

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Wednesday 12 April 2000

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

LIBRARY FUNDING

Petitions signed by 3 718 residents of South Australia, requesting that the House ensure government funding of public libraries is maintained, were presented by the Hons J.W. Olsen, R.G. Kerin, Dean Brown and Mr Lewis.

Petitions received.

COOBER PEDY CRIME

A petition signed by 781 residents of South Australia, requesting that the House urge the government to liaise with the community and provide resources to deal with increased crime in Coober Pedy, was presented by Ms Breuer.

Petition received.

PROSTITUTION

Petitions signed by 250 residents of South Australia, requesting that the House strengthen the law in relation to prostitution and ban prostitution related advertising, were presented by the Hon. D.C. Wotton and Messrs Lewis and Meier.

Petitions received.

SCHOOL ZONES

The Hon. DEAN BROWN (Minister for Human Services): On behalf of the Minister for Transport and Urban Planning in another place, I table a ministerial statement the minister will make there today.

LEGISLATIVE REVIEW COMMITTEE

Mr CONDOUS (Colton): I bring up the 14th report of the committee and move:

That the report be received and read.

Motion carried.

Mr CONDOUS: I bring up the 15th report of the committee and move:

That the report be received.

Motion carried.

QUESTION TIME

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

The Hon. M.D. RANN (Leader of the Opposition): Will the Minister for Human Services personally attend tomorrow's meeting of the clinical review of mental health services convened by his department so that he can hear first-hand from doctors and health professionals about the crisis in mental health at Glenside Hospital which is now posing a potential danger to patients, carers and the community? Late last year Glenside Hospital closed 10 secure beds in a locked ward at a time when support and rehabilitation services had been reduced in the community. I am told that last week,

because of the shortage of beds, Glenside Hospital actually paid for public patients—

The Hon. M.H. Armitage interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. M.D. RANN: —to be sent to Fullarton Private Hospital—

The Hon. M.H. Armitage interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister will remain silent.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: Have you finished?

The Hon. M.H. Armitage interjecting:

The Hon. M.D. RANN: Good!

The SPEAKER: Order! The leader will get on with his question.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: Last week, because of the shortage of beds, Glenside Hospital actually paid for public patients to be sent to Fullarton Private Hospital, Kahlyn Private Hospital and the Adelaide Clinic. Other patients requiring secure or acute psychiatric beds had to be kept at the Royal Adelaide Hospital and Flinders Medical Centre because of the bed shortage at Glenside. One patient who needed psychiatric care was sent to a local hostel for the homeless, which is not a hospital and does not have proper secure facilities or trained staff for mental health patients. Glenside psychiatrists are having to treat public patients in private hospitals around town—again because of the bed crisis at Glenside in recent weeks. Will the minister attend tomorrow's meeting?

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no need for the leader to repeat the question.

The Hon. DEAN BROWN (Minister for Human Services): First, let me take the House back to the situation that we inherited as a government in 1993. There was the closure—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. M.D. Rann interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The leader has asked his question.

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: Hillcrest, one of the two major mental health institutions in South Australia, closed with a view of putting the patients out into the community. However, in the budget of 1993-94, which was brought down by the previous Labor government, not \$1 of money was allocated to accommodate or treat those patients in the community. They were pushed out from Hillcrest straight into the broad community.

The Hon. M.D. Rann interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The leader has asked his question.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: First, I, with the department, asked Dr Peter Brennan to review the actual health summit and the recommendations coming out of it and to ensure the appropriate implementation of those recommendations. Dr Peter Brennan is regarded as one of the best in this area in the whole of Australia—probably the best—and he has been systematically working through the issues to ensure that we do have effective treatment both in the hospitals and in the broader community as a result of the transition from the hospital clinical situation, an acute situation for people with mental health, into broader community health support.

Tomorrow's seminar is part of the process of which I officially approved for Dr Peter Brennan, and in fact

Dr Brennan has already met with me and discussed a range of issues—

The Hon. M.D. Rann: Are you going to the meeting?

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: I am not going to the meeting, first, because parliament is sitting and, secondly, because I asked Dr Peter Brennan to consult widely with a group of people. He has brought 70 people together for tomorrow's meeting at my specific request. So, it is very appropriate indeed that he carry out the consultation and then come back and see me again to report on the results of that consultation. I have seen the issues to be discussed by Dr Peter Brennan. I have approved those issues and very comprehensive consultation out there to make sure we more effectively implement the issues that arose out of the mental health summit. We want to ensure that there is satisfactory treatment and supported accommodation in the broad community.

We are already taking a number of other initiatives hand in hand with this. One of these, which I have already announced, is that we will start providing supported accommodation on a much broader basis than we have provided in the past for all those people at risk. These are primarily people with mental health problems, but in some cases people with disabilities are falling through the gaps or, as the Coroner reported recently, some people are not accepted as mental health patients but for all intents and purposes have enormous mental damage as a result of alcoholism and drugs and similar problems.

We want to make sure that there is appropriate supported accommodation in the community. We are looking at at least three different levels of support for those people. We want to ensure high levels of support, together with clinical input, but out in the broad community. There will be a second level where people will be able to move from that higher level to a medium level of support, still with 24 hour coverage, still with trained mental health workers and still where necessary with a clinical mental health input. The third area will be people who can live in independent units within the broader community with a much lower level of support—not 24 hours on site support—but again where mental health workers make regular visits and can make sure they are getting the appropriate treatment if they need it. Our objective here is to help to take people from clinical acute care out into three different levels of support within the community.

We have already started a range of programs. In fact, I have already opened a number of the facilities for people with mental health problems. I will give some examples of those. Recently we opened a boarding house at Glenelg that is specifically designed to take people with mental illness and look after them with 24 hour support. In that case they get their meals prepared, rooms tidied, linen changed and clothes and laundry done for them. In that case there is a fairly high level of support and someone there on a 24 hour basis when they need that level of support. That is one example. Another excellent example is what we have done with the Port Adelaide mission using commonwealth-state housing funds under the housing agreement where through the Port Adelaide mission we have provided low cost housing, particularly for younger women who have children who need support and who are able to live together and get the general support. The objective there is to help those people move back out into the community and get employment and other support within the broader community.

So, let us acknowledge that there was a move by the former Labor government to relocate mental health patients

from institutions out into the community with absolutely no planning and no financial support to back that up at all. This government has increased funding—

Members interjecting:

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

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: This government has increased funding for mental health by over 20 per cent since it has been in office—

Ms Stevens interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order, the member for Elizabeth!

The Hon. DEAN BROWN:—and we are taking further steps now to provide supported accommodation through the commonwealth-state housing agreement, which is outside the normal scope of mental health payments. This parliament should also acknowledge that we have redirected our money under the commonwealth-state housing agreement specifically to those people with the highest level of need, and that includes people with mental illness or those people who otherwise would fall through the gaps.

So, we are providing appropriate accommodation. I understand the situation at Glenside: I have been out there, as the shadow minister knows, and if she had any common sense she would have informed the leader before the question today. I clearly understand the issues at Glenside. In fact, I ordered repairs and renovations out there as a result of that visit, and I understand the pressures on the mental health system and have talked about them in this parliament. We want an intelligent—

The Hon. M.D. Rann interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! I warn the leader for continuing to interject.

The Hon. DEAN BROWN:—understanding by the broader community, who do not just reject people with mental health problems but who are willing to be part of the solution whereby as a community we provide a broad range of options and much better support for people with mental health problems. After all, the evidence shows that one in four people are likely to suffer from mental health problems, particularly severe depression, at some stage in their life. There has been a tendency in the past to shun and push mental health to the back and try to forget about it. As minister I have been trying to bring it to the fore, and we have put in additional resources. At the beginning of last year I committed another \$3 million a year to make sure that we support and strengthen services out there for people with mental health problems.

Ms Stevens interjecting:

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

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: I would appreciate a strong supportive response from opposition members, who seem to have no answers on this at all: they merely want to criticise. When you look at our record and at what we have done recently in terms of trying to help people in the community with mental health problems, you will see that it far surpasses anything the previous government did.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the next question, it has been drawn to my attention that we have in the gallery this afternoon some distinguished visitors. I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of members and officials of the Vietnamese National Assembly who are here in Adelaide as

part of an Australian study tour. I welcome them to the chamber.

POPULATION

The Hon. G.A. INGERSON (Bragg): Will the Premier inform the House of the recent population estimates for South Australia?

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN (Premier): Population growth is continuing, and the latest growth rate of .5 per cent is an encouraging trend line we have now seen develop in South Australia. That has been driven by a natural increase in our population base but also supplemented by overseas migration. I note that the Commonwealth government has announced that it will be increasing skilled business migration categories next year by some 6 000, which is to be welcomed but which is still not sufficient for Australia's needs in the future. Our employment figures are also improving—clearly a real factor in continuing our population growth. In marketing South Australia interstate and overseas, job prospects and job certainty clearly have to be the base for a continuation in population growth. They are the opportunities which at the end of the day will attract people to this state.

Over the past 12 months in trend terms there has been strong growth in total employment in South Australia of 3.2 per cent. Over the same period nationally it was 2.8 per cent, so for the first time for a long time our employment growth in South Australia has outperformed the national growth figures. That is an economic indicator that underpins the strength of the economy in South Australia and, as I have stated, both Access and Econtech (and BIS Shrapnel in terms of non-residential construction activity) clearly indicate that that will continue over the course of the next two years.

We have currently 678 000 South Australians employed: that is a record, an historic record, for South Australia. Last month we were the only state to record an employment increase. Our unemployment rate is now the lowest it has been for something like 10 years. Unfortunately there are still people moving interstate, but these figures are at their lowest for years and well below the exodus caused by the collapse of the state economy in the early 1990s. We have had to work hard at creating more job opportunities for South Australians, particularly young South Australians.

Skilled migration can play a strong role in the solution, and it is an issue that we will be progressing at the immigration conference later this month with all states and New Zealand. The government is a strong supporter of significantly increasing skilled migration to Australia, particularly South Australia. In a meeting with a group of business people early this morning, they underscored to me yet again the importance of the skills shortage in South Australia to meet the demand as the economy continues to grow. We are attempting to address that in a number of areas. As I mentioned, the commonwealth has now opened the debate and South Australia is determined to play a leading role as it relates to skilled migration and to ensure that this state gets its fair share of overseas migration.

Stories of young people leaving interstate for job prospects are not as commonplace as in the past, and certainly the trend line is significantly reduced and continuing to move in the right direction.

Mr Atkinson: What are your stats on that?

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: The trend line for the last five or six years has been downwards.

Mr Koutsantonis: You just made that up.

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: I beg your pardon!

Mr Koutsantonis: You just made that up.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Peake will remain silent.

Mr Atkinson: Give us the stats.

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: I will give the honourable member one stat: unemployment when Labor left office was 12.3 per cent; unemployment today is 7.8 per cent. For another stat, let me repeat that employment growth last year was 3.2 per cent, compared with the national average of 2.8 per cent. If members want a set of stats, I will take those two every day.

As for the member for Peake, who interjected inanely yet again, I refer him to the ABS statistics in terms of exodus from South Australia in 1991, 1992 and 1993. If he looks at the last set of figures, he will see a trend line downwards. There is not the interstate migration—

Mr Foley: There was a recession.

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: The member for Hart has just admitted that at the end of the 1990s there was a recession—caused by Labor. We had a Labor government federally and a Labor government in South Australia and, thank you, you have confirmed that we inherited the mess that you left. What have we done about cleaning up your mess? We have turned it around: we have got employment growth, we have got new investment, and we have got the lowest level of unemployment in 10 years. That is not a bad track record.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! Members are cutting into their own question time.

MODBURY HOSPITAL DEATH

Ms STEVENS (Elizabeth): Will the Minister for Human Services detail what is being done to implement the recommendations of the Coroner following the inquest into the death of a person who had been detained under the Mental Health Act at the Modbury Hospital? On 7 April, the Coroner reported his findings on the death by drowning of a person who had been admitted to Woodleigh House under a detention order issued pursuant to the Mental Health Act. The report is highly critical of procedures at the hospital and says that there was a lack of appreciation of the significance of detention under the Mental Health Act, a failure to follow instructions and exercise an appropriate degree of supervision, a failure to keep case notes and a failure to act with urgency when the patient was found to be missing.

The Hon. DEAN BROWN (Minister for Human Services): In his findings, the Coroner came up with a series of recommendations as to what should be done, and I indicate to the honourable member that I sent a directive to the department, I think on the same day, to make sure that all those steps, which were aimed specifically at the Modbury Hospital, were implemented as a matter of urgency, and the department has taken those up.

