

## HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday 30 June 1998

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

### NATIONAL ELECTRICITY (SOUTH AUSTRALIA) (COMMENCEMENT) AMENDMENT BILL

His Excellency the Governor, by message, intimated his assent to the Bill.

### EMERGENCY SERVICES FUNDING BILL

His Excellency the Governor, by message, recommended to the House the appropriation of such amounts of money as might be required for the purposes mentioned in the Bill.

### LIVING HEALTH

A petition signed by 146 residents of South Australia requesting that the House urge the Government to reconsider its decision to close Living Health and to ensure that existing sponsorships currently funded by the tobacco tax are maintained was presented by the Hon. R.B. Such.

Petition received.

### PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

The **SPEAKER** laid on the table the seventieth report of the Public Works Committee, being the final report of the committee on the Hindmarsh Soccer Stadium Upgrade, Stage 2, which has been received and published pursuant to section 17(7) of the Parliamentary Committees Act 1991.

### QUESTIONS

The **SPEAKER**: I direct that written answers to the following questions on the Notice Paper, as detailed in the schedule that I now table, be distributed and printed in *Hansard*: Nos 7 to 10, 37, 53, 73, 80, 99 to 103, 112, 114, 116, 119, 120, 122, 125, 127 to 130 and 134; and I direct that the following answers to questions without notice be distributed and printed in *Hansard*.

### JJJ RECYCLERS

In reply to **Mr WRIGHT (Lee)** 28 May.

The **Hon. DEAN BROWN**: The Minister for Transport and Urban Planning has provided the following information.

The Minister for Transport and Urban Planning did not declare the proposal as a major development. The Minister resolved that the normal assessment processes under the Development Act were adequate to consider the merits of this development. The member for Lee was advised accordingly on 21 May 1998.

On 9 June 1998, the Development Assessment Commission conducted a hearing of representatives and subsequently resolved to refuse development approval. In summary the Commission did not consider the site for the proposal to be suitable given its close proximity to existing housing and other activities which are potentially incompatible. While the Commission has refused this application, there is an outstanding application yet to be determined for a very similar development on the same site. The Minister for Transport and Urban Planning has been advised that the Commission has contacted the applicant to ascertain whether it intends to proceed with this application given the decision made by the Commission on 9 June 1998.

The applicant has appeal rights to the Environment, Resources and Development Court against the refusal. Any appeal must be lodged within two months of the decision date.

While it is appreciated that the final outcome is not yet known, given the existence of an outstanding application and appeal rights, the Minister for Transport and Urban Planning is satisfied that the assessment processes established by the Development Act provide an appropriate mechanism to assess the merits of the proposal.

### FOSTER CARERS

In reply to **Mr De LAINE (Price)** 28 May.

The **Hon. DEAN BROWN**: Under section 41 of the Family and Community Services Act 1972, no person can act as a foster parent unless he or she has been assessed and approved for the purposes of providing a safe and stable family environment for a child who cannot, for whatever reason, remain within the care of their own family.

The Department of Human Services has the legislative responsibility to approve and register carers following the recommendation of agencies involved in the engagement of foster carers. These legislative requirements are maintained through the Carer Approval and Registration Service (CARS). This service is located within the Community Services Division of the Department of Human Services.

All foster care assessments undertaken by service providers are based on a Manual of Practice entitled 'Standards for Assessment and Approval of Caregivers'. This manual was written and endorsed by the Department of Human Services following consultation with agencies involved in the recruiting and engagement of carers.

CARS is responsible on a state-wide basis for approving and registering all Carers within the Alternative Care System, on the electronic Justice Information System (JIS). This includes carers engaged by Anglicare, South Australian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, Port Pirie Central Mission and Anglican Community Care. It also involves relative carers and specific child only carers identified by social workers in the Department's Family and Youth Services Centres.

CARS also has responsibility to register and approve carers who do not fall within the scope of the Alternative Care Services system; for example carers recruited by agencies such as, Society of Sponsors, Interchange, Community Accommodation and Respite Agency (CARA) and SOS Children's Village.

The responsibility to recruit, train and recommend the approval of carers remains with the service providers.

Screening Process

At the commencement of the assessment process all potential carers are required to sign an 'Authorised release of Information' form from various parties. This is deemed essential due to the vulnerability of the client group. The checks include:

1. Police checks which identify and examine any police charges.
2. Departmental checks investigating any previous family contact with Family and Community Services.
3. Health checks, obtained through the family's General Practitioner.
4. Written references from persons not related to the applicant.

The Department's role through CARS is to acquire departmental and police checks on the service providers' behalf and advise them of the outcomes.

1. Police Checks

All Service Providers must conduct police checks on carers at the beginning of the assessment process on all adult members of the carer's family, including baby sitters.

There are several circumstances which could preclude a potential carer from being approved. These include:

- If a potential foster carer has ever been convicted of any sexual offence, no matter how long ago, the application will not be considered for approval and registration.
- If a potential foster carer has been convicted of an offence involving violence against another person in the last 10 years the application will not be considered for approval.
  - If such a conviction is more than 10 years old, further consideration of the applicant will be subject to the consideration of the nature of the seriousness of the conviction and/or an assessment of the applicant's current attitude toward violence.
- If a potential foster carer has been convicted of a drink driving or drug offence in the last 10 years further consideration of the application will be subject to a careful check of the nature and frequency of convictions.

If such a conviction is more than 10 years old, further consideration of the application will be subject to an assessment of the applicant's likelihood to reoffend.

#### 2. Departmental Checks

If information reveals a family history of substantiated child abuse, or an inability of a parent to protect their own children, or the applicant is a current client with issues of parent child conflict, the application will not be approved.

#### 3. Health Checks

It is compulsory for all potential carers to provide information on their health status as part of the assessment process from their general practitioner. The information is gained via a questionnaire which covers aspects of physical and mental health in a historical and current context. This information must be completed and signed by the GP and is considered by agencies in their assessment of a carers suitability.

The Department has the power of veto in the decision to proceed with the application or not, based on the outcome of both departmental and police checks.

#### Carer Reviews

All carers undergo a complete review annually and further police checks are taken every five years.

#### Further Information

The full assessment, approval and registration process takes approximately four months. This includes orientation and training of prospective carers which is considered to be an essential component and is part of scrutinising prospective carers.

In addition to the exclusion of carers due to external screening, families sometimes also voluntarily withdraw as they find the assessment process intrusive or more demanding than anticipated.

### ELECTRICITY, PRIVATISATION

**The Hon. G.A. INGERSON (Deputy Premier):** I move:

That Standing Orders be so far suspended as to enable the Premier to make a statement of unlimited duration regarding the planned restructuring of ETSA and Optima.

Motion carried.

**The Hon. J.W. OLSEN (Premier):** Today the Government is announcing the next stage of its plan, its determination to restructure and reform South Australia's power industry. This plan responds to both the risks and the opportunities which come from the establishment of the national electricity market between South Australia and the Eastern States. Make no mistake: the sale of our power utilities is an essential and critical part of our plan. This is not a decision that we have taken lightly. I have already acknowledged that, by taking our decision to sell, the Government and myself in particular have suffered considerable political damage, but it is a decision which we had to make. We had no choice. In a perfect world I would have preferred it to be different. It gives me no pleasure to see a great institution like ETSA pass from public ownership. After all, ETSA was the creation of the Liberal Party. But ideology played no part in Sir Thomas Playford's decision to nationalise the Adelaide Electric Supply Company, and I can assure you that ideology is playing no part now in our decision to return our power industry to private ownership.

Unfortunately, the arrival of the deregulated national market has made the decision inevitable. We have been advised that, in this new, deregulated market, the main players will be global companies, which are backed by access to massive equity. This is no place for public authorities that are risking taxpayers' funds, because up against this competition our small utilities will lose; that is fact. When they lose, every South Australian as a shareholder will lose. We accept that advice.

All of us remember that South Australia has been down that sad and damaging road before. The previous Labor Government allowed State owned financial institutions the

freedom to try their hand in a competitive, deregulated market, and we are still suffering. This is not an experience which my Government intends to repeat. Importantly, our plan for power is also time to take advantage of the narrow window of opportunity which we have. This window will maximise the value that we can receive for our power utilities. In doing so, we can secure the financial future of South Australia by reducing the burden of debt of our current interest bill of \$2 million a day. To lock in these savings, our legislation will set out that the total net proceeds from the sale of our utilities will be deposited in a special account in Treasury. This account will be available only for the purposes of paying off debt.

We have made commitments to upgrade hospitals, provide additional computers for our school children and to fund environmental improvement programs. All this can and will be delivered from the financial flexibility of the State's having much lower interest payments on a vastly reduced State debt. But, if we want these benefits, we do not have the luxury of delay. At this time, there is considerable national and international interest in our plans for a new power industry. There is a clear eagerness to purchase utilities as a means of entry into the new national electricity market in Australia. But we cannot expect that potential buyers will mark time waiting for South Australia to act. Once the New South Wales Labor Government puts its assets on the market—as it surely will once the Federal election is out of the way and with it the potential embarrassment to Labor's Federal Leader—South Australia will be up against New South Wales in competition for the same buyers. Our advice is that this could well reduce the sale price of our utilities. It is not a risk we should be willing to take.

I would like to say that, in being determined to restructure and sell our power utilities, the Government—and I am sure the people of South Australia—feel let down by the Opposition Leader, Mr Rann. After the last election, he gave us a promise of a bipartisan approach to issues of critical importance to this State. We have had nothing but negative carping since, especially on power. He is doing the people of South Australia a great disservice. We have their best interests at heart, and this can be seen in our power plan. In formulating our plan for a new power industry, the Government has been guided by a number of key objectives: principally, we are seeking to create an efficient, competitive electricity industry of international standard which delivers the lowest achievable prices to customers.

This new industry must be structured to meet the requirements of the National Competition Council and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission—I might point out, initiatives of the former Federal Labor Government. Allied to this, we want to increase the power of all customers, and we will do this by offering them the ability to choose from whom they receive their power service. In addition, we are determined to ensure that South Australia has a secure and reliable supply of power well into the future. Finally, as I have already highlighted, we wish to grasp the opportunity to reduce debt and to insulate the State's finances from the risks associated with the new national electricity market.

Addressing these objectives leads inevitably and inescapably to the conclusion that our current industry structure must be completely restructured and reformed. Advice to the Government on these requirements under competition policy to restructure, and the best possible structure for our industry, has been provided by a special electricity reform and sale unit. This has been established as part of the Department of

Treasury and Finance. This unit has been supported by a team of advisers with international experience across banking, accounting, economic analysis and the law. The unit and its advisers have conducted a comprehensive review of the existing industry and the public utilities that currently generate, distribute and retail electricity in South Australia.

The advisory team has conducted the review against a number of key criteria. Today, I intend to discuss these criteria and the reasons why they have led to the plan which the Government has accepted. However, before doing so, I wish to outline to the House the new industry structure the Government proposes to implement. At present, South Australia's power assets are held within two public corporations—ETSA Corporation and SA Generation Corporation, more commonly known by its trading name of Optima. Within ETSA Corporation are five further subsidiaries, the most significant of which are ETSA Transmission, ETSA Energy and ETSA Power.

The State's power generating assets are largely held by Optima, although ETSA also owns two small plants at Snuggery and Port Lincoln, which provide peak power when required. Under the plan for the new industry Optima will be restructured into three new power generating companies. It is critical that the House understands that, even without selling our utilities, this action is necessary to meet the principles of national competition policy. It is also necessary to meet the requirements of the ACCC and, most importantly, to gain the benefits of a truly competitive power generation industry.

The first of the three new companies will be based on the northern and Playford power stations at Port Augusta and packaged with Leigh Creek coal. For the time being it will be known as Coal Co. The second, which will be based on the Torrens Island power station, will be known as Gas Co. The third, to be known as Peak Co, will be focused on the generating assets which produce peak power including the four existing gas turbines at Mintaro, Dry Creek, Snuggery and Port Lincoln. This third company will also include a new combined cycle gas turbine station, which I will refer to in more detail later.

The changes to ETSA's structure are as follows: the distribution and retail businesses currently undertaken by ETSA will be established within a new company. These two businesses will be offered for sale together. This business will be established with separate entities owning the distribution and retail assets under a common holding company. The distribution and retail functions will be 'ring fenced' to have separate accounting, separation of information and elimination of cross-subsidisation of retail operating costs by distribution costs. Also, ETSA Transmission will be separated from ETSA Corporation and will be completely independent of the distribution and retail business. This will be done in a way consistent with the obligations of ETSA under its existing cross-border lease and the existing guarantee by ETSA Corporation of the obligations of ETSA Transmission under the cross-border lease.

An exciting new concept, which we believe will encourage new generation companies and deliver a more effective use of our gas reserves, will be a new company to be known as South Australian Gas Trader. This entity will hold all existing gas contracts and assets of Optima and ETSA, including a gas bank of approximately 19 petajoules. It will enter into new contracts to supply natural gas to Peak Co (for its gas turbines) and to the gas company power station at Torrens Island. It will also supply gas to the privately owned and

operated power station at Osborne and to any other new generators who enter the local market. SA Gas Trader will also assume Optima's rights in relation to pipeline capacity and expansion.

Finally, a residual entity will remain as the holder of a number of rights and obligations which are not appropriate to sell. This will ensure that the benefit of certain existing contracts can be preserved through pass-through arrangements. To ensure the most competitive marketplace possible, specifically so that customers have the greatest opportunity to benefit, we will also put in place cross-ownership rules to ensure that generally the purchaser of one asset will not be permitted to buy any other. However, the owner of transmission assets or the owner of the distributor/retailer may also acquire the proposed SA Gas Trader and vice versa. No restrictions will apply to the creation or acquisition of other businesses or assets by new entrants except operators of transmission assets.

Licenses in each functional business may also be licensed to operate at another functional level except transmission. I referred earlier to a new gas-fired, combined cycle power station which will be part of Peak Co. This is an exciting opportunity for us to attract major new investment to South Australia and at the same time deliver additional power capacity for certainty and security of supply. This opportunity, which we expect will lead to \$500 million of private sector infrastructure development in South Australia, will, in effect, be offered for sale as part of the privatisation process. The Government will provide non-cash incentives by way of access to land near the existing power plant at Torrens Island and the new plant will be accorded planning support and facilitation. It will have development and environmental approvals.

We are able to sell this investment opportunity because of the value which international energy companies place on entry into Australia's increasingly privatised energy market. There is no doubt that an investment of this magnitude will provide significant stimulus to our economy and boost to employment. It will also be an important symbol of confidence on the part of investors which can only spill over to other industries. I suggest that, when considering the legislation, which will give effect to these plans, all members of Parliament clearly understand that we have only one chance to package, market and sell this opportunity. It can bring us \$500 million of infrastructure development.

Importantly, the industry structure which I have just outlined will be overseen by a regulatory framework. This will provide a far greater level of practical protection to all customers than the current system of public ownership. Under the plan for this new industry, the power to regulate, to set standards and to monitor performance will be separated from ownership and operational responsibility. At the core of the new regulatory framework is an independent economic regulator. The regulator will be independent of the Government and established under a separate Act of Parliament.

The role of the regulator is to act as the independent watchdog, to protect the interests of both the power companies and customers. This independence will be preserved by giving the regulator a fixed tenure of five years and by limiting the circumstances in which the regulator can be removed from office. The key role of the regulator will be to ensure that users and consumers benefit from competition and efficiency, that the misuse of market power is prevented, that new entry into the market is facilitated and that efficient firms are able to remain viable.

The main functions of the regulator relate to prices, licensing and performance standards. The regulator will be responsible for the regulation of distribution pricing and retail pricing for non-contestable customers, that is, customers who have not yet been deemed to be able to choose their own power supplier under the national electricity market time lines. The Government will establish power pricing orders covering network prices up to January 2003 which the regulator will administer. The regulator will also be responsible for transmission pricing until the ACCC takes over this function.

The regulator also will be responsible for issuing, amending, transferring and revoking licences within the South Australian power industry. The regulator will also monitor and enforce performance and technical standards of the licensees. An equally important aspect of the regulator's role will include consultation with consumer and community groups through a Community Consultative Committee.

The regulator will provide information to customers and liaise with an industry Ombudsman to identify and address any issues. The existing functions of the technical regulator under the Electricity Act 1996 will be transferred to the independent regulator, except for the monitoring and regulation of safety and technical standards both in the power supply industry in South Australia and with respect to electrical installations. The technical regulator will be a State Public Service office reporting to the responsible Minister.

Consumer protection will be further strengthened by the establishment of a separate industry Ombudsman to deal with concern and complaints from industry participants and customers. The Ombudsman's role would be to receive, investigate and facilitate the resolution of complaints relating to the provision or supply of energy services, the administration of credit payment services, and disconnection and security deposits.

The Ombudsman's office will be established through an industry funded scheme and supported administratively through a company structure similar to that which exists in Victoria. The independence of the office will be guaranteed by ensuring that the articles of association of the company provide that the Ombudsman is independent of the directors of the company.

I referred at the beginning of this statement to the key criteria which have been applied in developing the structure and the regulatory framework. The first of these relate to the price of power to industry and homes in South Australia. Customers' power bills are made up of three major components: the cost of generating power, the cost of transmitting power and the cost of distributing the power to the customer. Each of these components is addressed by the proposed structure.

I will deal, first, with the cost of generating power. The initiatives we are proposing are aimed at maximising competition among generators in South Australia and other inter-connected States (Victoria, New South Wales and, ultimately, Queensland) while maintaining security of supply. By creating three viable in-State generation companies, we expect the market price of energy will reflect the reality of competition: in other words, the lowest cost operators will have a market advantage. Thus, cost reductions will become the primary operating objective of privately owned generators with obvious benefits to customers. Generators will not be price regulated; however, we are confident that competition will determine the energy component of market prices for

power as it has in Victoria and New South Wales with dramatic positive effects for customers.

I now turn to transmission and distribution costs. Customers will benefit from efficiency improvements within the transmission and distribution systems. The independent regulator will set prices based on a regulatory cap mechanism which provides incentives for the distribution system operator to reduce costs of power delivery over time. Consequently, we are confident that the combination of a competitive structure for generation and a regulatory regime focused on rewarding efficiency will keep a hold on prices and will benefit all South Australian consumers.

However, we have also been particularly mindful of the needs of rural South Australia. As I said earlier, the cost of power is based on three major components. Obviously, the cost of transmission and distribution is greater for remote areas. However, the impact of these additional costs is uneven. For example, in some circumstances transmission costs may be less in the South-East of the State compared with the Far West because of the proximity of the South-East to the inter-connector with Victoria. However, the Government's restructuring strategy is designed, as far as possible, to effectively average costs for small customers across the whole State. Our objective has been to develop a system in which the cost differential between different areas of the State for households and small business is kept at no more than 1.7 per cent after the year 2003.

As I have stated, from now until South Australian power customers can choose their own power supply within the national electricity market, which occurs in total in January 2003, we will set in place pricing orders which will ensure that power charges will be the same for all classes of customers in the city and country who use similar amounts of power. After January 2003, the independent national body, the ACCC, will take control of transmission pricing, and we expect that the increased competition that will have developed by this time will keep a hold on prices.

In all this planning of the new power industry, it has, of course, been essential that compliance with competition principles be the key criteria for its structure. At stake are the competition payments. These are made under the Federal-State agreement to implement national competition policy which South Australia signed in April 1995. Under this agreement, certain conditions must be met before competition payments are made. These conditions include the complete structural separation of power transmission assets from other power assets and the ring fencing of the power distribution and retail businesses currently conducted by ETSA. I assure the House that the proposed structure meets all these conditions and, consequently, ensures South Australia's access to competition payments.

The industry structure has already been presented to the ACCC and NCC. The ACCC has raised no objections to the new structure. The NCC has stated its preliminary view is that the proposed structure is 'consistent with South Australia's obligations under both the national electricity agreements and clause 4 of the competition policy agreement'. I can also confirm that, under the new structure and with private power companies, all existing customer concessions will be maintained. The current practice is that power concession schemes are funded from general revenue while being administered by ETSA. This practice will not change, except that the private sector will take the place of ETSA.

Customer service standards are also an important matter for rural South Australia where, unfortunately in recent years,

performance has not been as good as country people have a right to expect. Prior to sale, the Government will publish a customer service charter which sets out minimum customer service standards for the distribution and retail sectors. These standards must be met or exceed current performance levels. It will be a condition of sale that buyers must agree to abide by this charter. This will be enforced by licence, and failure to comply will result in penalties including fines. However, we would fully expect that potential buyers will be prepared to commit themselves to such improved standards. All things being equal in terms of price, we would look more favourably upon potential buyers who do so.

A criterion for South Australia's power plan which is of great importance to this State's future is that of system security and capacity. Peak demand for power in South Australia has grown by about 3 per cent every year for the past few years. Peak demand occurs for only a small number of hours in the year, with the summer peak demand highly dependent on temperature and the increased use of air conditioning. The Government's advisers have reviewed ETSA and Optima forecasts for demand through to 2005 and have recommended an approach which will ensure that the State's power supply is secure. This involves: the continued operation of the Playford power station; the return to service of Playford unit 4; incentives to encourage a new generation company as part of the sale of Peak Co.; and, importantly, more sophisticated demand management. In addition to these measures, the Osborne power plant will come on line, and it is likely that the interconnector to Victoria will be upgraded to increase its capacity.

Finally, there is the all important criterion of the identification and management of risk. The report of South Australia's Auditor-General to the year ended 30 June 1997 reviewed, among other topics, the process of power reform in South Australia. I remind all members of the preliminary findings of that report. First, the implementation of national competition policy, including in the power industry, would entitle the State to 'competition payments' of \$322 million and financial assistance grants of \$690 million over a nine year period. Secondly, the restructuring of the power industry in Australia and the establishment of the national electricity market will expose the State, as the monopoly owner of all power businesses, to growing competition and risk in an environment of rapid change.

The State would also need to develop and maintain world best practice in order to remain abreast of that competition and to comply with the national electricity code. Thirdly, there is an inherent conflict of interest in the State, on the one hand using its regulatory power on an ongoing basis to manage risk and commitment to comply with the electricity reform and policy agreements, and on the other hand having its interest as a stakeholder in and guarantor of Optima and ETSA energy. Fourthly, the establishment of appropriate processes for risk identification and management, particularly through a deregulatory and possibly a privatisation phase, is an essential function of Government.

I want to stress that the present review of our power industry has ensured that the Government will meet its obligations to identify risk, and the structure we are proposing will ensure that, to the greatest extent possible, these risks are minimised. In addition to taking the steps which are required by the new electricity market, the process of selling our power utilities will allow us to take action to deliver a range of improvements in different areas.

Most significantly, we have a unique opportunity to take action to enhance our environment. South Australia is fortunate that our ability to use natural gas as a source of energy means that overall our generators have a better greenhouse performance than the generating sector in other States. Nevertheless, a number of the power plants currently operated by Optima and ETSA do not comply with today's environmental standards because of their age and outdated technology. The plan to restructure and sell the State's power utilities includes an environmental package that is designed to address these issues. It will also deliver other exciting environmental results. Under our environmental package, the new owners of the power stations must agree to improve their environmental performance over a period of time. Their performance in meeting the agreed targets will be monitored by the EPA.

As well, the package of incentives for the private sector to build a major new gas-fired power station will not only mean investment and jobs—it will also lead to a total reduction in emissions from power generation in South Australia, particularly the smog-causing chemicals. This will occur because the new power station will be required to meet or exceed current standards for air emissions. The Government will also establish a new Sustainable Energy Agency, which will play an important role in promoting energy efficiency and new technologies for renewable energy, such as wind and solar power. The agency will also assist in the development of cost-effective, demand management strategies. It will also work with the Independent Regulator to encourage the owners of the power stations to build in greenhouse gas reduction programs as part of their operational planning. The agency will be expected to work with similar organisations in other States such as the New South Wales Sustainable Energy Development Authority.

It will initially be funded by Government. However, private operators within the new power industry will be expected to contribute to the agency over the longer term. Also, 'Green Power' schemes, which operate in other States, will be introduced in South Australia. These schemes give customers the opportunity to purchase part or all of their energy needs from sustainable energy sources.

The job security of the existing employees of ETSA and Optima has been given priority. We will meet our commitment to no forced redundancies by making it a condition of sale that prospective owners agree to provide employment for all those employed at the time of sale. This will include workers with outstanding workers compensation claims and those subject to income maintenance. We will then lock in our commitment to no forced redundancies after the sale through a certified agreement which will be agreed and signed with the relevant unions prior to sale. This agreement will operate under the Federal Workplace Relations Act which means that any changes to it could occur only after negotiation between the employees, their unions and the new owners.

We have also taken steps to ensure the long-term security for existing employees by a commitment to protect superannuation entitlements through a new industry based scheme. As part of sale arrangements, the Government will ensure that, at sale, the scheme is fully funded to ensure continuity of current entitlements. The changes will mean that, while in future employee superannuation will be provided through an industry scheme, benefits will be maintained as though there had been no change of ownership. I would also add that the new structure which I have outlined is designed to bring

about an overall expansion of the power industry in this State, and with it an expansion of new job opportunities.

As I stressed when I began this statement, the plan I have outlined is necessary to respond to the demands placed on all States by the new national electricity market. Whatever the views of individual members concerning public versus private ownership, there can be no doubt that the structure of the power industry in South Australia will have to change. The alternative is a highly regulated, inefficient, and introspective Government monopoly which replaces competition with complex rules, one which denies choice to consumers and which places at risk our share of the competition payments. All States are moving to establish independent regulation. All States are moving to meet their obligations to structurally separate key sections of the industry. All States, with which we directly compete, are joining the national electricity market.

At the moment, many of our industries are threatened because their competitors in the Eastern States already have the advantages of deregulation and competition. We cannot allow our industries to be left with the double disadvantage of distance, and an uncompetitive power industry. I suspect that these facts are not clearly understood by some members of the Parliament. This is particularly the case with those who take up entrenched positions in advance of all the information being available—those who run phoney campaigns to save a system which increasingly cannot continue to exist. This phoney campaign is at its most dishonest when it claims to be protecting the revenue stream from ETSA. In a competitive market the revenue stream can only be maintained in one of two ways: either by the Government setting higher prices, which would put industry at risk, or by the utilities themselves taking competition risks which put the taxpayer clearly in the firing line. Either way, South Australia stands to lose.

There is also no doubt that our power industry needs to build more capacity. But you cannot put aside money for investment while at the same time increasing dividends, unless of course you simply want to borrow and blow the State debt out even further. Equally dishonest is the hand-wringing about jobs. The dividend which ETSA pays is only as large as it is because of efficiencies which inevitably have meant a reduction in employment. That was a process begun by the previous Labor Government. You cannot have it all ways. You cannot say that ETSA is going to be able to compete, increase dividends, spend more on capital and employ more workers. That is economic fantasy.

And if those opposite, and those in the other House, who think they can make fantasies come true have their way, then we run the risk of being left with greatly devalued assets. It will then be too late to get full value for the South Australian taxpayer. That is a result which Mr Carr and the Labor Government of New South Wales would be pleased to see, and I suspect that Mr Beattie and the new Queensland Labor Government will not be far behind. But it will be at the cost of South Australia's future. The structure I have outlined today is the structure of the new power industry for South Australia in the twenty-first century. It must be implemented, regardless of the political point scoring and engineered deadlocks.

In fact, it has to be implemented if we have any desire to be a modern and efficient economy, one which is serious about attracting investment and jobs. I would ask all members of Parliament to consider this with care, with a view not for short term political gain but for a long term economic

strength for this State. That is what we are working towards. That is our goal.

### PAPERS TABLED

The following papers were laid on the table:

By the Minister for Industry, Trade and Tourism (Hon. G.A. Ingerson)—

District Council—By-Laws—Tumby Bay—No. 14—  
Keeping of Dogs

By the Minister for Human Services (Hon. Dean Brown)—

Regulations under the following Acts—  
Chiropodists—Fees  
Harbors and Navigation—Recreational Vessel Licence  
Royal Adelaide Hospital—By-Laws—No. 15

By the Minister for Government Enterprises (Hon. M.H. Armitage)—

Regulations under the following Acts—  
Dangerous Substances—Fees  
Explosives—Fees  
Fees Regulation—Water & Sewerage Fees  
Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare—Fees  
Sewerage—Other Charges  
Trade Standards—  
Cots for Household Use  
Lighters  
Waterworks—Other Charges  
Rules of Court—Supreme Court—Supreme Court Act—  
Criminal—Subpoena

By the Minister for Education, Children's Services and Training (Hon. M.R. Buckley)—

Education, Training and Employment, Department of—  
Report, 1997  
Regulations under the following Acts—  
ASER (Restructure)—Restructure  
Public Corporations—Funds SA Subsidiary Holding

By the Minister for Environment and Heritage (Hon. D.C. Kotz)—

Environment Protection Act—Regulations—Licence Fees  
Environment, Resources and Development Committee—  
Aromatics in Petrol with Particular Reference to  
Benzene—Response to Recommendations of

By the Minister for Primary Industries, Natural Resources and Regional Development (Hon. R.G. Kerin)—

Regulations under the following Acts—  
Fisheries—  
Management Committees  
Fish Processors  
Blue Crab Fishery  
Marine Scalefish Fisheries  
General  
Miscellaneous Fishery  
River Fishery  
Rock Lobster Fisheries  
Lakes and Coorong Fishery  
Prawn Fishery  
Abalone Fisheries  
Meat Hygiene—Fees  
Veterinary Surgeons—Rules of Conduct.

### ENVIRONMENT, RESOURCES AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

**Mr VENNING (Schubert):** I bring up the twenty-ninth report of the committee on aquaculture and move:

That the report be received.

Motion carried.

## QUESTION TIME

### ELECTRICITY, PRIVATISATION

**The Hon. M.D. RANN (Leader of the Opposition):** Given both the Premier's statement to the House today and his refusal yesterday to rule out putting the question of the sale of ETSA and Optima to the people of South Australia through a referendum, is the Premier now prepared to declare the ETSA Bill a Bill of special importance and make it a real referendum?

**The Hon. J.W. OLSEN:** The Leader's question is based on a false premise. When I was asked about a referendum in a press conference yesterday I indicated that that was just one of the options the Government would consider; I did not rule it out.

*An honourable member interjecting:*

**The Hon. J.W. OLSEN:** Workers' jobs are not on the line. The ministerial statement—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier has the call.

**The Hon. J.W. OLSEN:** I have just detailed in the ministerial statement the arrangements and negotiations with the unions to give protection to the workers, so the interjection once again is fundamentally wrong; it is a flawed argument. As I indicated in my ministerial statement, with the legislation introduced to this Parliament we have a window of opportunity to get to market before the New South Wales Labor Government. To do so will maximise the price of our assets to South Australian taxpayers and maximise debt reduction.

On behalf of every South Australian we ought to be striving to maximise the price, to get to market before the New South Wales Labor Government and to maximise the reduction in debt. That will be the most important objective that we need to achieve. I note that Sandra Kanck of the Democrats has said, 'Well, if you have a referendum I'm not going to take any notice of it, anyway.' So, what is the point? When a proposition was put before Ms Kanck she said, 'It doesn't matter what the referendum says; I will still oppose any subsequent sale.'

