parliament to consider is the matter of managing the risk. The risks have been enunciated by several members previously. That is the crux of the matter. It is not, as indicated by the Premier, that we suddenly had this dire warning which, by the way, we know we had 18 months ago.

We know that the Auditor-General had conversations with the Premier over that time and, according to the Premier, the Auditor-General did not find this issue of sufficient import to mention it to him. The only thing we can conclude from the Auditor-General's Report is that he does not see the sale or otherwise of the asset as the really important issue: it is the management of the risk. Whether or not we sell the asset is not the issue. This report is nothing about justification for the

sale of the asset: it has a completely different message for the Parliament of this State.

I hope that in the ensuing months, when we sit down to debate this plan the Government intends to put into action, it will have done a little more analysis than it is indicating it has done, which is, according to the Premier, none up until December last year and January this year. I hope that we will finally be able to focus on the real issue of import to this State: the management of the risk in the competitive environment of the national electricity market.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! There is too much background noise. The member for Goyder seems to be wandering about unnecessarily. The honourable member for Elder.

Mr CONLON (Elder): It is a shame that the member for Gordon has left the Chamber; I wanted to congratulate him on his contribution. I thought that the best part of the honourable member's speech was that he used five minutes of a possible 20. I thought that was the one merit of his speech. I want to—

An honourable member interjecting:

Mr CONLON: I will not be, I will use all of that, don't you worry about that. I want to comment today, as most members would expect, on the attacks in the past week on two on the great, longstanding South Australian institutions. I refer, first, to the Government's attack on ETSA; and, secondly, to the announcement today concerning the Housing Trust—two great planks of South Australian society. I have to say that they were largely the legacy of the last half decent Liberal Premier this State had. Why are they to go? We have had a few explanations from Premier Olsen. First, we had what could only be described as a massive beat-up about certain risks associated with ETSA, and I will address those in a moment. That is precisely what it is—a beat-up of the proportions of that terrible groyne the member for Colton has copped in his electorate. It is a beat-up as big as the honourable member's groyne.

Members interjecting:

Mr CONLON: That is right.

The ACTING SPEAKER: The members for Colton, Mawson and Hart should restrain themselves and listen to the member for Elder.

Mr CONLON: The second matter is an incredible tale about how the Premier knew nothing about these beat-up risks that have been in the community for two years. I have to say that it is a tale that inspires incredulity in the manner of the best possible episode of *X Files*. It is truly unbelievable. The truth is that this Premier has and has had for a long time an unremitting hostility towards public ownership. He is a Premier with a peculiar bent. He has a certain phobia about public ownership. I strongly suspect that, as a young boy, the Premier had some terrible fright from some species of public utility and he has never recovered from it, because he has an unremitting hostility to public ownership.

It is something of the nature of the phobia of Michael Jackson: every time he handles something owned by the Government he has to wash his hands. That is the truth of the matter, and I offer as evidence the action of this Premier, when he was formerly, I think, the Minister for Infrastructure, involving privatisation of the water supply in South Australia.

Mr Foley interjecting:

Mr CONLON: As the member for Hart says, what an outstanding success! What a great success! No-one wanted it. He did not have the excuse of some risks to beat up. He

had no excuse at all. No-one wanted it. The Premier, as Minister, did some secret polling and found out that the move was less popular than European carp, yet he went ahead with it, and why? Because he has an obsession against public ownership. He believes in privatisation like smart people believe in gravity. What did we get from his fabulous privatisation of the water supply? We got a 25 per cent increase in costs—thank you, John—fewer jobs, 100 per cent foreign ownership, and Bolivar. It stank. It stank from start to finish. As I said, no-one wanted it, just like no-one wants the member for Mawson, and we will find that out at the next election. I tell the honourable member that this will not help him. Let me say this: no-one believed the Premier—

Members interjecting:

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order!

Members interjecting:

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! The members for Mawson and Colton will come to order. My eyesight is still 100 per cent.

Mr Brokenshire interjecting:

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! I caution the member for Mawson and ask him to restrain himself. If he keeps interjecting, I will take action.

Mr CONLON: I know that he—

Mr Foley interjecting:

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! The member for Hart needs to restrain himself as well. I might look relatively harmless but I do have a sting like the European wasp.

Mr CONLON: I note that the member for Colton has shifted his attention from groins to brains. I think he had better get back to groins—something of which he has at least some knowledge. No-one believed the Premier last week, and everyone is right to treat his arguments with distrust. He was committed all along to the sale of ETSA, just as he was committed all along to the sale of water. We did not believe him when he denied it last year; we did not believe him when he denied it during the election campaign in October; and no-one should believe him now in terms of his change of mind.

I shall highlight a few reasons why. First, he said that there are extraordinary risks which have caused him to sell ETSA. We have heard just how extraordinary they are. In short, the Auditor-General gave evidence on Monday about them and said, 'I did not see them as anything extraordinary.' That is why we have to sell ETSA—for something the Auditor-General did not see as extraordinary. What did he say? He said, 'They are apparent on any close analysis of an industry which is dependent upon markets.' We have all known for years that electricity in South Australia would depend upon markets; that fact is not new. If the Premier did not know we would be in the market place, he has been asleep at the wheel for two years.

Mr Brokenshire: What about Bob Carr?

Mr CONLON: What about Bob Carr?

Mr Brokenshire: Is Bob Carr asleep, too?

Mr CONLON: The member for Mawson continues to make excuses—

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! I caution the member for Mawson. If he continues in this manner I will have no alternative but to take tougher action.