Ms Stevens: Will you report to the House—

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: Yes.

ENFIELD HIGH SCHOOL

Mr SCALZI (Hartley): My question is directed to the Minister for Education and Children's Services.

Mr Atkinson interjecting:

Mr SCALZI: I thought you had graduated. Can the minister advise the House of Enfield High School's new direction in curriculum management?

Mr Foley interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Hart will remain silent.

The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY (Minister for Education and Children's Services): I constantly remind this House that education as we knew it has changed dramatically, both here and overseas. Teaching practices and tools of trade that teachers use are now out of date in many cases. We have students who are undertaking community workplace learning and who are undertaking consultation with the community and becoming involved with industry.

Mr Foley interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Hart will remain silent.

The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY: The question is: how has the government responded to this? In 1998, we undertook a wide consultation of the school community, because the message that was coming through was that members of the school community wanted more flexibility and more say in the running of their schools. This led to the formation of the Cox committee, and the result of that was Partnerships 21 schools. This has been an outstanding success. In the first round, 40 per cent of schools have entered Partnerships 21. Communities have supported this overwhelmingly—a real success story.

However, there is one negative. The Australian Education Union has come out and bagged this initiative, even though it was a part of the Cox committee that signed off on this report, supported the initiative and identified that there were benefits for the schools in this initiative. Yet, what did we get? Nothing but negativism from the AEU. It bagged the initiative and tried to coerce schools not to become involved. I say good on those school communities that became involved, ignored the union and looked at what was the best for their school community—something that the union never does.

Let us look at another initiative: the South Australian curriculum framework. The teachers in the schools that I have visited over the last couple of years have approached me and said that the curriculum is overcrowded—that they cannot teach what the curriculum requires, that they cannot squeeze into a day what is required in this curriculum. Teachers and educators want the best for their students in the classroom. As a result, a new curriculum framework is currently being trialled in our schools. The teachers to whom I have spoken say that this is clearer, simpler and easier to teach and that, from what they have seen, they are extremely happy with it. But again, what do we get from the AEU? We end up with a statement advising teachers not to become involved in it. We consulted 4 000 teachers in the course of drafting this new curriculum framework, and yet the director from the AEU says, 'Ban it. Do not get involved with it.' So much for the wants and desires of the teacher in the field.

Today I wish to inform the House of another exciting initiative that has been generated from Enfield High School. Last year representatives from Enfield High School approached my department and asked for flexibility in their timetable, because it believed that it would be an advantage for their students. So, we have set up a three year trial for the senior students of the school (year 11 and year 12) in which the school will operate on a four day week. Students will commence the day at 8 a.m. and finish at 4 p.m. This leaves

one day of the week—Friday—for them to undertake vocational education training, to obtain part-time employment if they wish or to become involved in their project work, do block study—it will give them some flexibility within their program.

The whole school community—teachers, parents and students—was canvassed and the support was quite amazing. It will enable students to decide for themselves what they do on that day for which there is flexibility for them. I think it has the potential, first, to attract some students back to school because they will be able to undertake part-time work on that day—on a specific day; they will be able to undertake school-based apprenticeships or traineeships as well undertaking their normal studies, and it will give them that increased flexibility.

But, the question is: will the AEU executive recognise this as yet another community innovation to improve educational opportunities for students in this state or will it, as history shows, do what it does best, that is, run at odds against the community and, again, bag this initiative purely to satisfy its own selfish needs?

HOSPITAL BEDS

The Hon. M.D. RANN (Leader of the Opposition): My question is directed to the Minister for Human Services, who tells us he is interested in history. Can the minister confirm that the average number of beds available in South Australia's public hospitals is now 500 less than it was in 1994? The 1999 *South Australian Year Book* indicates that the number of beds fell by 384, from 5 109 beds in 1994 to 4 725 beds in 1997. The opposition has been informed that the number is now below 4 600 and that this reduction of about 500 beds is equivalent to or much more than the closure of the entire Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

The Hon. DEAN BROWN (Minister for Human Services): I love these people who come along, as Johnny-come-lately or Mike-come-lately, to lecture us about what is occurring in medical technology. Back in 1994—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. DEAN BROWN:—which is the time that the Leader took as his reference point, day procedures were almost not known. Today day procedures account for something like 40 per cent, and in some hospitals 55 per cent, of all major procedures within those hospitals; so there has been a dramatic shift.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister will resume his seat. There are far too many interjections coming from the left this afternoon.

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: For example, six or seven years ago cataract surgery required you to go into a hospital, to have the surgery and then lie in a hospital bed for 10 days with a sandbag on either side of your head; and, as the specialists point out to me, that involved a mortality rate of about 2 per cent. The sandbags were necessary so that you could not move your head; your head had to stay remarkably still for the 10 days; it was a 10 day procedure in hospital.

Recently, when I was at the repat hospital, I was talking to the specialist there, and I met a gentleman at 12.15 p.m. who had had cataract surgery that morning as a day procedure, had a patch over his eye and was waiting for the taxi to go home. As the specialist pointed out, there is now no mortality risk under the new type of day procedure. There has

been an enormous improvement, change and shift in the way in which medical technology has moved over the past six years.

I cannot give the leader the exact number of beds—I will get that detail—but I assure him that the number of beds today is certainly less than it was a few years ago, simply because of this huge shift. I take, for example, a classic case such as the Royal Adelaide Hospital. It was designed to be a hospital with 1 000 beds; today it has about 750 beds. That is in just one hospital alone. However, the important thing—and this is the crucial part—is that the number of patients we are dealing with has skyrocketed in that period. Therefore, I would suggest that the—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order, for the member for Bragg!

The Hon. DEAN BROWN:—important indicator here is how many patients we are dealing with in our hospital. I assure the House that the number of patients has gone up very dramatically indeed. In fact, the honourable member has only to refer to our annual report which is tabled in this House each year to see the extent to which the number of patients has increased very dramatically indeed.

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: I can assure you that the Royal Adelaide Hospital, which has gone from having 1 000 beds back to having 750 beds, treats an enormous increase in patients in that period simply because of this change in medical technology. I am quite happy to take opposition members to the Royal Adelaide Hospital and get them to talk to some of the clinical specialists there so that they can get some idea of what has occurred in terms of the change in medical technology over recent years.

CAR THEFTS

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH (Waite): Will the Minister for Police please inform the House of steps being taken today to cut down on car theft in South Australia using the South Australian police and Crime Stoppers? There has been extensive media reporting of an upswing in car theft activity, and constituents confirm the personal and financial trauma associated with such thefts. I have first-hand knowledge of this problem, as last year, on two separate occasions, my own vehicle was stolen. The matter is one of ongoing public concern.

The Hon. R.L. BROKENSHIRE (Minister for Police, Correctional Services and Emergency Services): I thank the member for Waite for his question; I know he has a genuine and real interest in this issue. We have seen that when it comes to crime trends over the past 10 months or so—particularly since the new local service areas have started to get into full operation—there have been significant reductions in that crime increase that we highlighted to the chamber then. So, we can see a lot of good work happening with local service areas. One area that has concerned the government and police is the issue of motor vehicle theft and larceny. Members will recall that last August I spoke about the success of the anti-heroin trafficking phone-in day. That occurred between 10 a.m. and 10 p.m. In fact, from memory, the program was extended because of great community support.

Today, I am pleased to say that, as police minister, I was involved with the South Australian police in a launch known today as 'Car crime phone-in day'. From 10 o'clock this morning until 10 o'clock tonight, there will be a commitment

by Crime Stoppers to focus completely on the community ringing and reporting issues involving crime and motor vehicle theft. I do not know why the shadow spokesperson always has to sneer when I talk about the good work that the police are doing. This morning we launched this phone-in, and I can report to the House already that, since 10 o'clock this morning, there have been 45 calls from the community in relation to car crime. Police have already listed two of these calls for immediate investigation, and I have been informed that the phones have effectively been running hot.

I would like to encourage the South Australian community to continue to ring in today because, unlike the opposition which does not understand about partnership, modernisation and policy development, the South Australian community does understand these issues, and it is very keen to work with SAPOL in a partnership arrangement to combat motor vehicle theft and crime. I would encourage them not only to ring in today but also to continue to ring in whenever they see any incidents where they suspect that a neighbour or someone may be involved in motor vehicle theft.

There is also a special operation, Operation Vigil, which is looking at the specific targeting of motor vehicle theft and larceny. I am pleased to see that, as a result of this operation, in the period October to December there has been no increase in the number of illegal use and interference. What this shows is that, through community intelligence based policing, police are able to address particular issues in a very quick way with tactical responses.

Also it is worthwhile giving credit to the Attorney-General for the commitment he has to motor vehicle theft and the development of a comprehensive auto theft research system known as CARS which is a South Australian based program and which will now be expanded nationally. I need to put on the public record that, next to the United Kingdom, I understand Australia as a nation has the highest motor vehicle theft in the world. What we are now doing is looking nationally at how we can work on combating this motor vehicle theft.

Finally, as the member for Waite said, car crime victims suffer enormous trauma, inconvenience and expense. I, as have many members, have had constituents speak to me about when they have gone shopping before school, come out of that shopping centre and discovered that the car has gone. The trauma, the dilemma and the economic impact that that can have on a family is horrendous. Therefore, this car crime phone-in day, together with the other initiatives police are putting forward, are great initiatives and I encourage the community to continue to work with the South Australian police.

HOSPITALS, FUNDING

Ms STEVENS (Elizabeth): Given the Treasurer's repeated statements about cost pressures on the budget, will the Minister for Human Services explain his guarantee that after the sale of the Lotteries Commission hospitals will get extra money from general revenue? On 23 February 2000, the minister told the senate inquiry into health funding that he was absolutely confident that after the sale of the Lotteries Commission this money would be replaced out of general revenue. In 1998-99, the Lotteries Commission paid \$82 million to hospitals and since 1967 hospitals have benefited by a total of \$1.1 billion.

The Hon. DEAN BROWN (Minister for Human Services): As I have indicated several times publicly—and

I know the Minister for Government Enterprises has done so—the situation is that money from the Lotteries Commission went across to the health budget, and a certain number of dollars were involved in that. Cabinet has agreed that the same amount of dollars will go across directly from general revenue. Therefore, as a result of the sale of the Lotteries Commission, there will not be any reduction in funding to the health budget at all and cabinet has signed off on that. Therefore, with a cabinet direction behind him the Treasurer has ensured that the health budget will get exactly the same in dollar terms as it would have received from the Lotteries Commission, if in fact the Lotteries Commission was sold. As the Lotteries Commission is still there for this budget, it will get the money.

As this matter is also related to the pressure on the hospitals, a matter raised by the Leader of the Opposition, I indicate that the number of total admissions in our hospitals in 1991-92 was 271 000. The number of admissions in 1998-99, which are the latest figures I have, was 334 000. Therefore, there were 65 000 extra in-patients. In terms of non-in-patients, casualty has gone from 361 000 to 461 000, an increase of 100 000 non-in-patients. The increase in terms of outpatients—

Members interjecting:

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: I ask members opposite to be quiet and hear the figure for outpatients: the number of outpatients has increased from 1.3 million to 1.419 million.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! Members on my right will remain silent so that they can hear the minister.

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: So, whilst the number of beds has declined—and I am able to give a figure to the leader: the average number of daily beds available in South Australia was 5 280 and has declined to 4 630—changes in medical technology have allowed a much bigger increase. Over 65 000—

The SPEAKER: Order! Members on my right will come to order. This is the last general warning. From now on I will start warning and naming people.

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: I reiterate: there has been an increase of over 65 000 inpatients, an increase of over 100 000 casualty admissions and outpatients, and an increase of over 100 000 other outpatient admissions during that period. I can assure members opposite that I am happy to take them to and sit them down with my medical specialists and explain to them the change in medical technology that has occurred.

EMPLOYMENT, OLDER PERSONS

Mr CONDOUS (Colton): Will the Premier please provide his response to the difficulties facing older Australians in gaining employment?

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN (Premier): It is important to ensure that, following the International Year of Older Persons, we have and develop a society for all ages. To that extent the government has established the South Australian Centre for Lifelong Learning to ensure that mature adults have access to the training necessary to equip them with all the required skills to compete in a constantly changing labour market. It values the experience of our citizens, particularly those of mature years. I was somewhat alarmed to hear the member for Spence's comments in the past 24 hours regarding his colleague the member for Price. The member for Spence stated that Murray De Laine was seeking to overcome

the convention that you retire from parliament if you turn 65 in the term for which you are seeking preselection. Apparently this is the basis upon which they moved against Mr De Laine. I point out that Mr De Laine may wish to ask the Equal Opportunity Commissioner to look at those aspects of age discrimination legislation in South Australia. Here is a party, an opposition, that is not prepared to practise what it preaches in that context.