At this point, rather than risk \$4 million to \$5 million and risk delay, we will test the Parliament. This is about testing every individual member of Parliament and their responsibility to South Australia's future. This is about our languishing in the past, languishing with the debt *ad infinitum* or breaking free for South Australia's future. This is our one golden opportunity to eliminate in the main this debt that has crippled this State for a decade or more. As we go into the next century this is our one opportunity to clear a path for South Australia in the future.

We could do no greater service for our kids than give them a debt free future. That is what is at stake. Does the Leader of the Opposition want to say to Western Mining, General Motors and Mitsubishi, 'We do not want you to have a competitive marketplace or a lower price of electricity going into General Motors at Salisbury and your new \$1.6 billion second production line, creating 700 additional jobs for South Australia and producing a motor vehicle that is going to the Middle East'? Does he want to say, 'We do not want you to have internationally competitive power prices; we want to put you at a disadvantage when you try to sell Holden motor vehicles into the Middle East'?

Well, we will not put General-Motors at a disadvantage: we will create the opportunity for those 700 jobs to grow and expand. We will give General Motors-Holden's the chance to produce a motor vehicle for the Middle East and the international marketplace and compete with any other manufacturer in the world. That is what we want to achieve: not only new private sector investment, the export market, jobs and a debt free future but also, importantly, preserving the future for our kids.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Before calling for the next question, I draw the attention of the House to Standing Order 184 which provides, *inter alia*, that questions may not attempt to anticipate debate on any matter which appears on the Notice Paper. I allowed the honourable member's question because I did not believe it fell into that category. I would caution members to remember during the rest of Question Time today that there is an ETSA Bill on the Notice Paper.

**The Hon. M.D. RANN:** I rise on a point of order, Sir. Given the number of questions asked by the other side on this issue, does that apply to both sides?

**The SPEAKER:** Of course it will apply to both sides. I drew that Standing Order to the attention of members so that if they have questions on ETSA they will bear that Standing Order in mind.

**Mr FOLEY:** I rise on a point of order, Sir. The Bill currently before the Parliament is an enabling piece of legislation which deals with principles associated with the framework for the sale. As outlined today by the Premier, it is a significant structural reform of ETSA, for which we have no legislation presently before the House. I would ask that your ruling involve only those issues related to the sale process and not anything to do with the structural make-up of ETSA.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I remind the honourable member that I have not made a ruling: I am cautioning members not to stray into offending Standing Order 184 when they frame their questions. If they observe that, there will not be any problems between members and the Chair.

**Mr HAMILTON-SMITH (Waite):** Will the Premier explain to the House the extent of the market risk to transmission and distribution which will be brought on as a result of the start of the national electricity market scheduled for October?

**The Hon. J.W. OLSEN:** As we have indicated, we are about to enter a period of great change within the national electricity market, and enter it we must. Our entering the national electricity market is not a matter of choice for us; we must enter it. The Democrats cannot understand or are simply failing to accept one fundamental point. In doing so, there is a risk that, if we retain—

**The Hon. M.D. RANN:** I rise on a point of order, Mr Speaker. Is not the Premier referring to the Bill currently before the House? He is talking about the Democrats' not supporting it.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order.

**The Hon. J.W. OLSEN:** The question relates to risk. I am addressing the matter of risk. Our first risk is that we have to go into the market; we have no choice about that. So, the monopoly of the past goes. That is a risk. That is the most fundamental point. We have to do it, we have to move in it, and move in it we will. They have indicated that there is no risk with transmission and distribution, that the revenue flows will be maintained. I will provide an example of where that was not the case. ETSA lost a contract to supply transmission

lines through to Roxby Downs. Western Mining then went and built its own powerline from Port Augusta. That is just one graphic example of how it could not compete with the private sector. Western Mining had a choice, so it went and built its own transmission line. That clearly indicates how transmission and distribution are subject to market risk, competition and moving away from the structure that has existed in the past.

Given that only 27 customers purchase 17 per cent of our power output, if they all shifted, 17 per cent of the revenue would go from ETSA/Optima. Along with that would go an even greater percentage of the dividends and, with that, the market value. These are intertwined. You just cannot separate them out. So, when people claim there is no market risk on transmission and distribution, they are simply wrong. It is wrong to say that. We have these risks. We have to ensure that we manage these risks in South Australia's long-term business interests, because managing that risk, moving to the market and protecting and preserving South Australia's investment base, is the way in which we preserve and protect South Australia's jobs base. I do not need to point out to the House and to the Leader that each month the unemployment figures come out and the Leader asks, 'What are you going to do about it?' I reply, 'We are trying to do something about it.' We are trying to position this State in the long term such that we can get new private sector investment into the State.

Ms Kanck's other point was, to use her words, 'the landscape will remain familiar'—that is, not much will change. She obviously does not understand that matter. Under competition laws—private or public, sale or no sale—we have to restructure our electricity industry. It will change; the landscape has to change in the future. A statement to the contrary is simply not factual. We envisage that by 2003 all customers will have a choice of supplier, as we now do with Telstra and Optus. If you do not like the service from Telstra you can go to Optus and get a better deal, reduced costs or better service. We only have to look at how many South Australians have taken up the option of choice.

*An honourable member interjecting:*

**The Hon. J.W. OLSEN:** Woolworths with petrol; there is another example. In Victoria, there are about 15 or more retailers, so you can shop around. In the future, it is likely that you will be able to buy your power supply from Telstra, Optus, Woolies or someone else. You will be able to shop around and do a deal. You will have a choice on service and a choice on price. In 2003 they will be the options. In Victoria, about 50 per cent of customers have been given the choice, and they have exercised their right to choose. Some 50 per cent have taken it up and moved somewhere else, and they would not do it if they were not getting a better service or better price. Therefore, to say that the landscape will remain familiar in the future is to defy simple logic.

#### LIBERAL PARTY, LEADERSHIP

**The Hon. M.D. RANN (Leader of the Opposition):** Will the Premier tell the House the names of the companies referred to by his adviser Professor Cliff Walsh which have withheld potentially hundreds of millions of dollars worth of investment in this State because of leadership instability in the South Australian Liberal Party and, if not, why not? Last week, Professor Cliff Walsh, a key economic adviser and consultant to the Premier, wrote in the morning press under the headline 'Why I can no longer stay silent', the following:

To my certain knowledge, several hundred million dollars worth of potential investments in South Australia haven't gone beyond initial assessments because expert political analysts have not been willing to give potential investors the reassurances they've wanted.

Professor Walsh goes on to say:

The problem isn't that those analysts are predicting a high probability of a change of Government at the next election, which they are, but rather they are predicting continuing instability in the present governing Party until they are voted out of office.

**The Hon. J.W. OLSEN:** When you have no policy and no ideas, what do you resort to in the Parliament? Here we have—

*The Hon. M.D. Rann interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member has asked his question.

**The Hon. J.W. OLSEN:**—the most significant policy issue in this State in the past 20 to 30 years, and what does the Leader of the Opposition's second question go to? Scuttlebutt; it is no more and no less than that.

**Mr FOLEY:** I rise on a point of order, Mr Speaker.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier will resume his seat.

*The Hon. M.D. Rann interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader will not shout over the Chair.

**Mr FOLEY:** The Premier has accused the Opposition of not asking questions about the most important legislation before the House. You, Mr Speaker, have just ruled—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order. The member will resume his seat.

**Mr FOLEY:** I haven't completed my point of order.

**The SPEAKER:** What is your point of order?

**Mr FOLEY:** I haven't completed my point of order, Sir. It's a bit hard to rule it out when I haven't finished it. Mr Speaker, you said that Standing Order 184 precluded the Opposition from questioning the Premier about that legislation. Did you ask the Premier not to defy your ruling?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members should avoid breaching Standing Order 184. The Bill before the House refers to restructuring and disposal. Members should avoid questions and answers on that subject. However, issues dealt with in the ministerial statement this afternoon are another matter.

**The Hon. J.W. OLSEN:** Members may have noticed that, during the Estimates Committee and since, there has been a slight shift of emphasis in the Opposition. The member for Hart is now the tough guy on the other side. He is now upping the ante. Perhaps the member for Hart has his eyes set on some goal or objective a little further down the bench. Let me come back to the Leader's question.

*Members interjecting:*

**The Hon. J.W. OLSEN:** No, I don't think he will either. When you have no policy and no ideas, you get back into scuttlebutt. The Opposition has not put up an alternative proposal on the sale of our power utilities—its silence has been deafening, and it has not outlined an alternative policy. For an Opposition to have any credibility it must have a position on something—just something would do. What about the most important policy issue, which has been around since 17 February? Still, it cannot come up with an idea of what it believes in. Any credible Opposition would have put out at least a one line policy by now, but this Opposition has released no policy. It is clearly a policy free zone. The only policy it has is the word 'No'. It says 'No' to everything—'No' to progress, 'No' to elimination of debt, 'No' to a competitive marketplace, 'No' to reduced costs for power for our consumers, and certainly it has no policies.



Let us come to private sector new capital investment, which is the basis of the Leader's question. Private sector new capital investment in percentage terms for South Australia, as reported in the *Australian* a week or two ago, has outperformed every other State in Australia. That is not bad. I also argue that we have a long way to go. We have come from a very low base that we inherited from the former Labor Government. Despite the fact that they gave us foundations of sand, we are building a solid foundation to get new private sector capital investment in place. We are targeting key industry sectors. We are looking with the wine industry for a 20/25 strategy, looking to our food plan and taking it out by 20/10 to treble the size of our exports under our food plan. So, the list goes on in a whole range of industry sectors. But there is not one policy idea yet from the Leader of the Opposition. If we give him four years, perhaps he will come up with something by the time we get to the election in March 2002.

*Mr Clarke interjecting:*

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

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! You are only wasting your own Question Time.

#### STATE DEBT

**The Hon. D.C. WOTTON (Heysen):** Will the Premier provide the House with further reasons why it is so important to reduce the State debt sooner rather than later, bearing in mind in particular the statements made by the Leader of the Australian Democrats in another place, who has suggested that reducing the State debt can be dealt with at a later stage?

**The Hon. J.W. OLSEN:** The question from the member for Heysen identifies what Ms Kanck has said in relation to our debt, namely, 'getting around to it later'. If only we could. If only you could park the debt on one side, ignore it and blissfully govern the State of South Australia. Thankfully, Ms Kanck will never sit around a Cabinet table and be charged with the responsibility of squaring up with the debt and deciding how to manage it, how to put in place policies, how to raise revenue and how to expend that revenue with, basically, social justice responsibility as well as fiscal responsibility. What a simplistic version! The statement that 'we will get to debt later' is almost of One Nation proportions. It is something you can park on the side.

The part of the debt that really matters is the part which taxpayers are paying for and which is not reducing, namely, about \$5.6 billion of the \$7.4 billion net debt, more than \$4 billion of which is attributed to the State Bank. We had overnight a \$4 billion debt level put onto our decks. To those who want to hark back to the halcyon days of the 1950s and 1960s, with concessional loans from the Commonwealth at 1 to 2 per cent, the debt would not have mattered so much at those rates. We are now in a deregulated market place, courtesy of the Keating-Hawke Labor Governments, which means that we have to pay interest at current market rates. When we go back to the market for debt servicing, it is at market rates and not the 1 per cent loans that have been locked in for extended periods. They are not on offer to us any more. We have a few of those loans. Of the 2 000-odd loans we have, I think there are still one or two at those percentages, but the Commonwealth is not keen to give you any more of those.

*The Hon. Dean Brown interjecting:*

**The Hon. J.W. OLSEN:** I am reminded that there is a housing loan of some \$900 million at the low rate of 4 per cent. You have to go to the marketplace at competitive rates now and you do not have the luxury of the 1950s and 1960s. We simply cannot sustain the debt. When you are paying \$2 million a day debt servicing costs, it is like the Treasurer turning up to work and pouring \$2 million down the drain every day. I would rather the \$2 million, instead of being poured down the drain, going into the hospital system, the education system and police services and providing infrastructure for further development within South Australia. That is where the \$2 million a day ought to be going.

Let it not be misunderstood: if we do not get rid of our debt, if we maintain our debt, we will place every PAYE earner in this State at risk because, if the Commonwealth Government in its tax package vacates the personal income tax arena to the extent that allows all States—and I note that Labor Premier Beattie on the Sunday program supported this—to piggyback on the Commonwealth income tax system for revenues for the State, this is what the scenario will be in five years: Queensland has no debt; New South Wales will get rid of its debt by the sale of its power assets and will have no debt at the end of that process; Victoria is moving down the track of eliminating its debt; and Western Australia has significant mining royalties and revenues, so it is not affected.

The States will be asked, 'What is the tax rate that you want to apply to your State this financial year, piggybacking on the Commonwealth personal income tax rate?' Queensland has no debt and will say, 'We don't need the money: zero.' South Australia will say, 'We are still paying \$728 million a year or \$2 million a day in interest: we have no choice but to strike the rate at 3¢ or 5¢ in the dollar.' That means that every PAYE earner in this State will have a pay packet reduced by higher personal income tax than those in every other State in Australia. Is that what the Labor Party wants? Is that what the Democrats want? That is the risk you are facing in the future—putting every PAYE earner at risk. Well might some of you have a red face over that—every PAYE earner being put at a disadvantage. They are the risks a few years down the track.

If we do not take the chance to eliminate the debt now, that is the sort of scenario that can be inflicted upon every PAYE earner in this State. This Liberal Government will not inflict that on wage earners in this State, but let it be known that the Labor Opposition in South Australia is fully intending, because of its no policy zone, to allow that set of circumstances to evolve in the future.

#### EDUCATION, VOCATIONAL

**Ms WHITE (Taylor):** My question is directed to the Minister for Education, Children's Services and Training. Was the Minister's announcement of significant expansion of vocational education in the 1998-99 budget intended to mislead South Australians about the Government's cuts to funding for vocational education? On 28 May—budget day—the Minister announced a 'significant expansion of vocational education in the 1998-99 budget'. The Opposition has leaked budget documents which show that TAFE institutes will be cut by \$3.2 million in 1998-99, \$7.9 million in 1999-2000 and \$9.5 million in 2000-1—a total cut of \$20.6 million in three years. A second leaked departmental document states:

TAFE institute directors have been asked to identify strategies to achieve the savings targets identified.

**The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY:** I thank the honourable member for her question. The vocational education training program in the education sector is certainly one of the success stories of this Government so far. In 1996, 1 200 students undertook vocational education training in secondary schools. In 1997 that moved to some 4 000 students and it is estimated that this year some 7 500 students will undertake vocational education training within their SACE certificate. That will deliver to those young people not only an education in industry and in a particular vocation that they decide to follow or are interested in but also accreditation onto continuing TAFE courses and university courses. So, even if somebody does not get the points they want to go to university, they can work through the VET sector program and go into the TAFE sector and onto further education. We have identified \$4.2 million that will be spent on the Ready, Set, Go Program. Of that, some \$700 000 will go directly into vocational education training courses and some \$700 000 into the training of teachers to provide those courses.

The honourable member referred to cuts in TAFE that were identified in the budget. I do not walk away from the fact that TAFE does have to come up with some efficiencies, the same as within my own education area we are getting efficiencies because of the budget ask of the Treasurer. We have identified areas where some of those efficiencies can be gained. Some of those come from the amalgamation of Regency-Para TAFE. Where previously we had two organisations, now they are amalgamated into one. Some of those efficiencies come from the amalgamation of the departments. Previously, we had a Department of TAFE, which Minister Dorothy Kotz had under her program. We had two payroll sections and two curriculum sections: we had duplication. As a result of the amalgamation of those into the Department for Education, Training and Employment, efficiencies can be gained across the TAFE sector. Those efficiencies will be gained over time. We will not be walking away from vocational education training, which is a very high priority of this Government.

### ELECTRICITY, PRIVATISATION

**Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders):** Will the Premier advise the House what protections he can give country power customers in relation to price under a new electricity market?

**The Hon. J.W. OLSEN:** This is a very important issue for country and regional areas of South Australia, particularly those areas which have attracted new investment in recent times and which have new industry starting to expand and grow. The aquaculture industry is but one in the honourable member's district that has enormous potential for South Australia in exports.

There will be protection for consumers in two important ways: we will appoint an independent industry regulator—a watchdog not directed by the Government—and there will be an electricity industry Ombudsman so that the protections will effectively be greater than ever. We know that country consumers have been nervous about protection. Farmers and people living in rural communities will be protected by the measures that I have outlined in detail in the ministerial statement.

Households in the city and country which use similar amounts of power will pay the same through to the year 2003. Post January 2003, the national market requires that the ACCC will be the regulator in relation to transmission lines. After that, competition will keep a hold on prices and

structures which I have detailed today. In some cases, transmission costs at the far end of the line, because of voltage drop over the line, will mean that there is a significant cost at the end of the line.

But, we have indicated that we are prepared, in effect, to compromise in part the sales price to put in place an account to ensure that the disparity at the far end of a line is no greater than 1.7 per cent for any country and regional consumer of power in the household and small business category. That is a maximum of 1.7 per cent, and that 1.7 per cent would be right at the end of the line. By far, the majority of people in what we would term country-regional areas of South Australia would pay the same as in the metropolitan area post the year 2003. A difference comes in from January 2003—and Sandra Kanck seems to have overlooked or forgotten or does not understand this fact: as from 1 January 2003, the ACCC is effectively the regulator—

*Mr Atkinson interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier has the call.

**The Hon. J.W. OLSEN:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am explaining to the honourable member that, post 1 January 2003, the ACCC will be the regulator in terms of the transmission lines, and no Government—not even Ms Kanck—has control over that. Despite that, we have said that it does not matter what those components are: we will ensure that no-one pays greater than 1.7 per cent. In terms of dollar figures on an annual or a quarterly bill, that is quite small and insignificant. We have done that deliberately to give regard and protection to country-regional consumers of electricity, and we will be putting in place the service charter which any purchaser will have to sign, agree to and be held by the regulator accountable to post the sale period. That is a deal that ETSA consumers have never, ever had in this State.

### TAFE FUNDING

**Ms WHITE (Taylor):** Given that South Australia's rate of unemployment is the equal highest of that in any State in Australia, will the Minister for Education, Children's Services and Training explain why he has agreed to slash funding for adult re-entry education programs? A leaked budget briefing note states:

The main reasons for repeating year 12 are to gain a better tertiary entrance score, to gain entrance into university or acceptance into a preferred course.

The minute continues:

It is proposed that a reduction of \$1 million per annum be achieved.

A second leaked document shows that this cut has been included in the education budget for the next three years.

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order on my right! The House must settle down. The Minister for Education, Children's Services and Training.

**The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the honourable member for her question. A leaked answer that I have here suggests to me that we are looking at efficiencies within this area but, unfortunately, the member for Taylor in reading the leaked document in her possession has simplistically added figures rather than recognised that the three year scenario is one which builds. For instance, in terms of the TAFE matter that she raised earlier, she quoted \$20.4 million worth of cuts. It is not that: it is \$9.5 million. If the honourable member looks at the document, she will see

it is \$3.5 million in the first year; it rises, from memory, to \$5.1 million in the second year; and \$9.5 million in the third year.

Unfortunately, the member for Taylor has added those figures and come to a total of \$20.4 million, which is not the case. The fact is that we are looking at adult re-entry programs and looking for efficiencies in them. The problem is that the member for Taylor has, I assume, again added figures, because the actual saving we are looking for—and this is an option—is \$1 million, not \$2.5 million.

### EMPLOYMENT, REGIONAL

**Mr LEWIS (Hammond):** My question is directed to the Minister for Employment. What initiatives for regional employment are there in the \$100 million employment package which we have all noted and which, as the Minister has already announced, begins tomorrow, 1 July?

**The Hon. J. HALL:** The member for Hammond will be delighted to know that at lunch time today I had the privilege of attending a forum, just opposite this building, to have a meeting and discussion with and to hand over some money to CEOs of the regional development boards of South Australia. It was very exciting, I might tell you, to hand over the first instalment of a \$2.67 million cheque to start the implementation of some of the initiatives in the Premier's employment statement.

As members would know, the employment statement released several weeks ago is an important and integral part of the budget. Members on this side of the House—and, I might say, a number of South Australians—are pretty impressed with some of the implications of the programs and opportunities for employment growth contained in that statement. Apart from the number of trainees who will be able to enter both the public and the private sector, additional funds will be allocated for community at work grants and new support for the mature aged unemployed who seek to establish their own small business. This is a serious commitment by this Government to build successful employment programs.

I thought it would be of interest today to share with the House the results of two of the successful programs which have already been conducted and which I mentioned at the meeting today: one in the Port Pirie region and one on Kangaroo Island. In Port Pirie, a group of seven young employed people through the KickStart for Youth program undertook a viticulture course as a result of which five of those young people gained employment in the viticulture industry, one in the area of hospitality and one in light engineering. A special program conducted on Kangaroo Island trained two individuals in accredited meat rendering, which I am told is another term for 'meat worker'. Those two people have secured full-time positions, and through their own better quality control system they saved their employer \$250 per tonne.

Those two stories are pretty impressive. It is good to hear of some of the real human life stories of people who benefit from these programs. Today, I made the first instalment to the Regional Development Boards with a cheque for an amount of \$1.5 million out of the total of \$2.67 million, which I mentioned earlier.

*Mr Conlon interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

**The Hon. J. HALL:** Some members, including the member for Hammond, might like to hear of the commitment

this Government is making to employment programs. In the Murraylands in the honourable member's electorate, \$61 250 has been allocated to KickStart and KickStart for Youth programs; \$20 000 to the community at work program; \$15 000 to special equity programs; and \$20 000 to IT Advantage—a total of \$116 250. I think that is pretty impressive, and I would have thought that members would be interested to learn those figures.

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

### EDUCATION FUNDING

**Ms WHITE (Taylor):** I ask the Minister for Education, Children's Services and Training: why is the Government saving \$15 million from Commonwealth grants for education over the next three years instead of spending this money on our schools? The Opposition has a leaked budget briefing note which explains—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

*The Hon. D.C. Wotton interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Heysen will come to order.

*Mr Venning interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Schubert!

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The honourable member will resume her seat. I remind members that it is totally disrespectful to the Chair and the House to continue to interject after the Chair has called members to order. I ask members to bear that in mind.

**Ms WHITE:** This budget briefing note explains that the supplementation for Commonwealth grants for primary and secondary education has exceeded budget estimates by \$5 million per annum. A second leaked document shows that the Government has included \$15 million of Commonwealth grants over the next three years as corporate savings.

**The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY:** The budget came out a month ago—

*An honourable member interjecting:*

**The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY:** Yes. They have taken a bit of time to catch up with it.

**An honourable member:** A slow leak.

**The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY:** It's been a slow leak. I think it must have been a drip rather than a leak.

*Ms White interjecting:*

**The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY:** As the member for Taylor interjects, I point out that the budget contains a range of options in respect of how to achieve the savings requested by the Treasurer. And that is what they are: options. If we find further down the track that there are areas in which those options cannot be achieved, obviously we will have to look at other options. The direction that I gave to my CEO was to stay out of the classroom and not to affect SSO hours. Through the range of options that we have been able to come up with, exactly that has been able to be achieved. As far as the Commonwealth grants issue is concerned, I will check on that for the honourable member and provide her with a reply.

### HOSPITALS, UPGRADES

**The Hon. R.B. SUCH (Fisher):** Will the Minister for Human Services provide details of proposals to upgrade our

hospitals to ensure that the people of South Australia have continuing high quality health care?

**The Hon. DEAN BROWN:** I assure the House that for 4½ years this Government has made a considerable effort to upgrade the facilities of our hospitals, many of which were in a deplorable state when we came to power. My predecessor increased the commitment to capital works by \$30 million to \$35 million a year over what the Labor Party allocated: in other words, a 50 per cent increase on the capital works allocation for the health budget.

This increase in commitment is starting to achieve results. Last week, I opened the new angiograph facilities at the Repatriation Hospital. I think that those excellent facilities are the first to be installed in a theatre in a public hospital in the whole of Australia. On Friday, I opened the major refurbishment of the Hawker Hospital, its first refurbishment since it was built in 1924. It was a public disgrace. The people of Hawker and district are absolutely thrilled with their local member and this Government for what has been achieved. Yesterday morning, I attended the launch of stage 1 of the redevelopment of the Royal Adelaide Hospital. A commitment of \$60 million has been made to stages 1 and 2 of the upgrade of that hospital. Again, this work is urgently needed when one looks at the state of the hospital as it was left to us by the Labor Government.

I have also made a number of announcements recently, and it is worth bringing these to the attention of the House. The first concerns the establishment of a new day surgery suite at the Repatriation Hospital funded by the State Government at about \$1.5 million. The second relates to the establishment of specialist mental bed facilities at the Flinders Medical Centre at a cost of \$7.5 million. The third involves major redevelopment work at the Flinders Medical Centre in conjunction with the development of the \$60 million private hospital facility by Ramsay Health Care.

Another project is the redevelopment of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. We have heard Labor talk about this, but we must ask why the Labor Government did not do something about that hospital when it was in power. This hospital is situated in safe Labor territory, but the Labor Government did not spend a dollar on it. The buildings had deteriorated to the point where there were maggots in the hospital and the windows leaked. This Government is about to spend \$43 million on an entirely new facility, which is long overdue. The Lyell McEwin Hospital is also situated in safe Labor territory. This Government is about to spend \$40 million on the redevelopment of that hospital.

*Ms Stevens interjecting:*

**The Hon. DEAN BROWN:** I agree. It is sadly overdue. It should have been done about 10 or 15 years ago under the Labor Government; but, in fact, we are putting in that money. We are relocating the A&E department to where it should be. There will be new accident and emergency facilities; but the money is being spent by this Government. The other one I mention is the \$14 million refurbishment of the Repatriation General Hospital in conjunction with the Federal Government, involving a major redevelopment of the wards there, the first for many years. Of course, that hospital has only just come across to the State Government, but with the Federal Government we are making that commitment to turn it into what, arguably, will be the best rehabilitation and repatriation hospital in the whole of Australia. That is the objective of the hospital and, certainly, the standards they are setting would suggest that they will meet that objective. Over the last 4½ years this Government has made a huge commitment to

redevelopment and refurbishment of our hospitals, and we will continue that aim over the next three to four years.

### SCHOOLS, FUNDING

**Ms WHITE (Taylor):** My question is directed to the Minister for Education, Children's Services and Training. What effect will the Government's decision to cut capital spending on schools by \$22 million this year have on the backlog of maintenance and minor works, including health and safety issues, and on facilities for the disabled in our schools? On 19 June the Estimates Committee was told that the education sector of the capital works budget for 1998-99 was \$84 million. In 1997-98, the budget was \$106 million.

**The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY:** Before I answer that question, I remind the House of the backlog of maintenance that we inherited from the previous Labor Government. I would ask any member in this House to go to their schools, to ask how much money was spent on maintenance during the 1980s and early 1990s and to look at the backlog of maintenance that was ignored by the previous Labor Government. I have only to look in my electorate at the Gawler High School which had broken windows and which had not been painted for about nine years. Finally, we came to Government and gave that school a coat of paint to lift its profile. It was absolutely disgusting. Our primary schools were exactly the same. There is no doubt that it was an absolute disgrace.

In the budget we have indicated that programmed maintenance works budgets will be maintained at current levels, but they will not be increased for inflation. It is one of those aspects whereby we have indicated that we can make some savings to comply with the budget task we have been given so that schools will continue to receive their current level of program maintenance works. Yes, the honourable member is correct in saying that we have indicated that a restructure of capital works programs will occur in terms of the budget for 1997-98 (\$106 million) and for this coming year back to \$84 million (I think I have the figures correct). That is an option.

*Ms White interjecting:*

**The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY:** It is an option we have looked at and done so, again, in terms of trying to stay out of the classroom. I presume that the honourable member is suggesting that I should be looking elsewhere and that perhaps we should look into the classrooms. I have suggested that we will have to put the capital works program out a bit so that we can stay out of the classrooms and maintain this State's record in terms of having the lowest staff/student ratio and the highest education spending per capita of any mainland State in Australia. I indicated earlier that the member for Taylor had referred to some \$2.5 million in terms of the adult re-entry. If she did not say that, I withdraw that statement.

### TRADE MISSION, KOREA

**Mr CONDOUS (Colton):** Will the Minister for Industry and Trade inform the House of last week's successes in strengthening the trade and cultural links between South Australia and Korea?

**The Hon. G.A. INGERSON:** Last week I had the privilege on behalf of the Government to lead a delegation to the Chungchongnam-do province in South Korea. One of the most important issues was the recognition that as a Government, with their support and encouragement, we are able to export a lot of opportunities in the outsourcing and planning

areas, areas that specifically can be dealt with at Government-to-Government level. The other important goal, through the Office of Asian Business, was to develop a series of meetings between South Australian companies and their relative counterparts in Chungchongnam-do. SAMCOR, our largest abattoir, has conducted some excellent negotiations, and there is an expectation that through heavy baconers they could end up with a 2000 tonne a year order. There is also an expectation that they will be able to develop significant opportunities in the pig and pork area. Clearly, that will open up again a line that has been closed at SAMCOR now for some 10 months. From their negotiations it is estimated that the order could total some \$2 to \$3 million a year.

Interestingly, a group of South-East lobster people were able to negotiate a deal of about \$1.5 million. After receiving the request from an importer which supplies product primarily to five-star hotels in Seoul, South-East fish processors are looking at the possibility of supplying a 24-tonne order. Also in the group who made the visit were some people from the Department of Recreation and Sport who were involved in very successful negotiations with Korean teams involved in hockey, athletics, shooting, judo and wrestling. There is an expectation that one or two of those teams will train here in the lead up to the 2000 Olympic Games.

I also had the privilege to extend further the MOU between the Government and Chungchongnam-do province. An extension of the original MOU signed by the Premier here last year, essentially it continues the opportunity for us to work with the province to extend as I said not only Government-to-Government relations but, more importantly, the long-term commercial relationships with the business people in the province. Clearly, there are some very significant international difficulties at the moment in terms of finance in Korea. Those who were with us would recognise that. It is very important that we continue to foster our relationships with this province in the long term, because there is no doubt that dealing in difficult times and continuing to maintain relationships in difficult times will enable us to prosper when they do turn the corner—as they definitely will.

Another interesting issue is that during the previous week the first shipment of live marron from Kangaroo Island was transported to the province as part of a new breeding operation. It is very exciting for those in the aquaculture area to see that we can develop significant operations on a State-by-State, breeder-to-breeder level. It is a very important program and one that is very significant for Kangaroo Island and for South Australia. In my view, the whole trade mission was a success, continuing the long-term developments that we need to maintain in the Asian area. Further, it points out clearly the success of our having an Office for Asian Business operating specifically in that area, especially in terms of work that can be done in the future.

#### PARAFIELD AIRPORT

**The Hon. M.D. RANN (Leader of the Opposition):** My question is again directed to the Premier. What representations has the Premier or his Government made to the Federal Government in relation to the closure of the Civil Aviation Safety Authority's Parafield Airport office, which is located in my electorate? Will the Premier seek a guarantee that the safety of Parafield Airport users and local residents in surrounding suburbs will not be compromised by the closure of the safety office? A memo sent to the Civil Aviation Safety Authority's staff last week said the authority's Parafield

office is to be closed, together with up to eight other regional offices around Australia. An authority staff member is reported as saying that the changes would result in lower safety standards in regional Australia, as reported in today's national press.