Mr CONLON: He is just trying to throw me off my stride. The member for Mawson can sit there and squirm. I refer to the rest of the Premier's amazing *X-Files* story about why he did not know there were any risks associated with ETSA. One of the risks identified is that associated with being in the market place. I understand that the Premier once

sold used cars, so he knows a little bit about the market place. I thought that one thing axiomatic about the market place is that if you can make a profit you can also make a loss. If we believe the Premier, he picked up the Auditor-General's Report and said, 'By crikey, I did not know that that could happen.' He must have had a good run when he was selling used cars.

Mr De Laine: He went broke!

Mr CONLON: I cannot vouch for that. What were the other reasons that the Premier gave for not knowing about it? He says that the Auditor-General's Report was not given to him, and I will address that in a moment. What does the Auditor-General say about these risks that are not extraordinary? He says that they have been around for a couple of years.

The ACTING SPEAKER: The member for Elder will address his remarks to the Chair and not to the gallery.

Members interjecting:

Mr CONLON: They are a lot better looking than members opposite. The Premier says that he was not told about it. We already know that, as has been said, these unextraordinary risks have been out there for a couple of years; but he says he was not told about them. What we do know about these risks that were out there for a couple of years is that the Auditor-General made reference to them in his report. This is the report that the Premier would have us believe is so extraordinary, but he made reference to them. On Monday he told us that he gave draft copies of the report to an adviser to Graham Ingerson, to Mr Kowalick, the head of Premier and Cabinet, to the Under-Treasurer and to four other senior bureaucrats. If John Olsen did not know about it, he was the only person in South Australia who did not. Goodness me! What did Mr Kowalick say? He said, 'I did not tell him because an election was likely to be called.' How did Mr Kowalick know an election was to be called? It was not called at the time he received it. How did he know?

What we can believe from this is that the Premier tells Mr Kowalick more than Mr Kowalick tells the Premier. Can you believe that? The Premier went to Mr Kowalick and said, 'Do not tell me anything; I might call an election soon.' Goodness me! I will make one final comment about whether the Minister would have found out. The Auditor-General was asked whether these matters should be kept confidential and whether they should be given to advisers. Do you know what the Auditor-General said? He said, 'I did not care who they showed it to.' The truth is that the adviser to the Minister and the head of Premier and Cabinet had far more concern for the sensitivities and sensibilities of their employers than did the Auditor-General. He did not care whether they saw it. I have to confess that the matter of \$1 billion might worry a Minister and that it might be best not to say anything! What an extraordinary story.

Unfortunately, when we were questioning the Auditor-General, the Acting Speaker was there. If it is not out of order, I shall refer to something you said, Mr Acting Speaker, when questioning the Auditor-General. The Auditor-General had just explained that he had given out a copy of the draft and had requested confidentiality. But he made the point that it was not so confidential that the Minister could not speak about it. This is what you said, Mr Acting Speaker:

Having been a Minister, if there were some aspects in a report that could be negative, in effect, you got the opportunity to comment. I do not know how universal that practice is—

obviously it is not universal, because it did not happen with Mr Kowalick or with Graham Ingerson's adviser—

because I have not been the Minister of every agency. In effect, you do that in the interests of natural justice.

This convention is starting to look just a little ordinary, and this confidentiality is starting to look a little ordinary. The truth is that one cannot believe anything one has been told on this. We could not believe the Premier on 11 October; we could not believe him last year; and we cannot believe him now. The truth is that the Premier has always wanted to sell the Electricity Trust and Optima, just as he has wanted to sell everything else that is not nailed down.

The Premier has come in here with a beat up. I think he would sell his front bench if he could get a reasonable price, but who would buy them? The truth is that he has come in here, betrayed South Australia and sold a valuable South Australian asset. That is the real problem. Where has the debate been? The Premier has run in here with some trumped up, beat-up risks that he says people did not think were extraordinary.

There has been no debate about the value of this asset to South Australia. There was no chance for debate. It was kept secret from the Premier's own backbench because he cannot trust them. What has happened? We get no debate; instead we get a fire sale of a valuable South Australian asset and the utter betrayal of the people of South Australia.

I now turn to the Housing Trust and the announcement today by the Minister for Human Services. I will say this: this is the worst Government for public housing since the Second World War. This is a Government that has treated the possession of a valuable asset such as the Housing Trust as a bother, as something to be rid of at the earliest time it is politically opportune. The Government has waged psychological warfare on trust tenants. Last year, we saw the Premier get hairy chested in a speech to the Housing Industry Association when he talked about all the bludgers in the Housing Trust system. He did not use that word but that is what he implied. What announcement did we have today? The Minister for Human Services has decided—with a bit more skill and a bit more tact—by stealth and deceit to do what the Premier has done to ETSA. We will see people shifted from public housing to the private rental market; that is what this is all about.

Members opposite can talk about changing it for people in need and talk about single people in two and three bedroom houses, but that is not what this is about. This is about shifting people from public housing to the private rental market. The member for Mawson let the cat out of the bag. They want them out of public housing and in the private rental market so they can get more money from the Commonwealth. That is the extent of their interest in the Housing Trust in South Australia. What they want to do is turn the Housing Trust into welfare housing. By doing that they will create the psychological impression in people's mind that welfare housing and the Housing Trust are no different from rent relief in the private sector. Down the track, like night follows day, what we will get is privatisation and the selling off of the Housing Trust.

Mr BROKENSHIRE: Mr Acting Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Considering the issues of protocol and Standing Orders that you have pointed out, Sir, I draw your attention to the fact that the member for Elder is addressing the gallery and not the Chair.

Members interjecting:

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! I have already drawn that matter to the attention of the member for Elder. It is

against Standing Orders for members to address their remarks to any area other than the Chair, and I remind the member for Elder.