I point out for the benefit of the member for Spence that it was Sir Douglas Mawson who planned Australia's first Antarctic base at the age of 71, Sir Robert Helpmann was still dancing up a storm at the age of 77, and R.M. Williams is still changing the bush for the better at the age of 90; but for some unknown reason the member for Price does not qualify, because of the factional deals. So, perhaps the Labor Party would like to put to one side its rules on age discrimination as it applies to the selection process and offer a bit of equal opportunity to the member for Price.

MOUNT BARKER FOUNDRY

Mr HILL (Kaurna): Given the Premier's guarantee that the health of Mount Barker residents would not be compromised, does he support the reopening of the Mount Barker foundry with new technology, or does he support the Mount Barker Clean Air Group suggestion that a heavy industry site be established elsewhere in the Mount Barker council area; and will the government renew its offer to fund a relocation to such a site? The Managing Director of Jurlique International, Dr Jurgen Klein, who opposes the foundry and whose international operations are located nearby, is reported as saying, 'You don't put foundries within metres of residents, a school, and environmentally sustainable industries such as ours.'

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN (Premier): I am glad to receive the question, and I will trace a little history in relation to the matter. It was the Liberal Government that established the cast metal precinct. It was I as Minister for Industry and Trade who promoted the concept of the cast metal precinct and established it here in South Australia. Let us get the record straight in relation to the principle of having heavy industry appropriately placed within particular locations.

The member for Kaurna would also know that the government took the step of attempting in negotiation to assist with relocation of Mount Barker Products to the cast metal precinct. In the end the company decided not to accept the offer by the government of relocation to the cast metal precinct—a matter entirely for Mount Barker Products itself to determine. The government was pro-active: it assisted, modelled a package and presented it to the company which the company subsequently declined.

The third point I make to the member for Kaurna is that the matter is currently before the EPA. I am sure the honourable member is not suggesting that I interfere in any way with the processes before the EPA, because I will not do so.

BUILDING ON IT STRENGTHS FUND

The Hon. R.B. SUCH (Fisher): My question is directed to the Minister for Information Economy.

The Hon. M.D. Rann interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! I warn the leader of the opposition for the second time.

The Hon. R.B. SUCH: Will the minister advise the House of progress in relation to the commonwealth's Building on IT Strengths Fund?

The Hon. M.H. ARMITAGE (Minister for Government Enterprises): I thank the member for Fisher for his question and I am delighted to advise the House that South Australia—

Mr Atkinson: You are always delighted.

The SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Spence.

The Hon. M.H. ARMITAGE: I guess one of the reasons I am always delighted to identify success in the information economy is because it is such a good thing for South Australia. I am actually pleased with that. If the member for Spence is not pleased with that—

Mr Foley interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Hart.

The Hon. M.H. ARMITAGE: —one can only assume that in sitting opposite he does not want South Australia to do well, and it is a pity if that is the case. Nevertheless, I am very pleased and delighted to advise the House that South Australia has fared particularly well in the allocation of the Building on IT Strengths money that was announced by the federal minister Senator Alston on Monday. The total pool of funds made available through the Building on IT Strengths program across all states and territories, other than Tasmania, was \$76 million. I am very pleased to report that the South Australian consortium bid has been advised that its allocation out of that \$76 million is \$10 million, the highest single allocation in the nation. To the team bid and to all supporting organisations and to the key management staff at Ngapartji, the Playford Centre and the Business Centre, particularly on behalf of the small and smart companies of today (and, perhaps given the focus of the Building on IT Strengths money, more importantly the small and smart companies of tomorrow), I say, 'Thank you very much for a job well done.'

The fact that we have done so much better than our standard 7 to 9 per cent allocation, which many South Australians have come to regard as the standard share, in this case is a great bonus. We are fighting above our weight in that we are above the normal 7 to 9 per cent: we actually have 13 per cent plus of the pool. That gives us a great opportunity to maximise the money and the outcomes. The reason for this success is quite simply the collaboration that occurred in the bid. In times past perhaps each organisation might have mounted its own bid and dissipated its energy with the Commonwealth, and perhaps even confused the Commonwealth with the number of bids, and maybe the money might have been divided unequally between the bids, missing then the chance to maximise the growth opportunity.

Just as collaboration was the key in the bid, so it will be in the negotiations with the commonwealth, as it was in winning the WITSA bid for the World Information Congress 2002, which will be a wonderful bonus. All the programs that will be offered by the South Australian BITS (Building on IT Strengths) program and each of its partners will be well targeted and well constructed, and they will see every cent of the \$10 million delivered to the small and smart high growth companies in South Australia, which are the ones that are likely to see an exponential growth in employment and the economy of the future.

TAFE FEES

Ms WHITE (Taylor): How does the Minister for Education justify charging TAFE students hundreds of dollars

for tuition they never received, lectures they never heard, materials they never used and teachers they never met? Until this year TAFE students were charged a \$10 fee for receiving TAFE course status for recognised prior learning. The opposition has been contacted by angry TAFE students who have now been charged a full 50 per cent of the total course module fees, in return for recognition of this same course status, fees that can total hundreds of dollars.

The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY (Minister for Education and Children's Services): One of the things that we have done within TAFE is make the situation much clearer for students this year because, in previous years, TAFE students were charged a materials fee, an administration fee and a tuition fee. This year, we have brought that down into two areas so that, at any TAFE institute right across South Australia—whether it be in Mount Gambier, Ceduna or Adelaide—students pay exactly the same for that course. There are a number of advantages to that. It has shown that 86 per cent of TAFE students will pay either less for their courses this year or the same. In fact, some 70 per cent of students will pay less.

Ms White interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Taylor has asked her question.

The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY: As a result, a number of courses are now much cheaper for our students in TAFE, and it will encourage—

Ms WHITE: I rise on a point of order.

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister will resume his seat.

Ms WHITE: My point of order is that my question is about recognised prior learning courses, not TAFE fees.

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

The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY: Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is much more attractive for young people to come into TAFE. I wonder whether today the member for Taylor will show a little more imagination than yesterday because, after question time yesterday, I went back to my room and I had a look at the questions that the member for Taylor asked me on the GST and, surprise, surprise, they were word for word from this taxation book.

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY: That was all she had to do.

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister will not use—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Schubert will come to order. The minister will not use displays in the course of his reply and I suggest that he come back to the substance of the question that he has been asked this afternoon.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order, the member for Waite!

The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY: I thank you for your advice, Mr Speaker. Had the member read a little bit further yesterday, she would have been able to get the answer directly from the tax book.

OPAL MINING

The Hon. G.M. GUNN (Stuart): Will the Minister for Minerals and Energy explain to the House how the dedicated fund that the government has established to assist with exploration for opals at Coober Pedy and Mintabie, and also I hope at Lambina, in my electorate, is working? I seek your

leave, Mr Speaker, and that of the House to explain my question.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: We know the only thing that the honourable member knows about opal mining is branch stacking in Coober Pedy—

The SPEAKER: Order! If the member does not continue with his question I will withdraw leave.

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: I was under severe provocation.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Minerals and Energy.

The Hon. W.A. MATTHEW (Minister for Minerals and Energy): I thank the honourable member for his question: he has long been recognised in this place as a champion of the opal industry in this state and has ably represented the opal mining industry. I realise that the member for Giles has other business involving regional South Australia that she has been called to attend to today but I am sure she would have liked to be in the chamber to hear the answer to this question.

In answering the member's question it disappoints me that I must at the same time dismiss rumour and scaremongering that has been put to the opal miners by members of the Labor Party. It involves scaremongering, rumours and misinformation promulgated by the deputy leader. That, indeed, is most unfortunate. I would venture to suggest that the good people of Coober Pedy, the opal miners, have been used by the Labor Party yet again. This all happened at the same time. The member previously has informed this chamber of the disgraceful episode involving branch stacking in Coober Pedy. Members will recall when the Coober Pedy branch went from 18 to 68 members and when the member for Hanson's staff members were in there signing up—

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the minister to come back to the substance of the question.

The Hon. W.A. MATTHEW: This episode concerns meetings that were organised in Coober Pedy in relation to the exploration dollars that the member asked about in his question. Two seminars have been held in Coober Pedy dealing with exploration dollars. One seminar was held by the government and the other seminar was held a week later by the Labor Party and, indeed, addressed by the deputy leader—

An honourable member: A week later.

The Hon. W.A. MATTHEW: A week later. The government seminar was intended to involve opal miners in dialogue to hear their suggestions as to how they believe government could best help them to explore and extract their precious gems for the betterment of their industry. Obviously, expert staff were made available, and the opal miners put forward to government some very constructive suggestions. Information extracted from that meeting is being used by government to put forward the proposals I have detailed to the House. The meeting was held on 4 August 1999 at the Coober Pedy Golf Club. One week later, the Labor Party held a meeting at the same location. It obviously was not aware of the meeting the week before. It is the misinformation—

Mr FOLEY: Sir, I rise on a point of order. I know it would be a novelty to have standing orders observed but standing order 98—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr FOLEY: As I said, sir, as much as it would be a novelty to have standing orders apply during question time, I draw your attention to standing order 98: no debate is allowed. The minister is clearly not answering the substance of the question, he is debating it—

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr FOLEY: With a faint hope, sir, I ask that you rule that the standing orders apply.

The SPEAKER: Order! I hope that the honourable member has some knowledge of standing orders and that he has a look at standing order 137 occasionally, if he is making some—

Mr Foley: I will if you do.

The SPEAKER:—references to the chair.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! With respect to ministers replying to a question, very clearly the standing orders state that, provided a minister adheres to the substance and provides facts it is in order: if he strays into debate it is out of order. I have previously pulled up one minister because he was straying into debate, and I now direct the minister back to his reply.

The Hon. M.H. ARMITAGE: I rise on a point of order. Sir, in indicating to you that standing orders are rarely followed during question time and then later saying that he would follow standing orders if you did, has the member for Hart, in fact, reflected on the chair?

The SPEAKER: If the chair had heard that remark I would have clearly ruled that that was the case. At the time, I was giving a ruling and a response to a point of order. I did not hear the remark but if it was made it would be a complete and utter breach of standing order 137.

The Hon. W.A. MATTHEW: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Whether or not the Labor Party likes it, or whether or not the member for Hart likes it, I will put on the record the correct information for the opal miners so that they are aware of what assistance is available to them. The information promulgated by the Labor Party was nothing short of disgraceful. The opal miners were charged \$5 a head to hear the rubbish that was put forward: for example, that \$33 million was available from government for exploration. Opal miners at a meeting with government the week before asked for \$100 000: the \$33 million figure touted by the Labor Party in relation to exploration is the money spent by the mining sector itself on exploring the state, not money that is put forward by government for the assistance of the mining industry. That is the money that the industry itself spent.

The opal miners asked for \$100 000 in assistance. They were told that the government wanted to charge them \$500 for a software package to obtain assistance. That also was wrong, yet again. The opal miners have come back to us to ask what the truth of the matter is. The truth of the matter is that we are able to provide them with assistance, not what they asked for, but in fact \$8 000 more. We are providing the opal mining industry with \$108 000 in assistance. That has been provided to them through the targeted exploration initiative which I have partially detailed to this House before. We recognise the value in spending this money, even though the government receives no money from mining royalties from opal mining; we recognise the employment opportunities that opal mining generates; and we recognise the wealth creating opportunities that it also generates.

For the first time in 19 years the government has established a dedicated fund for assistance of opal exploration, at this stage in the Coober Pedy and Mintabie regions, with the

intention, after ensuring that the program is effective, of then expanding it to the other areas desired by the member.

The program will produce a number of significant initiatives. One of those is compilation of a geoscientific database for each of the major opal fields on CD utilising modern technology so that opal miners can identify areas of import; and to make that easy for them, computer access will be provided so that they can go to designated locations to look up the information they require, target the areas in the fields that they wish to explore and, for the first time, get modern, up-to-date, scientific information to enable them to explore their fields. We are also providing support for a national opal mining conference to be held in Coober Pedy in April next year, and opal exploration drilling programs will be conducted in Coober Pedy at a cost of \$50 000 and \$15 000 at Mintabie.