**The Hon. G.A. INGERSON:** The issue of airline and general transport safety has been on the drawing board with the Federal Government and the authority for some time. As to the fine details of this important question, I will get a report for the Leader of the Opposition and send it to the Parliament as soon as possible.

#### WATER LEVY

**Mr WILLIAMS (MacKillop):** Did the Minister for Environment and Heritage obtain legal or any other advice prior to the gazettal on 25 June 1998 of a levy under section 122 of the Water Resources Act 1997 as to whether such a levy would be in fact legal, without a water catchment plan being in existence for the area levied? If so, if such advice was obtained, will the Minister table that advice in the Parliament? The Minister gazetted a levy under section 122 of the Water Resources Act. Section 122(3) provides:

Where the water resource is in the catchment area of a board, a levy declared by the Minister under this section must be set at a level that will return an amount that is as near as reasonably practicable to the amount stated in the board's catchment water management plan as the amount to be raised by way of levy under this division.

My information is that there is a board in the area where the levy was gazetted but that the board does not have a catchment water management plan.

**The Hon. D.C. KOTZ:** I certainly thank the member for MacKillop for the opportunity to put on record answers to the questions he has asked. Also, I thank him for indicating that he was about to ask these questions.

*Members interjecting:*

**The Hon. D.C. KOTZ:** It is a courtesy I appreciate.

**Mr Conlon:** It's one we will not be extending.

**The Hon. D.C. KOTZ:** There is not a bipartisan approach to this? I wish to advise the member for MacKillop that there are other sections of the Act which need to be read in conjunction with the section to which he has referred. If he looks at section 121, he will note that it talks about the Minister raising a report. The report is raised in conjunction with the section the member quoted, but the section does enable the Minister to raise a water levy in conjunction with section 121, which raises the report. That means that the report designates the outlined indicative budget that is applicable to the board until the board moves to put together its own catchment plan, which will be a year hence, to the point where the Economic and Finance Committee will have the opportunity to again look at that catchment plan and to look at the levy that the board itself will strike in the meantime.

As to the legality of everything that has been done, the Water Resources Act 1997 is quite clear in terms of how it enables a Minister to have certain powers. Striking a water levy is one of the powers that is enabled under the Act if a board is not already there, which was the case in this instance. Also, I advise the member that the gazettal notice to which he referred was an amendment to the levy originally struck on 15 June. I suggest that the member for MacKillop needs to look at other sections of the Act in conjunction with those he is looking at but, at any time, I am happy to assist him if he wishes any explanation of the Act. I shall be happy to

provide him with a briefing on the Water Resources Act, and that includes a briefing for the Economic and Finance Committee and the member for Hart at any time they like.

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### GRIEVANCE DEBATE

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

**Ms HURLEY (Deputy Leader of the Opposition):** I want to follow up the question asked by the member for Taylor about cuts to adult re-entry schools. The leaked paper she quoted stated that most people went to adult re-entry to repeat year 12 to get better marks. I have Para West Adult Re-Entry College in my electorate and it does little of that sort of work. Even if that is a bad thing in itself—repeating year 12 to get better marks—it is only a very small part of what Para West does. Para West is very important to people in my electorate and in a much wider area as well. Para West represents a second, third or even a fourth bite of the cherry for young people who failed at school for one reason or another. Many people in my electorate had a very poor experience of school for one reason or another. Many of them come from a family where life was made very difficult for them at school.

Many suffered from unrecognised learning difficulties, which meant that they performed very poorly at school. Often, it is not until later in life that they gain the courage to go back and try to overcome some of those problems and further their education. Indeed, I was told of a woman who had dyslexia, which was not recognised during her schooling. She has gone to Para West and is very successful and has completed many year 12 subjects and is looking to start her own small business. In fact, she is getting interest from a couple of businesses around the place for employment, but she is determined to form her own small business and make a success of it. If her determination to succeed in business is anything like the determination she has shown to get through those years subjects and go back to school, she will undoubtedly succeed. That woman was highly motivated. There are others who are far more tentative. There are single parents who, with their children growing up a little and going to school, decide tentatively to take those first steps towards going back to school themselves and get the necessary training and qualifications to get themselves not only a decent job but, in some cases, a job at all.

Para West Re-Entry runs literacy and numeracy programs. It provides bridging courses for people who need help to get back into the education system to give themselves a chance. There is any number of success stories involving the people who go back to Para West. I know many people who have been given an opportunity by the Para West courses, which they have seized with both hands, especially with the support and encouragement of the staff. Certainly, I am appalled at the idea that cuts foreshadowed in that document might deprive Para West of the ability to provide that support and assistance to my constituents.

Also, I express concern about the child-care centre at Para West. As I said earlier, many Para West students are single parents who need to find a safe and secure place for their children to stay, a reliable and low cost centre so that they can concentrate on their studies and attend their courses regularly.

I believe that the child-care centre at Para West has been absolutely instrumental in ensuring that many parents are able to get back to school and back into the work force and off the welfare system. There is the prevailing mythology that many single parents want to live off welfare and continue to have children.

In my experience that is not so: most single parents I know are desperate to get off welfare, get themselves a decent job and give their kids a real chance in life. They want to be in a position to afford the things they need to give their children a head start in life. Para West has played an absolutely vital role in giving people a second chance at education—a second opportunity to make something of their lives—and I would be extremely disappointed to see anything that jeopardised its proud record in doing just that. The dismissive reference to adult re-entry is appalling.

**Mr VENNING (Schubert):** This is the first day of the South Australian Parliament since the Queensland election and the emergence of Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party. We all got a shock—Australia got a shock—when the Queensland people spoke via the ballot box, which is where it counts. Polls all over Australia have shown us that it was not just a Queensland phenomenon or an aberration. Irrespective of our out of touch journalists, yuppie socialists, union heavies, flat earth economists and bureaucrats in their ivory towers, the people have spoken with a loud, clear voice. People say it could happen only in Queensland; not so. If members think that, they are sadly mistaken and will meet their demise. We have been given a strong message and, if members have not heard it, I certainly have, particularly in an electorate such as the one I represent. The little people—the Bills and Beryls out there—are hurting, especially those living in country regions in all States of Australia. They are disillusioned. Economic rationalism and the pace of change are causing anxiety. Rightly or wrongly they perceive that we as their elected representatives—both Federal and State, and of both major Parties—are not listening to them.

I am no fan of Pauline Hanson. I find many, but not all, of her philosophies abhorrent. Likewise, the electorate has overlooked the unpalatable policies and latched onto those which they can assimilate. So, they are saying that they agree not with Pauline Hanson the person but with her populist policies. They are hurting, and I know they are. The pig farmers are only one segment of our community who are feeling the brunt of Australia's trading policies. Try reasoning with a family who have just built a piggery and who now cannot make enough to meet the interest payments on their borrowings. The same applies for citrus growers, those in the dried fruits industry and many other industries. Rightly or wrongly, they believe they have been sold down the drain. Economic rationalism may be fine in principle, but when it hurts people they rebel. Other issues—

*An honourable member interjecting:*

**Mr VENNING:** That's right; you have forgotten the bush. I am from the bush and I regularly return to the bush. Other issues cited by the One Nation Party are law and order and truth in sentencing. We have heard that, time after time. One has only to listen to the Bob Francis show: certainly, a lot of radicals ring up, but I ask people to listen to the genuine callers. They say that people cannot walk on the streets, muggings are common and penalties are perceived to be pathetic. I believe that Australia is the least racist country on the planet. We have many nationalities here and we get on very well—at least, we did until now. People in my electorate

are not racist and would be offended by that slur. I am not a racist but, when issues of equality are raised, people take uncharacteristic stands and divide our community.

Certain elements in our community have a hands-off attitude. Most Australians are happy to abide by certain public standards applying to public drunkenness, public abuse, respect for the police and the rights of other citizens. When people are harassed in the street by certain elements of our community (often young) and when they report it to the police and are told, 'We can't do anything about it,' no wonder we get cross. I stress that it is only a minority of a certain element. Most of these people are fine citizens but, as always, it is a few who do the wrong thing and make it difficult for the rest. This has been a protest more than anything else. Many of the policies espoused by Ms Hanson have no place in today's Australia and, to make sure they do not, it behoves us all to lift our game, hear the voice and heed the message. It is the perceived arrogance of politicians that has promoted One Nation. Only wisdom and consultation will check it.

**Mr WRIGHT (Lee):** I draw the attention of the House to a decision that was made by the Development Assessment Commission on 9 June. I am sure all members share my response to the overwhelming decision that was made by the Development Assessment Commission with respect to a planning application for a waste transfer and recycling facility for the corner of Old Port Road and Tapleys Hill Road at Royal Park. Unfortunately, this issue dates back to 1993 and has had a major impact particularly on the communities of Royal Park, Hendon, Queenstown and Albert Park. The local community has certainly shown overwhelming opposition to this proposal, which dates back to 1993.

On this occasion, well over 200 written submissions went to the Development Assessment Commission in opposition to this application. Obviously, I do not have time to mention all the people who played an active role in this public campaign, but I would like to share with the House a few names. I acknowledge the untiring work of people such as Ray and Erica Dowd, Jean and Ivan Osborne, Pat Bell, Councillor Robert Grant, Allan Chambers and Tolley Wasylenko. They are just a few of the people who have played a very vigilant role for a number of years with respect to this application.

I have spoken to the House on a number of occasions about this application, because what went before the DAC on 9 June was an application for a waste transfer and recycling facility that was to receive approximately 1 000 tonnes per week in a residential area. It was obviously not sustainable and totally impracticable for such a facility to be established in a residential area. Before this hearing occurred, a proactive State Government could have and should have taken a more positive role in overcoming problems of this nature. The State Government should have shown some leadership in this area. Regrettably South Australia currently has a metropolitan waste disposal policy setting which is a shambles.

The current application that went before the DAC was another example of metropolitan waste disposal occurring on an *ad hoc* basis. In more recent times we only have to think of the Marion, Wingfield and Highbury situations (to mention a few), which were all examples of planning applications which have dragged through the courts. Here we have another case which has been dragged through the courts, which is still subject to appeal and which may continue to drag on through

the court system because the State Government has not set in place a metropolitan waste disposal policy setting. It is simply not good enough for this State Government to run away from that.

I have raised this issue with the Minister, and I hope that the Minister takes a more active role in making sure that South Australia does have a metropolitan waste disposal policy setting which is fair and equitable to all members of the community. Currently in this industry applications are being driven by economics rather than environmentally responsible behaviour. There must be an overall strategy for such a critical issue. The waste management industry must be guided in a strategic sense for metropolitan South Australia.

This decision of 9 June is certainly to be heartily welcomed, and I acknowledge the role of the Development Assessment Commission. The hearing of 9 June took place at the Charles Sturt council chambers. Many people attended the hearing and many made representations, including the member for Price, whose area of Queenstown is also affected by this application. However, this situation is currently in limbo, because the applicant has up to eight weeks in which to lodge an appeal, and that may occur. Further to that, we also have the same applicant with a different application before the Development Assessment Commission.

**Mr SCALZI (Hartley):** I refer to the Queensland election results. Members would know that prior to the election I made clear that, had I been there, I would have been quite happy to hand out how-to-vote cards for the Labor Party before I would hand them out for One Nation. Obviously, I would have wanted the Liberal Party-National Party Coalition to win. However, that was not the case. Given that that was not possible, I am the first to congratulate Peter Beattie on forming Government—which will be a stable Labor Government—and I congratulate Peter Wellington for facilitating that. However, I am saddened to find out that the Queensland Labor Party is not all squeaky clean. It gave its preferences to Graham Campbell's Put Australia First Party before the Liberal Party, and that is disappointing, as members opposite who are true Labor members would agree. Nevertheless, I congratulate Peter Beattie on forming Government; it is a stable Government and it sends the right messages overseas.

I also acknowledge that One Nation was successful in winning 11 seats. It cannot hide now; it is part of the political stage. We are all watching its performance carefully. All Australia will see how well it performs and will scrutinise carefully its policies—or, as is more evident, its lack of them. As I said, I was appalled by the Queensland Coalition's treatment of preferences but that has been settled and there is a Labor Government. What lesson can we learn from that election on 13 June? Surely the lesson is that we have to listen and that, in the eyes of the electorate, the major Parties have failed to understand the broad cross-section of the community, whether it be in the bush or in the metropolitan area. People are hurting, there is no question about that. Although they are hurting, One Nation will not bring them economic or social health as it has no policies. However, it remains to be seen how well it can be part of our political system.

The electorate is threatened not by multiculturalism but by economic rationalism; not by diversity but by competition policy; not by integration but by centralisation; and not by immigration but by depopulation. The Australian community

is angry not because we have failed to acknowledge our past but because of the failure of all forms of Government to provide a secure future for all Australians, especially for young people. One Nation does not have the answers, and in the next three years we will see that it will fail to deliver. How can it succeed when it has no Party platform as have the major Parties and no real policies? For example, one of its policies is to abolish divisive and discriminatory policies such as those for Aborigines. The response was as follows:

Indigenous Australians make up 1.6 per cent of the population but they get 1.26 per cent of Commonwealth health expenditure, despite having a greater need.

That is attributed to the Australian Media Association by the *Advertiser*. There are many other examples where it has failed to scrutinise problems in Australia carefully and give a balanced answer. Regarding Pauline Hanson, a survey of five Independent MPs shows that Mrs Hanson missed 100 of 148 legislative votes in Parliament between April 1996 and December last year. She made just 10 speeches on legislation in the same period, compared with other Independents: 45 by Mr Paul Filing, 53 by Mr Peter Andren, 58 by Graeme Campbell and 92 by Allan Rocher.

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

**Mr KOUTSANTONIS (Peake):** I wish to send a message to the Minister for Transport, Diana Laidlaw, and congratulate her on her decision to upgrade Bakewell Bridge. I am the first one to congratulate the Minister; she has finally acted. It is a shame that two people have had to die, but I am glad she has finally acted.

I bring to the attention of the House the fact that Ms Christine Gallus, the member for Hindmarsh, who has been in Parliament since 1990, has finally, for the first time in eight years, brought up the matter of Adelaide Airport in Federal Parliament.

*Mr Clarke interjecting:*

**Mr KOUTSANTONIS:** That's right; the Speaker and I have been constantly talking to Ms Gallus, asking her to fight for our constituents in the Federal Parliament, as have the members for Colton and Hanson. Our complaints have always fallen on deaf ears. Mr Speaker, you will be glad to know that she spent a full 3½ minutes speaking about the Adelaide Airport. This is how the member for Hindmarsh thinks she earns her \$80 000 a year—by speaking for 3½ minutes on Adelaide Airport.

*Mr Scalzi interjecting:*

**Mr KOUTSANTONIS:** The member for Hartley asks whether I am still upset about her not returning my phone calls and letters. I am devastated. More importantly, the West Torrens council, which covers half my electorate, part of the Speaker's electorate and most of the Districts for Colton and Hanson, was asked by the member for Hindmarsh two years ago to immediately and urgently ratify her curfew Bill. It even prompted the West Torrens council to move a motion, proposed by Councillor Arthur Mangos, as follows:

Do actions speak louder than words? Why hasn't Chris Gallus put her Bill re the Adelaide Airport to Parliament?

Moved Cr Mangos that council write to the above mentioned member and ask why the urgency was to get the Bill ratified by council yet no action was taken.

The Chairman ruled the motion would lie on the table.

I have spoken to the Acting Mayor, Mr Reece Jennings, about the airport. We are all concerned about the lack of energy that Ms Gallus is putting into her curfew Bill. I let the residents

of the western suburbs know that there is someone waiting in the wings to do a better job than Ms Gallus is doing—Mr Steve Georganaf.

*An honourable member interjecting:*

**Mr KOUTSANTONIS:** Good guess. He is ready to take the fight to Federal Parliament immediately.

*An honourable member interjecting:*

**Mr KOUTSANTONIS:** He is a local, born and bred in the western suburbs. I will indicate the amount of clout that Ms Gallus holds in the Federal Parliament—so much so that Mr Vale has refused to listen to her and meet with the local council in the area. It has taken the member for Hanson to write to the Minister for Transport. He has agreed to Ms Key's request to meet with the Minister. Ms Gallus cannot organise a meeting with the local council and the Federal Minister for Transport. The member for Hanson has organised a meeting almost immediately. We are flying as soon as we can—economy—to Canberra to speak to the Federal Minister and put our case. It is outrageous that this Government has set up a working party called the Adelaide Airport Working Party and has invited the Adelaide City Council, the Charles Sturt council, the West Torrens council, the Department of Transport, the Lands Management Corporation and the Department of Industry and Trade but it has not asked local members whose districts surround the airport to be members of this committee.

The Minister refers to a relationship of trust with local residents, with all the relevant stakeholders being involved, but they do not want the member for Hanson and me on the committee. They know that we will see them for what they are: they have sold out the western suburbs. They have stuffed the redevelopment of the Hindmarsh Soccer Stadium.

*The Hon. G.A. Ingerson interjecting:*

**Mr KOUTSANTONIS:** You have: you are the one who has let down every soccer fan in South Australia. You have let them down. It is a concern that you, Sir, the members for Colton and Hanson and I are not on this committee. As a matter of urgency the junior Minister for Local Government should come in here and explain—

*The Hon. G.A. Ingerson interjecting:*

**Mr KOUTSANTONIS:** So, it's you.

*The Hon. G.A. Ingerson interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The honourable member will address his remarks through the Chair.

**Mr KOUTSANTONIS:** Thank you for your protection, Sir. The Deputy Premier says he is the one who has kept me off.

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

**The Hon. D.C. WOTTON (Heysen):** I take this opportunity to refer to the opening of the new facilities at Wilpena. I do not know how many members of the House have had an opportunity to go up and look.

**Mr Foley:** You have not invited us.

**The Hon. D.C. WOTTON:** You don't need to be invited: any member can go to the Flinders Ranges National Park at any time. I hope they would go on a regular basis. It is one of the most attractive—

*Mrs Geraghty interjecting:*

**The Hon. D.C. WOTTON:** I am pleased that the member for Torrens goes there on a regular basis. It is one of the more attractive parts of the State and one of the more important national parks in South Australia. The history relating to the Wilpena development is a long one. Members would be



aware that the previous Labor Government decided that it would support a much larger development—the OPHIX development—at Wilpena, and the decision was made that perhaps we should look at other alternatives.

*Mr Clarke interjecting:*

**The Hon. D.C. WOTTON:** I was delighted that I was able to travel to this important tourism site with the Deputy Premier and Minister for Tourism. I was particularly pleased to see the results. It is a magnificent development—a first-class interpretive centre and restructured accommodation—worthy of this high class national park. If the member for Hart takes the opportunity to go and have a look, he will be delighted with what he sees. It is a vast improvement and I commend my colleague the Deputy Premier as Minister for Tourism. I commend also the people who work with him in the Tourism Commission and I commend the National Parks officers who have worked very closely in support of the project. It is great to see the relationship that has built up between tourism and national parks.

I also commend the Rasheed family, who for generations have played an important role in the Flinders Ranges, because it is as a result of their determination and the support of Government in its various forms that we now have this fine development. It is good, because so many people in this State like the opportunity to go into the outback areas. People from interstate enjoy the experience and people from overseas particularly have commented favourably about the opportunities they have had and the experiences they have been able to gain as a result of going to the Flinders. I was particularly delighted to see the new solar diesel plant, which is the biggest in Australia.

**The Hon. G.M. Gunn:** In the southern hemisphere.

**The Hon. D.C. WOTTON:** I thank the member for Stuart for reminding me of that. I was pleased that the member for Stuart was also able to attend the special opening.

*Mr Foley interjecting:*

**The Hon. D.C. WOTTON:** The member for Stuart is the local member and it was totally appropriate, given the support he has provided, that he should attend the opening.

**Mr Clarke:** What were you doing there?

**The Hon. D.C. WOTTON:** As a previous Minister for the Environment, I had a fair bit to do with the project and I was particularly pleased to see the results of the commitment that had been shown previously. It was good to see the new power facility up there—the new solar system, the greatest in the southern hemisphere. Altogether it is a development of which South Australia and all members can be proud.

## AERODROME FEES BILL

Received from the Legislative Council and read a first time.

**The Hon. DEAN BROWN (Minister for Human Services):** 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 will enable aerodrome operators to recover fees for aircraft arrival, training approaches, parking and departing at an aerodrome from the Certificate of Registration holder of the aircraft (hereafter called user fees).

The Bill will only apply to aerodrome operators who choose to publish their fees in accordance with the Bill and it will not affect or limit contractual powers to charge and recover any fees.

Currently the only right of recovery for aerodrome user fees lies against the direct user of the facilities and this person is difficult to identify, especially for unstaffed regional aerodromes. The Certificate of Registration holder can be traced through the aircraft's call sign, which is recorded from required radio transmissions.

Of 23 aerodromes in South Australia which publish that they charge fees, 9 are Council owned. The remainder belong to Government instrumentalities (4) or are privately owned (10 including Adelaide and Parafield). Before ownership of regional aerodromes was transferred from the Commonwealth to Councils, Commonwealth regulations enabled aerodrome operators to charge certain fees to the Certificate of Registration holder of the aircraft using the aerodrome. The Certificate of Registration holder could assign liability to other persons (subject to their agreement). This regulation has been repealed, leaving the Councils only the power under the *Local Government Act* to charge users for use of Council facilities. Private owners can only charge users under contract law, and the Certificate of Registration holder is not a party to the contract unless directly using the service.

This financial year in South Australia, about 25 per cent of user fees in regional aerodromes are unpaid. This is based on the figures for 6 regional aerodromes for which Avdata, an aerodrome billing agency, collects charges. No action has been taken to recover these fees because of legal advice that action against a party other than the direct user of the service is likely to fail.

The Commonwealth has declined to become involved in drafting legislation which could be adopted by all States. The States themselves have not been able to agree on a common approach. New South Wales has amended its *Local Government Act* to enable Council aerodrome operators to charge Certificate of Registration holders. Tasmania is interested in the approach South Australia is taking but has not acted. Queensland does not plan to act unless the Commonwealth takes the lead. Western Australia has declined to address the issue. However, it appears that the problem of avoidance of paying user fees is increasing and this should be addressed in this State by the enactment of the *Aerodrome Fees Bill 1998*.

Unpaid user fees make up a large part of revenue for many regional aerodromes, which may already have low levels of income. In some cases this may affect the aerodrome's viability. The closure of a regional aerodrome has severe consequences for the community it serves.

The only alternative to collection of user fees by the current or proposed method is to staff the aerodromes to ensure collection of fees at the time of use. This cost would have to be passed on to the user, thereby increasing the fees considerably. It is generally accepted that the Australian system offers the lowest charges in the world, due in large part to the manner of collection of the fees.

State legislation is necessary to give Council owners of former Commonwealth aerodromes the power which the Commonwealth had to enable the efficient collection of user fees. It is also necessary to provide consistent power to collect aerodrome user fees across the State regardless of whether aerodrome ownership is public or private. Alternative means of collecting user fees would be more expensive and inconvenient for the user.

Consultation on the draft Bill took place in March 1998. Government agencies, aerodrome operators, aerodrome user groups and local government were consulted. In addition, comments on the draft Bill were invited through advertisements placed in *The Advertiser* and *The Australian* newspapers and the Bill was made available through Transport SA's Internet site.

Responses were received from the following organisations:

- Office of Local Government
- Local Government Association
- Avdata Services Pty Ltd
- Royal Federation of Aero Clubs of Australia
- Federal Airports Corporation—Adelaide Airport
- Australian Airports Association
- Overnight Airfreight Operators Association Inc
- Australian Air Transport Association (verbal)
- Department of Environment and Heritage and Aboriginal Affairs
- Department of Industry & Trade (verbal)
- SA Tourism Commission (verbal)
- Commonwealth Department of Transport & Regional Development—Aviation Policy Division.

None opposed the introduction of the Bill but there were some aspects of the Bill with which Avdata Pty Ltd, an agent of some

aerodrome operators, was dissatisfied. It wanted the activities for which charges could be made to be extended. The initial draft was altered to take this concern into account in the case of training flights which use aerodrome airspace but do not necessarily involve landing at the aerodrome, but not for fees which could be made the subject of a contract between the aircraft user and the aerodrome operator (for example, terminal access or loading facilities).

Avdata was also concerned that the provision which allows assignment of liability for fees may work to make their recovery more difficult. However, since the aerodrome operator can decline to accept the assignment of liability if dissatisfied with the assigner's financial credibility, this should not be the case.

Nothing in the Bill precludes the Certificate of Registration holder and the user/hirer of the aircraft from entering into a contract which would give the former the right to recover fees from the user/hirer.

An association of aero clubs was concerned about some difficulties its members may encounter in complying with the provisions of the Bill, but it was judged that with some changes to administrative procedures, all such difficulties could be satisfactorily resolved. This association was also concerned about the absence of nationally consistent legislation applying to the collection of aerodrome fees and it is the Government's intention to continue to urge other States' Transport Ministers to follow our lead.

I commend the Bill to honourable members.

Explanation of Clauses

*Clause 1: Short title*

*Clause 2: Commencement*

These clauses are formal.

*Clause 3: Interpretation*

The definitions of certain words and phrases used in the Bill are set out here. The Bill will apply only to aerodrome related fees incurred by the use of aircraft registered under Part III of the Commonwealth *Civil Aviation Regulations* (see definition of aircraft).

*Clause 4: Act binds Crown*

This clause provides that the Crown is bound by the provisions of the Bill.

*Clause 5: Act does not affect other powers with respect to fees*

The Bill does not operate so as to limit or affect contractual or other powers that would exist apart from the Bill to charge and recover fees relating to aerodromes. This means that if an aerodrome operator and an aerodrome user wish to enter into a contract in which fees for the use of the aerodrome are agreed, they may do so.

*Clause 6: Aerodrome operator may fix fees for arrivals, departures, etc.*

A person who operates an aerodrome may fix a fee for—

- the arrival, departure or parking of aircraft at the aerodrome;
- a training flight approach to the aerodrome (see clause 3(3) for the interpretation of what is a training flight approach);
- the carrying out of an activity, or the provision of a service, at the aerodrome directly related to any of the above activities of aircraft;
- late payment of any of the above,

by publishing the fees in the *Government Gazette* and, in addition, in a daily newspaper circulating in South Australia or a periodical publication prescribed by regulation. Fees fixed in this way will come into force on the day specified by the aerodrome operator in the published notice of the fees.

*Clause 7: Liability for payment of fees*

Liability for the payment of a fee fixed under the Bill is placed on the holder of the certificate of registration of the aircraft (defined in clause 3(1)). The holder of the certificate of registration of an aircraft may, however, assign the liability for the payment of such fees in respect of the aircraft to another person by agreement in writing for a future period specified in the agreement. Such an agreement must be signed by or on behalf of the holder of the certificate of registration, the person to whom the liability for fees is assigned and the aerodrome operator for the aerodrome to which the agreement relates.

*Clause 8: Recovery as debt*

An aerodrome operator may recover a fee fixed under the Bill by action in a court of competent jurisdiction as a debt due to the aerodrome operator from the person liable for payment of the fee.

*Clause 9: Regulations*

The Governor may make regulations for the purposes of the Bill.

**Ms HURLEY** secured the adjournment of the debate.

## NON-METROPOLITAN RAILWAYS (TRANSFER) (BUILDING AND DEVELOPMENT WORK) AMENDMENT BILL

Second reading.

**The Hon. DEAN BROWN (Minister for Human Services):** 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 preparation for the sale of Australian National (AN) by the Commonwealth Government in late 1997, Parliament made provision for privatised rail operations in South Australia by passing the *Non-metropolitan Railways (Transfer) Act 1997* and the *Railways (Operations and Access) Act 1997*.

The interstate passenger and SA freight rail businesses were purchased by Great Southern Railways Ltd (GSR) and Australia Southern Railroad Ltd (ASR) respectively. Optima Energy became the owner of the Leigh Creek line. These organisations have acquired AN's assets, improvements and rights but not the land itself. The Commonwealth has transferred the AN land to the State and the appropriate properties have been leased to the new owners.

The *Non-metropolitan Railways (Transfer) Act 1997* makes a number of special provisions for rail that take into account its former public ownership eg. exemptions from land tax and fencing requirements. However, no provision was made for compliance with the *Development Act 1993*. It has been drawn to our attention by the new owners of AN that, unless a declaration of compliance is provided, they could be prohibited from occupying formerly exempt AN buildings, and thus from operating their services.

Buildings and development works by AN, the Commonwealth or the State prior to the sale of AN were not covered by the State's regulatory and statutory requirements. Now that they have been taken over by the new private owners of AN, these buildings and works are no longer exempt.

For instance, Section 66 of this the *Development Act 1993* requires that buildings erected after 1 January 1974 must have a classification in accordance with the regulations made under the Act. Section 67 prohibits a person from occupying a building unless an appropriate certificate of occupancy is issued for the building.

It is therefore possible to argue that buildings acquired by the new owners of AN, who would now come under the Act, would not comply.

The State is under no obligation to provide a declaration of compliance with the State's regulatory and statutory provisions to the new owners. However, the State is prepared to take action to address this technical issue.

In considering legislation to facilitate the resolution of this matter it is worth noting that:

- a precedent already exists as an equivalent declaration was made for the same reasons in the *South Australian Timber Corporation (Sale of Assets) Act 1996*; and
- declaring compliance of buildings acquired on the sale date would not add to existing risks.

This Bill therefore seeks to amend the *Non-metropolitan Railways (Transfer) Act 1997* to add a single section that declares that buildings erected by AN, the Commonwealth or the State on the rail land comply with the statutory and regulatory provisions of covering buildings and development works at the time these were carried out.

It is important to note that any new developments would need to comply with these provisions.

This provision would also apply to any improvements on further railways land transferred to the State by the Commonwealth. Further land transfers are expected to occur when the extent of the land required for the interstate track network, which was excluded from the sale of AN, is resolved later this year.

This is an important, although minor legislative change, that is necessary to avoid an unintended consequence of the loss of the exemptions applying to development and works resulting from the sale of AN.

I commend the Bill to members.

Explanation of Clauses

The provisions of the Bill are as follows:

*Clause 1: Short title*

This clause is formal.

*Clause 2: Insertion of s. 11A*

It is proposed to add a new provision that will allow building and development work carried out on land transferred under the Railway Agreement before the commencement of the principal Act to be regarded as complying with the statutory and regulatory requirements that applied at the time of the work.

**Ms HURLEY** secured the adjournment of the debate.

**VALUATION OF LAND (MISCELLANEOUS)  
AMENDMENT BILL**

Consideration in Committee of the Legislative Council's amendments.

**The Hon. W.A. MATTHEW:** I move:

That the amendments be disagreed to.

The amendments effectively concern the vacancy occurring in the Office of Valuer-General. There has been an endeavour to have that position retained as it is presently, namely, filled to age 65 years. The debate in this Chamber has already focused on the Government's view in relation to tenure of appointment of that position, and likewise the Opposition has also had an opportunity to put its debate. I would have thought we laboured over that for sufficient time in this House to have the other Chamber accept the point of view put forward. I see little point in this Chamber's spending a lengthy time to revisit those debates. They are in *Hansard*, and they stand. For that reason, the amendments are not agreed to.

**Ms HURLEY:** I want to put the point of view of the Opposition again and to reiterate the importance we see in the office of the Valuer-General: it is independent and it should be seen to be independent. As was pointed out in the other place, since these amendments were first introduced we have had the proposal for a land tax via the emergency services levy. It is, therefore, even more important that the Valuer-General be completely independent and separate from any influence of Government.