Mr CONLON: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. My only defence is that I am not looking at the gallery; I am trying to avoid looking at the member for Mawson. As I have said, the truth is that the Minister for Human Services is doing by stealth and tact, but with considerably more skill, what the Premier intends doing to ETSA. This is the first step in selling the whole kit and caboodle. Mr Acting Speaker, if they tell you it is not true, you cannot believe them. We said over and over last year that this mob would sell ETSA. We said it during the election campaign and we were accused of being scaremongers. I say now that they will sell the Housing Trust down the track and, if they tell you differently, you cannot believe them.

The last legacy that we will have of Tom Playford's contributions to this State—the last decent Liberal Premier—in respect of public ownership is the picture of him on the wall opposite, and I bet he wishes his picture was not there. Tom Playford would not be spinning in his grave; he would be turning like one of the electricity turbines the Government wants to sell. I will leave it at that because I can see the member for Mawson is becoming a bit fatigued.

Mr Venning interjecting:

Mr HILL (Kaurna): What the member for Schubert says is very true. It was terrific to hear the member for Elder's contribution. As usual, the honourable member's contribution was excellent, to the point and vastly amusing. Tonight I do not want to begin by talking about ETSA but I will raise the issue towards the end of my comments. I will talk about supply and the budget, how it affects certain institutions in my electorate and how this Government is neglecting the south. As the member for Mawson on the other side of the House would know, the Government has been neglecting the south—

Mr Foley: For four years.

Mr HILL: They have had four years of it, and they have to put up with the neglect for four more years. First, I want to talk about the O'Sullivan Beach Primary School, which is an excellent school and a well run school which serves a working class area. It is a school with a high level of students who are in receipt of school card grants: 65 per cent of the students in the school are in receipt of school card grants. It is an excellent school and it serves the community very well. It has a wonderful tone, very good programs and a very good sense of community. Because of the high level of school card grants in that school, one could assume that there is a high level of need in terms of literacy.

This is a disadvantaged school and a large number of children have learning difficulties. Government programs are designed to assist those children in the pursuit of higher learning outcomes. The point of my argument tonight is not so much a lack of resources to assist those children, although there is always an issue of resources—

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: Mr Acting Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am very interested to hear the remarks of the member for Kaurna, but I cannot hear them over the babble that is occurring opposite, and I would ask you to rule about constant talking in the Chamber.

Members interjecting:

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! Some of the points of order tonight are becoming frivolous. The honourable member who has the call is entitled to be heard in silence.

Mr HILL: I appreciate the concern of the Minister but I was not aware of the babble, either. I want to talk not so much about the volume of money and resources going to the O'Sullivan Beach Primary School—and indeed any school where there is a high level of literacy need—but rather the nature of the funding and how it is given to the school. The problem the school has is that in the period from October 1996 through to May 1997 it was in receipt of about 10 different types of assistance through both State and Federal Government programs, and it came in such a way that it was incredibly dysfunctional for the school in terms of organising its programs.

For example, on 31 October 1996, the school received .3 of a teacher's salary to assist students because of the number of school card students in the school. On the same day it received .7 of a salary to assist with special education. On 4 November, it received a grant of \$2 899 under the South Australian Government early literacy fund. Then, on 19 December, it received another \$3 500 under the Commonwealth literacy program. On some later date in December 1996 it received, under the disadvantaged schools programs, \$25 000. On 8 April 1997, it received \$3 673.08 for basic skills tests results for 1996. On the same day (8 April) it received another \$3 458.20 for basic skills test early assistance. On 26 May 1997, it received \$2 228.16 under the Commonwealth Government early literacy component. On 29 May 1997, it received .11 of a salary for a disability support teacher, which is less than half a day a week for 25 weeks, and again, on 29 May, it received SSO hours for 25 weeks at four hours a week.

Plenty of support is being given to the school, but the trouble is that it is coming in dribs and drabs and in such a way that it makes it very difficult for the school to manage. It makes it dysfunctional for the school and the school does not get the best outcome from those resources. If the Minister or his staff read my comments tonight, I would like to urge them—and perhaps the Minister can pass on these remarks to his colleague—that it would be sensible to look at all the literacy funding programs that are available to primary schools and, in some way, bundle the funds up so that the school can have a proper planning approach to literacy and not have to change the school program around from time to time as funding is made available.

The Hon. M.K. Brindal: That is a good idea, and I will actually pass that on. That is why you should be the Leader.

Mr HILL: And you, too, Minister. The second issue I address is the Noarlunga Hospital which is also within my electorate. During the election campaign I was very pleased that the Leader of the Labor Party came into the electorate and announced a \$23 million expansion program for the hospital. It is a program that is very much needed in the south, as you would know, Mr Acting Speaker. The population of the south is growing at a faster rate than anywhere else in this State, but the number of beds and the number of hospital facilities is not growing at the same rate. There is a need and no Government to date, including Labor Governments, has been prepared to move resources away from the suburbs where there is an older population, a declining population, into the newer growth areas. Nor has any government been able to bite the bullet and add additional resources into the system.

There is a great need in the south for extra hospital facilities. We support an expansion of the hospital to the tune of \$23 million, which would have provided an extra 100 beds and which would have been well received, as I am sure the

member for Mawson would agree. I give one example to highlight the need in the south. A month or so ago a constituent, who had been to see his doctor, contacted me. He had a problem with his neck and the doctor gave him an appointment at the hospital for physiotherapy. He was a pensioner and so he needed to have it done in the public health system. In late January he went to the hospital to book an appointment to receive physiotherapy. He was told, 'I am sorry, we closed our books for physiotherapy treatments at the end of November and we are not opening them up again until March.' In other words, there were three months when he could not even book in for physiotherapy treatment and, after booking in, he presumably had to wait for six or seven weeks before he could receive treatment. So, he might well have been waiting for up to five months for physiotherapy treatment, which seems to me to be an extraordinary amount of time for anyone who is in pain.