When the deputy leader was in Coober Pedy another piece of misinformation promulgated by the ALP was the claim that government would not help with drilling. We have before, we will again, and we will continue to do so with that expenditure of \$50 000 for drilling in Coober Pedy and \$15 000 in Mintabie—and the details of that were discussed with the opal miners the week before the deputy leader set foot in Coober Pedy. Opal miners can therefore rest assured that the information they received the week before the deputy leader's visit is correct and that the record has now been publicly corrected.

INDUSTRIAL COMMISSION CONSULTATIVE PANEL

The Hon. M.H. ARMITAGE (Minister for Government Enterprises): I move:

That pursuant to sections 29, 30, 34 and 58 of the Industrial and Employee Relations Act 1994 the nominee of this House to the panel to consult with the minister about appointments to the Industrial Commission of South Australia and the Employee Ombudsman be the member for Hanson.

Motion carried.

NULLARBOR REGIONAL RESERVE

The Hon. I.F. EVANS (Minister for Environment and Heritage): I seek leave to make a ministerial statement.

Leave granted.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: Of the five categories of reserves under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972, the regional reserve concept was established in 1987. This provides the government with an opportunity to exercise a management regime to maximise the conservation of wildlife, natural heritage or historic features of the land. At the same time it permits the utilisation of the natural resources of that land through pre-existing or future land uses such as mining and pastoralism.

There are seven regional reserves, principally in the remote semi-arid or arid areas of the state and covering some 10.6 million hectares.

Under section 34A(5) of the act, the responsible minister must report on each regional reserve at least every 10 years. This report must assess the impact of:

(a) the utilisation of natural resources to the conservation of the wildlife and the natural and historic features of the reserve; and

(b) the impact or the potential impact of the utilisation of the natural resources of the reserve on the economy of the state. This report must also make recommendations as to the future status under the act of the land constituting the reserve. The responsible minister must also cause a copy of the report to be laid before each House of the parliament.

The Nullarbor regional reserve was constituted in 1989. It covers some 2.2 million hectares and is located over 1 000 kilometres north-west of Adelaide, on the border between South Australia and Western Australia, to the north of the Nullarbor national park and to the south of the TransAustralian railway. The reserve conserves much of the South Australian section of the flat, treeless plane called Nullarbor. It is a vast arid landscape of limestone planes, covered in low shrubland, that extends from South Australia well into Western Australia. Caves, both within the reserve and in Western Australia, contain endemic fauna, and the area is the largest arid karst landscape in the world.

In establishing the Nullarbor regional reserve, the government of the day recognises that wildlife conservation should be the major use of this land, whilst permitting the utilisation of the natural resources of the land. Therefore, the classification provides a mechanism to develop cooperative partnerships for the sustainable use of the land. A review of the Nullarbor regional reserve was completed late last year, and I have pleasure in tabling it. The report confirms that the biodiversity and landscape values have been protected, whilst modest but useful mineral exploration has been undertaken. Management of the reserve has largely met the objectives of ecologically sustainable use of resources.

The land is important for Aboriginal people, both in terms of pursuing traditional practices and the presence of significant Aboriginal heritage sites. It is also becoming increasingly attractive for adventure tourism. It is important to remember that, without the regional reserve classification, we might not have been able to provide a conservation framework for this landscape, and this report confirms that the challenge has been successfully met. The review report, therefore, recommends that the Nullarbor regional reserve remain a regional reserve, as classified under the act—at least until the review within the next 10 years.

In accordance with section 34A(5) of the National Parks and Wildlife Act, I present the report on the use and management of the Nullarbor regional reserve.

GRIEVANCE DEBATE

Ms RANKINE (Wright): They are small, black, shiny and smelly, and they are crunchy when you step on them. If you live in my electorate, you do not have to wonder what I am talking about—I am talking about Portuguese millipedes. The deputy leader might smile and smirk, but he would not smile and smirk if he had to live with them, I can tell him. They are dripping off our curtains, coating our carpets and smothering our driveways. In fact, people are shovelling them out of their driveways. One resident contacted me and said that the road out the front of his place looked as though it was moving with these little creatures. The people in my electorate are getting increasingly frustrated with the damage that these little creatures are causing. When you walk across your lounge room floor and squash these little black, smelly,

crunchy creatures into your carpet, you soon start to wonder what is going on. It is not a nice thing to live with.

It is breeding time for Portuguese millipedes. The layout of my electorate is such that it has many open spaces and places for these millipedes to breed in. As I said, they are causing real problems. A couple of methods of control are available. They can be controlled through chemicals. This is expensive, a short-term solution and any use of chemicals has to be considered dangerous and a last resort. I understand that, if someone goes out and sprays a metre around their home, up to a metre high, they can stop them coming in. However, that really is not appropriate in many cases. Biologically, they can be controlled, and that is much more effective. However, to do that, a time span of 12 to 18 months is involved and, again, it is very expensive. To have successful biological control, there needs to be a concerted and coordinated approach. It is a nonsense to say to one householder, 'Go and buy some nematodes and put them around your house.' It will not work when there are thousands and thousands of millipedes down the street.

I have contacted both councils in my area, and they acknowledge that there is a problem, and in the past they have taken action. They have coordinated an approach, but it has been really costly for these councils. The Tea Tree Gully council told me that a nematode release in one street would cost approximately \$3 000. In an area like Golden Grove, you can just imagine what that would add up to. Both the Tea Tree Gully and Salisbury councils are saying—quite rightly—this is a statewide problem; in fact, I understand the problem spreads from Noarlunga through to Tea Tree Gully. An ad hoc approach to controlling these pests just has not worked in the past. I have written to the Deputy Premier, the Minister for Primary Industries, about this matter, and he wrote back, advising me of some very interesting information in relation to control of the millipedes. However, the bottom line was that he said it was the responsibility of councils and householders.

This problem cannot just be passed off like this. It is just getting too big in areas like mine. The Deputy Premier cannot lay it on the lap of individuals. It just will not work. These people are putting up with appalling conditions. You can just imagine walking into your house and seeing these little black shiny creatures hanging from your walls. It just is not good enough. The government has to take real stock of what is going in these areas, have a look at the problem and take some proactive action.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON (Heysen): I am delighted that the member for Wright has raised the issue of millipedes. This afternoon, we have heard a fair bit about history lessons, and I would like to give the member for Wright a little history lesson—

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: Exactly! Kym Mayes, who was the then minister for agriculture. I remember on numerous occasions—and this is going back to the early 1990s—making a considerable amount of representation to then Minister Mayes about this matter of millipedes. Nobody is more concerned about millipedes than I or the constituents of my electorate. I have to tell the member for Wright that, when millipedes first started to be noticed in South Australia, they were noticed in the hills first. I can remember taking at least two delegations to Minister Mayes and asking him to do something about it. He refused to do anything about it, and at the time I said to Kym Mayes, 'Nothing will be done until

these little black creatures start falling off the ceiling in the bedroom of ministers in marginal seats,' and that is exactly what happened. He refused to do anything until Unley became a marginal seat and the little critters got down to the metropolitan area; then he decided to do something about it.

However, it was very late in the piece, after a considerable amount of representation had been made, and I regret to say that the action that Kym Mayes took at that time has, in my opinion, not been very successful. If it had been the member for Wright would not be standing up here and talking about them now. There are a huge concern in my electorate. They have gradually worked their way through the metropolitan area now, and I would hope, as much as the member for Wright or anybody else in this place, that before too long we will be able to get a solution to the problem. They are annoying, and they are costly because of the damage they cause to carpets, and so on, as the honourable member has said.

I have had a number of complaints from constituents who regard these millipedes as being an absolute nuisance, if nothing more. I point out to the member for Wright that it is no good her blaming this government for not doing anything about the matter, when in fact it was her own government in the early 1990s that failed to do anything about it at all.

I did not want to stand up here today—and now I have only two minutes left—and talk about millipedes: I want to talk about Mundulla yellow, which members would be aware has caused a lot of concern throughout various parts of the state, bearing in mind the effect it is having on gum trees. The reason I raise this matter now is that I recognise and appreciate the significant amount of support that has gone into researching this plant disease. However, with winter approaching and with the trees starting to improve visually, I do not want to see a gap in the support to be provided for ongoing research.

Over the past two years, the state government has provided strong leadership in lobbying for national acknowledgment of this disease and has actively pursued a program involving research on the causes and potential cures of Mundulla yellow. I am delighted that the federal government came on board late last year with \$150 000, which is to be allocated to research through the bush care program. I am delighted with all of that, but I want to ensure that that research continues, because it is a major problem for South Australia. This disease needs to be recognised as a very significant issue for this state because of the effect it is having on our native vegetation. I can only hope that that continues to be recognised.

Mr KOUTSANTONIS (Peake): At the weekend I attended the opening of the new gymnasium and arts centre at St George College, along with the Greek Orthodox Archbishop of Australia, Mr Stylianos, the South Australian Bishop, Bishop Joseph of Arianzos, and Father Patsouris (the pastor or Reverend Father) whose church, St George, is located in my electorate of Peake. Nearly 10 years ago they had a vision to build a school that would house students requiring multilingual facilities. That school has now turned into the only Greek orthodox college in South Australia, with over 500 students. It was meant to be only a primary school, but it has now branched out into a secondary school. I must say that without the leadership of Father Patsouris this school would not have seen such progress.

The Archbishop came to bless the new hall and the new sports function centre and also made a speech, and I found his

remarks to be quite profound and wise. He talked about ancient Greek philosophy in terms of a sound body and a sound mind. In this time of Lent, of going without and making a sacrifice leading up to Easter, he talked about the sacrifices that Father Patsouris and the community have made to have this school built. He congratulated everyone, of course, and went on to talk about the courage of Father Patsouris in making this college not only workable but viable. The fruits of the school are the children. I have never seen children so well behaved at a school assembly. They were forced to sit through long speeches, followed by entertainment afterwards. I am sure they enjoyed it all, but these were very young children, and they were indeed very well behaved. They take an active role within the school, and they helped set up the function, which was well supported by parents as well.

St George College is a school catering not only for the western suburbs but for almost all the metropolitan area of Adelaide, with students coming also from the eastern, northern and southern suburbs. Unfortunately, many parents are now turning to private schools because of the way in which our public schools have been run down by this current government. However, this school is not just about students of Greek orthodox background: it now has a number of Aboriginal students and other students who are not of a Greek background, and they are making full use of the facilities. I think it is an excellent school, one of—

Mr Atkinson interjecting:

Mr KOUTSANTONIS: They are very well behaved students on tours of Parliament House. Also I must give credit to the chairman of the board, Mr Basil Taliangis, who, in partnership with Father Patsouris, helped establish the school. Mr Taliangis has worked very hard for the school. The people who make this school such a success are the parents and the local residents. I must say that many people in Thebarton put up with a lot from industry, considering the mix of residential and industrial areas. The Thebarton community of St George has done very well to include local residents in all its development programs and expansion ideas; indeed, the school has been embraced by the community. The St George College is now one of the jewels in the crown of the western suburbs and I commend all the people who have worked so hard to see that come to fruition. I thank the Archbishop for his permission to let Father Patsouris go ahead with the college and I also thank Bishop Joseph of Arianzos (the South Australian Bishop) for all the help he has given the local community in ensuring that this college is a success.

Mr SCALZI (Hartley): Last Monday, 10 April, I was privileged to represent the Minister for Youth at an important dinner for graduates of the youth opportunities program. I do not know whether members would be aware of the Youth Opportunities Association, which was established privately a couple of years ago by Mr Peter Marshman to offer programs and training to unemployed young people aged 16 to 25 years. It is a 12-week course providing communication skills, motivation, confidence building and goal setting. The participants receive learning in a variety of settings, including 10 hours in the classroom, two hours of counselling and 15 hours of fundraising per week. We are all aware that there is about 30 per cent youth unemployment in South Australia, which I agree is too high—

Mr Koutsantonis interjecting:

Mr SCALZI: Well, I will have to take elocution lessons, as the member for Peake is suggesting; perhaps we could go together. We are all aware of the youth unemployment rate which, as I said, is too high. There are various reasons for unemployment. We have structural unemployment, frictional unemployment and, of course, hard core unemployment, unfortunately involving people who are long-term unemployed and do not have—

Mr Atkinson interjecting:

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

Mr SCALZI: Of course, when you are long-term unemployed, as members would understand and appreciate, your self-esteem and confidence diminish. I congratulate the organisers of this course: the founder, Peter Marshman; the facilitator, Krysia Ciesiolkiewicz; Jenny Tuck, the training coordinator; and the sponsors involved. One of the special guests at the graduation dinner was Bill Cooper. The graduates were Robert Marciano, Steve Cansdale, Thi Nguyen Ngo, Daniela Stahl, Silvana Vagnoni and Belinda Clarke. It was really great to see the confidence in these young people; obviously the course is working. I would like especially to mention Steve Cansdale because, when asked what the course had done for him, he came up with a very good analogy that I certainly will not forget. He spoke of when you are driving a motor car on a road with your lights switched off and someone flicks their lights to tell you that your lights are not on; and a lot of young people are like that. Their lights might appear to be switched off, but what they need is someone to help them realise their potential. It is true that we all have lights; it is only that we forget to switch them on sometimes, and too often no-one is prepared to remind us. A course such as this does that. Not only does it provide young people with excellent skills but also it gives them confidence, because they care. When you have someone who cares, those young people are empowered. As a former secondary school teacher I know too well that, when you do something that in many cases is not expected for an individual, it does something for those students. It was great to see; I am privileged that I went, and I congratulate all the graduates.