We believe that it is appropriate that the Valuer-General's vacancy be referred to the Statutory Offices Committee for appointment, and that the position continue until retirement rather than having the Valuer-General under pressure of a five year appointment. The Opposition will pursue these amendments because the Government has not really addressed our concerns.

**The Hon. W.A. MATTHEW:** I do not want to labour over this issue or waste the time of the Chamber, but I simply point out that the arguments put forward are an absolute nonsense. The position of Police Commissioner—

**Mr Foley:** In your opinion.

**The Hon. W.A. MATTHEW:** The position of the Police Commissioner is not appointed by a committee. The position of Police Commissioner is appointed as a contractual position. I have not heard a single member of the Opposition raise a concern in this House about the method of appointment, the tenure of appointment or the calibre of the current Police Commissioner, and that is an appointment which has been made recently. That in itself, I think, serves to highlight that this is becoming a game for the Opposition. I am not interested in playing games with important positions. I acknowledge that it is an important position. The present processes ensure the maintenance of integrity and separation of the office of Valuer-General, and the reasons for tenure of

this position are the same as the reasons for tenure of the position of Police Commissioner.

I believe that is an acceptable precedent and I have not heard a single member disagreeing with my statement in relation to the Police Commissioner. For that reason we reject the amendment, and I dare say that there is every likelihood we will finish up in conference over it.

Motion carried.

**APPROPRIATION BILL**

**The Hon. D.C. WOTTON (Heysen):** I bring up the report of Estimates Committee A and move:

That the report be received.

Motion carried.

**The Hon. D.C. WOTTON:** I bring up the minutes of proceedings of Estimates Committee A and move:

That the minutes of proceedings be incorporated in the votes and proceedings.

Motion carried.

**The Hon. G.M. GUNN (Stuart):** I bring up the report of Estimates Committee B and move:

That the report be received.

Motion carried.

**The Hon. G.M. GUNN:** I bring up the minutes of proceedings of Estimates Committee B and move:

That the minutes of proceedings be incorporated in the votes and proceedings.

Motion carried.

**The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY (Minister for Education, Children's Services and Training):** I move:

That the proposed expenditures referred to in Estimates Committees A and B be agreed to.

**Mr FOLEY (Hart):** I will take the Opposition's unlimited time allocation to make my contribution to this debate. It is now 4.30 p.m., so that gives me 1½ hours until my first break. I have not decided for how long I will speak. It will depend on the issues I cover, the interjections from the opposite benches, and your support and protection, Mr Speaker, as I battle my way through a very rowdy and noisy Government bench when they rise to object to my contribution—and we can see that the numbers opposite are swelling already.

This is an important piece of legislation. As shadow Treasurer, at the beginning of the contribution I should attempt to make some very serious observations about the budget as it has come out of the Estimates Committees, and perhaps I will leave the lighter side of my contribution until the end of my speech. I hope the Minister for Education will be with me for a while because I have to touch on education. How long will you be here, Minister?

*The Hon. M.R. Buckby interjecting:*

**Mr FOLEY:** Well, I will start with the Minister for Education. Fair dinkum, I have heard some very silly suggestions coming from Governments of both political persuasions about how we can save money, but one of the silliest and—if it was not so serious—quite laughable suggestions was uncovered by the shadow Minister for Education, Children's Services and Training.

*The Hon. M.R. Buckby interjecting:*

**Mr FOLEY:** Well, the leak the shadow Minister got was that to save \$3 million they would close our schools a week earlier. That would have to be one of the greatest nonsense suggestions to come from the bureaucracy and from the Minister for many years. I thought it was a silly idea, although during Question Time today, by way of interjection, I did say that my two young children are considering joining the Liberal Party if that becomes part of your next election manifesto. I will have a real dilemma on my hands: with one of my sons already barracking for the Crows, I cannot afford too many breaches of Foley family policy.

As a journalist pointed out to the Minister, there will always be a last week of school, and the system would grind to a halt one week earlier. There were mixed messages from the teachers' union as to whether or not it was in favour, but I believe that the longer we have our children at school and the longer we can educate our children, the better.

*The Hon. M.R. Buckby interjecting:*

**Mr FOLEY:** I do not have experience with the private school sector because I am a supporter of the public school sector, so I do not have the same understanding of the private school system. But, in areas like mine the other element of a school's closing early is the horrendous cost of child care. As a result of your heartless Federal colleagues who have cut back child care enormously, the cost for after-school care could be as much as \$200 if you have two children in school—\$100 a week. That is an outrageous suggestion and an outrageous impost.

I suspect that, if I know my politics, if the Minister has not done it, certainly the Premier has suggested to Mr Ralph and his bureaucrats in the Department for Education, Training and Employment that they look for another initiative. The suggestion that we close our schools a week early is not just politically silly but quite against the flow of both public opinion and what our schools should be doing. As I said, the only two people in my street who thought it was a good idea were my two kids. As usual, I have corrected the error of their ways.

Initially, with this budget we saw great theatre by the Government, which painted it as having a \$150 million black hole. On the very day on which the budget was brought down, the Treasurer referred to a \$150 million black hole that would result in a mini-budget in October if the Parliament failed to sell ETSA. The Government may well regret that threat, as it now appears that the Premier is staring down the Parliament and he may well have to go through with his threat to bring in a mini-budget.

On the very night on which the budget was debated, the Treasurer and I took part in an on-air interview with Chris Kenny of *Nightline*. I asked the Treasurer to show me where in Budget Paper 2 this black hole existed. As far as I am concerned, Budget Paper 2 is the most important of all the budget documents as it contains the full breadth of the budget and its various components. The Treasurer answered me that it was certainly there. When I pressed the point, he said that it was in another document and that I did not have all the documents. I subsequently made sure that I read all the documents, but it was not in any other document. Clearly, the Treasurer was caught out on that night and, indeed, subsequently as I will relate in a moment.

*Mr Brokenshire interjecting:*

**Mr FOLEY:** You can always rely on one interjector. Of course, the member for Mawson does not have much to do because he does not have a committee to chair or a ministry to look after as he enters his fifth year in Parliament.

**Mr Wright:** Didn't he stand for the Chair's position?

**Mr FOLEY:** He did stand for the Chair's position but the Parliament felt that he was not quite up to it. I hope the Government thinks that the Treasurer is too tricky for members on this side, because we like to work with very tricky, clever Ministers. It makes for a breath of fresh air in comparison with some of the other incompetent Ministers with whom we have to deal from time to time.

I think the Estimates Committee process demonstrated that Mr Lucas is not quite the know-it-all Minister that he and others would like us to think. His over reliance on advice on the evening when the questions got a little technical was a telltale sign. It showed that at the end of the day Treasurer Lucas is the same as the rest of us: mortal. Having said that, I still have respect for Mr Lucas, because clearly he is an experienced politician and a capable Minister, but he is not without fault or vulnerability. As I said, in comparison with his motley crew of Ministers, he stands apart in some respects.

*Mr Brokenshire interjecting:*

**Mr FOLEY:** It was intended to be a slur: that is why I said it. Returning to the \$150 million black hole, I want to make some important comments. I asked the Treasurer during the Estimates Committee to explain just where the \$150 million black hole was. He was having a few problems, but he went on to say:

We do a simple calculation in terms of the offset of the savings on interest and what we have lost in the income flow, and depending on the sale value what we get is up to \$150 million a year by the end of the fourth year of this four year financial plan in bottom line benefit to the budget. That is \$150 million. That is where it comes from. It is in the budget netted off against the outlays. The member for Hart might want to damage our sales process because he does not want to see us get a good price for these assets. If we cannot get up to \$150 million from this we will have to increase taxes or we will have to cut education, police, health if that is what he wants to do.

At the end of the day, that was gobbledygook. It did not answer my question, because nowhere in the budget papers exists a black hole. The Premier and the Treasurer must frame the budget on the prevailing settings, and the prevailing settings, as was acknowledged during the Estimates Committee, are that ETSA and Optima remain in public ownership. Table 6.16 in Budget Paper 2, in respect of the four year financial plan, includes the dividends and income tax equivalents from ETSA and Optima. Table 2.4 shows receipts from other revenue. Note No. (2) states:

Includes distributions from commercial public trading enterprises.

The full value of the dividend and income tax equivalents was included in that figure, which still shows an underlying surplus of \$4 million at the fourth year of the four year financial plan. So, the income and dividends from ETSA are stated in these financial tables in the budget. The only thing the Government could point to—and the Premier was caught out on the following day—was table 2.5—the reconciliation statement. Those who read budgets—and I hope all members do—would understand that, in the main, a reconciliation statement reconciles this budget and its out years with predictions made in the previous budget. In this reconciliation statement, the only possible reference to a black hole to which the Premier could point was contained in the note to table 2.5 which states:

Above estimates are net of any premium on asset sales.

The more important part of that note is the first part, which states:

Totals may not add due to rounding.

That is hardly a definitive explanation of a \$150 million black hole, and it gives the lie to the Government's argument that this budget sits with a huge black hole that will need to be funded by other taxation increases in October should the sale of ETSA and Optima not proceed through this Parliament.

I have gone through the reconciliation statement in an attempt to see where the \$150 million black hole could have existed, and I am at a loss to find it. And the Treasurer could not show it to me. There are adjustments for net interest costs, but the notes given for that are that they are impacts in terms of the parameter effects—impacts, the underlying causes of which are generally outside the Government's control, which we assume is simply interest rate movements as interest rate forecasts are revised in the out year. The previous budget's reconciliation statement also showed interest rate adjustments, because in the last two or three budgets we have been moving into this lower rate cycle and, as we know, given the way in which our debt is funded, in large part we are paying catch-up when it comes to taking advantage of lower interest rates.

All of this may not be of stunning interest to members, but it is important in terms of working through the integrity of the Government's budget document. So, I pushed it further and I pushed the Treasurer to explain to me a little more about the dividend income stream flow. I referred to table 6.16 and wanted to know if that included the four years of dividends and income stream from ETSA and Optima and, if so, what are the figures. The Treasurer gave me those figures, which are as follows—and these are the dividends and income tax equivalents from ETSA and Optima: for 1998-99, \$193.6 million; 1999-2000, \$212.4 million; 2000-1, \$191.4 million; and 2001-2, \$211.1 million. They are very interesting numbers, for a couple of reasons. But in respect of the \$150 million black hole, I said to him (as I said earlier in my contribution tonight):

If you factored those numbers in, your budget is predicated on getting income stream from ETSA.

Then he came on with this argument:

No, the bottom line of the budget is net of what we would get for the sale of ETSA and Optima, less what we were expecting to get by way of income, and that comes up with a figure of \$150 million.

He might be right; it simply does not show in the budget. If he is right, he has given away what the Government's market expectation was for the sale of ETSA to learned observers, as I am sure that they could do the mathematics on that. I could not find that in the document. Then he made this most bizarre statement—and again, I will need to refer to *Hansard*, because this was quite strange. He said to me—and I will paraphrase it—that in fact when he worked out the \$150 million black hole he did not use the figures that I have just quoted, because they were the figures provided by the companies themselves. He used a more conservative figure. So I said, 'Hang on a minute, Treasurer. You are telling me that your budget has in it figures provided by the company, but for your black hole that also is in here somewhere you did not use those figures. You discounted those figures and relied on a more conservative number.' I mean, fair dinkum! If the Treasurer wants to be treated seriously in terms of the financial management of this State, he cannot say to me, 'Look, there is a black hole in the budget documents. I know you cannot find it but, believe me, it is there. But in relation to the figures that we have used in the budget document in terms of income stream from ETSA, we did not use those

figures either when we came up with the black hole: we used another set of figures.'

I will read a short contribution from the Treasurer. I asked the Treasurer:

How can the Treasurer put company figures in his budget that he does not personally support? The minute that has gone to print under his signature as Treasurer, they are his numbers. The Treasurer is now confident that those numbers can be achieved.

I am saying there that, if he has put the income stream into his budget, he must be confident with the numbers. The Treasurer answered:

No, as I have stated a couple of times, the honourable member misquotes what I have said to him and to the Committee. In this table that we are talking about, table 6.16, those figures incorporate the company figures. In terms of what we are doing by netting off against the outlays, the Government has made a calculation of the interest savings on what we might get from the sale of our assets against what the Government believes the dividend flow might be. The question that the honourable member has put to me relates to table 6.16 and he has asked for the breakdown within that table. Just to refresh the honourable member's memory, equally on the equivalent table on net debt to our State over the next four years, the Government has included in the net debt figures no assumption or calculation about a reduction because of the sale of ETSA and Optima.

He effectively contradicts himself there. The critical point there was that the Government has made a calculation on interest savings on what we might get from the sale of our assets and what the Government believes the dividend flow might be, which he told this House was a different figure from what the Government had included in its budget papers. So, that again just puts a lie to the Government's claim that a black hole exists within this budget document, and makes the Treasurer look quite silly when trying to explain what was a silly, flawed strategy in political blackmail of this Parliament.

I do not begrudge the Treasurer being a little political in his exploits with the budget: I simply say to him that, when it comes to the integrity of his budget papers, politics should be put aside to ensure that the integrity of the budget is not diminished by silly political statements such as, 'There is a black hole,' and the silly way in which he has attempted to explain that black hole.

The parliamentary Estimates Committee involved more than just the Treasurer, and I will say a little more about the Treasurer later. For some reason, I found myself on about five Estimates Committees. I had thought that, our numbers having doubled in the Parliament, perhaps I could do a few less. I will have to look at that next year. It is a pity that the Deputy Speaker has left, because I wanted to make reference to him. We took the opportunity to ask the Auditor-General some questions. The Government and the Deputy Speaker (the Chairman of Committees at this stage) took exception to my line of questioning. But it is important to note that there are very few opportunities to question the Auditor-General of this State. I thought that was a good opportunity to do it, because if we took the letter of the law as the Chairman of Committees wanted all we could have asked the Auditor-General about was how much he spent on paper clips, whether he wasted money on biros and other inane questions.

I thought that, given the Auditor-General had made himself available, that it was in the evening and that he probably would have preferred to be at home, we should have made his time worthwhile. I thought that it was incumbent upon me to make sure that the Auditor-General's time was not wasted, because he is too important an officer of the Parliament—not to mention the salaries involved. I thought

that we should put the Auditor-General's time in this Parliament to good use. What happened? I was nobbled. I was stopped short by the Chairman. I battled with him; I challenged him; I took the battle up to the Chairman of Committees. But at the end of the day, as will always be the case, I lost; he won; he closed down the Committee. I thought that was unfortunate. Although other members were somewhat delighted to go early, I was not. I was keen to stay the full distance and to ask the Auditor-General some very important questions about a whole raft of Government projects.

Of course, we saw the most extraordinary development where the Premier did not allow the Auditor-General to answer any of my questions. He let the Auditor-General answer a couple of questions but then steered away and would not let the Auditor-General answer some quite probing and, I would argue, appropriate questions. I think it was an unfortunate beginning to the Estimates Committees process. Certainly, it unsettled me. I was somewhat taken aback by the rough treatment I received from the Government. I was disappointed that we did not take the opportunity to ask the Auditor-General some questions properly. I think that is something that the Estimates Committees of this Parliament ought to have a look at. I am happy to give some advice to the Government, if it is prepared to accept it. Perhaps when the Auditor-General is in this Parliament we should occupy his time more usefully.

The member for Waite would not recall this, but when we had Estimates Committees in years gone by prior to this Government and its changing of when it brings down its budget (and I do not criticise the Government for that: it brings it down in May as opposed to August) we used to have the Auditor-General's Report about which we could ask questions during the Estimates Committee. We would have the Estimates documents together with the Auditor-General's Report, which meant we had a lot more ammunition for important questions. Clearly, Ministers had to be more on guard in terms of being prepared for difficult questions; but it was a good process to ensure proper accountability and proper scrutiny and, where possible, to expose areas of deficient Government administration.

Of course, now we have the present budget process. The Auditor-General only signs off at the end of the financial year. We now get the Auditor-General's Report in about September or October, five or six months after the budget has been brought down. That is why we need to look very seriously at what we do with that. We on this side of the House have argued—and I know my Deputy Leader has raised this with the Government's Deputy on a number of occasions—that we do need a much better process for asking questions arising from the Auditor-General's Report.

I say that in all seriousness, not wanting to score cheap political points but wishing to uphold proper Government scrutiny and accountability. It is disappointing that it has not happened. Through our Deputy Leader, the Opposition has proposed on a number of occasions that we should have a special sitting of the Parliament, perhaps in an Estimates Committee-style process, but with more detailed questioning of Ministers and their officers on the Auditor-General's Report, not the farce we see in October, where we have 30 minutes with one Minister. Moving down the list, we had Minister Lucas, then we had the Minister for sports facilities, the Hon. Graham Ingerson, the Deputy Premier. That was an interesting day, and enough has been said about the Hindmarsh Soccer Stadium; I do not want to revisit that.

The Minister looks at me, I am not sure with what message, but I could guess. I am happy to talk more about it, but I was being sensitive to the role of the Minister and not wanting to disturb her in her important docket signing. The Hindmarsh Soccer Stadium issue was raised by the Deputy Premier on the day, and it was a moment of high farce. The Deputy Premier had not had a good couple of weeks—although I suppose he did; he had been overseas, from memory. But it was not a good week, when he thought he would spring a counter attack on the Opposition. As you would recall, Sir, the press conference was odd, given that it was the Deputy Premier's own press conference, but from what I saw that night it looked as though he was reacting to something we had done. The Deputy Premier talked about a Labor dicky-bird, a senior Labor source having rung the Deputy Premier that day to say: 'Look, you need to go back and look into your files around the years 1989 and 1993 to discover that the former Labor Government was itself looking at expanding and upgrading the Hindmarsh Soccer Stadium.'

The Deputy Premier made great play of the fact that, as a result of this senior Labor dicky-bird ringing him, he had gone into the archives and, surprise, surprise, had found these secret plans—only that day, from memory—and thought it important to bring that to the Parliament. I remember that he had the plans sitting on the table, waiting to hit us with this major revelation. Of course, as I saw on the Channel 7 news that night, I and the Leader of the Opposition were accused of telling lies. We suffered a fairly significant attack from the Deputy Premier that night—something that I was disappointed in because I was accused of telling lies, which I did not believe to be the case. Nonetheless, that was said by the Deputy Premier.

Then in the Chamber, following some very quick work on her part, the member for Reynell showed me a letter that you, Mr Acting Speaker, would have been well aware of. Why you did not advise the Deputy Premier of this before he made his foray into the media, one can only speculate. That was a letter to Mr Lewis, the Chairman of the Public Works Committee, signed by Mr Ingerson himself in April 1998. The letter said, in part:

Dear Peter,

The purpose of this letter is to highlight to the committee the process that has developed since the original concept to redevelop the Hindmarsh Soccer Stadium evolved in 1993. In fact, as far back as 1989 a study was conducted at the request of the then chief executive of the Department of Recreation and Sport to examine the relative merits of two options for the provision of an international standard soccer stadium in Adelaide.

I went on to say:

Fair dinkum, Ingo: You can't even get your politics right!

That was probably a bit of a throwaway line that I did not need to repeat. The point is that on that day the Deputy Premier attempted to up the ante on the Labor Party, on me personally and on the Leader of the Opposition, accusing us of telling lies and trying to give the impression that there had been some major leak from the Labor Party and they had just uncovered these documents when, to everyone's amusement—perhaps not everyone's; I doubt the Premier was overly amused—I think the headline on most of the TV news bulletins that night was 'Deputy Premier kicks own goal.' I really think that, as a member of that committee yourself, Sir, you should have reminded Mr Ingerson of the letter he had written to you some months earlier, to save him that little bit of embarrassment.

It probably would not have been a bad political attack, had it been structured differently but, for whatever reason, the Deputy Premier just went a little over the top. I thought I would make mention of that because it was an important event along the road of the Estimates Committees and provided a little excitement in what was otherwise probably a fairly dull day.

I then had the pleasure for the first time of dealing with Minister Armitage in his capacity as Minister for Government Enterprises, and he did not let me down. Many would not recall, but last year I walked in on Minister Armitage in another place in the Estimates Committee when he was Health Minister and I was stunned to see half the Health Commission sitting in the gallery. On that day I think I counted 28 persons in the gallery to assist the then Minister of Health. Who knows what would have happened if there had been a major health crisis that day, because half the Government was in the gallery.

Once again, the Minister did not let me down. I walked in and I was hit again by a sea of faces sprawled in the two galleries. I did a head count—it is important that we do a head count on these sorts of days—and found 31 Government officers here to assist the would be Premier or Deputy Premier—I am not sure what Minister Armitage is running for but, whatever his ambitions, I am not sure that they are being well served by demonstrating that he needs 31 advisers. What was even more comical was that I asked him a question and he walked up into the gallery to get an answer. It was like *The Price is Right*: 'Armo, come on down.'

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Brokenshire):** Order! Point of order.

**Mr FOLEY:** No, you do not call points of order. Back-benchers call points of order.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** I seek the maintenance of some protocol.

**Mr FOLEY:** I am happy with protocol. I am just asking that you get the process right. Members call points of order and you, Mr Acting Speaking, decide on them. You do not call a point of order from the Chair. I thought that was an interesting day. Perhaps I can give a bit of advice, gratuitously. If members opposite really think the Minister for Government Enterprises is one of their options, they should rethink that one a bit. It is a tough job being Premier or Deputy Premier, no doubt. We may have our differences with the current Premier or the former Premier, but I have never seen Premier Olsen or former Premier Brown have more than a handful of advisers. Their confidence in their portfolios is sufficient that they are okay but, for whatever reason, the Minister for Government Enterprises, clearly not wanting to slip up, has to have his hand held by 31 advisers.

That is an important point because I doubt a Government enterprise was working that day in Adelaide. We had present the heads of ETSA, Optima, Ports Corporation, the Lotteries Commission, the TAB, the Motor Accident Commission and SAGRIC International. We had the elite of the elite here: we had the top officers of all Government trading enterprises bar none here with the Minister. If there had been an accident at ETSA or if a lottery coupon had gone missing at the Lotteries Commission or the TAB system had broken down, there would have been all sorts of strife because they were all here with Minister Armitage assisting him and holding his hand.

*Mr Snelling interjecting:*

**Mr FOLEY:** Exactly. Then we saw Minister Armitage's handling of the water contract, and it was not a good effort at all. He had his 31 advisers—Ted Phipps and others from

SA Water who have so competently advised Ministers Olsen and Ingerson over the years and who are now advising Minister Armitage. They were having difficulty answering questions on the great water contract. There were issues such as Thames Water having promised to deliver 100 jobs to Adelaide within two, three or four months, from memory. We asked a question and found that there were only three jobs. Then the Minister started to dispute our understanding of the contract and, doing only as I would normally do in wanting to assist the Minister, I went and got my copy of the water contract. As members know, we have a copy.

**Mrs Geraghty:** You are so helpful.

**Mr FOLEY:** I was. So, I brought the contract down into the Chamber. You should have seen the eyes of the bureaucrats from SA Water: what would they have given to be able to leap across and rip it out of my hands. Maybe I would have wanted to give it to them, and maybe I will one day. I opened up the page for the Minister and pointed to the clause to which I was referring, and I think he was a little sheepish and embarrassed that the advice that he was getting from his advisers was not consistent with the contract. As I have said previously, we will release elements of that contract that we believe to be in the public interest.

In any future committee meetings dealing with issues involving the water contract I will be quite happy to refer to the contract. I would only suggest that Minister Armitage also read the contract, and he might be less prepared to take on face value the advice given to him by his senior bureaucrats in SA Water. Enough said on that water contract.

I raised a couple of other issues with Minister Armitage and also Minister Matthew. That was an experience. Minister Matthew was so keen, but the problem for him was that it was the last night; I had been on six committees and I was really running out of steam. I could see that, in his normal very diligent manner (I must hand it to him: he was well briefed and prepared), Minister Matthew was eagerly waiting to do battle with me. However, it is fair to say that I really did not do justice to him, because I had run out of steam.

But, before that, we had a little bit of jousting, and one of the issues in which I was extremely interested was the radio network contract. Members may be interested to know that the Government has signed up for a radio communications network. Motorola has the contract to supply the handsets and various equipment and has been mandated as the supplier, and that contract is estimated to cost us between \$130 million and \$200 million. I understand that one of the reasons for introducing the emergency services levy is that it will help fund this radio contract. I am no electronics expert—some would think I am an expert in very little—but I would have to say—

**Mrs Geraghty:** Oh, no.

**Mr FOLEY:** I am pleased that the member for Torrens does not agree. I reckon that \$150 million is a lot of money to be spending on a radio communications system. It does not involve the police: it is for the CFS, MFS and the ambulance service. We have heard that Tallahassee, the capital of Florida, had a similar system that cost \$9 million. I do not know; I am no expert and do not want to say that I am right and the Government is wrong. However, many more questions need to be asked about why we will pay between \$130 and \$200 million for a radio communications network. No doubt it may be needed—I am not arguing that we do not need to upgrade our communications equipment—but I am astounded at the price.

What astounds me more about the price is the way in which elements of that contract have been negotiated. As long ago as, I think, 1994 the Auditor-General himself queried and was highly critical of the way in which the Government had contracted Motorola to provide much of the hardware involved, because it resulted in a deal signed by then Minister Olsen as Minister for Industry as part of an incentive package to attract Motorola here to Adelaide. An element of which Industries Development Committee was not made aware was that the Premier (then the Minister) and the Government gave a commitment to Motorola that it could have the contract to supply the hardware five years down the track. So, there has been no open tendering for a significant portion of this \$130 million to \$200 million contract; Motorola is getting it.

When I questioned Minister Matthew about what understandings we have that we are getting a decent price and we have allowed competitive pricing and competitive tendering to do their job in ensuring that taxpayers' interests are protected, he said that there is a ceiling. The maximum price that we will pay for the provision of infrastructure from Motorola will be the price of the New South Wales Government contract. I was stunned. I said, 'Sorry? Are you saying that Motorola promised to provide the hardware at a figure no more than a contract which it signed with the New South Wales Government?' He said, 'Yes, that's correct.' The Minister said:

The maximum price that we pay is the price by the New South Wales Government—

I then said:

That sounds awfully commercially competent. How do we know that it [that Government] did not pay more than it should have?

The Minister then asked whether I was suggesting that the New South Wales Government was not competent in its contract tendering. I do not know whether the New South Wales Government—Labor or Liberal, whichever of the two Governments it was—negotiated the best deal.

*Mrs Geraghty interjecting:*

**Mr FOLEY:** Of course we should have competition, as the member for Torrens quite rightly points out. We are lectured day in and day out, as we have been again today, about the need to allow competitive forces in a competitive market. But when it comes to doing deals this Government—as we saw with the water contract and as we have seen with many Government contracts—relies on a nod and a wink. This is not criticism necessarily of Motorola. Good luck to it in terms of securing contracts with Governments, as it has been able to, but whether it is Motorola or any other company, I get very concerned when Governments give contracts without following the proper process, particularly this Government that lectures us on the mistakes of former Governments, as well as giving us frequent lectures on competition and the need for it.

I know that my colleague the shadow Minister for Emergency Services, the member for Elder, certainly has highlighted these concerns to me. He is the shadow Minister responsible for that portfolio and has a particular interest in ensuring that proper scrutiny of that contract is undertaken and, as the shadow Treasurer and the shadow Minister for Information Technology, I am more than happy to assist him where I can to ensure that proper process has been followed. This contract is worth in excess of \$150 million: this is not a contract for a few Bic bios. This is a major purchase of Government—a purchase for which the average household in this State will be levied upwards of \$50 to \$70.

You, Sir, in the soon to be very marginal seat of Mawson following the redistribution, would need to bear in mind that your residents could be paying a minimum of \$50 per year more to pay for a \$150 million to \$200 million communications contract about which we have not established, first, the need; secondly, whether there is the need—and I am not suggesting that there is not—and therefore our options; and, thirdly, having decided what our options are, who can supply the hardware, the equipment. That involves many major steps about which we have had no public scrutiny.

All we have been told is that it will cost between \$150 million and \$200 million and that Motorola won the contract because Premier Olsen signed off on it back in 1994 without telling anyone, and that is the way it is. If members think that I am being a bit unfair to the Premier, let me say to them that one of the first persons who alerted me to this matter was his former principal adviser, Alex Kennedy, when I read an article written by her in the *Business Review Weekly* in which she was quite critical of that process. She articulated quite well, I thought, the concerns of many businesses about the deal that the Premier had done with Motorola. We then saw the matter mentioned in other fine publications, such as the *Adelaide Review*, and other publications. These publications are three or four years old but, of course, we are now seeing the contract come to fruition and the problems starting to arise.

That is a brief summary of a number of highlights or lowlights, depending which way you look at it, along the Estimates Committee road over that two-week period. My colleagues did some very good work in exposing a number of areas of appalling Government waste and over expenditure, highlighted no better than by the work done by the shadow Minister for Education in uncovering some of the very serious and quite painful and disturbing cuts to our State's education system.

Then, as I mentioned earlier, the highly paid bureaucrats within the Education Department, when asked to give their ideas on how to save money, came up with that very silly idea to close our schools a week earlier, and saying that by—

*Mr Scalzi interjecting:*

**Mr FOLEY:** The good old member for Hartley who, as we keep saying, nearly lost this Government office, chirps in. I understand where the member for Hartley is coming from. You, as a former teacher, might like the idea of having yet another week of holiday.

*Mr Scalzi interjecting:*

**Mr FOLEY:** I said 'you, as a former teacher'. As a parent, I would like to see my children in school that week.

*Mr Scalzi interjecting:*

**Mr FOLEY:** Teachers have more than enough opportunities for personal development under the current structure of holiday periods for State schools. Our teachers do not need any more time made available for personal development. I want the children in my electorate and my own children to get the best education possible, and that can happen only when they are at school. The teachers' union at that time was less than impressed by the Government's approach on that issue. It was silly. For the Government to be suggesting that we can save money—

*Mr Scalzi interjecting:*

**Mr FOLEY:** I don't care, because my kids and the bulk of the kids in my electorate go to public schools. I am talking only about public schools. If the private school system thinks that that is the best way to do it, good luck to it. However, parents have a choice. When it comes to the public system,



we need to keep our schools open as long as we do and not cut back that time. To suggest that would be a retrograde step. As I said, I doubt whether the Deputy Premier or the Premier would have allowed it.

**Mr Meier:** Don't private schools have two weeks less than public schools at present?

**Mr FOLEY:** I doubt that I will ever be Minister for Education, but I am happy to answer the member for Goyder's question. That may well be the case for the private school system but not for the public school system under this Liberal Government or a future Labor Government. Did you like that? That is just a little snippet of what you have to expect in the next four years.

The budget was a painful budget that hurt average South Australians; it particularly targeted motor vehicle owners and users. Of course, my colleague the member for Peake would be aggrieved on behalf of taxi drivers. However, because of our somewhat restrictive and narrow tax base in this State, the reality is that, when we increase tax imposts, they hurt a narrow band of people and they affect a narrow band of taxes. Of course, when taxes such as payroll taxes are excluded, the impost on average families is quite significant. In years to come, ordinary owners of cars and property will be dealt a painful blow by this Government, and that is something I regret.