It is not just physiotherapy treatment which is in short supply at the hospital: a range of ancillary services are needed. I ask the Minister again to pass onto one of his other colleagues another sensible suggestion, that is, that more support services need to be provided at the hospital. And, as I said before, an expansion is required.

I pay tribute to the Flinders Medical Centre, which I know is also hard-pressed. On a personal note, over the past couple of months both my father-in-law and my mother-in-law have had cause to be treated in the Flinders Medical Centre, both having had heart attacks, and the job that was done by the nursing and the medical staff was absolutely first-rate. As a family, we are very grateful for the care that they provided.

I now turn to the issue of transport. Prior to the last State election, and over much of last year, Transport SA hired a group of consultants to consult with the local community over the upgrading of Commercial Road, which runs through my electorate. Commercial Road is mostly a two lane arterial road which services the growing areas south of the Onkaparinga River. One of the campaign issues of the last State election—and, indeed, of the election before—was the need for this road to be upgraded, and the former member for Kaurna made much of this during both of her election campaigns. Over the past year there has been very wide and expensive consultation about what shape the road should be, how many lanes here, what speed there, and what byways at this point and that point. There was an expectation built up in the community that the road would be built. After the election I asked what was happening about the road, and I was told by the Minister in correspondence that there were no plans for this road, that it was being put on the backburner. I note just for the record—

An honourable member interjecting:

Mr HILL: If that is the case, Minister, if it was only after I won, that says something very nasty about the way in which the Minister for Transport organises her budget and her planning. Just for the record, I point out that Transport SA indicates that, during the three years (and it does not have records for the other years, which I find strange) 1992, 1994 and 1995, a total of 179 accidents occurred along Commercial Road. There were casualties suffered in 41 cases and, in one recent case, there was a fatality. One of the local residents, Emma Boss, from the Maslin Beach Community Association, said:

The State Government promised an upgrade, but nothing seems to be happening.

She added:

The lack of passing lanes at intersections [has] made travelling on the road a frightening experience. [When turning] you just sit there holding your breath thinking is he [the fast moving car behind] going to stop or not.

There is a great problem in terms of roadways in my electorate and in the south.

In addition, prior to the election the Government announced that it would upgrade Murray Road in Port Noarlunga. Indeed, according to the budget papers relating to the last budget (page 59) a sum of money was allocated for commencement in January 1998. It is now late February 1998, and no work has commenced. So, I ask the Minister again to pass on to his colleague, the Minister for Transport, my concerns about what is happening in that regard.

I turn to the issue of the Christies Beach pipeline that has been proposed by the Government. The private sector is involved in planning at present and I commend those involved. I know that the member for Mawson has been a strong supporter of this project, and I commend him for this strategy to get waste water into the McLaren Vale wine-growing areas. I believe that it is a very important initiative and it is one that I strongly support. My concern, however, is about the pathway of the pipeline. One plan put forward would have the pipeline going through the Onkaparinga National Park. If that is the case, I ask those responsible for it to think again, because that will not be acceptable to locals, and I can assure the Minister for Government Enterprises that there will be widespread local opposition to that proposition.

The issue of pipelines makes me think of sewerage schemes and, as you know, Sir—or as anyone who has any dealings with the south would know—there is a great need in the Aldinga, Port Willunga and Old Noarlunga areas for sewerage systems to be connected. The conditions in Aldinga and Port Willunga on certain days in winter are an absolute disgrace. It is reminiscent of Third World conditions, with untreated sewage going down the streets. Children play in the area and they are being affected, resulting in poor health. The condition of the septic systems of some houses is such that people have to pump out the systems on an almost daily basis: the material is going into the ground and being pumped out into the street again. It is an absolute disgrace. When I asked about it, I was told that there will be at least a 10 year wait before houses are properly connected. There is a limited scheme in place which the Labor Party, prior to the election, promised would extend to the whole of that community, and once again I ask the Minister to raise that with his colleagues as something that should happen.

In Aldinga a police station was opened by the current Government in the shopping centre. I believe that it is open between 7 a.m. and 11 p.m. Prior to the 1993 election, the Government promised that it would be a 24 hour a day station. It is still not 24 hours a day. Locals would like to see that extended. It is a commitment that was made prior to 1993, so I believe it is one promise that the Government could afford to keep. Generally, there are problems with policing in the south, as you would be aware, Mr Acting Speaker, and it is the same problem as we have with the hospitals: the population has grown, the nature of the population is more complex, there are more entertainment venues and a greater number of police is required. Unfortunately, the extra provision of police has not happened as has been required. There are problems with the building of the Christies Beach Police Station. However, I am pleased to note that a date has finally been given for its completion. That is something I will be watching.

I raise one issue in relation to the Noarlunga CFS, which is now based at Seaford in a new station which was supplied and built by the council. The Minister for Transport was requested to supply the means for the station to operate the local traffic lights so that, in an emergency, the vehicles can turn the corner. The Minister for Transport supplied the switching mechanism, which has been built in, but the connecting line between the station and the lights has not been installed. The Minister has effectively told the CFS that it has to supply that mechanism. As members from rural electorates would know, \$6 000 is quite an expense for the CFS. I have seen correspondence from the Minister in which she said that a precedent would be created, that there are 56 or so CFS stations and they might all want \$6 000. However, as I pointed out to the Minister, very few of them would be sited close to traffic lights, especially those in country areas, where there are no traffic lights. That is something I would commend to the relevant Minister.