Time expired.

Mr CLARKE (Ross Smith): In the brief time allowed me in the grievance debate today I want to raise an issue of some concern to me and other people living in The Parks area, in particular the establishment of a branch of the Hell's Angels motorcycle gang in premises just opposite The Parks Community Centre in Trafford Street. The Parks Community Centre is well used by those living in the region. It has a number of community facilities, including a health centre and a needle exchange centre. As we all know, the activities of outlawed motorcycle gangs are very much involved with the trafficking of drugs. A chapter of the Hell's Angels has bought this property, formerly owned by the Salvation Army. The property was bought in someone else's name, with an address in Rostrevor with the purpose of disguising the true identity of the new owners. Suddenly an eight foot high concrete fence has been erected in front of these premises. I am aware that the police are very concerned about this gang establishing its headquarters so close to residential areas, The Parks Community Centre and young people in particular.

I have spoken to and raised this issue with the Minister for Human Services, the Hon. Dean Brown, because at this very time we have a \$400 million redevelopment occurring within

The Parks area where ultimately the current concentration of Housing Trust homes will be broken down from about 60 per cent to about 25 to 30 per cent. How do we expect people to purchase homes within this \$400 million redevelopment when it is completed, when smack bang in the middle thereof we will have Hell's Angels bikie clubrooms? It is an absolute nonsense. I have requested that the Minister for Human Services in cooperation with the police and Port Adelaide Enfield council get together and work out ways within the law of how to prevent this club from operating.

The local residents and the community in that area do not want them; they are unwelcome. If they want to set up their bikie club then they can go and join the Gypsy Jokers somewhere in Wingfield, well away from residential areas and the like. We do not want them at all if we could get rid of them. No doubt they will establish their clubs, but we do not want them anywhere near young people, particularly when they ply their drug trade, as they inevitably will and as every other outlawed motor cycle club does.

This brings me to another matter of concern which I have raised with the Housing Trust and on which it has now acted. In the redevelopment work in The Parks and Ferryden Park area at present, when people have moved out and shut up a house ready for demolition, the gas mains should have been capped. However, this has not been done. The project developers responsible for it have not seen that Boral Energy has got on with doing the job. I have spoken with one woman whose house next door had been boarded up, and gas leaked because vandals or young children wandering around turned on the gas at the mains. Because the stove had been removed from the kitchen as part of the demolition process, the gas leaked out and was filtering through to this senior citizen's house. Had she struck a match anywhere, it would have blown up not only her but also the surrounding area. We might say that we could expect perhaps one house not to have its mains uncapped. However, I went down only three streets and counted more than 14 houses that had not had their gas mains capped, and there are similar problems with respect to water. When a house is demolished, the gas pipes should be removed beforehand; otherwise, if a person is going on with back hoe operations and breaks the gas line on the premises, it will be broken at the main trunk and all hell will then break loose with the amount of gas that will escape, the potential danger to local residents being immense. I thank Tony Elders and Jack Watkins from the TLC who brought this matter to my attention.

Time expired.

Mr MEIER (Goyder): On Friday 7 April I was privileged to be present at the opening of the new Port Broughton rural transaction centre. The centre was opened by the federal member for Grey, Mr Barry Wakelin, and was the culmination of some years of hard work in seeking to get this transaction centre up and running. It goes back to 1997 when the ANZ bank decided that it would close its branch at Port Broughton. At that stage there was a great deal of angst and concern at such a move.

I took a deputation to the ANZ bank head office in Adelaide, pleading with it to reconsider its decision to close the bank at Port Broughton. Despite the pleas, the ANZ bank decided to close the bank. A public meeting was held later that year at Port Broughton. It was a very well attended meeting—in fact, there was standing room only—and I was present, together with many local people. It was decided then that everything possible would be done to try to establish an

agency of some description, probably with a credit union. In fact, I would say that full compliments must be paid to Credit Care, a national organisation that has helped many communities establish credit facilities in their town. Certainly discussions were held with various other credit unions, but none of them came to fruition for the establishment of a separate banking institution in Port Broughton.

It is therefore all the more important that the Port Broughton rural transaction centre has come to fruition. Particular thanks must be given to the federal government, which provided a grant of \$120 000, some \$105 000 of which was for capital works to extend and renovate the building where the new rural transaction centre is housed. An amount of \$15 000 has been allocated as an allowance for operating costs for the first 12 months, and funding for regional transaction centres is available from the federal government as a result of the partial sale of Telstra—another positive for regional communities. The building has been established adjoining the current council offices and the builders need to be given full tribute for the way they have blended in the new building with the old. In fact if you did not know it was a new extension you would swear it was part and parcel of the original building, such was the excellent work undertaken by Harpers Carpentry and Joinery of Port Broughton.

Whilst the ANZ was certainly criticised back in 1997 for having removed its services from Port Broughton, the ANZ deserves full credit and praise for coming in with the rural transaction centre because in the new rural transaction centre there is an on-line agency of the ANZ Bank, which will provide for a wide range of banking transactions and services. I sincerely thank the ANZ for coming in and being part and parcel of the new rural transaction centre. Additionally, there is an agency for Centrelink assisting the public with a range of services, including the lodgement of forms for unemployment benefits, and also an agency for Medicare for lodgment of claims. Hopefully other government services may be included in the centre in future. For all involved, particularly the District Council of Port Broughton, Mr Nigel Hand, the district manager, and Mr Greg O'Connor, the deputy district manager, and their team, I say a very sincere 'Thank you and congratulations on establishing the first rural transaction centre in South Australia.'

Time expired.

COOBER PEDY OPAL MINING

The Hon. W.A. MATTHEW (Minister for Minerals and Energy): I seek leave to make a ministerial statement. Leave granted.

The Hon. W.A. MATTHEW: During the course of question time today I was asked a question by an honourable member in relation to opal mining at Coober Pedy and assistance provided by the government for exploration. During the course of giving an answer to that question I indicated my displeasure at misinformation being promulgated by the Labor Party at a meeting on 11 August 1999 and in advance of that meeting. In providing the House with that information I indicated that I was advised that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition had been present at that meeting.

The deputy leader has approached me since question time and advised me that she was unable to attend the meeting due to an injury. I recall the deputy leader sustaining an injury at the time in question and therefore have no reason to doubt what she says. However, that does not change the fact that the information circularised was so circularised in writing.

Mr ATKINSON: On a point of order, sir, the provision in standing orders for personal explanations does not allow debate.

The SPEAKER: Order! It is not a personal explanation. The House gave the minister leave to make a ministerial statement.

The Hon. W.A. MATTHEW: It is a pity the member for Spence was not listening a little more intently. That does not change the fact that the misinformation circularised by the Labor Party, stating on the information that it was circularised by the Labor Party, carried the name of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. The information is wrong.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE MURRAY RIVER

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON (Heysen): I move:

That the committee have leave to sit during the sittings of the House today.

Motion carried.

COOBER PEDY OPAL MINING

Ms HURLEY (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): I seek leave to make a personal explanation.

Leave granted.

Ms HURLEY: In the light of the statement by the Minister for Minerals and Energy I wanted to explain that I was indeed flat on my back with a broken ankle at the time and unable to attend the meeting at Coober Pedy, nor did I circulate any information under that heading. I approached the Minister for Minerals and Energy and asked him what proof he had that I had attended that meeting and made those statements. He showed me a flier advertising the meeting with my name on it. He did not—and I do not believe he would—have any statements circulated in my name containing the information he purported that I represented to the miners of Coober Pedy. He could not have had because I did not put out that information.

ENVIRONMENT, RESOURCES AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE: LOUTH BAY TUNA FEEDLOTS

Adjourned debate on motion of Mr Venning:

That the 38th report of the committee, on tuna feedlots at Louth Bay, be noted.

(Continued from 5 April. Page 780.)

The Hon. R.G. KERIN (Deputy Premier): In speaking on this matter I point out that this is the third reference that has skirted this same area. The Hon. Ian Gilfillan put forward this one and what we saw was a rerun of some of the earlier evidence from many of the same people. In fact many of the people who appeared are the same ones who opposed the tuna industry consistently: I give them that—they are consistent. We are working on an aquaculture bill at the moment, which will address many of the concerns raised. I will take this opportunity to address the recommendations of the committee.

The first recommendation is to do with the marine and estuarine strategy and the marine managers' forum is currently working on the implementation of that strategy, so that addresses that one. The second one is about the enactment of specific legislation, which is the direction in which we want to go. It is somewhat contrary to a later recommen-

ation, but that is certainly the way we need to go to give certainty to the aquaculture industry, to try to satisfy all stakeholders and bring forward some of the problems that occur because of the way that planning is done, so that problems are addressed up-front and not later when people are trying to invest.

The third recommendation was the amendment of aquaculture regulations so that they do not bypass the checks and balances needed for developments that have significant unmeasured environmental impacts. In late December 1999, we enacted some regulations to recognise temporary aquaculture development for less than 12 months as a category 1 development. This regulation change was consistent with a judgment of the ERD Court in relation to tuna farming in Louth Bay, which seeks to guarantee an adapted management regime, and the temporary development is subject to full assessment, including environmental impact assessment by the Development Assessment Commission.

The fourth recommendation was that sea-based aquaculture should be included in schedule 1 of the Environment Protection Act to enable the EPA to impose and monitor licence conditions. It is noted that the terms of reference for the ERD Committee's hearing into the Louth Bay tuna farms did not call for evidence in relation to environmental management from either the Department of Primary Industries or the EPA, the key agencies responsible for ensuring the ecological sustainable development of the aquaculture industry; likewise, with recommendation 5.

Recommendation 6 states that the committee recommends that more resources be directed to the monitoring and enforcement of legislation controlling tuna feedlots. Requirements for aquaculture under the Fisheries Act are enforced by a network of officers both of Fishwatch in the initial case, they being located throughout South Australia, and a special aquaculture compliance officer is responsible for the managing of aquaculture compliance issues.

There was a suggestion in the terms of reference that compliance officers were hindered because of a lack of resources and I was somewhat disturbed that in part of the report the words 'lack of resources' are left out, and I know that the suggestion of one of the witnesses is somewhat offensive to people within that section. I hope that he was not suggesting that we should interfere with the operations of officers.

In recommendation 7, the committee recommended the introduction of emergency provisions in the Development Act to ensure that a transparent and approved process can be used if emergencies such as Boston Bay in 1996 arise, and that has been picked up in the proposed green paper on the aquaculture act.

In recommendation 8, the committee recommended the standardisation of the language and measurement used to indicate the siting of tuna farms. The recommendation states that the use of two systems, that is, latitude-longitude and eastings-northings, is not satisfactory, but I am assured that those measurements are readily interchangeable and do not represent different systems of measurement.

In recommendation 9, the committee recommended the immediate implementation of a marker system that readily identifies owners and managers, and that will also be picked up in the green paper for the aquaculture act. Most of what the committee recommended will be picked up in the new act, and certainly in the green paper.

A couple of other issues should be raised. There have been some consistent critics of the tuna industry. One of the

unfortunate misconceptions is that Louth Bay residents oppose tuna farming. In reality, the local media reported that several residents of Louth Bay object, not the majority, and the residents made a clear statement that they support tuna farming and that they are not seeing fouling of their beaches. They were annoyed that others were willing to paint Louth Bay residents as anti-development. The issue of exemptions was picked up and the report states:

The committee believes that this reflects legislation that cannot adequately manage routine aquaculture development.