It is important to say that, as have many members, I have sat through many Liberal budgets, and each of those budgets has made clear to me that debt was under control. As I mentioned before, during the election campaign a debate with the former Treasurer on the issue of State debt and the budget made clear that he believed that the budget was under control, that debt was under control and that we were heading into a surplus. We have had rammed down our throats for three or four years phrases such as 'we've turned the corner', 'the light at the end of the tunnel' and 'we've broken the back of debt'. Now for the Government to be telling us that, by effect, it was telling us little untruths over the past three or four years I think says more about this Government—

*Mr Brokenshire interjecting:*

**Mr FOLEY:** The member for Mawson says, 'Wind up the drivel.' I am just warming up.

*Mr Scalzi interjecting:*

**Mr FOLEY:** I know that the member for Hartley and the member for Mawson have little to do these days. They are neither a parliamentary secretary nor a chairman of a committee. They just come onto the back bench—

*Members interjecting:*

**Mr FOLEY:** We know that the member for Mawson is under enormous pressure because he is facing potential electoral oblivion at the next State election, when the seat of Mawson becomes a more marginal seat. We know that the seat of Colton has been written off by the Government, but that will perhaps not bother the current incumbent. Certainly, I would suspect that the member for Mawson is spending many a sleepless night waiting for the Electoral Commissioner to bring down the new boundaries for the seat of Mawson. If, as most wise pundits on both the Liberal and Labor sides are predicting, the Willunga Basin and other key Liberal areas are taken out of his electorate and included in the electorate of Finnis, we will see the member for Mawson become even more ratty in this Parliament, even more unpredictable and even more boisterous as he attempts to put aside his nerves as we count down to the next State election: he will attempt to put a bit more bluster into this place and put on a brave face as he counts down to electoral oblivion.

The member for Unley now enters the Chamber, another member who no doubt will be very concerned about the electoral redistribution, notwithstanding the submissions of both his Party and our Party. If I were the member for Unley, I would be a little nervous. I am glad he has walked in, because I would like to make a brief comment about the Local Government Act—the wimpish Local Government Act. As is often the case with this Government when it comes to local government and other areas, the Minister talks tough; he talks the big picture but, when you read the fine print, there is not much to it.

The suggestions about the Adelaide City Council reform are about as stunning as watching paint dry or as looking at a blank wall. I would only hope that the current Minister shows more guts and backs the member for Colton to do things like taking away from the elite, financially wealthy residents of North Adelaide that injustice of the residential rate rebate that they enjoy. On many issues, I find myself agreeing with the member for Colton. I agree with him on that matter as it affects the budget and local government rates, and through the local government contribution to the emergency services levy, as you, Sir, would fully understand. However, we do not get as much for the emergency services levy, because in the Adelaide City Council area half is given back to the residents of North Adelaide.

Residents in my electorate and other electorates around our city who pay full tote odds with respect to their rates have to watch the residents of North Adelaide benefiting from this pork-barrelling. I listened to a radio interview only the other day: the member for Colton totally won me over when he talked about the history of that rebate—why it had been introduced and the fact it was no longer relevant. I do not know whether the member for Unley is trying to curry favour with the Minister for Government Enterprises as to whether or not he is on the ascendancy and will be a future Deputy Leader or Leader, but really he should bite the bullet when it comes to that, to ensure that that money flows properly through the budget into the local government levy, which pays for our emergency services.

*Members interjecting:*

**Mr FOLEY:** I noted some reigniting of the long-standing friction between the two Ministers.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! There is nothing about reigniting of Ministers in the budget.

**Mr FOLEY:** There is, Sir, because there is money in the budget to revamp offices. I am glad that you reminded me of that, Sir, as I wanted to move on to that issue. The cost of junior Ministers has been quite extensive. As we said in the Labor Party, they were not needed and not the message the Government should be sending. To have these ancillary portfolios tacked on to the nameplates of a few Ministers is most unfortunate and, as we have seen in the budget, is costing us real dollars. The member for Wright, in some good work in a leaked document she obtained, showed us that the cost to refit the office for the junior Minister for Disability Services was in the order of hundreds of thousands of dollars. That was quite disappointing.

*The Hon. M.K. Brindal interjecting:*

**Mr FOLEY:** The Minister for Local Government is making his normal inane interjections—on this occasion directed to his colleagues behind him and not at me. I was at a function last night that he attended (stepping in for the Deputy Premier who, I understand, was not well) and he delivered a rather clever speech—no doubt written for him, but nonetheless a clever speech.

*Members interjecting:*

**Mr FOLEY:** It is the first time I have seen him at an official function. I was a little sceptical and thought the Minister might be a little out of his depth. However, he read the speech rather well, and he shows some promise. Maybe when he has been around a little longer and when he grows up they might make him a real Minister. When the training wheels are taken off the bike they might elevate him to a being a real dinky-di Minister. He has done well: he has gone from parliamentary secretary to junior Minister and maybe one day he will go up the next step to being a real Minister. I suspect it will be a shadow Minister because by the time that occurs this Government will have lost office, due in no large part to this budget and its measures that have been designed effectively to hurt ordinary people, people that my colleagues and I were elected to support. We are disappointed.

As shadow Treasurer and in the tradition of the Labor Party I say, 'It's your budget—taxation measures are your taxation measures, they are designed to fund your budget. You'll have your budget and your taxation increases.' The principle of the Labor Party is that we are supportive of the Government in supply and, equally, if you vote for the appropriation of this budget, it is obvious that you are duty bound in the Labor Party to support the measures required to fund the budget. So, the Government will get its tax increases. That is not necessarily the record of Liberal Governments who from time to time in this place have obstructed Labor Party taxation measures.

The Liberal Party certainly obstructed Federal Labor Party taxation measures after the 1993 election. As we have known for many years on many issues, we work on a different set of principles in the Labor Party than in the Liberal Party, as evidenced no more obviously than in the recent election in Queensland where the Liberal Party gave preferences to One Nation and where the Prime Minister still cannot bring himself to really say how objectionable is One Nation as a Party. He still wants to dance with them—

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr FOLEY:**—as it relates to the budget. I am happy to line that up with the budget. Sir, as you know, the State Electoral Office is funded by the budget and is part of appropriation and clearly is an issue of interest and importance.

**Mr Brokenshire:** Hurry up.

**Mr FOLEY:** The member for Mawson says that I am wasting time. Sir, you do not waste time in Parliament: members have the opportunity to speak for as long as they like. I have the Opposition's free allocation to speak for as long as I like and I am happy to keep going, as long as my colleagues are captivated by my contribution and are supporting me. As long as members are learning something from what I am offering, I am—

*Mr Meier interjecting:*

**Mr FOLEY:** The Liberal Party Whip, the member for Goyder, has just said that we will not have any Liberal speakers on the budget.

**Mr Meier:** All the speakers are on that side, so you are taking time away from your own members.

**Mr FOLEY:** No I'm not.

*Mr Meier interjecting:*

**Mr FOLEY:** Please, Sir, protect me from the member for Goyder!

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! I suggest that we get back to the matters in the Bill relating to the budget. The

Chair has shown an incredible amount of flexibility over the time the honourable member has been speaking—

**Mr FOLEY:** Just about 1¼ hours.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:**—and I would ask him to either refer to matters in the budget or bring his contribution to a close.

**Mr FOLEY:** Thank you, Sir, and I am glad you have shown me a lot more tolerance than you have on previous occasions. Thank you, I appreciate that. Thank you, Sir, for your protection from the member for Goyder. I have to say that whenever the member for Goyder launches an assault on me it does me great damage and my stomach knots up as the member for Goyder launches into a verbal assault on me as he clearly did then. Thank you, Sir, for your protection because there is a no worse and a no more unsettling experience on this side of the Chamber than when the member for Goyder is in full flight—it just sends shock waves through all of us.

**The Hon. M.K. Brindal:** That will read very well in *Hansard* for the member for Goyder.

**Mr FOLEY:** Absolutely, and publish it throughout Maitland and the *Maitland Chronicle*, or whatever, and, if that helps the honourable member get another couple of points at the next election, I am happy to have obliged. The member for Goyder should remember one infamous Estimates Committee hearing when I think he was the shadow Minister for Primary Industries and we did a nice little trick on him when it came to the Egg Board. It is just a private joke between the member for Goyder and me. The member for Goyder is not listening, so I will save that for another day. It is obvious to me that I have canvassed the areas that I want to. No doubt, members would like to hear more from me. I have rather enjoyed this opportunity to put my thoughts on the public record in respect of the budget.

*The Hon. M.K. Brindal interjecting:*

**Mr FOLEY:** The member for Unley interjects that what I have contributed tonight is of little consequence. He may be right. I do not come into this Chamber, as he does, and think that people will hang on every word I say and that I am the font of all knowledge and wisdom. I cannot quote Shakespeare or read poetry like he can. I am but a humble member for Port Adelaide and I can only come in here with my limited vocabulary and knowledge and impart upon members the little that I know. I have not been the recipient of some of the private school education that perhaps the member for Unley has, and so be it. At the end of day, I have said about all I can—not necessarily all I want but all I can—because I suspect that I have probably pushed the limit in terms of your indulgence, Sir.

I thank you and, as I say, the Opposition will be supporting this appropriation. We will be supporting, in the main, the Government's taxation measures as they relate to this year's financial budget—not necessarily in out years but certainly in this year—and we will be debating those taxation measures in more detail as we progress. As we head into the fifth year of Liberal Government, this State still has record high unemployment, record youth unemployment, a depressed economy and little or no economic growth. It is a State of despair; a State of quite serious economic problems. The only hope and vision this Premier offers us is to sell off everything that he can lay his hands on.

We did not trust this Premier, but he told us to trust him when it came to the water contract, and that has been an abject failure for the State. He now tells us to trust him on the sale of ETSA, having only four or six months ago told us to

trust him that he would not sell it. I think this Government's stock of trust is all but gone. The vision of this Government is one of 'no hope' and members opposite will limp year by year to the next State election when, no doubt, the electors and voters of this State will discard this Government into the waste basket of electoral defeat and re-elect a Labor Government to show vision, courage, discipline and dynamic leadership which is needed for this State's economy. I look forward to being part of that Government as it ensures that this State has hope and vision, not the dispirited, demoralised, faction-ridden leadership-driven Party that you are. I am confident that we will elect to this State a decent Government, a Government that is about governing for the people and not about who shall be leader one year and who shall be leader the next.

**Mr HILL (Kaurua):** I am pleased to follow that very intelligent, comprehensive discussion on the State budget. I am glad that the member for Unley is here, because I look forward to his appropriate quotations during my contribution, and I am sorry the member for Mawson is not here because I always enjoy contributing when he is in the Chamber. In fact, I thought the member for Mawson was absent today, because he has been remarkably quiet.

I would like to talk about the process of Estimates Committees which I have gone through as a member for the first time and I guess, in part, to express my dissatisfaction with the process and with the outcomes that the process achieved in terms of trying to understand what is going on in this State budget. I do not entirely blame the Minister for Environment and Heritage for that lack of information. The budget process itself was the opposite to what was explained to us in briefings earlier on. It was not a transparent process: it was an incredibly opaque process.

Having listened to the Minister in this Parliament and read her comments in *Hansard*, I am still no wiser as to how much money is being spent in certain program areas: I do not think she is, either, because she said as much to me. There is no knowledge about how money is being distributed. There is a budget of \$100 million and we cannot be told, and we are not told, how much is being spent to achieve certain things. It may be that the budget is developed on an accrual basis, but I know that Government departments still run programs. The department still has a program which looks after the coast; it still has a program which looks after national parks; it still has a program which looks after endangered species. There are programs, but as we do not know how much money is being put into those programs we cannot tell if the Government is doing more or doing less in each of those areas.

I think it is an absolute disgrace, and certainly by the time the next budget comes down, if the Government intends keeping accrual accounting, it should add an extra dimension or layer to the budget so that we can know what is going on in different program areas.

*An honourable member interjecting:*

**Mr HILL:** It will be a surprise, yes, indeed. That is my overall comment about it. I am still no clearer about what is happening in particular program areas. The Minister was able to explain that, despite an apparent reduction in outlays of some \$16 million, in fact there was an increase of \$3.3 million in Government expenditure in the budget.

I have gone through the figures, and I am not sure that the Minister is correct on this. I want to go through it in a little more detail at a later stage, but at least one figure interests me. The number of full-time equivalent employees in the

department is expected to decline by about 10. That is not many out of 1 076 workers, but I would have thought that is one indication that there is less money in the budget. I would be interested to follow that up at a later date. I also refer to the Minister's explanation about wage increases. It seems to me that at least part of the anticipated wage increases in the environment and heritage budget will, in fact, come from within the existing resources which will mean a real reduction in expenditure.

Having made those general comments, I should like to talk about a number of the issues that were raised in the Estimates Committee procedure. One of them will be of great interest to you, Mr Deputy Speaker, as the local member, and I refer to the botanic gardens in the Adelaide Hills, and in particular the botanic gardens known as Beechwood. During the Estimates Committee I asked the Minister about this garden, which comprises 4 hectares and is open to the public on about 50 days a year and which costs the Government \$100 000 to maintain.

As you know, Sir, the garden is associated with a private residence, so for 315 days a year the benefit of that \$100 000 is gained exclusively by a private household. I have been told by people who work up there that, on various occasions when the private owners of the property plan to entertain, they telephone the botanic gardens office and ask for the lawns to be cut so that the garden is in good condition for their private functions. I know that botanic gardens staff have tried very hard to negotiate a better deal but they have been unsuccessful because of the nature of the contract that has been signed with the occupants by the Government.

It is a disgrace that \$100 000 of public money is being spent to maintain an admittedly beautiful nineteenth century garden, which I have looked over, mostly for private benefit. The 50 open days a year are concentrated over a couple of short periods. It is not every Saturday and Sunday: it is Monday to Sunday with Saturday off, or Monday to Saturday with Sunday off, over a limited number of weeks of the year. For most of the year—something like 10 months—the gardens are closed.

**The Hon. M.K. Brindal:** Which gardens?

**Mr HILL:** Beechwood gardens in the Adelaide Hills. As I said, they are beautiful gardens, but to spend \$100 000 a year, pretty well for the sole benefit of the family who live in the mansion that used to be associated with the gardens, is not right. I said to the Minister during the Estimates Committee that she should bite the bullet and do what a number of reports have suggested the Government should do and that is sell the gardens and use the money that is spent on their maintenance for other gardens in the Adelaide Hills.

For example, the Wittunga Gardens has had a severe reduction in expenditure over recent years and, as a result, that garden, which concentrates on South African plants, has very much declined and is no longer the special place that it was. Government money for botanic gardens has been reduced, but in this area it has been maintained pretty well. In her reply, the Minister said that she looked forward to bipartisan support, so again I say to her and to the House that if the Minister is prepared to bite the bullet I am prepared to support her. Those gardens should be sold. I know that they are a vested interest and that a range of people think these gardens are special and should be kept. That is fine, but if the private sector wants to look after them it might make a good wedding centre, a good hospitality centre, or a good private hotel.

*Mr Koutsantonis interjecting:*

**Mr HILL:** It could be a debutante centre, as the member for Peake said. It could make a whole range of nice private enterprises. If that is possible, that is a good thing, but it should not be in public ownership at its current cost.

My next point concerns national parks. As part of its pre-budget propaganda, the Government highlighted the fact that it was planning to spend \$30 million on capital works infrastructure in national parks. That is a good thing, and we all like to see money spent in national parks. However, the point is that the greatest part of that money is to develop tourism facilities in national parks. I am not opposed to tourist facilities being provided in national parks, but it is a bit rich for the Government to suggest that this is an increase in expenditure on the environment, because it clearly is not. It is expenditure that is aimed to make national parks more—

**Mr Lewis:** Accessible.

**Mr HILL:** I thank the member for Hammond for the interjection. It is a good thing to make the parks more accessible, and we should all support that. However, the money should have been in the tourism budget and, if it had been, it would have shown that the environment budget had had limited resources placed in it.

A range of things need to be done in our national parks. During the Estimates, I asked the Minister to take on notice a question as to whether she could detail to the House the amount of money that was spent on the over 300 parks and reserves controlled by the State. I was surprised to learn that there is no budget for each of these parks. I could not get any information out of the Minister on what is spent on a particular park. I mentioned a number of parks, in particular, the Onkaparinga Park, which is partly in my electorate, and I asked her how much money—

*Mr Lewis interjecting:*

**Mr HILL:** Only part, but it is the most beautiful part. Of course, part of the Onkaparinga Park is in the member for Mawson's electorate. I asked the Minister how much money is spent each year on that park and what is the budget for this year. There is no answer. We now talk about outcomes, and these outcomes are spread across a range of parks. So, how members of Parliament and members of the public can find out what is going on in the State's parks is beyond me. I will refer this matter to the Auditor-General because I think we should know how much is spent on individual parks. What sort of a management system do we have if money is spent in an *ad hoc* and random way according to the whim of whoever is in charge?

One point that I wanted to make if I could obtain the information was that I believe that much less than \$100 000 a year is spent on maintaining the Onkaparinga Park. I do not know the exact number of hectares of this park, but it is a substantial park.

*Mr Lewis interjecting:*

**Mr HILL:** I thank the member for Hammond. That's very nice. The Onkaparinga Park is a substantial urban park. It is used by many people in the southern suburbs and, of course, right across the metropolitan area. It is open to visitors all the time, anyone can go there, but less than \$100 000 a year is spent on it, whereas the Botanic Gardens in the Hills, which has fewer than 5 000 visitors a year and is open for only 50 days, has about \$100 000 spent on it. So, that is a very poor comparison.

**Mr Clarke:** Is that in the electorate of Heysen?

**Mr HILL:** It is in the electorate of Heysen. By way of comparison, a large public asset such as the Onkaparinga Park receives less than \$100 000 but the Botanic Gardens in

the Hills, which is open very infrequently and which is used almost exclusively for private benefit, has about \$100 000 spent on it. That is crazy. I do not blame the former Minister for that, because it was something that he inherited and managed.

During the Estimates Committee, the Minister admitted that she was planning to break a promise contained in the Liberal Party's environment policy. I am sure that you, Sir, as the former Minister had something to do with the creation of this policy to formulate the Greater Mount Lofty Ranges Park in the Adelaide Hills. I asked the Minister what stage that proposal had reached, and I got a lot of words. I said, 'Will you declare this a park in the coming year?' After some more words, she said, 'No'. I said, 'Does that mean ever or just this year?' and she said, 'Ever'. I said, 'That's a broken promise.'

This was a commitment, because the Conservation Council, the Democrats and other people interested in the environment had been pushing for this for some time. The former Minister of the current Government promised this in the election manifesto. No doubt that did garner some votes for the Liberal Party, but now that the Liberal Party is in office it has dropped that promise and there will be no park across the Adelaide Hills. I think that is a shame. It was a good idea, and it should have happened. If we could swap the current Minister for the former Minister who knew something about what he was doing in that area, I am sure that commitment would have been kept.

During the Estimates Committee the Minister advised the House that the EPA was to be given more resources to improve its powers of enforcement. That is something for which the Opposition and I have called in the past and which is long overdue. As we all know, the EPA has not conducted one successful prosecution since it came into existence. I think that part of the problem was that it had no adequate enforcement agency, no-one to go out and get the evidence and pursue the prosecutions. According to the Minister it now has that agency, and I will look forward with great interest to see whether, in a year, it has more runs on the board than it currently has. So, we will have to give them the benefit of the doubt at this stage.

Another issue which I thought was of interest during the Estimates and which shows that the Minister for the Environment really is not in charge of her portfolio and does not understand what is going on was when I asked her about the proposal of the Federal Government to use South Australia as a repository for uranium waste. I asked the Minister a range of questions about that, and she did not seem to know a great deal about it. In fact, when I asked her whether the State Government had a policy against South Australia becoming the uranium dump site, she said that it did not. I thought that was an amazing admission—that this Government has no policy in relation to the Federal Government dumping uranium in this State. She thought that the best we could do was to put in some kind of response to an EIS, but she did not know whether an EIS was in train, either. Uranium mining and the uranium industry are important to South Australia, but I do not believe that there are too many South Australians who want us to become the Australian base for uranium dumping—nor would they want the next extension, which would be an international base for uranium dumping. But when the Minister—

*Members interjecting:*

**Mr HILL:** The member for Hammond might like that. And, as the honourable member behind me says, Burnside

might be somewhere that she might like to consider. However, I believe that most South Australians would not like to see uranium being dumped in this State. There is a whole range of issues and concerns to do with the transportation of uranium—for example, what would it do to our tourism and our pastoral industries? When I asked the Minister about it, she was very vague: she did not know, and she said that the Government did not have a policy. I would like to know whether the Premier has had a think about this issue since it has been raised. Will he inform us whether the Government of South Australia has a policy on this very important issue for people in this State?

One of the other issues I raised with the Minister was in relation to marine policy. This is the Year of the Ocean, and last year, in the lead-up to the Year of the Ocean, there was a lot of work done, I gather, in the department about the establishment of a marine policy, and at some stage this year a marine policy was promised. I asked the Minister where it was. It is now half way through this year, and we still do not have a marine policy. The fact is that the department has put up a reasonable marine policy, but the Minister cannot get it through the Cabinet.

*An honourable member interjecting:*

**Mr HILL:** She may not be as successful as the former Minister. The reason why it cannot get through the Cabinet is that the members of the Cabinet do not want to do anything. It wants to have a marine policy which includes lots of nice pictures (a bit like its parks agenda) and nice words but, when it comes down to it, it does not want to do anything because it is afraid of taking on some of the vested interests. One of the vested interests that it is particularly concerned about is the fishing industry, because one of the things that any decent marine policy would include is the introduction of marine protected areas. When the Labor Party introduced its marine policy earlier this year it advocated an increase in MPAs. I know that the fishing industry has concerns about it, because I have talked to representatives. I believe that their concerns can be talked through, but I believe that the Minister is finding it difficult to get through to her Cabinet colleagues because they do not want a marine policy which has any teeth. If it has no teeth, you may as well not have a marine policy. I believe that is what will happen: we will not have a marine policy in the Year of the Ocean or, if we do, it will be a very much watered down policy.

I referred the Minister to a question on notice in relation to deposit legislation, and whether or not she was planning to extend that deposit legislation to containers other than the current soft drink containers—for example, would it apply to soft drinks, fruit juices, milk drinks, cider and a number of other things which are currently excluded from it. She seemed to be saying that, unless a particular target of a 25 per cent reduction in the waste from those areas was achieved in a year or so, she would be introducing deposit legislation. That is a very brave statement by this Minister. I would like to know whether she will get that through her Cabinet, because when it has been attempted in the past it has hit some difficulties. So, that is something I will keep an eye on in relation to this Minister. If she has not achieved her target in a year, will she introduce deposit legislation?

**Mr Koutsantonis:** Will she be the Minister in a year?

**Mr HILL:** That's right. The other fascinating thing is the koala fund and the sterilisation of koalas on Kangaroo Island, a policy that we certainly supported. But, as part of the deal, the Government established a process to get the public interested in this birth control system and it attempted to raise

the money. In fact, the Government put in \$125 000 to employ somebody to raise money, and after a year they have managed to get \$60 000 in donations. Even the Minister admitted that this was not a great success.

**Mr Clarke:** Did she blame the former Minister?

**Mr HILL:** No, she didn't; she was very honourable in that. Finally, I bring to the attention of the House that over the course of this year the Federal Government plans to introduce a range of omnibus Bills relating to the environment, biodiversity, ocean management, and so on. We expect that as part of this process a lot of the Commonwealth's current responsibilities will be passed to the State. So, that will mean that the State will be responsible for funding a lot of these current funding initiatives.

**Mr Koutsantonis (Peake):** It is always good to listen to the member for Kaurua, because when he is speaking about the environment he knows what he is talking about and he knows his brief—unlike the Minister. Generally, you get a lot better answers from the member for Kaurua than you do from the Minister. I, too, want to refer to the Estimates process. Being a new member of the House, I was not quite sure of the Estimates process. I thought that the Estimates would provide the Opposition with a legitimate opportunity to ask the Government real questions about its budget. However, during my time on the Estimates Committee—and I see the member for Coles is laughing and giggling about it—I found that the Minister for Transport simply wanted to filibuster. The Minister began by reading out long, boring statements that someone else had written for her. I found it very counterproductive, because when it comes to the budget the people of South Australia deserve the facts; they deserve to know what is going on.

When we did get a chance to ask a few questions, which was surprising when one considers that the Member for Stuart was Chair of the Committee, we were constantly given short answers, or the Minister did not know the answer. When I asked the Minister to take some action in respect of the Bakewell Bridge, it took a while, but she did do something. I am the first to congratulate her on that. I have said so in the local Messenger, and the member for Colton would have seen that. I was the first to congratulate the Minister for Transport, even though two people died before she took the appropriate action. I am not one to make the Bakewell Bridge and fatalities a political issue, because that sort of behaviour is disgraceful. I am glad that we are finally getting a new bridge.

I asked the Minister a series of what I thought were straightforward and simple questions, but the Minister did not know the answers. For example, in relation to the breakdown of asset sales, I asked the Minister, 'What are included in these asset sales?' The Minister replied by saying, 'I can't tell you.' When I asked, 'Are you planning to do this, Minister?' she replied, 'I can't tell you.' When I asked the Minister about her meeting with SATA, Adelaide Independent Taxis and other taxi companies and about the increase in compulsory third party premiums, I found that she did not bother to turn up to these meetings. When questioned in the Estimates about it, I think she told me an untruth. I could not believe it. To my face, a politician told me an untruth! I was shocked!

I can see why the people of Queensland are turning to Parties such as One Nation, because they are sick and tired of politicians not giving us the facts, talking in political speak and not giving straight answers. I asked the Minister, who claims to be on top of her brief, whether or not the Treasurer,

who is not the Minister responsible for Transport, had told the taxi industry that it should just pass on the higher third party premium to the consumer in the form of a taxi fare increase. The Minister told me that was untrue, that the Treasurer did not say that. Surprise, surprise, 10 minutes later when the Treasurer was being questioned in Estimates Committee A his answer was, 'That's right; I did tell them to pass on the increase.'

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

#### ROAD TRAFFIC (MISCELLANEOUS) AMENDMENT BILL

Received from the Legislative Council and read a first time.

#### IRRIGATION (DISSOLUTION OF TRUSTS) AMENDMENT BILL

Returned from the Legislative Council without amendment.

#### APPROPRIATION BILL

Debate resumed.

**Mr KOUTSANTONIS (Peake):** As I said before the break, it was my first Estimates Committee as a member, and I was quite disappointed by the filibustering of the Government. Apart from those of the member for Waite, most of the questions during the Estimates Committee I was on were inane and basically dorothy dixers, asking the Minister rhetorical questions, which she would then answer from a prepared statement. It was often counter-productive and a waste of the Estimates Committee's time. I would have thought that no Government is afraid of accountability, and of being transparent. From the member for Kaurna's remarks earlier, he found Estimates to be quite opaque, and I agree with him.

The Government should have nothing to fear from Estimates. We should have an open and honest system whereby members can ask real questions about the budget. Not every question we ask is about scoring political points or about trying to undermine or embarrass the Government; some of these concerns are genuine. In fact, I would say that our questions all show genuine concerns.

*An honourable member interjecting:*

**Mr KOUTSANTONIS:** I am.

*An honourable member interjecting:*

**Mr KOUTSANTONIS:** Absolutely. In 3½ years, when Mike Rann is Premier and Annette Hurley is Deputy Premier, I will make sure that if I am on an Estimates Committee I will not ask inane dorothy dixers of our Ministers. I will make sure that I ask probing questions, just like the Opposition, delving deep into Ministers' portfolios, making sure that they are kept accountable to this Parliament. After all, that is our job: to make sure that the Crown and Ministers are accountable to this House.

**An honourable member:** Your job is to order the scones.

**Mr KOUTSANTONIS:** Very clever. I have been here six months and I am a backbencher: the honourable member opposite has been here about 27 years and is still a backbencher.

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Peake has the call.

**Mr KOUTSANTONIS:** Thank you for your protection, Mr Speaker. I thought that I could ask some genuine questions during the Estimates and get some genuine responses from the Minister. I found it frustrating to think that, even in Estimates, it became a political game—in fact, it was just like Question Time. There were some legitimate questions: I asked the Minister for Police whether or not the Henley Beach Police Station, located in the member for Colton's electorate and which covers most of my electorate of Peake, was to be closed. The Minister said, 'No, it will not be closed or relocated.' However, when I asked whether the Henley Beach Police Station was listed under proposed asset sales in the budget, the Minister did not know, saying that it might be; I found that we were not getting fair answers. The Minister could have said, 'Mr Koutsantonis, there are real problems with law enforcement in Henley Beach.'

We have to look at a new and different way of enforcing law in those suburbs; we need a new way of patrolling our streets; and we will be open and honest with you, because this is what we are going to do.' Instead, we are having a series of cover-ups. We have the Government dodging and weaving issues. Certainly, we have the Government hiding the asset sales in the Estimates Committees because, with accrual accounting, not every asset is listed individually and members need a breakdown from the Minister. I found, as obviously members on this side have who care about their electorates and about how money is spent in their electorates also found, that it is difficult, unless we have specific questions about a specific location or clause in the budget, to get information. Indeed, some budget papers did not have page numbers, so we could not refer to specific pages.

I do not believe that was a deliberate attempt by the Government to frustrate the Opposition: it was just poor government and poor accountability, and the people of South Australia deserve better than that. They deserve a Parliament where, whichever political Party is in Opposition, members have a right to question the budget fairly and accurately, and members opposite would not disagree with that assessment.

As to my questioning of the Minister for Transport and Urban Planning (Hon. Diana Laidlaw) about the increases in compulsory third party premiums (CTP) imposed on taxi owners, before the Estimates Committee and the presentation of the budget, she refused to meet or consult with the taxi industry and had claimed that she had never met with the industry about CTP increases or indeed discussed any increases. However, in my talks with the South Australian Taxi Association (SATA) it indicated that the Minister had been claiming for some time that there would be an increase of 50 per cent or 60 per cent in CTP. The taxi industry said, 'We are prepared to accept this, as long as it is introduced fairly, that is, over two or three years, perhaps 25 per cent or 30 per cent at a time.'

The Minister claimed never to have discussed this with SATA, but the fact is that she did so, and I have minutes to prove it. Secondly, the Minister denied claims that the Treasurer had told the taxi industry simply to pass on CTP increases to consumers. I understood his argument to be that, because we are increasing bus tickets by 7 per cent, if taxi fares are increased at the same rate, there will be no loss in patronage. If South Australia was a booming economy under great leadership, with spending, retail sales and capital investment up, we could justify an increase in public transport fares because of the greater use and demand.

However, the fact is that in South Australia there is not greater use of or demand for our public transport, and those users are being slugged the highest. The poor old taxi industry, having had an increase forced on it earlier and having to raise the flagfall to about \$4, has already found a slump in its trade, especially during the day, because many people, especially pensioners who travel by taxi to shopping centres to do their shopping, are not doing that to buy their groceries. Pensioners cannot afford their taxi fare. Previously, the fare would cost \$3 or \$4 but it is now \$7 or \$8, nearly a 100 per cent increase.