The last issue I would like to deal with directly in terms of my electorate in terms of Supply is the recent sale of former Housing Trust areas in Noarlunga, where the Colonades shopping centre is, to the AMP Society for a sum of \$25.2 million. I certainly supported that sale, and prior to the 1993 election I was involved in negotiations with the then Government to achieve it. It surprises me that it took almost six years before that land was sold, because it was an impediment, as the member for Mawson said the other day, to the development of that site. I certainly supported it.

What I do not support, however, is that \$25.2 million being taken out of the southern community and directed towards general Housing Trust debt. I believe that, given the unemployment conditions and the needs of the community in the south, it would have been far better if that resource had been sent in the south for job generation and improvement of local facilities. In particular, the \$25.2 million is around the mark for what it would have cost to extend the hospital.

I would like to take the remaining five minutes to explain something to some of the backbenchers on the other side, several of whom are here at the moment. Over the past couple of weeks, I have noticed, they have not been a very happy lot, notwithstanding the comment in the paper today that it was very jovial in the Liberal Party party room. I imagine it was kind of gallows humour that was in play there, as they contemplated their very short careers in this place.

In particular, I am glad that the member for Colton is here, because he has obviously been so distressed by the Government's announcement about the sale of ETSA and other State instrumentalities that, according to the press on the weekend, he has been forced to go on a regular regime of exercise and good food, and I commend him for that. Perhaps that explains why he has not been looking so happy. Something certainly has been causing him to look unhappy.

The member for Mawson has also not been looking very happy. I note he was away ill yesterday, so the trauma of the Premier's announcement has obviously affected him as well. I do not think that the member for Hartley ever looks happy, but he has not been looking happy since the election, and certainly since the Government's announcement.

I can understand why these members are not happy: they know their future is very limited as a result of this incredibly unpopular decision by the Premier. I have been thinking: why would the Premier make such an unpopular decision? Why would he decide to sell ETSA against all the promises he made? Members opposite might like to believe his rhetoric in here about risk and about competition policy, but let us get

down to the politics: why would he take the political risk? The Premier has decided that he will not be Premier after the next election, because either the Liberal Party will lose or he will be knocked off within his own Party. I think he decided that his days were numbered. In his heart, he knows that he will not be around for very much longer. So he has decided to go out with a bang, not a whimper, and he has embraced his very long-term goal, going back to the 1985 election—to privatise as much of this State as he possibly can, in particular to privatise ETSA. This is a goal he has always had. I suspect, given that it was the mid 1980s, he was infatuated by the rhetoric and philosophy of Margaret Thatcher. She has gone, but the Premier is still around.

What he wants to do is to go through to the process of privatising ETSA. That will have two effects on him: first, nobody on the other side will challenge for the leadership while that process is going on. Why would anybody want to take the poisoned chalice? So he is safe for the three years or so that it will take to privatise ETSA and the other instrumentalities. Secondly, once he has done that, he will then resign from the Parliament, having done the good deed. He will have achieved his lifetime goal and will leave the stinking carcass of the Liberal Party to some new Leader. It is worth contemplating and making some predictions for the other side about who that will be. In the position that the Minister for Local Government is now sitting, it is the Premier. However, I do not think it will be the Minister for Local Government who will take the Premier's seat when he goes in three or so years. I do not believe it will be the Minister for Human Services, either. He will be so exhausted by the process that he will want to leave then as well. I do not believe it will be the Deputy Premier; he will want to get out.

We have to go down four spots, and we see the member for Adelaide. The member for Adelaide is clearly grooming himself to be the Leader of the Liberal Party, and I predict that in three years he will be. Next to him, the member for Light will be the Deputy Leader. They will just shuffle along the chairs. They will lead the Liberal Party into oblivion, into Opposition, for a good number of years. Of course, if three of the frontbenchers go, that raises the question of who gets to take the spots. There are four possibilities already sitting here, but I am not too sure that they will all get guernseys. The most likely thing is that the member for MacKillop will be embraced by the Liberal Party and become a Minister. He is on a promise. I would say that the member for Waite, who has shown great skill and who has asked the right questions at the right times, will get a guernsey. There will be one guernsey left. The question is which member opposite will get it. The member for Mawson desperately wants it, but I am afraid he will miss out again. The member for Schubert is looking pretty good at this stage; I put my money on him.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr VENNING (Schubert): Until the last few minutes I had a lot of time for the new member for Kaurana. However, I will disregard his comments. The honourable gentleman has shown a little decorum and class in his presentation. I mean that with every sincerity.

Members interjecting:

Mr VENNING: All members know that I do not deal in porky pies. In a debate as serious as the one we have had this week, the attitude of the member for Kaurana ought to be mirrored by others. Members do not have to carry on like

pork chops to draw attention to themselves and generally bring this House into disrepute. It is a very serious issue.

I want to briefly touch on the sale of ETSA. Members would know that, before I came into this place, I could have been classed as a wheeler-dealer. Some people have said that I have always been lucky that I have never lost in a deal, but it is a matter of judgment and luck. Last week I sat with Robert Sangster and Colin Hayes, and I was told, 'An ounce of luck is worth a tonne of judgment.' Dead right! I firmly believe that before Christmas none of us on this side of the House—including the Premier—had a desire to sell ETSA or Optima. The debate was then and should be now the national competition policy. That is what is wrong; that is what I am cross about.