It referred to the number of exemptions that have been issued under section 59 of the Fisheries Act. Not surprisingly, at the same time as the report was released, the Hon. Ian Gilfillan issued a press release criticising the use of exemptions. I have asked for a full list of the exemptions granted and I cannot see any evidence that it weakens what is happening with aquaculture. Indeed, most of the exemptions concern research. A large number were issued within the pilchard fishery and there have been others involving charter boats, taking new species for research and development purposes, taking broodstock for aquaculture, importing and farming barramundi (17 exemptions), and testing gear which reduces bi-catch (21 exemptions). I cannot find evidence in that list of what the Hon. Ian Gilfillan is speaking about, and I think he should have checked that before he suggested that it makes the act unworkable.

We constantly hear from the same handful of anti-tuna people, and I will quote one witness, although I will not name that person. When referring to the feeding of tuna with imported pilchards, the witness said:

The fish do not even eat a lot of that imported bait because they do not like it. They do not want to eat it, so it goes straight to the bottom.

When one considers the millions of dollars spent on bait, that is an absolutely ludicrous claim and it shows that these people are not focused on what they are saying. It is a matter of the tall poppy syndrome for a number of them.

The report identifies a number of issues and they will be addressed in the green paper for the new aquaculture act. We look forward to making the aquaculture industry sustainable in the long term because that is the only way we will protect the environment, investment and jobs. It is an important industry to a lot of regional areas of South Australia, including Yorke Peninsula, but Eyre Peninsula has had a real boost from aquaculture. It has helped that region enormously as the number of farmers has decreased. It has held a lot of towns together and we will continue to promote it.

Mr VENNING (Schubert): I thank the minister for responding to all the committee's recommendations and I am pleased that they are on the record so that we can scrutinise them. I thank the minister for his cooperation, particularly as the government does not have control of the committee. We rely on the argument to stand on its merits and not in all cases does the government come out squeaky clean. I pay tribute to this minister because he has been honest with us and, when both sides of the argument have some problems, it looks as though the committee got it right. On one side there is the government and on the other side is the Tuna Boat Owners Association. We have got a bit of flak from both sides of the argument so I am relaxed and pleased that we have got pretty close to the mark.

I thank the minister for keeping an open mind and most of the committee's concerns will be addressed by the

government via the minister. That is what committees are all about: doing the outside work for the government and making recommendations so that the government can react where it wishes and leave things when it does not. I am confident that the minister will pick up almost all of the committee's recommendations. It is what is called a partnership and, as chair of the committee, I am pleased to have Minister Kerin doing this on behalf of the government.

I thank members who spoke in this debate, particularly the member for Hanson, who is a valued member of the committee. I believe that the member for Hammond spoke as well, although he is not here today. Public interest in this report has been the best since I have been chair, which is over four years, and that is because of the inflammatory remarks made in the media and because both sides were not happy with the committee, so we must have got it right. Mr Brian Jeffriess from the Tuna Boat Owners Association, its very high profile chairman, reacted flippantly and made several media appearances. He called the committee's report similar to yesterday's fish and chips paper, but that did not worry me in the least because it ensured that people got copies of the report and read it. No-one else has been critical of it.

Mr Jeffriess' comments are in stark contrast to remarks he made about the committee after two previous inquiries, namely, the aquaculture inquiry and the pilchard fishery inquiry. He complimented the committee, congratulated it on doing an excellent job, on getting an excellent hold of the argument, and on coming up with good recommendations. You cannot win them all. Mr Jeffriess has won two out of three, so he ought to be happy with that. I have no doubt that Mr Jeffriess and the committee will be associating in the future and I hope that he will give evidence as he has always done, in a strong and forthright manner. His comments do not upset me in the least and I hope I can say the same for him.

On a more serious note, Mr Jeffriess reflected on the members of the committee as being just a gaggle of people who do not understand and said that our recommendations were worked out purely on a political basis, or something to that effect. I absolutely refute those remarks, because we are a professional committee. I remind the House that there are two parliamentary leaders on the committee, the leader of the Democrats, the Hon. Michael Elliott, and the leader of the National Party, Mrs Karlene Maywald, in addition to two prominent Labor members and two Liberal members. So, it is a fairly high profile committee.

As I said, the government did not have the numbers so we had to work it out and come up with a consensus. It is easy to come up with a consensus when dealing with the facts and when the facts are before us. The committee has two excellent people who put those facts before us and who write out the detail. Not only do I enjoy my committee work but also I take it seriously. I think that my position as chair is probably one of the most rewarding jobs of my political career. It is essential and very interesting work.

I thank all those involved: the committee members and our staff, Mr Knut Cudarans and Ms Heather Hill, our research officer. I only hope that Mr Jeffriess is not too upset. He did refer to the committee as yesterday's fish and chip paper but, no doubt, we will see him again shortly during the course of the next inquiry.

Motion carried.

**PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE: WILLUNGA
BASIN PIPELINE (RECYCLED WATER REUSE
SCHEME)**

Adjourned debate on motion of Mr Lewis:

That the 112th report of the committee, on the Willunga Basin pipeline (recycled water reuse scheme), be noted.

(Continued from 5 April. Page 784.)

The Hon. R.L. BROKENSHIRE (Minister for Police, Correctional Services and Emergency Services): It gives me a great deal of pleasure to be able to speak with respect to the committee's report on the Willunga Basin pipeline (recycled water reuse scheme). Without doubt, this is one of the most significant initiatives that we have seen in the past 40 or 50 years in my region and in my electorate. I am delighted to be able to say that not only is the community now benefiting, both economically and socially, as a result of this recycled water project, but also that our children and our grandchildren—and, indeed, their children—will be significant beneficiaries of this initiative.

I would like to place on the record some information about this project. As members would know, there are about 150 000 people in the metropolitan part of my electorate and surrounding electorates who utilise the Christies Beach treatment plant. For a very long time throughout the winter and the summer we have seen thousands and thousands of litres of water—in fact, 10 megalitres—entering the gulf, and we have seen dieback of the seabed and general degradation of our very important environment along the coast.

By virtue of this project being developed, we now have a situation where with stage 1 we have started to see in particular the very damaging summer outfall into the gulf being prohibited and coming back into the Willunga Basin to offset a major problem in our region. We have in my electorate some of the world's best wine grape growers and winemakers, and that is very—

Mr Williams interjecting:

The Hon. R.L. BROKENSHIRE: I know that my colleague the member who represents the Coonawarra area always likes to put in his bit—they are learning down there, I admit. However, the fact is that the McLaren Vale wine region has for a number of years been winning world titles and gold medals across almost every competition, and particularly for shiraz and cabernet sauvignon. The problem was that we had a situation in my electorate where we were running out of water. This enormous growth in viticulture (we have seen viticulture literally double in the last five years in my electorate and in the Willunga Basin) was starting to put a major strain on the basin. Fortunately, I understand that that strain on the basin had not reached the point where it would have caused permanent damage. However, it could have meant that we needed restrictions in underground water allocations—and that still may be so for an interim period. But in the long term, by bringing this recycled water back into the basin, we will not only be able to offset all that pressure but we will also be able to see an increase in further plantings.

One example of the sort of developments that we are seeing almost monthly in my electorate at the moment was the opening recently by the Premier of the new \$6 million Hazelgrove winery. When you spend \$6 million on capital infrastructure like that you need to know that you will be able to receive on an annual basis not only quantity but also

quality grapes. That is what is happening as a result of this project.

In 1993, I was involved in writing the policy for the development of this recycled water project, and soon after coming into office we conducted an investigation into how that policy could come to fruition. The Deputy Speaker was then Minister for the Environment, and I would like to place on the public record my sincere appreciation for the good work that he did in supporting and assessing this initiative, as he also knew how important it was that we stop that degradation of the seabed and capitalise on water. He will go down in history for introducing in this parliament the Water Resources Act that also allowed some benefit for this project.

What had to be considered then was the best way to develop the project. Clearly, the government does not have to have money in everything if the private sector is prepared to get on with the job. So, the government's policy was further developed. A feasibility study was carried out and money and support for that feasibility study was provided by SA Water, and from there it concluded that it was viable to bring this water back from Christies Beach into the Willunga Basin. It was then that the private sector showed its real initiative. I would like particularly to place on the public record my support of Mr Vic Zerella, who led the charge from the private sector in lobbying me and other members of the government to get on with the job of making sure that this project came to fruition. The normal tender calls and processes and probity checks were then put in place and, of course, it is history now that we saw the Willunga Reusers Group formed, a group of local people who were prepared to put their money and efforts into this project.

Stage 1 was very quickly fully subscribed, and at the moment they are working on stage 2. The important thing now, in my opinion, is that we ensure that we can get stage 3 up. From my understanding, stage 3 will ensure then that there will be sufficient water to offset well and truly all the pressures in the Willunga Basin at the moment and therefore guarantee sustainable environmentally managed agricultural development for our region.

I understand that the project cost about \$8 million, but the point with this is that if we can get aquifer storage and recovery in place with respect to stage 3 we will not only be doing a good deal of work economically for our region but we will also be able to show the world what can be done with recycled water.

Given the shortness of time allowed for this debate, I will not go on any longer, except to say that I certainly appreciate what my community has done. It has always been prepared to get out in front and put its money and its efforts up front and not rely on government to do everything for it. I have been delighted as the local member to support and assist with the facilitation so far and I look forward to continuing to do so on behalf of my community in the future as we see other opportunities developed.

Ms HURLEY secured the adjournment of the debate.

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

A quorum having been formed:

**PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE ON
OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY, REHABILITATION
AND COMPENSATION: LEIGH CREEK COAL
MINE**

Adjourned debate on motion of Hon. M.H. Armitage:

That the second report of the committee on impacts of past and present coal mining operations on the health of workers and residents of Leigh Creek and environs be noted.

(Continued from 29 March. Page 657.)

The Hon. G.M. GUNN (Stuart): This matter which is currently before the House, and the desire of certain members of the Labor Party to continually raise this issue, is not a very productive enterprise. Some of us, including the Premier, have been involved in investigating this matter for a long time. I well recall going to Leigh Creek with the Premier on one occasion and when we got off the plane we had a welcoming party; 50 or 60 ladies clapped and cheered us when we got off the plane.

Mr Atkinson: And why wouldn't they?

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: That is right; and we were most indebted to them—

Mr Atkinson: Why?

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: Because of the stand we had taken in relation to this matter. We had stood up to a few people who wanted to endanger the whole operation of Leigh Creek. I also recall—

Mr Atkinson interjecting:

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: Look, I can make a living in the real world: you can't.

Mr Atkinson: Well, I did before I came here.

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: I would be surprised.

Mr Atkinson: The *Advertiser* newspaper was very happy with me.

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: That is nothing to write home about in a city with one daily newspaper; something would be wrong with you because you would not have any opposition or competition. I also remember attending a meeting of the Trades and Labour Council at Leigh Creek where a discussion ensued in relation to this matter, and a number of the members got very angry with one individual who was ignoring the wishes of that organisation and the local people by continuing to pursue these matters. At one stage I thought that he was going to be involuntarily invited to leave the meeting head first because they took a very dim view of his activities.

Mr Atkinson: Who was that?

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: I will not mention his name. All I want to say is that this matter has been investigated over a long time. The management of the mine is very aware of its responsibilities. It has bent over backwards for a long time. It brought outside people in to investigate these matters and they gave the management a tip in the right direction, so I do not think it is of great benefit to unduly raise the expectations of a few and create a great deal of concern to the community at large at Leigh Creek.

At Leigh Creek we have a very productive, well managed and efficient mining operation, and this government has approved the expenditure of tens of millions of dollars to ensure that it is competitive and that the coal fired power stations at Port Augusta can operate to world best practice—which they do. I intend to speak on another motion from the Public Works Committee about its report—and I have some

interesting things to say about that document because it is an absolute nonsense and a grave reflection on the competence of a most efficient and well run electricity undertaking for which the people of South Australia should be most grateful. I will deal with that in chapter and verse because I have all the information about the agenda of those foolish enough to go along with the Public Works Committee. They ought to have a good look in the mirror because they do not know what they are talking about. I will deal with that on another occasion because I have some very good briefing notes and I am fully aware that on this particular matter—

Ms Thompson interjecting:

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: I did not hear the honourable member.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member is out of her seat.

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: I am very charitable; I would not want to misquote her in any way—even though she is out of her seat. All I want to say is that I think the quicker this matter is put to rest, the better. There has been enough discussion over a long time and I am afraid a great deal—

Mr Atkinson interjecting:

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: Look, if the honourable member wants to assist the gentleman in question, I will convey all the mail that comes to me to the honourable member and invite him to respond. I have a collection of a mail from that gentleman; I think he would have filled a couple of filing cabinets.

The Hon. R.G. Kerin interjecting:

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: I will not be so rude as to comment on that.

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: And may he enjoy Kangaroo Island for a long time into the future.