Many people cannot afford that on top of the price of their groceries, but this Government shows so much compassion, saying, 'We are not interested in the increase in CTP on fares. All we want you to do is pass the cost on to the consumer.' If such costs are passed on to consumers, it goes through to pensioners who are being hit twice—

**Mrs Geraghty:** Plus all the other increases.

**Mr KOUTSANTONIS:** —as the member for Torrens points out, as well as all the other increases. That is just one example of how harsh this budget has been. We can look at the thinly-veiled excuses that the Government has for increasing taxes and charges in the budget. The Labor Party will support the Government's taxing measures because they are tied in with the budget, and on this side we have a principle of supporting the Government's taxing rights in the budget.

After all, the Government was elected on 11 October, and it has a right to charge taxes as it sees fit in relation to its budget, and we will not be opposing that. However, I do question the merit of some of the taxes that the Government has introduced. I am pleased that the member for Unley has decided to walk into the Chamber after dinner, and I hope he is in a better state than the former President of the New South Wales Legislative Council. The member for Mawson, who could not give a stick about the western suburbs, has just walked back into the Chamber.

*Mr Brokenshire interjecting:*

**Mr KOUTSANTONIS:** He says, 'That's right!' I will be letting all my constituents know, especially those who visit the Hindmarsh Soccer Stadium and about whom the honourable member says he cares so much. He does not give a stick about the western suburbs, as he has said, but of course he will find some excuse.

**Mr Brokenshire:** I'm only interested in the south.

**Mr KOUTSANTONIS:** He is interested only in the south, and the Minister for Local Government has said that he has visited the western suburbs only once. In relation to the budget—

**Mr Brokenshire:** Where are the western suburbs?

**Mr KOUTSANTONIS:** Do you remember when you flew to Hawaii to investigate beaches? Do you remember that big thing called an aeroplane that took off—do you remember that place? It is there. Do you remember that place? I am sure you do.

*Mr Brokenshire interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Mawson will stop interjecting.

**Mr KOUTSANTONIS:** Further to the transport issue, I understand—

*The Hon. M.K. Brindal interjecting:*

**Mr KOUTSANTONIS:** Well, trust you to notice. I note that the junior Minister for Local Government has set up a committee, the Adelaide Airport Working Party, comprising the City of Adelaide, the City of West Torrens, the Depart-

ment of Transport, the Land Management Corporation and the Department of Industry and Trade. He claims in his talks with the Acting Mayor, Mr Reece Jennings, that he wants to deal with the airport in a new way, break ground and involve all the stakeholders. He wants to have—

*An honourable member interjecting:*

**Mr KOUTSANTONIS:** A former member of the Labor Party; did you know that? You know whom I am talking about.

*Members interjecting:*

**Mr KOUTSANTONIS:** Absolutely! Apparently Unley is swelling up as we speak; everybody is looking for preselection. I return to the Minister's Adelaide Airport Working Party, which I might say the members for Morphett, Colton, Hanson and I have not been invited to join. But the Minister sees fit to be on the board himself, and he states that—

**An honourable member:** Keep going.

**Mr KOUTSANTONIS:** I will keep going. I understand that you want to change the name of Victoria Square; what will you change it to? Reece Jennings states that the Minister for Local Government is canvassing the idea of renaming a certain road, and that a recent discussion in strict confidence was raised with an excellent reception. The Minister will personally take it up with the Premier. The Minister, incidentally, wants Victoria Square renamed because he thinks it merely advertises our neighbouring State. What will you call it? This is another leaked document! I wonder what the Minister will call Victoria Square—perhaps Brindal Place, Olsen Square, Brown's Revenge or the Peter Lewis Memorial Statue. I should be interested to know what he would rename Victoria Square.

**An honourable member:** Koutsantonis Corner.

**Mr KOUTSANTONIS:** I like that one; it has a nice ring to it.

*An honourable member interjecting:*

**Mr KOUTSANTONIS:** Keeps you looking good!

**The Hon. M.K. Brindal:** You sound remarkably jealous that we are actually doing something in the western suburbs.

**Mr KOUTSANTONIS:** The Minister says I am remarkably surprised that the Government is actually doing something in the western suburbs. It took me from December 1997 until now to convince the Minister for Transport and Urban Planning to put railings along the Bakewell Bridge—and I commend her for that. And, on the front page of the Messenger newspaper, I was the first person to congratulate the Government for doing that, because it was well overdue. I did not take a swipe at the Minister for waiting so long; I said only that it was unfortunate that two people had to die before something was done, but I was very pleased that something was done. I applaud the Minister, as I applaud the Minister for Local Government for taking an interest in Adelaide Airport. He is showing a little bit of leadership on this issue, which is not something that the Liberal Party rewards, other than its Leader because, obviously, people start counting numbers. Mr Speaker, that aspect of your political Party amazes me: as soon as a new Premier is elected, you start trying to knock him off. Of course, the member for—

**The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL:** I rise on a point of order, Sir. The honourable member referred to 'your' political Party, Sir. I do not believe that the Speaker in this House has any political Party: the Speaker is an impartial office and he should not be referred to as being a member of a political Party.

**The SPEAKER:** The Chair does not uphold the point of order. However, there is a tradition dating back to 1377 in this area, and I ask all members to observe it.

**An honourable member:** You're a bit young to remember.

**Mr KOUTSANTONIS:** That is right: I am a bit young to remember what happened in 1377. Sir, you have been a very independent Chair and a stranger in the gallery would not have noticed your political affiliations. You have been very wise in your rulings, unlike some others. King Solomon could not have shown more wisdom. Unlike members opposite, Opposition members remain loyal to their Leaders. I hear the member for Unley laughing.

**The Hon. M.K. Brindal:** Tell John Bannon that. Tell Don Dunstan that.

**Mr KOUTSANTONIS:** Tell Dean Brown that. I come back to the budget.

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There are too many interjections on my right.

**Mr KOUTSANTONIS:** I come back to the budget. I found the Estimates program to be very frustrating. I found that the Government was not prepared to give honest answers to honest questions, although the Minister for Police, the member for Davenport (Hon. Iain Evans), was quite forthright in his answers. He obviously knew his brief. I did not attend the session with the Minister for Local Government but I am sure that he was on top of his brief.

*Mr Snelling interjecting:*

**Mr KOUTSANTONIS:** Was he good?

**Mr Snelling:** No, hopeless.

**Mr KOUTSANTONIS:** I was not there; I cannot pass judgment. I attended a session with the Minister for Transport and I must say that she was absolutely disgraceful. For a person who has been in the Legislative Council for such a long period and to not be on top of her brief I found disgraceful. For the Minister to take questions on notice so often and to make such longwinded, Dorothy Dix answers to questions to avoid any probing questions I found not only undemocratic but very frustrating. I hope that when the Labor Party is in Government in 3½ years and the new member for Mawson, whomever that might be—

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

**Mr LEWIS (Hammond):** My remarks tonight will focus attention not only upon the Parliament itself and the process by which the budget estimates of the Government are examined through the Estimates Committees but also the manner in which the Parliament derives money for its own use; the authority it has but does not exercise in this respect; and the agencies within the Parliament that are here to serve the needs of members who are here to represent the constituents within their electorates—whether or not they voted for them, that is their duty.

I then wish to make some remarks about the two Houses and the way in which they are currently structured and financed, since there is no other opportunity in the course of any parliamentary year to debate such matters as the structure and function of the Parliament and the two Houses of which it is comprised than in the budget estimates reply and, in the process of doing that, to look also at how standing committees might better function.

I then want to make some remarks about reform of the Federation as we see it almost 100 years on. It is interesting

that the organisation set up by State and Federal Labor Governments, when there was a majority of Labor Governments in this country, called the Constitutional Centenary Foundation, of which I was a foundation member, does not even mention the word 'Federation'. To my mind that is sad, because there is an underlying fear in the minds of those who proposed its establishment that the mention of the word 'Federation' might give people cause to try to understand why Australia, as a society, chose to form a Federal system of Government.

Over the past 20 years or so there has been an increasing amount of chatter about the system of Government that we have in this country and the nonsense that we are over governed, meaning that we have too many elected representatives. What people are really saying when they as individual citizens say we are over governed is that we have too many regulations governing what we can and cannot do, and where we may go to get information or redress for our grievances. They are not talking about whether there are too many levels of government and too many elected representatives, and we do not do too badly in that respect when we compare ourselves with other successful societies in modern times.

Turning to the Estimates Committees, they are clearly not working for two reasons. That rapidly became obvious in the early 1980s when in 1981 the first budget was introduced and there were Estimates Committees to examine that budget rather than the line by line approach to the Bill which prevailed when I first arrived here and which was the traditional approach, because the Bill is a proposal to make a law which appropriates funds, by authorising both taxation and the expenditure of the money raised through that taxation on various programs. You cannot examine it line by line and get any sense out of it.

I agreed with the Tonkin proposition, and I said this in the remarks I made prior to the budget being referred to the Estimates Committees. It is necessary to have the Committee procedure that we have. What the member for Peake spoke about as being a filibuster, as he has observed it in the course of this budget consideration in the Estimates Committees, is nothing compared with the procedure that used to be followed. It cannot be compared with the kind of nonsense that went on during the 1970s. Ministers of the Government rapidly learned that the way to avoid controversy and inane political comment from journalists who did not know much about the institution of Parliament or, for that matter, the consequences for the society it governed through this process and who looked for opportunities to write about where a member scored a point off a Minister, or where a Minister tricked a member in preventing the member from scoring a point—

*Mr Hanna interjecting:*

**Mr LEWIS:** It was, and it has become more so in that respect. We as members of this House abuse the institution of Parliament and the trust which people put in us by allowing ourselves to be seduced into thinking that that is our role: it is not. Our better role—indeed, with the Minister's cooperation in these matters—as a House of this institution, this Parliament, would be to refer members' questions where they are more appropriately answered by members of the bureaucracy to those members of the bureaucracy who prepared the budget proposition. Wherever it is not a matter of policy but a matter of administrative procedure, it ought not to be tackled by the Minister and the Minister ought not to feel threatened by what a journalist might say in referring it—quite properly—to the senior members of the bureaucracy



sitting with the Minister, allowing that bureaucrat to answer and be accountable for the administrative process involved.

I could regale the House with a few instances—indeed, I could take up quite a lot of time doing that—but the best one I can think of was when the member for Bright, the present Minister for Administrative Services, whilst a backbencher not long elected to this place, caught out a bureaucrat who was not a sworn member of the Police Force answering questions put to the Minister and from the Minister to the bureaucrat as to what was going on within the Police Department in terms of administrative procedures. He caught him out by pointing to the instance where in two consecutive years the same question was asked and precisely the same answer was given by the police bureaucrat to that question. To my mind, that really meant that the bureaucracy thought that we were idiots. They might well get away with that.

**Mr Brokenshire:** They might be right!

**Mr LEWIS:** The honourable member for Mawson says ‘They might be right.’

**Mr Brokenshire:** In some cases.

**Mr LEWIS:** In some cases, indeed, I have to agree with him. We have been idiots in that we have allowed the bureaucracy to pull the wool over our eyes and senior bureaucrats have often left the Minister to ramble or filibuster or promise to give a report or something on a matter which does not require a report because they, as senior bureaucrats, have not understood what is going on in their own departments. So, there is not sufficient measure of accountability within the bureaucracy as to what is happening within the divisions and the branches of those divisions within the departments.

What we have done this year by reducing the number of Cabinet Ministers to 10, from 13, and thereby only having ten Estimates Committees consideration—five A and five B—is reduce the amount of time available and increase the level of knowledge that is required of the bureaucrats as to the administrative processes and the policies which drive them, and make it more difficult for us as a Parliament to get the information from that bureaucracy and the Minister.

There are two parts to the examination. If I did not make it clear earlier, let me make it clear now. The first is to make sure the Minister understands the policies they are pursuing and what they cost, and that they are accountable for those policies. Policies are what we use to guide us where good science cannot. The second part is to make sure that the manner in which the department is administered is properly accounted, and is understood by the people who are put there to supervise it, and to make sure that policy decisions are properly executed within that administrative framework. It is the duty of the department to give its Minister advice on a policy, but ultimately it is the Minister’s responsibility to determine whether or not to accept that advice and, on accepting the advice, they accept the responsibility for it, and that is about policy; it is not about administration. Much of the money that we appropriate is for administrative purposes.

Having said that, I believe that it is inappropriate for a Minister of the Crown to be held responsible for the expenditure of the Parliament. Parliament is sovereign and it should not have its appropriations allocated to it at the discretion of a Minister. For years in South Australia the Minister in this regard has been the Premier. What we find then is that a Government Minister has control of the budget of the Parliament, which is wrong. The control of the budget of the Parliament ought to be in the hands of the Parliament itself, and a measure to that extent ought to be placed before the

Parliament as a recommendation of the Speaker in this place, in the first instance, as to what is considered to be appropriate, and those appropriations ought to be determined by a Standing Committee of the Parliament.

We have one right now called the Joint Parliamentary Services Committee. It ought not only to look after the *Hansard*, the Library and the other services provided within this building, to make this building function and the two Houses of Parliament in it function successfully and effectively, and provide the members with support, but also be extended, with the electorate offices also coming under the control of that committee.

The people who currently work in the Public Service could simply be transferred over into the Parliament itself where, once the funds are appropriated to the budget of the Joint Parliamentary Service Committee, by a resolution of this House on your recommendation from that committee, Mr Speaker, and passed by the other House, it should then, and only then, be constitutionally possible for the Government to introduce the budget itself for its appropriations for all other matters. It would not cost the State any more whatsoever, and it would ensure there was no political interference from the Government of the day in the role, function and operations of the Parliament, because the Government of the day would still have its numbers on the floor of the House to determine whether or not the committee’s recommendations were to be adopted. But it would not have the administrative prerogative to determine whether or not to victimise one or more members or a group of members, wittingly or unwittingly, in the way in which the money they get is provided.

I believe now that the Library in this place is a ruddy disgrace, and it is not because of anything that the Librarian or the staff have done. In fact, they do as much as is possible within the limited resources at their disposal. If we as members of Parliament are to be effective in the way in which we obtain and then can provide information to the elements within our respective constituencies who need that information or who want us to be better informed about aspects of it, whatever the matter may be, then the Library needs to be a place which does what other parliamentary libraries do. That is, they should not only clip the printed media of the articles relevant to our interests—and we have a press clipping service—but they need to clip the electronic media in the same way, and I wonder whether members understand that.

Indeed, at present I guess the Government for its own purposes, and maybe the Leader of the Opposition within the global allowance provided to the Leader’s office, have within their respective control hundreds of thousands of dollars, if not more than a million dollars, of salaries and overhead costs, as well as equipment monitoring and extracting information from the electronic media, whether that is radio broadcasts or television broadcasts or radio narrow-casts; it doesn’t matter, that is happening. It ought to be available equally, jointly and severally, to all members of Parliament without fear or favour, and without censorship, and it ought to be driven by the committee of the Parliament called the Joint Parliamentary Service Committee, to ensure that all members have equal access to it from the Library.

All electorate offices, and the allowances that members are given should go through that committee rather than through any department, and the committee itself would then be making decisions about it. I happen to believe that all members ought to be responsible for reporting how they

spend their electorate allowances, which should include sufficient funds to meet the rental costs and all other associated overheads in running their electorate offices. They should have to submit, at the end of 12 months in each case, within eight weeks of the conclusion of the financial year a financial statement on the way in which they used the funds that were allocated to them, done within the framework of the law. If they cannot do that, if any individual member cannot do that and arrange for it to be done within the framework of the administration of their electorate offices, they ought not to be here. If they cannot do it for their own office they certainly cannot do it for the people they seek to govern or on whose behalf they might otherwise be a part of Her Majesty's loyal Opposition, putting an alternative view of how government might be conducted for the benefit of our society. Altogether, that plus the budgets of Standing Committees of the Parliament ought to be run, not by the Houses of the Parliament, but by the Joint Parliamentary Service Committee. This would ensure that there is no jealousy or difficulty between either of the Houses themselves. If that is done, then the budget committees can get on with the job of examining what the Government is doing.

At present Estimates Committees are not working in the form in which they have been established. Discussion about the possibility of including members of the Upper House is silly because that means that you actually are doing what I feared might be in the minds of some members, wittingly and consciously, or otherwise; namely, we will blur the differences between the roles and functions of the two Houses to such an extent that the two Houses are not seen to be relevant or necessary.

What that clearly means is that what was intended to be the benefit of the two Houses is lost to the society that we govern through this bicameral system. That would be very sad indeed. I do not think that ought to happen. But if it is to happen we ought to have a full-on debate about it and we ought to clearly discover in history, as well as then determine in our own minds, why we believe in a bicameral Parliament and what roles we see for each of the separate Houses and the members of them, and, if we do not believe in a bicameral Parliament, what benefits we believe we would get from a unicameral Parliament. We should also consider what the disadvantages of each model would be. So we do a swot analysis of each of the models of the Parliament—bicameral or unicameral, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats—in the interests of society, and not done on partisan lines. Parliament does not exist for the benefit of political parties. It exists to provide good government of society.

That brings me to the final matters to which I wish to draw the House's attention; namely, the source of the revenue that we have to run Government in the State of South Australia and the institution of Parliament that makes the laws for that Government. That revenue does not come so much from State taxes but, more particularly, from charges, and more particularly still, from funds obtained and granted to the State by the Commonwealth. Increasingly that revenue is tied to specific programs. That means that the State administrations do not have the prerogative right to determine how to best expend that money in the interests of the people in the State for which they have a responsibility. It is my judgment that not only do we need to reform that matter—that is, the relationship between the States and the Federal Government—but in the process of so doing we need to reform the taxation measures and the manner in which the revenue derived from that system of taxing is to be distributed within the community.

Clearly, we do need a goods and services tax and a percentage of it that can be set at a discretionary level by the individual States would then determine—whether or not they attracted capital to the State to create jobs or whether they attracted labour—how they decided to structure their law and, what is more, structure the expenditure of the revenue they derived; and so we would then have a good model for competitive Federalism. On that note then, it would enable each State to compete with the others. It would enable us to create a society in which the State that got it right would attract the interest and attention of investors and people who wanted to work to get the benefits from it.

Let me now draw attention to what I consider to be an outrageously incompetent arrangement that has come into existence as a result of the Federal system of Government, failing to operate through the bureaucracies; that is, the Australian Southern Railroad. Our State's railway enterprise was transferred to the Federal Government and now it has come back in the form of a privatised railway service, the Australian Southern Railroad, which will charge people in the Mallee to have the crossings within their farms to get their farm implements across the railway line, from one side to the other, a licence fee on an annual basis, for goodness sake, in order to maintain that crossing. That is revenue raising, but I think it is blood money and, in my judgment, it is wicked. It was stupid of the bureaucrats—and I cannot understand why the Ministers ever allowed it to be overlooked when the contract was first written and signed.

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

**Mr WRIGHT (Lee):** It is always a pleasure to follow the member for Hammond and also the member for Peake who have both made very erudite contributions and, in particular, I will come back to the contribution of the member for Hammond.

*Mr Brokenshire interjecting:*

**Mr WRIGHT:** I notice already that the member for Mawson cannot help himself: he has to pipe up. I know he also is a very strong supporter of the member for Hammond—and one can hardly wonder why. I was starting to wonder whether we were going to have any contributions at all from the Government side. I was particularly pleased to hear from the member for Hammond, and he made a number of very pertinent points to which I shall return. Once again it highlights that this budget is a very grubby budget. This budget stands condemned and it is little wonder and no surprise to any of us on this side of the House that Government members, including Government Ministers, do not want to speak in defence of it. For the past few weeks there has been story after story and exposure and more exposure of some of the grubbiness with regard to this budget. It has now been well and truly exposed that this \$150 million black hole about which the Premier and Treasurer spoke at the time of the release of the budget has been blown out of the water completely.

No longer does the Premier talk about the \$150 million black hole. Today, we hear him talk about the extra PAYE taxation that individuals will have to pay if, in fact, the ETSA legislation is not passed through the Parliament. We have gone from the \$150 million black hole to another argument altogether but, of course, that will be brought up in other debates.

I think members on both sides of the House genuinely are receptive to and in favour of the new system of accrual

accounting. I think this is a positive direction that the budget is now following, and it can only auger well for the future and for the State. But, in respect of the process of the Estimates Committees, even though we are in the embryonic stages of the new system, I think that all members have been very disappointed. The process has been most disappointing: I was going to say 'disgraceful', but perhaps that is going a little too far.

Members only have to look at some of the allocations that have occurred. The member for Peake, quite correctly, spoke earlier today about the dorothy dixers that have been asked on the Government side. Quite clearly, time has been wasted. The member for Hammond has highlighted the abuse of privilege that can occur and has occurred through the Estimates Committees process. If we are going to use the Estimates Committees in a meaningful and productive way for the benefit of the State, and if we are serious about accountability and good government, surely, we must be honest with each other, and the Government must be honest about its sanctioning of stupid, straightforward and simple dorothy dixer types of questions which have been a waste of time and which have chewed up the time of the Estimates Committees.

Further, I think the time allocation should be exposed. Irrespective of whether they represent people in the western suburbs, southern suburbs or country areas, all members would be concerned about some of the big ticket items such as employment, health, the Housing Trust and education—and, of course, there are others, but I refer to those issues quite deliberately. The time allocated in the Estimates Committees to some of those areas compared with the allocation in years gone by is simply a disgrace.

In areas such as employment, health, the Housing Trust and education, the time was wound back quite deliberately so that we were not given the opportunity to go through those budget areas and budget lines to ask meaningful questions about where we are heading and what it is all about. The employment area is now handled by a junior Minister. One of the most critical issues confronting South Australia and Australia is that of getting our people back into the work force, that is, generating employment. If it is not bad enough that we give it to a junior Minister, we now allocate 1½ hours to it when in the past something like 4½ hours was allocated.

In years gone by, a full day was allocated to health but this year it was allocated only a few hours. One of the big issues that confronts many of the electorates throughout South Australia is the Housing Trust, and this year one hour was allocated to that organisation, whereas in the past something like two-thirds of a day has been allocated to it. If we are serious about being accountable to taxpayers, to the people who put us in this position, we have to look at these things seriously and be honest with each other, because at the moment we are not being serious about it.

I also raise a couple of other issues in relation to time allocation. I could not believe it when I sat on one of the Estimates Committees with the shadow Treasurer and noted that recreation and sport had been allocated an hour. Sydney will host the next Olympiad and, very correctly, the Deputy Premier and the member for Hammond went to Korea to try to get some of their athletes to come to South Australia for training. Yet only an hour was allocated to that portfolio in the Estimates.

Racing has been described as the third biggest industry in South Australia, yet only half an hour was allocated to the Racing Industry Development Authority. I cannot see how

those things stack up. How can that be justified if we are being honest with each other and if we are being accountable to the public? If we are to go through the process of the Estimates Committees properly and correctly, looking at the budget and trying to extract important and significant information from it, there must be a more meaningful allocation of time and a better process. I was very disappointed with the process.

In the various Estimates Committees of which I was a member—and I guess this is the same for all other members—I thought that some of the Ministers were very good. Some were prepared to show some flexibility and open up the budget lines and they did not constrain themselves to what was programmed. Good on them for doing so, and I am prepared to admit that. In other portfolio areas, quite the opposite was the case. One example that really irked me was the half hour that was allocated to WorkCover. Can we be serious about the safety of the work force if we allocate half an hour to looking at that issue in the Estimates Committees? I think not. A significant and meaningful time was not allocated to that matter.

I turn now to some of the detail in the budget which most disappointed me and, if they are serious about it, it also disappointed a very broad cross-section of members on both sides of this Parliament. They might not be able to say so publicly, and I can understand and appreciate that, but if we are serious and honest to ourselves when analysing the budget, we must admit that one of the great concerns of the budget is the areas that it cuts into and the areas that it taxes.

If we are honest with each other, what can quickly and very noticeably be analysed and depicted from the budget is that those people who can least afford to pay are the people who will be most affected by it. There is no doubt about that and that should not be the case. Governments will have to be much more creative in the future as they go about trying to organise as best they can the tax take and the expenditure to which they commit themselves.

I am extremely disappointed that this budget does not create jobs. At some stage, each and every one of us talks about the high rate of unemployment, about our concerns with unemployment, and about that being our goal. Unemployment is what we have to address, and quite rightly so. One does not have to be Einstein to know that that is our No. 1 problem in South Australia and probably Australia-wide. We have to find ways of cutting into unemployment. We have to find ways of generating employment. We have to find ways of getting kids back into the work force. We have to find ways of training kids for real so that they can get real, meaningful, long-term jobs.

This budget cannot do that and members opposite know it as well as I do, because we do not have the growth in this budget to cut into the unemployment figures. No-one can deny that. We simply do not have the growth rates that will cut into the unemployment figures, and that is a sad indictment of the budget. We do not have to seek out economic gurus and we might scorn the predictions that are made by economists—I know that I do—but generally members on both sides of the House would agree that we need growth of about 4 per cent to cut into or decrease the unemployment figures.

We do not have that room for growth in this budget. It will not cut the unemployment figures. That is a sad indictment of this budget. Another thing that is sad about this budget is that it cuts into the big ticket areas of education and health to which I referred earlier. What an indictment it is on South

Australia that in times of need and high unemployment we are confronted with a budget that cuts into education. What a tragedy it is that we will cut back on teachers and ancillary staff and put a freeze on Government supply grants. This can in no way be of any benefit to the education system in South Australia. The people who will hurt the most as a result of these cuts are the kids—the future of this State.

We must tackle the problems in the public education system. They are widespread and deep rooted, and they have existed for a long time. Members on both sides of the House must get serious about addressing these problems. Like a number of members, I was somewhat astounded to hear of the ambit claim put forward to cut a week off the school year to reduce costs in the education sector. If ever a more preposterous point of view has been put forward in the area of education, I have not seen it. Whoever put forward that idea must be absolutely bonkers.

I heard someone in the House today—I was not here at the time—try to justify it in respect of the training needs of teachers. Like anyone in the work force, teachers need to be trained and to attend retraining courses—I do not think that anyone opposes that—but the way to do it is not by cutting into the school year or cutting back on the amount of time that kids have at school. This is a crazy idea that gives no credibility to either side of the House. Whoever put forward that idea is talking in fairyland. If the Government is silly enough to consider this idea, it is fantasy politics and should be scorned.

*The Hon. M.K. Brindal interjecting:*

**Mr WRIGHT:** I don't mind admitting that I might have some idea in that regard. Another area of this budget that is of major concern to me is that of health. In this area of health, the budget and the Government stand totally condemned. I need go no further than the Queen Elizabeth Hospital to highlight the total hypocrisy of this Government. In the debate on the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, members opposite keep referring to what happened under the Labor Government. For how long will they play that tune? They must get on with governing the State, which is what they have been elected to do. They have been charged with the responsibility of governing the State and showing some accountability. What this Government has done with the Queen Elizabeth Hospital amounts to nothing more than hypocritical trickery and playing with people's emotions.

In 1996, under the former Minister for Health, this Government promised a grand \$130 million project to refurbish the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. That was well and good. The project was welcomed by people in the western suburbs and, obviously, it was very much in need. That was done, of course, before the last State election. It has now been cut back from a \$130 million promise to a \$43 million commitment. And that is not in the forward estimates of the budget: if one analyses the capital works in the forward estimates of the budget, the \$43 million has not even been accounted for. This is a total hypocritical act of thuggery that this Government has committed in respect of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

The massive tax imposts that have been handed down by the Government in this budget will most affect those people who are least able to afford to pay: those people who can afford to pay will possibly notice very little difference. One has only to look at the stamp duty on compulsory third party insurance, where there was an increase from \$15 to \$60. That is a massive increase for people who are taking out compulsory third party insurance. The stamp duty on general

insurance has increased from 8 per cent to 11 per cent—another significant increase. People using public transport have been hit by an increase of 7 per cent—once again, another significant increase that will most affect those people who can least afford it. Taxi drivers have been met with a massive \$1 000 hike in their third party insurance—about which the member for Peake earlier spoke.

I was particularly disappointed with the Estimates process. I believe that it does not augur well for members on either side of the House, but the Government is running the show at the moment so it has to take responsibility. Members of the Opposition are extremely disappointed with the Estimates process. It has not been handled professionally; it has not been set up in any way, shape or form to allow the correct exposure of the critical areas that I have addressed. The budget is a massive tax impost on people living in the western suburbs (one of the electorates which I am charged with the responsibility of representing), and it also cuts into those significant areas of jobs growth, education and health, which are critical in particular to people living in that area. So, I am extremely disappointed, and I believe that the budget stands condemned for that reason. South Australia currently has record unemployment levels—something that no-one is proud of. I believe that we have the second highest unemployment rate in mainland Australia, and this is something about which we all must get serious if we are to cut into those high rates of unemployment.

**Ms BREUER (Giles):** I will not talk for very long tonight, because a lot has been said already. However, I particularly want to reinforce what many of my colleagues have said. The Estimates Committees process was a very interesting experience for me, being a new member of this Parliament. It was also a very cynical experience, because it was not quite what I had expected—I did not have the opportunity to ask the questions that I particularly wanted to ask, and I know that this was the experience of many of my colleagues. The only good thing that came out of it was that there were trays on the desks in the other place and one was able to sit at one's seat and work from there instead of trying to reach across, as is the case in this place.

I was very angry about the Estimates Committee which dealt with Aboriginal affairs. I agree with the comments of the member for Lee in relation to the time allocations for many of the portfolios and the time in which to answer questions. I was also a member of the education committee, and I felt rather differently in relation to that committee. The Minister for Education was very concise and factual in his answers, and he had a number of experts there. I thank him for that, because we were able to ask a lot of questions—although we probably could have gone on for three days, as we had a number of questions that we wanted to ask about this Government's policy on education.

In terms of Aboriginal Affairs, a limited time of only 1¼ hours was allocated to this area initially. I know that this was a result of the Government's desire to shorten the amount of time spent on the environment line. Initially, the Government allocated more time for Aboriginal Affairs, but the Opposition opposed this because of the large number of issues involved in the area of the environment. As a result, in what I believe is one of the most important years in Aboriginal history in Australia with the emergence of the One Nation Party and the very real possibility of a Federal race-based double dissolution election because of the Wik legislation, we

were allocated 1¼ hours to deal with what are very major issues.

My real concern was not with the amount of time allocated to this line—I could live with that—but the amount of time that the Minister took to answer questions. In the first 30 minutes of that 1¼ hours, the Minister answered only two questions. The answers were longwinded, padded out and filled with minute detail and statistics which could have been recorded elsewhere. I found the whole experience to be quite ridiculous. The Minister's answers were quite well prepared. Obviously, she had thought out beforehand what we may ask. The Minister read out her answers slowly and laboriously, and I became more and more frustrated as the session went on.

In fact, even the Chairman of the Committee requested that answers be kept short, which I think was a bit of an indictment on the fact that the answers were taking so long. This followed with Dorothy Dixers from members of the Government. Again, this allowed the Minister to make what I believe were ministerial statements. I had some very important questions to ask regarding Aboriginal health, Aboriginal education and conditions in Aboriginal communities. I was not able to ask most of these questions.

Recently, I spent two weeks in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara lands. I learnt a lot while I was there. I had a lot of questions about the conditions there which related back to budget allocations, but I was not able to ask those questions. I believe that if we in this Parliament are serious about raising important issues, if members are to have the opportunity to ask these questions and to raise these issues, and if we are to make sure that the budget is fair and equitable, we seriously need to look at the process that takes place with these Estimates Committees.