We have gone into a complete change of Government policy, and we never had the debate. The debate we never had was accepting this policy which, of course, came from former Labor Prime Minister Keating. It was never debated in this House. This is the big question. This is why we have had no choice in these areas. I wonder what it is doing to our State, because in a huge country such as Australia being able to compete is very difficult. We have no choice whatsoever in the matter. I wonder why we did not quiz Mr Hilmer. We took the Hilmer report as being gospel—and it was the Labor Government in Canberra that did that, I remind members—and just accepted it. Why did we not debate that issue? However, we are now debating the problems associated with it. Why did we not debate that? It was because we have been hung out to dry with everything else. That is what makes me very cross. I do not care what Government we have in Canberra: we in the smaller States will pay the price for that. If we are not careful, we will not have any infrastructure left, because the bigger States can produce electricity so much more cheaply than we can, and we will be told to buy it over the border. That is the debate.

In this instance, I firmly believe that from the Premier down—all of us—members were hoping that in the period December to January we could do something about the national competition policy. We thought that even a Federal election might have helped us—whatever. We thought there was a way to solve that problem. However, it did not happen, and now we have no choice but to maximise the State's opportunity. We have the choice either to stick with what we have or to sell. We have to move quickly now. The options are to sell or to lease, or a mixture of both. We must protect the generating asset because, in the worst scenario, we sell it and all the power is bought interstate: eventually our capacity to generate power will close down, and we will not have any at all. That would be a great tragedy, particularly as Torrens Island is a gas power station. It is efficient and pollution free, unlike some of the power stations interstate.

We must move quickly now because the New South Wales Government is moving quickly, and we cannot be a long way second to that process. I do not want to reveal too much: I am afraid that we have already said too much in the past two weeks. Any intending buyer has only to read *Hansard* and the market price will be denigrated. We can beat New South Wales to the mark, because it has a Labor Government. It certainly would be advantageous for us to do that, because the market is very fluid and we have several options.

I take umbrage at what the member for Gordon said earlier. He had a go at us because we had other ways of protecting assets. He said that we can protect our asset by hedging. I have done a lot of business in my time, and I have always used hedging to protect my risk, whether in wheat or

machinery trading, or whatever. By hedging on a deal such as this, you could very easily hedge yourself into double, triple or quadruple losses, because there are no other players in the market. If you buy something and it looks as though your investment is looking a bit rugged, you quickly go onto the buying market and buy more to try to soak up the surplus that is creating your low price. However, all of a sudden other markets move in, and you are caught not only with the original loss but with all the rest as well. There is no way you could go out into the marketplace and insure that. I believe in trading; I have spent my life as a trader. Once a trader, always a trader. You sell when everybody else is buying—

The Hon. M.K. Brindal: Traitor or trader?

Mr VENNING:—trader—and you buy when everybody else is selling. The opportunity to sell is now, because ETSA and Optima have a good reputation. It is good property, and it is saleable. I have always played the spot price on the share market. If you watch the spot prices on things, after a while—and you only need to be a strategist—you can work out the highs and the lows. They are already doing it with the power market. One member tonight said that we have only one generator. However, within two years we could have up to 20 authorities selling electricity interstate—perhaps even Telstra. It is easy. All you have to do is set yourself up to play the spot market for electricity, spend some time studying it, work out where the lows are, buy it at a low price, then flog it off at the high times to the consumers. It is very easy to work out where your profit and losses are electronically, and it is pretty gilt edged stuff if you are a smart player.

It makes it very difficult for us as a Government to do that because we cannot move with split-second precision, and the people who are employed to do it do not share that risk personally. When you play the spot market, you are very edgy. Even with the crop that we grow, we are dealing with thousands of dollars, but in this instance we are talking about millions. If you are not quick, a few seconds can cost millions of dollars playing the spot market.

In a few months even small consumers will be able to telephone a supplier of electricity and order or buy as little as 300 or 400 units of electricity. They will tell consumers what the price is and what it was last week, and people will decide to telephone in three weeks when it might be cheaper. We will be doing it ourselves, or we will get a forecast of what the spot price is and what it was, and there will be futures in electricity.

For a Government to play this game is just flawed with problems. I have played futures in grain marketing and you can hedge your bets, as the member for Gordon said, but we are talking small bickies because seasonal conditions, etc., can change. If you do that, you make sure that you insure your risk, as I do, borrowing money overseas, but the Government does not do that.

Members opposite must take a clever look at this, and they have not told us what their policy is. If there was a way out of this, I would recommend that we take it. However, the risks are all one way. We cannot afford another State Bank or even a half size State Bank disaster. In two years we may be buying our power from Victoria, and we may have to shut down one generator, let us say at Port Augusta. How could we then sell ETSA or Optima? The market would have fallen through the floor. We would have a liability on our hands that is worth nothing. We would end up closing both down and picking up a huge loss as well. What would we do with it then?

I believe that we should lease, not sell, so that the generating capacity is ours. It belongs to the people of South Australia. Things have changed. Members opposite should read the account of the life and times of Tom Playford to find out why he brought power generation under State control. Today's conditions are exactly the opposite. I have a lot of time for Playford; he was a magnificent man.

Do any members opposite, and there must be a few businessmen among them, think that we can continue in the present market, especially as the Auditor-General noted his concerns for us all to see? I have the greatest admiration for Premier Olsen. He has admitted that he had to change his mind. How many members opposite would have the courage to do that? It is a courageous act for an MP, particularly a Leader, to change his mind.

Members interjecting:

Mr VENNING: It is an extremely important subject that we are discussing and I know that my constituents want spelt out exactly why we are doing it. I invite members opposite to think a little about the risk that we are taking. They should think of it as their own money. Before I came into this place I was into wheeling and dealing, and I believe that, if this was my transaction, I would go with the Treasurer and Premier, particularly, and sell it, or lease it.