The Hon. R.G. Kerin interjecting:

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: He has not forgotten me, either. He actually wrote some rather uncharitable things about me recently.

Mr Atkinson: That is something we have in common.

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: I am pleased to say I do not have a great deal in common with the honourable member. With those few comments I sincerely hope this matter is not further pursued as it is not a productive enterprise to do so.

Mr HANNA (Mitchell): I move to amend the motion as follows:

After the word 'noted', to add the words 'but the matter is referred back to the committee for a thorough investigation'.

The Public Works Committee when taking evidence and looking at the coal dumping bridge at Leigh Creek observed that there were signs of health problems among the workers and the population at Leigh Creek. That was not the brief of the Public Works Committee, so it was appropriate that it refer the matter for investigation to the Parliamentary Committee on Occupational Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation. It seems that that committee carried out only a very cursory examination of the issues raised. The main form of examination was simply to take into account various reports which had been made over the past few years—some of them good reports but not necessarily conclusive in respect of the concerns that had been raised with members of the Public Works Committee last year.

So, it is a matter that requires further investigation. I suspect it requires the committee to actually go to Leigh Creek and take evidence first hand from workers—perhaps

medical practitioners and members of the township—so that a proper assessment of the previously published reports can be made. A couple of key points need to be addressed. The diseases concerned range from asthma to cancer, so we are not dealing with something trivial.

Section 19(3) of the Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare Act 1986 imposes a duty on employers, as far as is reasonably practicable, to monitor the health and welfare of the employer's employees in their employment with the employer, in so far as that monitoring is relevant to the prevention of work related injuries. Of course, other duties are imposed. However, it has been raised with me that perhaps those duties have not been carried out in respect of workers in Leigh Creek. I am so far from persuaded that it is not funny when I hear the member for Stuart say that he has spoken with senior management of the company there and that has completely reassured him.

In order to properly address this matter, there needs to be a call for public submissions, certainly in Leigh Creek specifically. However, as was pointed out by the member for Reynell when commenting on the Public Works Committee report on the Leigh Creek coal dumping bridge to which I have already referred, the health problems which might originate in Leigh Creek often end up being treated in Adelaide, Port Augusta or somewhere else. So, this is a topic where the parliamentary committee really needs to have a look under the fingernails and carry out some extensive investigations. It will not be enough to hop off a plane at Leigh Creek, greet the local council or Trades and Labor Council, shake hands and go home again. It is a matter that will require advertising and seeking out information. It certainly is not good enough simply to refer to previously published reports and rely totally on them without more. I seek leave to continue my remarks later.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: It is not possible for the member to seek leave to continue remarks when speaking to an amendment.

Mr HANNA: Thank you, sir. I am sure that, with a little more time, I could bring even more information to the House. However, there is enough there to establish a prima facie case that this matter needs to be thoroughly investigated. It certainly has not been thoroughly investigated to the satisfaction of all members of the Parliamentary Committee on Occupational Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation. That fact was alluded to by the minister when he referred to the committee being divided on issues arising from the report. We note the report but we on this side at least, speaking from a concern for not only workers' health but also the people of Leigh Creek and the people who live there from time to time, would want to see this matter further investigated, and the appropriate vehicle to do that at this stage would be the parliamentary committee; hence, my amendment.

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH (Waite): I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

The House divided on the motion:

AYES (23)

| | |
|--------------------|------------------------------|
| Armitage, M. H. | Brindal, M. K. |
| Brokenshire, R. L. | Brown, D. C. |
| Buckby, M. R. | Condous, S. G. |
| Evans, I. F. | Gunn, G. M. |
| Hall, J. L. | Hamilton-Smith, M.L.(teller) |
| Ingerson, G. A. | Kerin, R. G. |
| Kotz, D. C. | Matthew, W. A. |

AYES (cont.)

| | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| Maywald, K. A. | McEwen, R. J. |
| Meier, E. J. | Olsen, J. W. |
| Scalzi, G. | Such, R. B. |
| Venning, I. H. | Williams, M. R. |
| Wotton, D. C. | |

NOES (15)

| | |
|---------------------|------------------|
| Atkinson, M. J. | Bedford, F. E. |
| Ciccarello, V. | Clarke, R. D. |
| Geraghty, R. K. | Hanna, K. |
| Hill, J. D. | Hurley, A. K. |
| Key, S. W. (teller) | Koutsantonis, T. |
| Rankine, J. M. | Rann, M. D. |
| Thompson, M. G. | White, P. L. |
| Wright, M. J. | |

PAIR(S)

| | |
|----------------|---------------|
| Penfold, E. M. | Breuer, L. R. |
|----------------|---------------|

Majority of 8 for the Ayes.

Motion thus carried.

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE: SOUTH COAST WATER SUPPLY AUGMENTATION PROGRAM

Adjourned debate on motion of Mr Lewis:

That the 110th report of the committee on the South Coast water supply augmentation program, stage 1, be noted.

(Continued from 29 March. Page 661.)

Ms THOMPSON (Reynell): Members will recall that this is an important water project to secure supply of water to residents of the South Coast area, and this means residents from McLaren Flat to as far as Victor Harbor. Currently there is a problem with the water supply, and SA Water identified in 1996 that, unless action was taken urgently, there would be water restrictions in the near future, particularly in the Willunga Basin. SA Water told the Public Works Committee that it was likely to have to introduce water restrictions during the summer that we have just had in the South Coast township area south of the Onkaparinga River due to the existing restrictive capability of the system to replenish the Hindmarsh Valley reservoir during the summer. Regretfully, we are aware that in fact the residents of McLaren Flat did experience water restrictions, and it was indeed unfortunate that action was not able to be taken in time to give them a secure supply of high quality water over this recent summer. We certainly do not want to see a repeat of that performance so, for my part, I am fully in support of the need to proceed with this project.

However, a few issues need to be talked about, and I want to make clear that, in indicating areas where there may be some problems with a proposal, it in no way diminishes the importance of the proposal. It is the responsibility of the Public Works Committee on behalf of the parliament to identify where there may be issues with a proposal. If we do not discharge this responsibility, we may as well have Wednesday mornings off and go doorknocking.

I hope that all members opposite will take serious note of issues of concern that are raised by the Public Works Committee and treat them not as criticisms but as things that, if attended to, can advance the good government of this state and the good use of the money of the people of this state.

The first matter needing some attention at the moment relates to the Aboriginal heritage issues connected with this scheme. I raise it simply because we did not get complete assurances during the investigation that these matters would

be attended to. Issues are identified in the environmental impact statement by Woodward-Clyde Pty Ltd, and there was an acknowledgment of the Aboriginal cultural heritage at the Sellicks Hill and Nettle Hill sites which will require a plaque or marker of some sort to note the significance of these sites.

It is also recommended that a local Aboriginal heritage representative and an archaeologist should monitor any major earthmoving activity. I simply raise those matters to remind the department of the importance of these issues and to indicate our interest in receiving reports on progress relating to Aboriginal heritage issues because some work is occurring in sensitive areas.

There is also an issue about water flow reversal, and this means that, at some stage during this project when some residents will start to receive water from the Happy Valley reservoir instead of the Hindmarsh Valley reservoir, there will be a lot of disturbance to the pipes. As a result, the water that people receive will be very dirty indeed, and they will find their baths and showers unpleasant—and certainly they will not want to wash their whites in it. The proponents have indicated to us that they will be notifying customers through the local news media and the *Advertiser* for several weeks prior to this event, and a 24 hour contact will be included to answer any questions from the public. I want to ensure that it is noted in the House that sometimes these wonderful improvements of securing a water supply do have these downsides, and that we will seek the indulgence of the customers who are affected and let them know that the benefit that they purchase through having this horrible water for a few days—and we hope it is not long—is a secure water supply.

However, there are other issues relating to some of the economic matters. My personal view is that, whatever the numbers, this project is so important that it needed to go ahead. However, we need to be quite open and honest in looking at the economic figures connected with proposals coming before this House. One issue that was raised during the hearing was the potential use of the Hindmarsh Valley reservoir, which will no longer be required. It was suggested that this might be able to be used for direct irrigation purposes.

The results of a brief inquiry by SA Water was that on a stand-alone basis, that is, considering the Hindmarsh Valley reservoir irrigation usage on its own without looking at any alternative proposal, this option could generate a favourable economic outcome of some \$12.2 million positive net present value with a benefit cost ratio of 1.95.

A copy of this economic assessment is included as an attachment to the report, and SA Water will further investigate this option before concluding how to pursue the future of the Hindmarsh Valley reservoir. The analysis indicates that irrigation could provide a beneficial usage of the reservoir and provide a benchmark on which to compare alternative options for the ultimate future of this facility.

The department indicated to us some time considerably before Christmas that it would undertake this activity but, unfortunately, we do not yet have a report on it, despite the fact that a quarterly report is well overdue. We are anxious to know how they will deal with that matter.

Another matter on which I have some personal anxieties is the possible conflict with the Willunga Basin waste water company scheme. The contacts from that scheme have raised with me privately a concern that SA Water was going to pump in fully filtered water to areas where it would be competing for sales with the waste water reclaimed by the

Willunga Basin company about which we have heard so much, and so many congratulations have been given on its initiative.

I have also been involved in congratulating them on this initiative. I am concerned that SA Water seems to be operating in a vacuum in terms of its policy for water supply in the southern area. It does not have a clear policy about the use of recycled water; and the fact that it may be setting up a situation where recycled water would be in competition with filtered water is most undesirable. Again, despite the lapse of time during which the department should have reported to the Public Works Committee, we have no further information on that. Everything may be fine. There may be no potential conflict between the two proposals, but it is important that this be made clear to the Public Works Committee, because we want to see that the best use is made of recycled water and that companies that invest considerable money in finding a use for this recycled water are not facing unnecessary competition. Indeed, we need to decide whether it is appropriate that competition be a factor in the supply of water, in what areas competition may benefit users and in what areas it would simply add to duplication of resources. The recycled water has to go through separate pipings—lavender coloured, some of you may recall—so that means considerable capital construction. If they are going to invest in that construction they do not want to be beaten at the post by SA Water undertaking a new supply.

Mr WILLIAMS (MacKillop): My comments will be fairly brief, but I wish to raise a couple of important matters. This highlights a typical problem that governments face in certain areas where you have large variations in the requirements for services, as we do in the south coast towns, because the population increases dramatically during the summer months because Victor Harbor and surrounding areas are very popular tourist destinations at that time of the year. The population increases markedly and puts a heavy tax on the services provided. SA Water has come up with a wonderful solution here. Not only has it come up with a solution to provide filtered water into those towns and communities via the augmentation of the pipe network down there but it is also using what to date has been excess capacity from the Onkaparinga filtration plant. So, that is a great solution to two problems: excess capacity and lack of service provision and filtered water at certain times of the year. On top of that, as the previous speaker mentioned, there is this idea of selling water to irrigators in the off-peak winter months to offset the capital cost of the infrastructure. The irrigators can store that water on their property and use it in the rapidly expanding grape growing areas to the south of the city, in the Willunga Basin and farther south.

The previous speaker has mentioned some concerns about whether this would compete with the Willunga pipeline which is carrying diverted waste water into that area. Would the two schemes compete? While I was sitting here listening to those comments my recollection was that we received evidence during our hearings that that was not the case. I remember that we had that concern at the time. We asked Mr Kym Wallent, General Manager of Adelaide from SA Water that question. Referring to an overhead on the wall in evidence given to the committee, he stated:

... the overhead depicts three areas south of the Onkaparinga River: one area fairly close to the east of Moana and Maslin Beach, which are the current areas served by the new Willunga Basin pipeline scheme; another area to the east and north-east of that area,

which are the areas into which it is envisaged that the Willunga Basin and the use of irrigated effluent could expand into the future; and the area we have targeted as being possible for off-peak sales relevant to this augmentation scheme is located to the south of the Willunga Basin pipeline area—the area bordered in the east by Willunga, in the south-west by Sellicks Beach and in the west by Aldinga Beach.

So, contrary to the previous speaker's assertion that there are potential conflicts between those two schemes and that they could compete in the same market, the evidence put to the committee clearly shows that that is not the case. I certainly compliment SA Water on this scheme because, as I said earlier, it not only solves the problem of lack of service or excess pressure on the service in the townships on the south coast but it also provides valuable water to the a growing and important industry in the southern hills areas.

Motion carried.

DAIRY INDUSTRY (DEREGULATION OF PRICES) AMENDMENT BILL

The Hon. R.G. KERIN (Deputy Premier) obtained leave and introduced a bill for an act to amend the Dairy Industry Act 1992. Read a first time.