The other issue I want to raise in terms of the Estimates Committees relates to a question asked, again of the Minister for Environment and Heritage, about the dumping of uranium waste in South Australia. I am amazed that, from the answers given by the Minister, the State Government has no policy on uranium waste disposal. This very much affects my electorate in particular, the largest and farthestmost electorate in the State. Perhaps it is not the Minister's problem, but it is certainly my problem because the Billa Kalina area is in my electorate. The Labor Party fought long and hard for the clean up of the Maralinga lands, which are also in my electorate. It took many years, a lot of money, a lot of hard work, lobbying, etc. to get those lands cleaned up. Now, we have the very strong possibility that some waste will be dumped back into the Billa Kalina area.

There is no State Government policy on the dumping of this waste. People in Coober Pedy, Woomera and in the Aboriginal lands are very concerned about this. I have had many questions, complaints, letters and telephone calls in my electorate office about uranium waste being dumped in our backyard. The Anangu people in particular are concerned about this, yet the State Government and this Minister have no policy on this issue.

We are talking about very low level wastage: we all know what sort of waste material it is. But I and people in my electorate want to know what is next. How long before we will be asked to take something of slightly higher level, and then a bit more, and another truckload or two, and so on? If we accept this low level waste in our area, how much further will it go? We may have to accept more. It is a big electorate. The Billa Kalina area is hundreds of miles from many places, but it is there somewhere. I have spoken to Aboriginal people

in my travels through my electorate, of which I have done a great deal. I have spoken to people who were actually present in the Maralinga area or where the clouds went—people who actually remember that experience and who know what happened. They remember what it was like; they remember the clouds coming over; and they were frightened. And the results are still there today.

Those people are still suffering effects from this, and they are very concerned about the possibility of waste in their area. At the time the Government encouraged this, yet here and now we have absolutely no policy by this State Government on low level waste. It is a major concern to me, and it is time that this Government had a look at itself and started to think a little bit more about who is Leader of the Party.

**Ms STEVENS (Elizabeth):** I would also like to commence my remarks by spending a little time referring to the process of the Estimates Committees this year. I must say that this has been the most frustrating Estimates Committees session in which I have participated in terms of the human services budget. In order to approach our contribution to the Estimates Committees, we had to do a complete reversal of normal practice. There was absolutely no point in our using any of the information that was presented to us by the Government, because it was so opaque that we could draw no conclusions from it. We had to get our networks working in the community, asking people what the hot spots were, and essentially work from the bottom up: raise issues, ask for clarification and ask for detail.

The budget papers themselves gave us no information at all on which to base any assessment of what would be spent or what was going to be specifically achieved. I must say that, even in doing as I have just said, our raising issues and seeking information, I was extremely disappointed to see that the specifics for which we asked were not forthcoming. We still have many questions on notice, and I will be interested to receive those answers and hope that we gain some more information there.

The other point of concern was the contraction of time, which was noted by my colleague the member for Lee a few moments ago. I have calculated that, in years past, when we had separate departments for Health and Disabilities, FACS, the Ageing and the Housing Trust, about 14 hours were devoted to all those topics. This year, however, it was only 8½ hours. The time was virtually halved, and that made it very difficult.

Prior to the Estimates Committees, the Minister for Human Services told me that he would try to keep his answers short, and by and large he did. But I must say that the Minister for Disability Services in another place was absolutely atrocious in his answering of the questions. He was longwinded and did the sorts of things that the member for Giles has just outlined in relation to the Minister for the Environment. He was actually interrupted by the Chair and asked to keep his answers short; he thought that was a great joke, but I thought that it was a disgrace for a Minister who was supposed to be accountable, giving information, being concise and welcoming questions. He was just the opposite.

I must also note that, in terms of the amount of time given to the Human Services budget, we were curtailed and finished early at 9.56 p.m. That was not by our choice: I was actually cut off in my last question by the Chairman, who announced that the session had closed. If members would like to check with the *Hansard*, they will see that we did not get our full time until 10 o'clock; it finished at 9.56 p.m. So, I think we

have a long way to go in repairing the damage, certainly to democracy and enabling proper analysis and scrutiny of the Government. It is evident that this Government does not want this scrutiny and is not interested in providing information either to parliamentarians or to the community generally.

Having said that, I would like to pick out a few issues that were part of the Human Services budget lines and comment on them. I want to talk about the issue of Rose Cottage, which was raised early on with the Minister for Human Services. Rose Cottage is a facility in the western suburbs that comes under the Supported Residential Facilities Act. An arrangement was made between the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and Rose Cottage in September 1997 which provided for the early discharge of patients requiring convalescent care or awaiting placement in Commonwealth residential aged care facilities from the hospital to the supported residential facility, Rose Cottage. Under this agreement the Queen Elizabeth Hospital paid Rose Cottage \$85 per day per patient and patients were required to pay a further \$26.40 a day directly to Rose Cottage. Obviously, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital entered into this arrangement because it was cheaper to pay \$85 a day for some other agency's residential facility to accommodate these people rather than taking up a hospital bed at that hospital which, of course, costs much more to run, and, as we all know, our hospitals are absolutely chocker and have been for some time.

The Opposition voiced many concerns about this matter and asked the Minister a number of questions about the arrangement that he had entered into. The Minister knew very little about what had gone on and said, first, that it had happened when he was not the Minister. That was his first excuse. Later he said that it was an agreement that had been entered into by the board of Queen Elizabeth Hospital and essentially was not his concern. However, he is the Minister for Human Services and has supervisory responsibilities for that Act and does have that responsibility.

We asked a number of questions (and they are all in *Hansard* for people to look at) concerning the legality of the contract. We asked why the Queen Elizabeth Hospital had not carefully checked out that facility. We asked also why frail aged people, who had been assessed as needing to go to a nursing home, had been placed in that facility, which did not come up to standard in terms of the level of care required for them. We asked a series of questions, most of which the Minister could not answer. However, later during the day the Minister gave me an answer and stridently told me:

As I said, these arrangements were put in place in August/September. The arrangement is between the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and its management and the manager of Rose Cottage and Trojan. At the commencement of the contract the operator was checked for both public liability and insurance coverage. The facility was an accredited nursing home—I stress, 'was an accredited nursing home'—the facility was licensed by Port Adelaide and Enfield council and was inspected on a regular and very frequent basis.

I want to put the Minister right, because he was incorrect in his answer and I want to put this on the record. In November 1997, Rose Cottage had a supported residential facilities licence based on previous groupings of residents, but this licence did not take into account the facility's accepting NH5—that is, nursing home assessed—residents under the Queen Elizabeth Hospital contract. I stress that Rose Cottage was not an accredited nursing home under the Supported Residential Facilities Act or any other Act. The Minister was incorrect in the answer he provided. The

Supported Residential Facilities Unit's Executive Officer's report of December 1997 stated:

Rose Cottage is not equipped in terms of staff, facilities or level of care required by residents.

It is interesting to note that this unit is the Minister's own advisory committee; it is interesting to note how much notice he has taken of that committee's reports. On 13 March 1998, at the Supported Residential Facilities Ministerial Advisory Committee meeting, Port Adelaide Enfield council advised the committee that it had been agreed that Rose Cottage would be licensed as a nursing home under the Act to cover residents who required greater standards of care. This would have required a director of nursing to be on duty, 24 hours a day registered nursing coverage and upgrades to the building codes to meet nursing home standards.

In April 1998 it was reported to the committee that this was proceeding and that the Port Adelaide Enfield council was working with Rose Cottage to achieve this. The then manager, Mr Paul Lovegrove, apparently was not reporting these new requirements to the then proprietors who, on discovering these conditions, decided to sell the facility. I hope that the Minister reads my comments. The facility did not ever achieve the status of being licensed as a nursing home under the Supported Residential Facilities Act, as the then proprietor sold the business and, in effect, the contract with the Queen Elizabeth Hospital was cancelled. It is very concerning that the Minister knew nothing. Further, when he came back with his feathers ruffled to accuse me of suggesting that the contract was still in operation, it is concerning that he was given completely the wrong facts and gave the wrong information to the Estimates Committee in response to my questions. I look forward to the more detailed responses.

I have a copy of the letter which the Supported Residential Facilities Advisory Committee wrote to Minister Brown on 3 March 1998. He had no knowledge of that, either. He said he had received 2 500 pieces of correspondence and could not be expected to remember them all, but he had no recollection of having received this letter from his own ministerial advisory committee. In part, the letter of 3 March 1998 from the committee to the Minister states:

The committee's concerns with this... arrangement are as follows:

- There was no communication between the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and the relevant licensing authority under the Supported Residential Facilities Act... the City of Port Adelaide Enfield, to ascertain the facility's licence status, its compliance with the standards required under the Act or its ability to provide the necessary level of care and equipment for residents with nursing care needs.
- The adequacy of the staffing and equipment available at Rose Cottage was not assessed by the QEH prior to entering into the agreement. The City of Port Adelaide Enfield have reported that, for instance, patients were eating meals from dishes balanced on their stomachs because overways were not available at Rose Cottage.
- The principles under the SRF Act for residents to be treated with dignity and respect and to be able to make informed choices about their care have been compromised by the arrangement. Residents and their families have not been provided with information about Rose Cottage, have not been fully consulted in the transfer process and have not been offered a choice about where they obtain the care required.

In general terms the committee is concerned that arrangements of this nature may undermine the Supported Residential Facilities Act. The committee is aware of the demands on hospital beds and health resources and, in principle, supports the provision of non-acute care needs in a non-hospital setting. However, the committee is concerned about how public hospitals make certain that the systems and arrangements that are put in place to support a policy of early discharge ensure the ongoing quality care of the patient and

ensure consistency with the existing State legislation which regulates the standards of care and accommodation in licensed supported residential facilities.

The letter further states:

The committee believes that the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that State legislation is adhered to as part of any agreement lies with the public hospital system and recommends that all relevant hospital personnel be directed to give due consideration to the requirements of the SRF Act in developing policies and procedures of this nature, and be directed to include the relevant licensing authority in preliminary discussions before implementing an arrangement with a particular supported residential facility.

This is a very important issue because, in times of real stress on the health system, the pressure on hospitals to try to move patients out and place them somewhere else at a reduced cost is very great. We have exposed a situation where people were placed in a facility that simply did not come up to standard in terms of level of care. In his hasty answer to me in the Estimates Committee, in relation to the contract between the QEH and Rose Cottage, the Minister said:

Formal meetings were held monthly between the hospital, nursing staff and the operators. All issues raised were quickly addressed. Nursing staff in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital undertook regular inspections.

It is interesting that the Minister said that all issues were regularly addressed. I came by a copy of a letter from the City of Port Adelaide Enfield to Mr Lovegrove, Manager of Rose Cottage, dated 27 November 1997. I cite one example where what the Minister said did not happen in reality, and it relates to call bells. The letter states:

The issue of installing appropriate call bells has been raised several times. At present there is a flush mounted call bell in the bedrooms which is typically located between beds. As you are aware most residents are unable to access or operate the current call system. Officers first discussed this matter on 29 August 1997. A request for more accessible call buttons to be fitted was made on 4 November 1997. Another request was made on 26 November 1997.

The letter further states:

You have explained that you have had trouble getting these items from the company who manufacturers them. We regard this as an extremely urgent matter. The urgency of this matter is reinforced by two complaints that we have received stating that family members soiled themselves because of delays in being attended and have been unable to get staff to come when needed. It is my opinion that a functional call system, as well as other items, should have been purchased and installed prior to entering into an agreement with the Queen Elizabeth Hospital to take in people who are waiting for a Commonwealth funded nursing home placement.

The Minister's statement to me that all problems were fixed immediately is simply not the case, and that is not what happened in relation to this matter. I look forward to the Minister's providing me with detailed answers in a week or so. I certainly will be looking closely at them, because we have been informed that it is possible that the Queen Elizabeth Hospital is looking at other arrangements with other facilities. People are also suggesting that perhaps other hospitals will be in the same position. We do not have a problem with people being placed in step-down facilities provided these facilities have a level of care that is appropriate and necessary for the people for whom they are caring.

I note that the Government is required to make a 1 per cent efficiency dividend on the Human Services budget. That will equate to about \$30 million, which means there will be another cut this year in Human Services of \$30 million. The Minister said that he will quarantine hospital budgets from this cut. So \$30 million has to come out of the other areas of Human Services—the community health system, the Housing Trust, Family and Community Services, Disability Services

and Services to the Ageing. So it is not good news at all for people in those categories.

The Minister made great show of the Access Economics report by highlighting the fact that it stated that the State Governments had made a greater contribution to funding of health than the Commonwealth over recent years. Of course, he failed to tell us that in that report all the States were lumped in together under the one figure, and he failed to mention that the New South Wales Government, under Bob Carr, has increased health funding by \$1.3 billion in New South Wales, completely swamping the funding cuts levied in South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia. That was a very dishonest attempt by this Minister to mislead the public and to try to rewrite history and say that the Government over which he was Premier did not cut health services. The community is a little more sophisticated than that.

**Mr CLARKE:** Mr Speaker, I draw your attention to the state of the House.

*A quorum having been formed:*

**Mr CLARKE (Ross Smith):** I hate to speak without an audience. I am glad that the Deputy Premier is here, and I am sorry that I have snared a few of my Labor colleagues. I would have far preferred members of the Liberal Party to be here, because it is a disgrace that a Government in office can provide only about three backbenchers to hear members' contributions on the Estimate Committees processes. It is more appropriate that Government members fill their back bench because they could learn from what members of the Opposition have to say to them. Don't cup your ears, member for Hammond. I know you're not deaf. I know you want to listen keenly to the pearls of wisdom that I am about to impart to you.

With respect to the Estimates Committee hearings, first I would like to congratulate the two chairpersons. The member for Heysen was, as usual, very conciliatory and he acted rather deftly in the way he handled some tense situations that arose during the course of hearings in Estimates Committee A. I would also like to congratulate probably for the first and possibly the last time the member for Stuart, who was Chairman of Estimates Committee B. I was a member of Committee B on only brief occasions and so I stand to be corrected by my colleagues on this matter, but during the times when I was there he showed himself to be most conciliatory and flexible, to the extent that I believed that he must have had a twin brother sitting in his place. But, no, it was the member for Stuart. I do congratulate him with respect to those times, albeit brief, when I was present in Estimates Committee B. So, I am prepared to acknowledge those who do right by me as much as those who do ill by me.

I would like to refer to the Estimates Committee hearing and its framework. I think the Estimates Committee process can be very valuable. The Opposition did show itself because it in fact dominated the evening television news coverage and most of the local political news stories in the morning newspaper, that toe rag called the *Advertiser*. We did dominate it, and it showed that Estimates Committees can be very valuable for Oppositions in trying to put the Government of the day under pressure and to get their news item reported at night. That is the whole point of Estimates Committees: to have the Opposition of the day put the Government, of whatever political persuasion, under pressure.

It has been my experience in the past four years that I have been a member of this place that some Ministers have used it to allow members on their side to ask a range of dorothy

dixers—very searching and incisive questions from their backbench—which were answered dutifully by the Minister, usually in a very long-winded fashion, in a pre-prepared ministerial brief. That is all very well for the Government of the day. I was not here when Labor was in Government, and it is possible that we used it for the same process as well, but it should have been regarded as the Opposition's day because, if a Government is confident enough in its own ability, the Ministers of the day ought to be able to say, 'This is the Opposition's day. This is the day I test my mettle against that of the Opposition. This is the day when the normal Standing Orders of Question Time in Parliament do not prevail. There are supplementary questions and the like. This is the time when there can be real scrutiny with respect to the Government's plans for each department over the next 12 months.' Unfortunately, it does not work that way.

I tend to think that a Government ought to be big enough to be able to say, 'I am confident enough to be able to withstand that type of Opposition questioning, that I will put up with having the Opposition put me under pressure between 11 a.m. and 10 p.m. on a particular day.' The introduction of these junior Ministers only further confused the situation. They have enabled the contraction of the time available for the examination of major expenditure departments.

The Health Department spends approximately 25 per cent of the State's revenue. When it was the old Health Department, we used to spend a whole day from 11 a.m. until 10 p.m. just on the Health Department. This year, with the Minister for Human Services, we had time only for the former Health Commission, Family and Community Services, the Housing Trust, Disability Services, the Ageing and maybe a couple of other agencies—and, despite what we read in the *Advertiser*, I am not in the ageing category. I just wish it would get it right. I am 46, not 56 years of age—not that I am sensitive on the age issue.

Whereas we had a lot more time available to scrutinise those individual departments, they had to be compacted all into one day. It does not do the Government of the day any good in itself if Ministers are not put under some scrutiny. It is a bit like a football club: you perform your best only when you are under hard pressure from a formidable opponent. If you can best that opponent, then you know you are doing a good job and that you are representing the Government in the best way. If the whole system is slipshod, then you will fall into a slipshod way. That is just the way of human nature.

Given the format of the Estimates Committees, no representatives of the Opposition of the day from the Legislative Council, the shadow Ministers, can cross-examine Ministers in the Upper House. I appreciate from the nodding of the member for Hammond that that takes away the historical perspective that it is the Lower House that raises taxes and revenue and decides how revenue should be spent and that therefore we should jealously guard those privileges and only members of this House should be involved in Estimates Committees.

I find it extraordinary that we have 22 members of the Upper House who, for the past three weeks, frankly may as well not have been on the payroll of this Parliament. We have 22 members of this place who have had nothing to do because their Chamber has not been sitting owing to the Estimates Committees. It is not fair to include the three Ministers from the Legislative Council or the shadow Ministers who were involved in helping prepare questions for their Lower House colleagues in the Estimates Committee hearings, but the bulk of Legislative Councillors have not been missed. The govern-

ance of this State has not been affected one iota by their absence from this place. Some might argue that the governance of this State is improved when they are not here.

It is the policy of the Labor Party to abolish the Legislative Council, and I was interested to read in today's *Advertiser* an article by Greg Kelton that the Liberal Government, because of what is likely to happen with the ETSA Bill's being chucked out by the Upper House, ought to countenance a referendum to abolish the Legislative Council. The Labor Party supports that position. I would be more than happy to embrace any such referendum to abolish the Legislative Council. But, if we are to abolish the Legislative Council, we would not do it overnight: it would mean a radical reform of the committee structure here in the House of Assembly, because otherwise we will simply face the position where the Government of the day, having a majority, will simply ram through legislation without any opportunity for the local community to voice its opposition, for the legislation to be fleshed out in somewhat greater detail, or to pick up the many mistakes that come out of Government legislation, Liberal or Labor.

We do not necessarily need an Upper House to nitpick over legislation or to improve it. It would be far better for the governance of this State to abolish the Legislative Council. It is time for us to get rid of that body. It is by and large a body that holds back progress. It might suit me today, with respect to the Government's ETSA legislation, to be able to prevent the sale of the ETSA assets, Optima Energy and the like, but by and large it serves no useful purpose. I would only agree to getting rid of the Legislative Council if we had a decent system of committees in this House of Assembly to scrutinise legislation. When the Government or any private member introduces legislation (obviously it is predominantly Government legislation), it should go to a standing committee of this House where it can be scrutinised in greater detail, where submissions would be invited from interested parties throughout the State and where those most deeply offended by pieces of legislation could come forward to those committees, state a case and have an opportunity to put their views on legislation.

That would prevent legislation being forced through Parliament at midnight—all done in 24 hours if it is the wish of the Government—and there would be a legislative bar on Governments ramming through legislation, as it would have to go through the committee structure. Those who are opposed to legislation or who want dramatic amendments to it would have an opportunity to build up public opinion to try to convince the Government that it was going down the wrong track with that legislation.

At the end of the day, the Government would have the numbers to put the legislation through. Despite whatever exhaustive committee processes we might go through, at the end of the day, if the Government had a clear majority in this House, even if the legislation was delayed three or six months (whatever the time span might be), it would be able to get its legislation through. I simply put that down to democracy and, at a general election at the end of its four year term of office, the Government is held accountable for its actions. By and large, the Legislative Council performs a pretty useless function. By and large, 90 odd per cent of the legislation that goes through this Parliament is unanimously agreed to, or where some defects are pointed out with pieces of legislation, the Government of the day, Liberal or Labor, is usually prepared to pick up the suggested amendments because it thinks they are good ideas.



We could do that if we had a decent series of standing committees in this Lower House. It would also give backbenchers something to do because, quite frankly, backbenchers in this Parliament—and I should say more particularly in this Chamber—have very little to do. If you are in Government, you are expected to ask inane, stupid dorothy dix type questions that put the Government of the day in a good light. If you are in Opposition—

**Mr Lewis:** It doesn't mean you have to.

**Mr CLARKE:** I agree with the member for Hammond: it does not mean that you have to, but usually those of us on the backbench are looking to climb the greasy pole and do as we are told. By and large, Opposition backbenchers are told to shut up and be quiet—and I have been in the same position on the front bench and am now relishing the Opposition backbenches—because, obviously, the Opposition of the day has a theme it wants to get through for the news items that day and only one line of questioning is permitted. In those circumstances, quite clearly, that is the only time available to you. A decent committee structure in this Chamber would allow the backbenchers on both the Government and Opposition sides to be able to sit down in a more informal and less restrictive atmosphere than we currently have to examine pieces of legislation in detail. Many of the amendments now moved and supported in the Legislative Council would have been picked up in this Chamber had we had the time and the committee structure to enable us to do so.

As I say, at the end of the day, the Government of the day that has the majority on this floor would be able to get its legislation through and, if that means the sale of ETSA or Optima Energy, whilst I am totally opposed to that type of policy position, the Government of the day could get it through and it would have to wear the consequences of it at the next election. However, you cannot introduce the proposal that I am suggesting by abolishing the Legislative Council without significant reform of a standing committee structure in this House, so that Governments of the day could not do as they do now, if they wish to do so; that is, simply suspend Standing Orders if you have 24 votes and ram through a piece of legislation inside 24 hours so that opponents of it that legislation have no time in which to galvanise public opinion to change the end result or significantly influence the legislation.

Frankly, when we look at the way in which State Parliaments' powers are being eroded—mainly through the lack of dollars—it is a nonsense to have a Legislative Council. It is a nonsense to have 22 Legislative Councillors largely confined to this building. They do not have offices outside because the Government of the day, Liberal or Labor, is not prepared to trust Legislative Councillors to let themselves loose on constituents outside North Terrace—and maybe there is good reason for that. I am not saying there is, but maybe there is good reason.

Maybe Legislative Councillors are elected to office, but they are terrified of meeting constituents. When they walk out of this building, they are terrified at 5 o'clock at night at the intersection of King William Street and North Terrace when a large slab of their constituents are heading for the railway station; they might get asked a question or be asked to do something on their behalf, but they much prefer to pass them on to a member of the House of Assembly to get some work done.

I think there is need for a fundamental reform of our parliamentary system. I agree 100 per cent with the abolition of the Legislative Council. It is an anachronism and, in many

respects, it inhibits progress. The Labor Party when in Government has never enjoyed a majority in the Legislative Council, unlike the Liberal Party. For years under Tom Playford, under the gerrymanders at Legislative Council level and at House of Assembly level, the Liberal Party has enjoyed a majority in both Houses of Parliament. Labor has never enjoyed a majority in both Houses of Parliament.

I do not like having to negotiate with the Democrats: I far prefer to deal with Liberals. I know where they stand and I know what I am dealing with. I far prefer to deal with Liberals than marshmallows, as far as the Democrats are concerned, who ring their hands, agonise, and all the rest of it. They did 1 000 hours of study on the ETSA Bill. Well, they went to the election in 1997 saying that they would not sell South Australia short, so they should have been very quick in making up their mind. All they needed to do was to oppose the sale of ETSA. They did not need to wring their hands or justify any backflips, as the Liberal Government has had to do in that area.

What I have learnt—and this is my fifth Estimates Committee hearing—is that it does need a major overhaul. I think the idea is terrific. The Labor Opposition was able to get a number of advantages, technically speaking. We won the day each day the Estimates Committees sat in terms of getting answers, but we did not get enough time to probe Ministers more effectively. In this, the working Chamber of the Parliament, we need to set up a proper committee structure to enable legislation to be properly scrutinised, to allow backbenchers from all sides to contribute to the workings of this Parliament, to put Ministers of whatever political persuasion under real pressure and to get rid of the Upper House.

The Upper House, by and large, is a waste of time and a waste of space, notwithstanding the fact that for many years I wanted to get into that place because I thought it was like winning Tattsлото—eight years and you had a pension for life. What better odds can you get than getting into the Legislative Council on that type of basis?

**Ms RANKINE (Wright):** Like many of the new members of Parliament who have addressed us tonight, I was looking forward to the process of the Estimates Committees. I was looking forward to seeing this Government abide by its commitment of political accountability. Like so many others, however, I was disappointed. I was looking for a real boost in my education of the parliamentary process. Unfortunately, I do not think that is what I had: rather, I had an eye-opening experience.

Like many others, I was disappointed with the time allocated for many of the portfolios. Like many others, I was disappointed with the longwinded and time-wasting answers provided by Ministers. So, this evening I will attempt to address some of the issues that I raised during the Estimates Committee, and also raise one issue that I did not have the opportunity to raise.

I participated in the Estimates Committee in relation to the Police Department and the emergency services. During questioning, I asked the Minister for Police when we could expect to have a new police station in the Tea Tree Gully council area. The St Agnes police station has been reduced to a shopfront and the Tea Tree Gully patrol base is operating out of the area which it serves. Sadly, the Minister still does not know. We have Focus 21, which is supposed to be a vision for the future of policing in South Australia, yet they do not know when we will have a patrol base in the area of

the Tea Tree Gully council. This clearly is not a vision for the future but a very dim vision for policing in South Australia. I also raised the issue of patrols not attending some quite serious crimes in a shopping centre in my electorate.

We heard the Minister praise the new roster system that has been implemented under Focus 21 and, recently, a magazine issued by the Police Department contained a two page article which set out how well the new rosters were working, how much more effective our policing was and how police are available when the community needs them. However, when the General Manager of Drake Food Markets went to see the local chief inspector, he was told they simply did not have the resources to attend to the attempted arson, the attempted flooding, and the major vandalism of his supermarket. I want to know what is happening in relation to the Tea Tree Gully Police Station and these patrols. I am consistently getting complaints from people saying that they cannot get police attendance and, when we talk to the police privately, they tell us that the rosters are a disaster.

I also asked the Minister for Police, Correctional Services and Emergency Services to give us some information about the CFS levy that is to be imposed on South Australians this year to wipe out the \$13 million debt from Ash Wednesday. When I asked him who would contribute to the \$6.5 million that will be collected through insurance policies by the insurance industry, and how much those people would pay, he could not tell me. He was confused. I asked him whether it would only be people living in CFS areas or whether it was CFS and MFS combined. With some prodding, some digging and some poking, we basically got the answer that he did not know, and it appears that it will be up to the insurance industry as to who it will levy for this \$6.5 million. We do not know whether it will be people in CFS areas or all South Australians who have household insurance who will have to pay the levy.

I also asked him whether volunteer members of the CFS would be exempt from the levy, given that, according to the CEO, we in South Australia have had the services of the CFS incredibly cheaply. That is because so many people volunteer their time and effort to ensure the safety of South Australians. The Minister said that there is no way of telling who is a volunteer and that everyone will have to pay. What he was telling us was that those men and women who put their lives on the line during Ash Wednesday, those people who use the equipment which incurred the debt for the CFS are now going to be given the privilege of paying for this debt, a debt that is owed to the State Treasury, so it is basically owed to the Government. The volunteers who daily put their lives on the line, who attend accidents, bushfires, scrub fires and the like, are now not only expected to give of their time and energy but also to pay for the privilege.

I had the privilege of sitting in on the Estimates Committee when our shadow Minister for Human Services questioned the Minister responsible for the aged and disabled, so I am pleased that the Minister for Human Services is present in the Chamber to listen to my query on this matter. The shadow Minister asked the Minister for Disability Services about his plans to change the situation faced by those people who are accommodated in institutions such as Minda, Julia Farr and the Strathmont Centre.

**Mr Lewis:** We are going to put them in the Legislative Council, according to Ralph.

**Ms RANKINE:** That may be so, probably on your side of the House, too. I am particularly interested in the Julia Farr Centre. The Minister said that the number of residents of that

centre had been downsized considerably, that it had been reduced from 700 clients to 220 clients. He went on to describe the deinstitutionalisation of these people as being a great thing. He said:

The process of reducing the size of these institutions and providing more community based and less institutional based care is one that is progressing. It is not progressing as fast as some of those who are more jealous might require, but I am determined to ensure that the process is pushed on.

I highlight that: the Minister is determined to ensure that the process is pushed on.

Recently, I visited a constituent of mine, Christine Clift. This woman is 48 years of age, she suffers with multiple sclerosis, and she is totally reliant on carers for 24 hour care. Familiarity with her carers is essential in providing her with effective care because she has very limited ability to communicate. Currently, six carers are allotted to her: one is fairly new; the other five know her extremely well. It is important for her carers to know her attitude to things: what boosts her morale and what she finds offensive. It is vital for them to be able to react to her nuances and to know her routine.

Four years ago, this woman was a resident of the Julia Farr Centre. She was de-institutionalised and now lives in her own home. The assistance she receives from the Government is, as I said, 24 hour care. She has no control over any bodily function. Sadly, in January this year the Minister sent a letter to this woman's mother telling her that her daughter would be referred to a new residential service in Mitchell Park. Basically, he said that if she did not accept this alternative her other option would be a nursing home placement. Her mother was devastated. The Minister reinforced this attitude in another letter to her on 30 April. This is the same Minister who said that he was pushing forward with the de-institutionalisation of the residents of Julia Farr. This woman was living in her own home, and he now wants to put her back into institutionalised care.

Christine has real difficulty with her speech. In a letter, her speech therapist states:

Over the past two years, Christine's speech has shown steady deterioration. She can now only produce gross weak vocalisations, which are difficult to decipher even by familiar listeners. Communication has become more and more of a functional issue.

It is vital that her carers know and understand her. The speech therapist continues that it has been her experience that without individual training carers have not been able to care adequately for Christine. Christine has a need for set care routines and a constant set of carers.

This woman has an amazing strength of spirit. She is determined to continue with her life and to see her 14 year old daughter grow and develop. She does not complain, and she is not demanding. She deals with more than most of us could ever contemplate dealing with in our life and yet she continues to enjoy life with her daughter, the company of her carers, the attention of her family and the happiness that her pets bring her. To take away her home would devastate this woman. It would be untenable. In a letter, her chiropractor states:

I consider moving Chris out of her own home would severely disadvantage her and end weekend visits by Jodie, her daughter, which are a highlight in her life, and there are not too many of those.

Who in this House will have the heart to take that away from this woman? He continues:

Cost cutting is an important part of Government today, but surely a person's peace of mind, home comforts and daily pleasures must be more important than the almighty dollar.

I urge this Government to show some compassion and decency in relation to this woman and her family, and not threaten to put her in a nursing home if she chooses not to take the option of the Mitchell Park facility. I urge this Government to think a little bit about the money that it is spending.

In one Estimates Committee of which I was a member, the Minister for Administrative Services told us that he is paying \$200 000 a year for tradespeople from the now defunct Facilities Management Service to occupy office accommodation in the central business district of Adelaide. We have documentation showing costs of up to \$354 000 for this Minister's accommodation. And tonight we heard about \$300 000 being spent on an ETSA sale leaflet. I urge the Minister to urgently evaluate this situation and to give this family an assurance that the very last vestige of dignity and independence that Christine Clift has will not be wrested from her. I urge the Minister to put some humanity back into human services.