Members interjecting:

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order.

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL secured the adjournment of the debate.

CRIMINAL LAW (FORENSIC PROCEDURES) BILL

Received from the Legislative Council and read a first time.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL (Minister for Local Government): I move:

That the House do now adjourn.

Mr BROKENSHIRE (Mawson): It was refreshing to hear the sense in all but the last little bit of the member for Kaurua's speech. Apart from that, today I have listened to some of the most irrelevant debate that I have heard in 4½ years, especially the contribution from the member for Elder, but I guess that every Party has a clown, and we have seen that today.

My remarks concern the ETSA sale. As I have admitted to some of my constituents, prior to the last election, I said that to the best of my knowledge ETSA was to stay in its current situation. Now that more evidence has come to light and a decision has been made, I have had to let those constituents know what is going on, and I intend to make sure that I do.

The most disappointing thing about this debate is that Opposition members have not made any sensible contribution to it, yet this decision is one of the most crucial matters before this Parliament since the State Bank fiasco. It is a pity that members opposite do not treat it with that importance. At the end of the day when everything is resolved and the Opposition stops playing its games and trying to throw mud, particularly at the Premier, and the sale has gone through, the

general community will understand that, unfortunately, we have no other choice than to sell ETSA, otherwise we have nowhere to go. Time and time again we have asked the Opposition for an alternative, but it cannot offer one.

Some members opposite say that we should not sell those sorts of assets, but I remind them that we do not own those assets because they have already been mortgaged. As one constituent said to me on the telephone tonight, a person who had a primary home and a couple of negatively geared homes and who started to have financial difficulty would sell off one or two of the homes to make sure that the family home was kept intact. That is simply what the Government is doing. Financially, South Australia still has a very difficult path to tread.

It is probably fair to say that the biggest mistake the Government made in its last term was that it did not have the fortitude it should have had to make some tough decisions. That was unfortunate for two reasons, the first being that we did not have the numbers in the Upper House. One thing that really annoyed me when I was out and about last term was that initially people said, 'Don't do a Jeff Kennett. We don't mind how long it takes to fix Labor's mess. We know they have stuffed the State but don't do a Kennett.' Later on in the term they said, 'Why don't you do a Kennett?' Unfortunately, the Opposition never agreed to allow us to make some of the radical but important decisions that the Kennett Government made.

Frankly, we did not have a true mandate because we did not have control of both Houses. I would have loved to see the community of South Australia make a decision to give the Government a majority in both Houses for one term, just to see what could be done. If they did not like it after four years, they could flick us out, but at least we would have had a true opportunity to govern.

We have thrown out a challenge to the community of South Australia. We have told them exactly what the facts are. It has been supported not only by scientific evidence but also by people such as retired Senator Graham Richardson, the Labor Premier of New South Wales (Bob Carr), his Treasurer, Bob Hogg from the union and a number of other people. The Opposition should stop playing politics for a minute, get on with the job of assisting us in the recovery and support this legislation.

The member for Peake today said, 'If you sell off WorkCover and ETSA what's the point of being in Government? What are you there for if you don't own ETSA and WorkCover?' I would suggest to the member for Peake that the first purpose of Government is to make laws that protect and enhance the State; and, secondly, to provide infrastructure and facilities that the private sector either cannot or will not provide. Frankly, if the Government or any Government of any political persuasion stuck to that policy, instead of getting into this socialism and idealism that has now destroyed this State, then everybody would be far better off than they are today. Young people would have jobs; people would be more confident; and we would be able to rebuild the hospitals and make inroads into the great backlog of urgent maintenance required in this State.

As a member of the Public Works Committee, every time that committee goes on an inspection I see a lot of infrastructure that was carried out in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. It is grossly overdue for replacement but, unfortunately, the cupboard is bare. I am not interested in putting the blame on whoever caused that problem, because that is history, but I am certain of one thing: you cannot live in the past and you

cannot run a business or a Government as it was run in the 1950s.

We are coming up to a new millennium, and things have changed totally, just as they did during the industrial revolution when Sir Thomas Playford came forward with his vision. I am very grateful and thankful that Sir Thomas Playford was the Premier for 28 years. He gave people such as myself who came from a very middle-class family—in fact, less than middle class—an opportunity. We were battling. My father battled all the time to provide for us, but because we had good Government then I have been fortunate and I have done very well. Now things have changed. We have gone through an era when we had massive debt.

For some reason the media wants to give Don Dunstan a lot of credibility. The only reason I believe the media is presently giving Don Dunstan that credibility is that they cannot give credibility to the current Leader of the Opposition. When the leadership on the other side changes—and I know that the member for Hart is having trouble now because the left wing has gone over the top of him and will not support him—and we see a new Leader of the Opposition and we see the member for Ross Smith return to his rightful position as Deputy Leader, we will start to see a bit of cooperation and opportunity for this State, and I hope that happens soon. My point is that I will never forgive Don Dunstan for what he did, because he destroyed the social fabric of this State.

Indeed, the social fabric of the whole country is in disarray because of Gough Whitlam. The 1970s was the decade of destroying the family and social fabric of this country and this State. So, why make a martyr out of Don? Don is an older man now. Let him go to Don's Table and enjoy his meal, his Asian cuisine, and a bottle of wine, but leave him out of modern-day South Australia, because he is irrelevant to it. So is the Opposition. It is absolutely irrelevant to modern-day South Australia, but the community that we represent is very relevant to this Government.

I will tell members one thing: we will succeed with this and we will get the support of South Australians. We will succeed a lot sooner if we get a bit of support from the Opposition. We must go with the times. Things have changed and we all know that it is time we got on with the job of making sure that we provide for this change. I say to members that \$4 000 million through the sale of ETSA is worth the \$400 million that we can inject into this economy every year to help rebuild the social fabric of the State, to help fix those hospitals sooner and to get on with the job of pumping money into the Noarlunga Hospital which, like the member for Kaurana, I am very keen to see happen. But you cannot keep pumping money in if you do not have it.

The Government does not have a bottomless pit, contrary to what some people suggest. The Government is about running a business. I know that the extreme socialists on the other side get upset about this, but the fact is that their policies have not worked in the past, they are not working now, and they are certainly not the policies for the future. Get with us and support this important piece of legislation and, instead of talking about the Premier, talk about the policy and the issues and tell us how you intend to help us rebuild the State.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order.

Mr Clarke interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr Clarke interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The member for Ross Smith is wasting the time of his own side.

Ms STEVENS (Elizabeth): After the member for Mawson's speech I am not sure I can get up the energy to get into the same flamboyant and irrational behaviour that he exhibited. I think I will stick to some facts and some substantive matters. I want to talk about a program of great importance to young people with disabilities in South Australia. I want to highlight to the House something that went badly wrong in terms of this program's implementation. I certainly hope that the Minister will do something to retrieve the situation and keep up the Government's end of the bargain. The Moving On project—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Will the member for Ridley please take a seat.

Ms STEVENS: The Moving On project is a post-school options project for young people with a disability which was established by the Intellectually Disabled Services Council in the middle of last year. I quote from a newsletter IDSC sent to its parents and families which talks about this project in glowing terms, as it should, because it could be a good project. The newsletter states:

New Commonwealth funding of \$1.4 million and additional State funding will enable up to 170 people to choose what they wish to do during the week. People with intellectual disabilities, with the support of their families, will be provided with information about services which will allow them to choose those that best match their interests, convenience and support requirements. Individuals will be able to change services if they wish and may choose a combination of activities. We believe it is essential that families be kept involved in and informed about this new-day options project, which will lead to 170 young people with intellectual disabilities having day options in place in January 1998.

A meeting was held on 17 September in which this program was outlined to parents and families. It was well attended and, obviously, there was a great deal of enthusiasm for it because parents of disabled young people have been fighting for many years for a program that could follow on for their sons and daughters after they finished their secondary schooling. In the past, when their secondary schooling finished, generally around the ages of 18, 19, 20 and 21, these young people had no future. They have been left to be with their parents from that day on. So, people were very excited about this program, as they should be.

Unfortunately for at least 45 young people the promises and undertakings made at that time have not come to pass. The IDSC outlined a set of dates on which very important processes were to occur to enable this program to get up and running. The problem was that it had too much to do in too short a time. It first had to assess each of the 170 young people to determine just what level of support they needed and how many days each of them would be allocated for day options. That was to happen between 17 and 31 October—two weeks only, and it was unrealistic.

The next stage involved establishing an information session which everyone would attend: that is an easy one. The third stage was to invite providers of these post-school options to tender for their services and, after that process, for them to be selected as an approved provider from whom young people and their families could choose day activities. This process, a very complicated process, was also telescoped into a very small time frame.

Finally, on 26 October 1997 young people and their families were invited to attend the Expo knowing just how much support they would be allocated according to need in terms of numbers of days. The idea was that they would look at all the activities on show at the Expo and make their choices. This is great in theory but, unfortunately, it did not always come together. For at least 45 young people who went through this process, who went to the Expo with their families and who chose their activities, when they turned up at their chosen activity in early January—and these people turned up at the Take 5 program—they found to their disappointment and horror that, in fact, what they had been offered by the Government was not enough to pay for the number of days that they had been allocated.

In other words, a quite considerable mistake had been made by the IDSC in terms of matching the required dollars with the days those people had selected. People were very disappointed and upset. In fact, the organisers have been forced to curtail that program quite substantially. People expected that their sons or daughters would have 48 weeks of the year with a day options program. That is what one would expect: four weeks' holiday and a 48-week program each year. In order to make the funds meet the program, some of these people have had to curtail that 48 weeks by up to 15 weeks. This has caused real turmoil for those families. It has meant that people who work have had to figure out how to manage the care of their son or daughter during the 15 weeks for which they now unexpectedly have to find care. They now are faced with having to pay for and look for other activities which can fill in the gaps that have been left in this program.

The other problem is that agencies such as Take 5 now are faced with not being able to employ their own staff for a full year's work, because they now have gaps in the service they provide. This puts small providers of post-school options in great jeopardy, because they cannot keep their staff if they can offer them only 33 weeks a year instead of 48 weeks. So, it has had wider ramifications for families and has threatened the existence of small agencies.

I was contacted by four different families who were affected directly by that program because of this issue. Each family had issues which related to what they would do, how they would manage, how they would pay for their mortgages and for more activities, how they would manage work—for those who worked—and how they would arrange stop-gap measures. This was raised with the new Minister for Disability Services. I am pleased to say that, after his initial rejection of the fact that it had happened, he acknowledged there was a problem, and he has asked the IDSC to talk with these parents and those who organised the program in an endeavour to fix the situation.

I believe that, morally, the Government must keep its end of the bargain and should provide the necessary funds which it undertook to give those parents and young people. This will mean that it will have to find the money. That is the right thing for the Government to do. It was IDSC's mistake, so it must give an undertaking to these people that the original undertaking will be honoured. These people have had to put up with a lot in their lives. They are not the sort of people with whom you can renege on an agreement.

Motion carried.

At 10.5 p.m. the House adjourned until Thursday 26 February at 10.30 a.m.