I refer to the operation of the Estimates Committees on which I sat, most particularly Committee B. I spent a short time in this place under your guidance and consideration, Mr Deputy Speaker, and greatly appreciated that, as I am sure did other members. Sadly, we did not experience the same level of consideration and dignity in Committee B. Our committees closed early, we were not allowed to ask questions and we were ruled out of order because our Committee chairperson wanted to close things down five minutes ahead of time. There was no consistency in his allocation of questions and, despite a quarter of a century in this House, there was clearly no-one more easily rattled or more easily spooked. It is not surprising that Labor found it so easy to have him dumped. The lack of respect in which he is held by his own colleagues—even the Premier could not bring himself to stand by him—is not surprising. Clearly, the Government wanted to see Parliament steered by a safer, calmer pair of hands. His approach to Estimates was boorish and patronising, to say the least, and it is not surprising that he has been relegated to the minor area of chairing committees.

**Ms WHITE (Taylor):** Being the Opposition spokesperson on education, I wish to speak about the education Estimates. However, before doing so, I want to reiterate the comments of a number of other speakers on this side. This year, Estimates was a particularly difficult process for the Opposition, given the format of the budget and the change to accrual accounting. A change to accrual accounting does not necessarily mean an opaque budget document: it should mean more information, rather than less. Unfortunately, what this Government chose to do, particularly in the education area, was to use this change to an accrual format to provide less information.

Last year, each education program was listed with expenditure and budgeted: this year, there was no program information at all. So, obviously, the first question I asked the Minister in Estimates was to provide the program information. Despite several attempts on my part, he did not give an undertaking to provide that information. He said that it was too difficult, patted me on the head, and said that I obviously did not understand how complex accrual accounting was and that he could not provide it. Quite clearly, that is not the case.

These educational outputs as provided in the budget papers may be nice, warm and fuzzy headings under which to group programs, but the fact remains that the Department for Education and Children's Services (DECS) still needs to provide education programs. DECS must know how much it is spending on computer programs, special education programs and the like. To operate as an effective department, the Department for Education must know these things. Clearly, the Minister is attempting to hide this information by saying that it cannot be provided. I say that because it became quite clear in the process, when the Opposition had to drag out of the Minister every part of the way answers to quite fundamental questions about the extent of the budget cuts, that the Government was attempting to hide those cuts within the budget papers.

I want to do two things this evening. I want, first, to talk about some of the information that came out in the education Estimates Committee and, secondly, to talk about the Minister's role in framing his budget. It is important to point out that, before the election nine months ago, this Government went to the people of South Australia and said not only that it would maintain the education budget in 1998-99 but also that it would increase it. That is what this Liberal Government took to the people of South Australia.

In February, I put to the Minister that Commonwealth funding to the public education sector would decrease, and I asked about the implications of this for the budget. The Minister stood up and said, 'We will make up that shortfall in funding.' In other words, the Minister tried to give the impression to South Australians that, again, the State Government's contribution to public education would increase. But in the actual budget papers there were massive cuts, on which I will touch briefly. Suffice to say that the cuts have been enormous, ranging from \$49 million directly in the 1998-99 budget and increasing thereafter.

We have heard the announcements about 30 schools to close and about 90 to 100 teachers to be sacked. I point out that in the budget papers 222 full-time equivalent positions from the department will go. Of course, this is at a time when we know—and the Government's own research tells us—that by 2003 we will face a massive teacher shortage. This is the vision that the Education Minister has for South Australian education. This is the result of his negotiations in Cabinet in terms of defending education in this State. Clearly, the Minister has not done a very good job, because education takes the bulk of those cuts.

The first lot of questions to the Minister (and it took three questions to get no answer from the Minister) on budget Estimates day, when we had half the amount of time that we had for those portfolios the year before, related to a 1 per cent efficiency saving or an \$11 million saving from the enterprise agreement that the department has with the teachers' union. The Minister avoided giving an answer in terms of whether that was the case. It took three questions and no response before I finally told the Minister that I had the leaked budget strategies from his department, and finally one of his departmental representatives admitted that that was the case.

The second admission from the Minister—dragged out, not offered, of course—was that his department had factored into its budget strategy the fact that it would cut the school year by one week, to save \$3 million, \$260 000 of which was to come from such things as turning out the lights in every State school for a week. So, we have reached a situation where, to cut the education budget, the Minister and his department have decided that they will cut tuition time for

students. It is a very sad day when that option is put into a budget strategy. The response that came was, 'You don't do much in the last week of school.' Of course, what did not seem to occur to the Minister is that, when you cut out the last week of school, the second last week becomes the last week of school.

The Minister tried to say that it was simply a consolidation and that all the student-free days throughout the school year would be consolidated into that week. In fact, an interjection from the member for Flinders confirmed that that was the Minister's strategy. On closer examination, however, the Minister backed away from that, so it remains unclear whether that week is in addition to student-free days throughout the year.

Next came the very slow admission from the Minister that, despite the Premier's repeatedly stating in this Parliament that he was giving \$1 million of new money to child care, that comes at a price, of course: the Government is going to cut \$500 000 per year over the next three years. So, on one hand we have a big announcement from the Premier of \$1 million of extra money for child care, but out of the child-care sector of the portfolio the Government is cutting \$500 000 per year. How honest is that?

We did have a hint from the Federal Liberal Minister responsible for child care (Hon. Warwick Smith) a day or two later in a press release that the Premier had actually reallocated money that was not new at all. Thank you very much, Minister!

Capping of school grants was admitted: \$6.4 million in 1998-99; \$13 million the year after; and \$19.5 million the year after that. According to Minister Buckby's admission in the Estimates Committee—something that we were not told—\$19 million would be cut in the third year by capping—that is, cutting—school grants. If members want to know what that \$19 million actually means, last year parents paid \$17 million in school fees. So, the Government intends in the third year to save \$19 million. What effect will that have on school fees?

**Mr Lewis:** They bought a soccer stadium.

**Ms WHITE:** As the member for Hammond interjects, they bought a soccer stadium. Indeed! The sum of \$1.2 million will be saved by devolving temporary relief teacher costs to schools. Temporary relief teachers are those who come in to replace teachers who are ill or on leave. Our schools in country regions in particular have a lot of trouble in attracting temporary relief teachers and, indeed, permanent teachers at times. These costs will be devolved onto the schools—another impost on the schools. The amount of \$1.3 million will be devolved onto schools through having to pay energy, water and telephone bills. This is even more pressure on schools.

That is before we even get to the TAFE cuts: \$3 million in this budget is to be cut from TAFE institutes—not the department but TAFE institutes—rising up to \$9.5 million in the third year. The Minister says that we will do it through efficiencies. I ask how, and the Minister does not know. Today, in Question Time when I asked about this, still he vaguely mentioned 'efficiencies' and launched into some technical argument about how we cannot add the saving in one year to the saving in the second and third years because that is not fair. I ask the Minister, 'How much money will you not be spending over those three years?' The answer is: the saving from year one, the saving from year two and the saving from year three. That is what he is not spending which, if he kept his current budget, he would be spending.

The Minister can explain it anyway he likes, but he cannot escape the fact that that is what is not going to be spent on education.

This morning the Minister was on radio. It was an interesting interview, although I did not hear it all, but I have a transcript, which explains the Minister's approach to his whole education portfolio. I presume that the Minister spent months formulating this budget. The budget has been set; the cuts to the education budget have been set and done; and now the Minister is trying to tell us, 'Don't worry about all these things, they may not happen. These are options.' The cuts to the budget are not an option: they are done. The Minister has not worked out the situation and has no idea.

Let me give some examples of the Minister's comments on 5AN this morning responding to the list in yesterday's *Advertiser* of all the cumulative cuts to education. The presenter, Julia Lester, went through the list and questioned the Minister about them. She questioned the Minister about means testing for school bus concessions and the transcript is as follows:

Lester: Firstly, a \$5.1 million cut by means testing for school bus concessions. That's the way it will go?

Buckby: One of the options that we looked at, to stay out of the classroom basically in achieving the budget task that we had to, was to look at, yes, the possibility of bringing in a... either a means test or some—we haven't devised it yet—but a way of saying these people who can afford to pay within the community in terms of busing children to school. So that was one... one option.

The Minister seems to be saying that his budget is quite fluid, yet this is after he has had to spend many months formulating the budget; a month after it has come down, when the cuts have been set in concrete, he is saying, 'It's been announced by the Treasurer that this is going to happen; it is in the budget,' and the Minister is saying, 'It is just an option.' Get your act together, Minister. Julia Lester then questioned the Minister about reducing teacher numbers over three years and the transcript is as follows:

Lester: \$11.3 million, says the *Tiser*, by reducing teacher numbers over three years. That's your target?

Buckby: We identified that there would be 90 to 100 teachers that would probably come out of the system, and again the target that we were given by the Treasurer, we tried to stay out of the classroom as much as we possibly could, and this won't affect class sizes, and it won't affect SSO hours, but there are areas where we can make some savings.

Lester: Can you be specific? How can you cut teachers without affecting classes?

Buckby: Oh, there are various areas in terms of curriculum support and those sorts of areas, Julia.

Lester: What does that mean?

Buckby: They're not directly in the classroom.

Lester: What's curriculum support mean?

Buckby: Well, for instance, within the department here there are people who work on curriculum, for instance, developing curriculum and doing a lot of support work for curriculum. There may be chances to be able to rationalise a bit of that perhaps.

Lester: And that would leave teachers without that sort of support, would it?

Buckby: Well, not really, it'd just mean that we might slow down on research in new curriculum, for instance, for a while.

Lester: Can we afford to do that—

Buckby: Oh.

Lester: —as an education State?

Buckby: I mean, the messages I get back from principals when I talk to them at schools as I go around is that, you know, 'Can you do something about the paper war, because we just can't keep up with everything?'

The third issue on which Julia Lester questioned the Minister was the cut to school grants and departmental purchases, as follows:

Lester: \$38.9 million, says the *Advertiser*, to be cut over three years in school grants and departmental purchases. What won't you be buying?

She asked what the schools would not be buying, and asked:

Lester: So, schools will buy less?

Buckby: That's right. Well, they'll . . . have to basically look at ways in which they can buy better.

It goes on and on. Another issue is relief teachers, discussed as follows:

Lester: \$3 million to be reduced in payments for relief teachers. Does that mean you won't be paying relief teachers?

It goes on and on. I want to draw members' attention to a call that came in for the Minister this morning from a person named Abby. I will read this directly, because it brings up another impact in relation to the planned cut of 30 schools announced in the budget. The transcript is as follows:

Abby: Good morning, Julia. . . I've been listening to your show a lot lately, and you've been talking a lot about the financial impact that school closures and education cutbacks have on families and communities and educators, but not so much the emotional impact.

Lester: Now, you were at Port Adelaide Girls' High School.

Abby: Yes, I was.

Lester: And where are you now?

Abby: I'm no longer at school.

Lester: And what was the effect of the closure of Port Adelaide on you?

Abby: It was horrific, as it was on all students. There were 77 of us, and it, you know, ranged from minor depression, you know, all the way to a suicide attempt made by one of the students.

Lester: Because the school closed?

Abby: Yeah.

Lester: Why would that cause someone to attempt to take their life?

Abby: Well, it was. . . a very, very special place, and it had a lot of structures set up to allow students to succeed, and those structures weren't set in place in other schools.

Lester: And were you supported through all of this?

Abby: No, we weren't.

Lester: So, who looked after you?

Abby: Well. . . I went off to Taperoo High School. The teachers really didn't know how to handle us, so we were palmed off to counsellors, who also didn't know how to handle us. And in the end we were lumped on one of the former staff of Port Adelaide Girls' High School, who wasn't equipped, and didn't have the time to deal with us.

Lester: Would you have left school when you did if you hadn't swapped schools?

Abby: I doubt it, I highly doubt it.

That caller must have highlighted to the Minister the impact on real people of these budgetary measures that he has taken. So, for the Minister to be saying on radio and publicly as he is that these are only options is ridiculous when the budget cuts are real, they have occurred and they have been announced.

**The Hon. DEAN BROWN (Minister for Human Services):** I move:

That the time for moving the adjournment of the House be extended beyond 10 p.m.

Motion carried.

**The Hon. J.W. OLSEN (Premier):** The Treasurer has already described comprehensively and convincingly to

members on 28 May the context, strategies and rationale for this year's budget. In its subsequent contributions to the debate, the Opposition has in contrast been somewhat nit-picking, carping, negative and totally policy free; totally without serious alternative to the Government's fiscal strategies and directions as set out in the budget and its accompanying four year forward financial plan.

*Mr Foley interjecting:*

**The Hon. J.W. OLSEN:** I would simply ask the member for Hart to go back and read through a few *Hansards* and he might become a little better informed. There is no point in my prolonging the debate by addressing one by one the issues raised by the Opposition, because it has really not raised anything of substance. Rather—

*Members interjecting:*

**The Hon. J.W. OLSEN:** Not only does the Opposition have no credible alternative policies but its criticism of the policy set out in the budget is incoherent and internally inconsistent. They criticise us for expenditure reductions, even though the key service areas, such as health and education, have been protected and preserved at expenditure levels in real terms significantly above what they themselves were spending when they were in office. They criticise us for raising some taxes and charges, even though this still leaves South Australia well below the national per capita average in tax levels. They become totally irrational at the thought of selling assets to reduce the crippling debt that this Government inherited as a result of years of Labor's economic mismanagement and to thereby ensure that we no longer must find \$2 million a day for interest payments.

Then, to cap off this charade, the Leader of the Opposition has the temerity to criticise us for a small bottom-line deficit, in accrual terms, in the budget for 1998-99, conveniently ignoring the way this turns into a surplus in subsequent years. The Opposition's arguments simply belong in fantasy land. In a budgetary situation where we have just last year achieved balance, you cannot simultaneously increase expenditure, reduce taxes, do nothing about debt levels and still have an acceptable budget outcome with no increase in the debt. Of course nothing—

**The Hon. Dean Brown:** They think you can.

**The Hon. J.W. OLSEN:** Yes, they think they can but that is the formula that, in the past, has proven to be so fatally flawed for this State. Nothing has changed in Labor's refusal to recognise the simple fact. It was precisely the policy the Leader of the Opposition took into the last election. The Leader then said that he would have no new or increased taxes, make multimillion dollar reductions in a number of existing taxes, hire 1 300 more public servants and still guarantee a reduction each year in the net debt. It was an incoherent and mathematically—

**Mr FOLEY:** I rise on a point of order, Sir. Consistent with rulings made throughout the evening—

*An honourable member interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Chair wants to hear the point of order.

**Mr FOLEY:** The Premier is commenting on what the Opposition may or may not do. To be in order the Premier must talk about his budget, not about what the Labor Party may or may not have put to the people at the last election.

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr FOLEY:** The Opposition has been pulled up on similar points of order. I expect the same ruling for the Premier.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! It is the Chair's view that the noting of grievances and the debate that has followed the noting of expenditure referred in Estimates Committees A and B is a wide ranging debate. Members on both sides have canvassed a wide range of issues and the Premier is free to respond to that wide range of issues.

**The Hon. J.W. OLSEN:** As I mentioned earlier today, the member for Hart has had this make-over in the last month. The Leader of the Opposition is going to this soft, non-confrontational role and the mantle has been shifted to the member for Hart. He is wanting to up his profile in an aggressive way. It is an interesting phenomenon. I come back to the budget. It was an incoherent and mathematically impossible policy then and the Opposition's response now to this budget has been equally incoherent and mathematically impossible. The Treasurer, when he spoke on this Bill in the House on 28 May, said that he had major concerns about the Opposition's fiscal views. In fact, it did not have any. The Treasurer said:

We issue a challenge to those magic pudding believers. If you oppose asset sales, revenue increases and expenditure reductions, what is your policy alternative? . . . I suspect this challenge will be met with deafening silence.

The Treasurer has been proven right in terms of the response to the budget debate. Clearly, the Leader of the Opposition and most of his colleagues simply do not understand this budget and the strategies it puts forward. To be fair to him, he admitted exactly that in his address to this House on 2 June. However, he proceeded to lay the blame for his ignorance on the adoption in the budget papers of accrual accounting presentation which, according to him, prevented his making valid comparisons to previous budgets and eliminated program information previously available. This might have been more convincing had he let his spokesperson on education into what the Party line was going to be. In her contribution to the debate, she said of the shift to accrual accounting in the budget papers:

This is a desirable measure, making it easier to assess the present and future obligations to be incurred by the Government and forcing the Government to think about how the service it has to deliver to the public affects the outcomes for the community.

*The Hon. Dean Brown interjecting:*

**The Hon. J.W. OLSEN:** The health spokesperson as well. Further, she said:

In addition, the accrual method of accounting brings us more into line with best practice standards.

I agree. The only trouble is that the Leader's attitude and that of his frontbench are diametrically opposed.

*An honourable member interjecting:*

**The Hon. J.W. OLSEN:** The honourable member comes in late to interject, but the *Hansard* record demonstrates how the Leader put down one position and the shadow Minister put down another. I suggest that they at least get one consistent theme and story. We know that they do not have any policies, but at least they could get the suggestion right.

*Mr Foley interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier will resume his seat. First, the member for Hart will not interrupt when I bring the House to order. Secondly, he will restrain himself from calling members opposite by their Christian names; they do have titles.

**The Hon. J.W. OLSEN:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. The education spokesman is someone who has put it in a concise and accurate way. I could not have put it better. That is why we have adopted accrual accounting, that is why all State

Governments and the Commonwealth have adopted it or are in the process of doing so. It is simply more transparent and gives a better and clearer picture of the Government's finances. The Leader of the Opposition's distaste for accrual accounting is just one more example of his clinging desperately to outdated and outmoded policies and practices, because he is incapable of framing any new and convincing alternatives.

*An honourable member interjecting:*

**The Hon. J.W. OLSEN:** He doesn't understand. It is on the same lines as his invoking the views in an earlier debate in this House of the 1945 royal commission as a reason to oppose privatisation of electricity assets in 1998 circumstances—national competition, national electricity market and all. The world moves on in 50 years, even if the Leader of the Opposition's policies do not. I suggest that, if he does not understand accrual accounting, he seek some coaching from other more mentally agile members of his side of the House.

It is not the adoption of accrual accounting which has led to the Opposition's wild misrepresentation of this budget. They simply remain incapable of grasping the basic principles of responsible management of the State's finances and the State's economy. We as a responsible Government cannot afford the Opposition's luxury of retreating into fiscal fantasy. We have to cope with the task of continuing with the restoration and reconstruction of the State's finances from the disaster we inherited from the Labor Government when we were elected in 1993.

At that time, as members would know, the State debt was out of control and heading to a peak of 28 per cent of Gross State Product, towards \$9 billion. The budget deficit was over \$300 million. We were faced with unfunded superannuation liabilities estimated at \$4 billion, and still growing—all this the result of the mismanagement of those who now sit opposite and carp about our solutions to their problems. We have made encouraging progress in four years in fixing this situation. The budget is now balanced on an annual basis. Nearly \$2 billion has been paid off the debt and nearly \$900 million off the superannuation liability. But we need in this budget, in our forward financial planning, to build on this base, and we need to do so in light of some significant new challenges that have emerged. At the risk of some tedious repetition of what the Treasurer has clearly set out, I will briefly again go over these challenges and the response strategies that the budget adopts, since the Opposition obviously does not yet understand them or at least is unwilling to admit that it does.

Having balanced the budget in 1997-98, we undertook a re-examination of future needs within the community and external pressures on the budget. We found a situation in which revenues were expected to grow at rates more or less in line with inflation, while outlays were expected to grow significantly faster. There were particular pressures on public sector wage costs, in the health sector, and in the increasingly urgent imperative to take further steps to tackle continuing high and unacceptable levels of unemployment. They were exacerbated by continuing reductions in the level of Commonwealth funding to the States and the High Court's decision to rule out business franchise fees.

It is in this light that the 1998-99 budget and the four year financial plan that accompanies it set out some changes in our policy mix. The strategy balances a number of competing priorities: first, to fund employment initiatives and strategic infrastructure initiatives that will boost economic and

community development; secondly, to maintain and improve our delivery of public services, especially in the key areas like education and health, most especially to fund demand growth in the health sector to upgrade hospitals and to maintain the quality of our health care services; thirdly, to fund \$400 million in public sector wage increases.

**Mr FOLEY:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker, I draw your attention to Standing Order 128—irrelevance or repetition. The Premier at the commencement of this particular section—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I must hear this.

**Mr FOLEY:** The Premier at the beginning of this section said that he was repeating statements already made to this House. Standing Order 128 provides:

If a member indulges in irrelevance or tedious repetition of substance already presented in a debate, the Speaker may direct the member to cease speaking.

I ask that you enforce Standing Order 128.

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! While the Chair is of the view that that Standing Order refers to repetition in debate, the Premier is free to reiterate and go over the subject material in this particular debate which, I draw to members' attention, is a summary of Estimate Committees A and B. It has covered almost a grievance debate on the part of members of both sides. It is a free-ranging debate and the Premier is free to canvass subjects raised by members on both sides earlier in the debate. The honourable Premier.

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is too much audible conversation.

**The Hon. J.W. OLSEN:** The member for Hart is wanting to lift his profile. He is working hard on it, constantly—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I caution the member for Hart and also members on my right.

**The Hon. J.W. OLSEN:** A further point in the strategy was to reduce further debt levels that are still much too high, costing us \$2 million a day to service, with a view in particular to regaining the State's AAA credit rating. Further, progress is to continue towards the target of eliminating the unfunded superannuation liabilities by 2024 and to continue to balance the budget.

To meet these challenges, we are adopting a three-pronged approach: a responsible policy mix of revenue increases, expenditure reductions and asset sales. Raising taxes and charges was a hard decision but a necessary one. It still leaves South Australia as the third lowest tax State on a per capita basis, \$130 below the national average. I reiterate that South Australians are taxed \$130 per head lower than the national average, and I stress this point because of the amount of this House's time the Leader of the Opposition wasted the other day arguing a bizarre and convoluted case involving average wages based on out-of-date CPI figures and, for all we know, measurements that simply do not bring about an equation—an equation that clearly demonstrates that they understand the policy mix that has been put in place and why we are doing so.

The fact of having a tax level \$130 below the national average is incontrovertible, despite what the Leader of the Opposition might want to say in repositioning that fact. The fact is that he was unable to do so. We have needed to restrain expenditure, but we have done so in a responsible and focused way. More resources are going into key areas of

service delivery and into capital works programs delivering jobs. In particular, this budget increases expenditure over 1997-98 in health—an increase of \$51 million to \$1 346 million, or up 9 per cent in real terms on Labor's last budget. Education expenditure is up \$50 million to \$1 909 million, also up 9 per cent in real terms on Labor's last budget. Expenditure on public order and safety is up \$3 million to \$557 million, or a 5 per cent increase in real terms on Labor's last budget, while capital works expenditure is up 8 per cent on the 1997-98 figure.

The third prong of the approach is asset sales. Notwithstanding the progress made in the past four years, South Australia's debt level is still too high. We cannot afford to continue to carry levels of debt so much greater in relative terms than those of the other States and to suffer the credit rating that goes with that status. We need the increased business confidence and certainty in the State's economic environment that will come from turning around the debt situation. If we are to generate investment, growth and jobs, we need to reduce the cost of capital to the Government and reduce our vulnerability to interest rate rises and other external uncontrollable shocks.

The only way to make the necessary quick impact on the debt level is to sell our electricity assets and to sell them now while there is keen market interest in them. This will be a circuit breaker, enabling us to slash interest costs, to free up resources to put into the delivery of improved services in the key areas of most concern to the public of South Australia such as education, health and law and order, and to minimise the risk to the taxpayers of major losses in the new national electricity market. I cannot emphasise too strongly that asset sales are a critical part of the overall strategy.

If Parliament rejects the sale of the State's electricity assets there will, without question, have to be a mini-budget to provide up to \$150 million per annum in years three and four of the four year budget strategy. That is simply not a threat but a reality. It is in fact a responsible recognition of South Australia's financial situation.

Let me turn to the employment creation aspects of the budget. Much of the Opposition's singularly fact free attack on it has been predicated on the allegation that it is, as the Leader of the Opposition put it, a budget 'with no answers for employment', that it is a budget 'with no jobs'. The fact is that one of the foremost principles behind framing this budget was the need to create long-term jobs in this State, to reduce what we acknowledge are unacceptably high levels of unemployment. It is a budget with a clear focus on jobs—a fact underlined by the separate employment statement with its detailed description of programs involving nearly \$100 million of expenditure over three years to create 4 500 jobs.

Before I go further into this Government's employment initiatives, let us reflect briefly on the employment record of the last Labor Government. The man who now berates this budget on the score of job creation was Minister for Employment, the current Leader of the Opposition. Let us check some of the facts. Under the stewardship of the Leader of the Opposition as Minister for Employment, the number of unemployed South Australians grew by 35 000 people. The unemployment rate—

**Mr Foley:** That was during a recession.

**The Hon. J.W. OLSEN:** Here is the excuse coming out now.

**Mr Foley:** An international recession.

**The Hon. J.W. OLSEN:** So, we are going to excuse it all now. Come on the member for Hart! The unemployment rate in South Australia rose from 7 per cent to 11.8 per cent under the Leader of the Opposition. The number of South Australians in full-time employment fell by 35 900 and the youth unemployment rate in the State grew from 17.6 per cent to 40.6 per cent under the Leader of the Opposition as Minister for Employment. That is the track record of the Leader of the Opposition when he was Minister for Employment. It is a pretty lousy track record.

This puts into the right perspective the Leader's qualifications to criticise our budget for the way in which it addresses jobs. Nonetheless, since he goes on about this issue, let me spell out for him some of the ways in which this budget will generate employment. It continues the highly successful State Government traineeship scheme, which will generate an additional 2 400 traineeships over the next two years. It expands the small business employer incentive scheme by committing an additional \$6 million in the next two years. This will fund an extra 1 500 trainees in the small business sector. It expands the self-starter grants to provide business start-up funds to mature aged unemployed persons and it expands the community at work scheme.

Less directly, many more of the budget initiatives will also generate jobs. A few examples include the second phase of the minerals exploration initiative which will flow through to exploitation of the discoveries and this will create jobs, although if the Opposition's Federal colleagues get a chance to put their policies on uranium in place first the outcomes might be somewhat diluted. We are doubling domestic market expenditure in tourism. There is a range of important infrastructure projects: for example, \$10 million on Kangaroo Island; \$100 million on the Darwin railway link; \$55 million to expand the Convention Centre; together with the 8 per cent overall increase in the capital works budget—a strong and carefully targeted program that will support some 20 000 jobs.

**Mr Brokenshire:** And the Southern Expressway.

**The Hon. J.W. OLSEN:** Indeed the Southern Expressway is also on the list, which the member made sure was on the capital works list. The main point about job creation, which the Opposition consistently has been unable or unwilling to grasp, is that the Government cannot somehow go out and buy jobs. Seventy per cent of public sector agencies' budgets already go on wages. Any State Government is limited in what it can do off its own back to ensure more jobs. Decisions by the private sector, the Commonwealth Government and global economic impacts outside our control, such as we have seen in the Asian financial crisis over the past year, are the main influences on employment creation. What we can do and the core responsibility of the State Government is to try to establish and maintain a competitive business environment which will encourage productive, job creating investment—an environment determined by factors such as business taxes, wage costs, land costs, the cost of living and business confidence in the Government's economic management.

It is private sector activity which generates economic growth and economic growth which generates jobs. The Leader made much in his address on this budget of the fact that the budget papers reduce the estimate of economic growth in the State in the current financial year to 2.75 per cent from the initial forecast of 3 per cent at the time the budget for 1997-98 was brought down, and further reduce the growth forecast for next year to 2.5 per cent. He must be the

only person in Australia who has not heard of the Asian crisis and what it is doing to economic growth globally and nationally. Why South Australia should be expected to be exempt from that only the Leader can explain. However, he now appears to understand the principle that to generate jobs we need to generate economic growth. He said, 'Labor would seek to grow the economy to get more people back to work.' Well, he might not have any policies that would achieve that—he certainly has not in that speech or at any other time put any forward—but give him enough time and coaching and I guess the light might dawn.

He reaches the startling conclusion that there is a link between economic growth and jobs growth. We realised that link a long time ago and that is why we have consistently given priority, as we continue to do so in this budget, to policies which will improve the business climate and assist the private sector to create economic growth and jobs in South Australia.

For example, we are encouraging export growth with targeted market development assistance and the efforts of the State's overseas offices network which we have significantly expanded. Last year, South Australia led the nation in export growth—11.3 per cent compared with the national average of 4.1 per cent. Our call centre and back office strategy has succeeded in establishing an entire new industry sector in South Australia; the Food for the Future strategy will triple the value of food industry production by 2010; the Capital City Development Program is a blueprint for the future of Adelaide which will stimulate investment in the city centre; the Education Industry Development Council that we have established aims to double the number of overseas full fee paying students studying in this State which will pump more than \$200 million into the South Australian economy.

There is good evidence that policies such as these are already having their effect on economic growth. Some of the State's economic indicators are now quite positive. Business investment, the most important lead indicator of future levels of economic activity, is at historically high levels. Last year, private new capital expenditure in the State rose 29 per cent, the strongest growth amongst all the States and the trend continues upwards. This is a stark contrast to the depressed business climate that the Labor Government's policies had reduced us to in 1993. Business investment levels in that year fell to their lowest level since the mid 1980s, as the business sector lost all confidence in Labor's financial and economic management, and we have been paying the price in economic and jobs growth ever since.

The migration exodus from South Australia has slowed dramatically to 3 400 last year, or the lowest level in five years. Again, this is in stark contrast to the situation of 1993-94 when annual departures reached nearly 8 000 as people voted with their feet against Labor's economic mismanagement and business depressive policies in the wake of the State Bank collapse.

Growth in retail trade in South Australia outstrips growth nationally. So does growth in the housing industry with dwelling commencements in the year to the March quarter up 33 per cent compared with the national average of 11 per cent. Telstra's most recent small business survey showed South Australian small businesses more positive about future prospects than those of any other State. Most importantly, jobs are being created. All job advertisement and vacancy surveys conducted by the ANZ and by the Australian Bureau of Statistics have shown strong positive trends at rates above the national average.



Clearly, economic indicators and trends like these do not just fall out of the sky. They happen because the Government is getting its financial and economic policy settings right. This budget continues in that tradition, continuing to create a conducive business environment for private sector activity and getting on with the job of reconstructing the State's finances. It is a responsible budget. It consolidates the hard work of the previous four years and stays on the path of fiscal responsibility. It is a budget that does not flinch from the hard decisions, but it is fair to say that it is a fair budget to the community. It balances the Government's social and financial obligations and, most importantly, is based on real and

realistic strategies for generating jobs and economic growth for South Australia.

Motion carried.

**The Hon. J.W. OLSEN (Premier):** I move:

That the remainder of the Bill be agreed to.

Motion carried.

Bill read a third time and passed.

#### ADJOURNMENT

At 10.25 p.m. the House adjourned until Wednesday  
1 July at 2 p.m.