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

That this bill be now read a second time.

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

Leave granted.

This bill brings into effect an agreement between the Australian dairy industry, the Commonwealth government and the States to deregulate the Australian dairy industry in a coordinated and orderly manner.

This has been requested by the dairy industry itself at a national level and has the full support of the Australian Dairy Industry Council, the Australian Dairy Farmers Federation, and, at the State level, the South Australian Dairy Farmers Association, milk processors, vendors and milk hauliers.

The dairy industry, at all levels, has been very concerned that deregulation through a piecemeal removal of price and supply controls across Australia, could cause dislocation and confusion in the industry.

The South Australian Government has done all in its power to ensure that the changes that now need to be made will be implemented under the best possible conditions for the State's dairy farmers. The industry now has an agreement with the States and the Commonwealth that dairy farmers will be entitled to structural adjustment assistance over the next eight years, conditional on each State removing milk price and supply control arrangements from its statutes.

The Bill is designed to come into effect at the same time as similar legislation in the other milk producing states. It will deliver to dairy farmers the opportunity to assess and restructure their businesses so that they can operate in a new, deregulated market environment. The result of this adjustment will be that South Australia's dairy industry will be more competitive and will have its export prospects further enhanced.

I commend this bill to honourable members.

Explanation of Clauses

Clause 1: Short title

Clause 2: Commencement

These clauses are formal.

Clause 3: Amendment of s. 3—Interpretation

This clause removes the definitions of 'authorised price equalisation scheme' and 'farm gate price' from the Act.

Clause 4: Amendment of s. 12—Functions of the Authority

This clause removes paragraph (a) of section 12 which refers to the Authority's functions of recommending the imposition, variation or removal of price control in respect of dairy produce.

Clause 5: Amendment of s.15—Accounts and audit

This clause removes subsection (3) of section 15 which refers to the audit of any money collected and paid under section 23(3) of the Act or under a price equalisation scheme.

Clause 6: Amendment of s. 19—Licence fee

This clause inserts subsection (1a) which provides that the regulations may prescribe differential licence fees.

Clause 7: Repeal of Division 2 of Part 4

This clause removes Division 2 of Part 4 of the Act which deals with the control of the price of dairy produce of specified classes and the farm gate price for milk.

Clause 8: Repeal of Division 3 of Part 4

This clause repeals Division 3 of Part 4 of the Act under which the Minister may set up price equalisation schemes or approve voluntary price equalisation schemes.

Mrs GERAGHTY secured the adjournment of the debate.

STATUTES REPEAL (MINISTER FOR PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND RESOURCES PORTFOLIO) BILL

The Legislative Council agreed to the bill without any amendment.

DEVELOPMENT (SIGNIFICANT TREES) AMENDMENT BILL

Received from the Legislative Council and read a first time.

SUPPLY BILL

Adjourned debate on second reading.
(Continued from 5 April. Page 790.)

Mr FOLEY (Hart): Today I wish to begin my supply speech by touching on a number of issues relating to the budget, but importantly at this stage I would like to talk a little about electricity, given the significant impact the privatisation process has on the state budget.

Mr Scalzi interjecting:

Mr FOLEY: I am glad the member for Hartley talks about Pelican Point, because I wish to touch on that. A very important report was brought down but it received little or no media attention here in South Australia. It was a report clearly of some significance for what it says and for whom, and by whom, it was done. The Business Council of Australia is a body that many Australians in all walks of life and in the political field hold in high esteem. I assume that members opposite, the conservative side of politics, would certainly be at the forefront of those who respect and rely upon the views and advice of the Business Council. They engaged some consultants to undertake a review of energy reform, particularly as it relates to the operation of the national electricity market. Significant micro-economic reform was put in place under the Keating Labor government and more recently is under the stewardship of Peter Costello and the various states.

This report has been done to look at whether the market is behaving as expected: are the wins and reforms that were promised being delivered and, ultimately, are consumers in business receiving the price reductions that were promised, and just how is the market itself behaving? I urge all members to go to the web site of the Business Council of Australia at www.bca.com.au and look at this report because it is very important for the debate on electricity reform in Australia and, most importantly, South Australia.

My initial reading of the very detailed report confirmed some of the fears I held as the shadow minister responsible for electricity reform, and that is that we see emerging—and, I believe, confirmed by this report—one of the most significant policy blunders of the Liberal government since its

election in 1993. It is a policy blunder because, as I will detail to the House shortly, the route that has been chosen by the government to deal with the competitive framework for electricity in this state is not delivering what it promised and will not deliver, according to this report, for the foreseeable future or the next few years at least, and has cost users of electricity in this state significantly. That is a fundamental policy failure.

Much has been debated about electricity in recent years, much about the issue of privatisation, and I will not go into that in any great depth. I am referring here to the constructive debate about policy settings as they relate to micro-economic reform and to the very important input costs of electricity and the effect it is having on business in this state. The Liberal Government has failed business. The program put in place will fail households when they are finally deregulated, and it shows quite starkly that the government has not put in place the right policy and is presiding over, as this is an evolving issue, a monumental policy failure that will cost taxpayers, both business and residential, quite significantly.

I will read in part some of the elements of the report that relate to South Australia so that my statements about the significant and monumental policy blunders can indeed be shown to be just that. The report talks about the expected price reduction that consumers would receive in Australia from the reform of our electricity businesses, and a number of predictions were made at the time. According to this report, electricity price reductions in the order of 25 to 30 per cent for business users were forecast to flow from the cost reductions being passed on due to the effects of competition and the removal of cross subsidies that favoured domestic and rural users at the expense of industrial and commercial customers. Gas price reductions expected were more modest, at 4 per cent, and were mainly to come from price reductions in Adelaide, Sydney and Brisbane due to the use of cheaper Victorian gas via new pipeline connections.

As we look at this report, it is quite clear that price reductions have not been delivered in South Australia to the extent that it had been hoped they would. Medium and large industrial and commercial consumers in New South Wales and Victoria have experienced very large reductions in their electricity prices. I am quoting directly from the report. They have a graph that illustrates data from a survey by the Electricity Supply Association in Australia, which shows 20 to 30 per cent price reductions up until October 1998. These reductions were supported in other evidence obtained by the consultants working for the BCA. It goes on to say:

The scale of the price reductions realised by customers in New South Wales and Victoria has not been matched in Queensland and South Australia. Customer comment in the latter [that being South Australia] indicates small or no price reductions in electricity.

That should alarm all consumers, particularly business consumers as they are the ones facing the realities of deregulation. The report goes into a number of other areas, but I will move on to where it comes back to addressing issues in South Australia. It states, under another section:

Energy reforms are best assessed against criteria that deal with industry structure and economic incentives.

It goes on to say:

A range of significant problems have emerged in both the nature of the reforms and their implementation.

We are getting to the crux of the matter now. In relation to South Australia it says:

The size and the mix of electricity generation capacity in South Australia and the entities created in New South Wales and Queensland are currently unable to sustain competitive outcomes.

That is a direct quote. I repeat that the size and mix of electricity generation capacity in South Australia is currently unable to sustain competitive outcomes. That should send the alarm bells ringing around business and policy makers in this state. It has some important graphs, and I urge all members to look closely at them. The report continues:

An examination of the electricity generation structures in each state participating in the NEM [the national electricity market] reveals that Victoria has a competitive industry structure but that all—

Mr Hamilton-Smith: Thanks to Jeff Kennett.

Mr FOLEY: Thanks to Jeff Kennett. I am glad you have said that. Listen to what I am saying and you will learn something. It is the sort of stuff you do not learn in MBA classes at the university but stuff that you learn from the school of hard knocks and the school of practical experience. If that comment in the report means hats off to Jeff Kennett, so be it. The report continues:

All other states face problems in this area, that is, while the energy market reforms envisaged a competitive environment for generation, only one state adequately laid the foundation for this.

One state only has laid the foundation for a competitive framework for generation.

Mr Hamilton-Smith interjecting:

Mr FOLEY: We have a Liberal government here, and I am glad that the honourable member raised that because I will get on to South Australia.

Mr Hamilton-Smith interjecting:

Mr FOLEY: The member for Waite has walked into the chamber halfway through my contribution. We are talking not about privatisation but about industry structure, something that the opposition has been encouraging the government to get right for many years, and on this issue the government has not been frustrated by the opposition. We encourage the government in the corporatisation and break-up of electricity, to put in place the right competitive framework. That is where I say a major policy blunder has occurred. I ask the member for Waite to listen to this report of the Business Council of Australia. I am not talking about something that has been prepared for Labor: this is from the masters of the conservative business community. This is what it says:

The situation in South Australia is also a problem. One of the generating companies (Optima) owns nearly all of the capacity that sits on the critical part of the cost curve; that is, at the point where demand typically interacts with supply.

That is not an issue of whether it is publicly or privately owned. It is a statement of fact that Optima sits at the very point where demand typically interacts with supply, and that clearly gives Optima a strategic market position. The report goes on to say this about South Australia, and I again ask members to follow it, because it is extremely important:

While the government is currently selling the three generating companies individually, that will not change the fact that Optima can (if not prevented by regulation) make regular trade-offs between reducing supply and lifting the overall market price. It is estimated that 70 to 80 per cent of the time the level of demand is such that the Victorian-South Australian interconnector is constrained, which leaves Optima to set the market price.

Optima, be it privately or publicly owned, for a very large part of the time is able to set the market price. The report continues:

Optima's strong market position comes from its physical configuration and position on the cost curve, not from any action of

government. In fact, the South Australian government has used vesting contracts to reduce this market power. Optima is usually committed to supply, at a fixed price, more power than it has the capacity to supply, so that if the market price spikes upwards it suffers the result. That is, at the margin it has to supply power at a fixed price and buy it at a higher price from the market. This regulatory control, however, ceases within a year or two of Optima's privatisation.

The report goes on to talk about Western Australia, where structural separation has not occurred, so there is no joy for Western Australia. The report deals with likely immediate future generation industry structures and states:

There are many proposed investments in electricity generation in Queensland and South Australia. They will add considerable capacity in Queensland and South Australia.

One might think that that will help our state, but the report goes on to say:

In South Australia the position is also improved with Pelican Point. It would still seem likely, however, that Optima (through the Torrens Island plants) could continue to exercise considerable power for some time into the future.

This report is saying that, even with National Power's Pelican Point plant, Optima Energy will continue to exercise considerable market power for some time into the future. That should be a great concern to all members on both sides of the House. The report continues to deal with a possible choice between competitive structures and more regulation but, because the document did not download from my laptop as clearly as I would have liked, I may not be able to read all the words. It states:

While governments established a national electricity market... and proposed competitive generation, the industry structures that naturally exist (in South Australia) or were created (in New South Wales and Queensland) are not conducive to the market achieving its objectives on a sustainable basis, and it may take some time before the high prices in South Australia and Queensland will attract sufficient new entrants to solve the problem of industry structure and, given the excess capacity, it will take even longer in New South Wales.

That is saying clearly that the market structure that is in place, including the new entrants into generation, will not be conducive to the market's achieving its objectives on a sustainable basis. That should alarm all members. I am citing a Business Council of Australia report, which is saying that the market structure is wrong. The report goes on.

The Hon. M.R. Buckley interjecting:

Mr FOLEY: It does, and I will move on to that now. It goes on to discuss solutions under the heading 'Insufficient electricity interconnection links'. It states that interconnections were designed by the people developing the market as the way to spread the surplus power and to ensure that a competitive market evolved, and the insufficient quantity of electricity interconnection is a major impediment to the competitive market. The report continues:

The clearest need for interconnection is in South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria—

where else would it be—

but the energy market reforms have not been able to encourage the development of the needed interconnection in South Australia.

The report's next point reveals a startling fact, one which should shock all of us and which clearly highlights the ramifications of this significant policy blunder. It states that prices in South Australia have been over double those in Victoria during the period that the consultant surveyed the market, and the report goes on to say that, had there been increased interconnection, the price difference between

Victoria and South Australia would have been around 15 per cent.

So, the lack of interconnection with Victoria or New South Wales has meant that the price in South Australia has been double that in Victoria. It would have been only a 15 per cent price differential had proper and sufficient interconnection been in place. Business can thank this government for its not being able to access cheap electricity.

An honourable member interjecting:

Mr FOLEY: Even the member for Hartley could work out that, for similar industries in South Australia and Victoria, if there were double the price for electricity in Victoria over the medium to long term, investment would chase the cheaper power. If we do not close that price differential quickly, we will see a flight of capital to Victoria and/or New South Wales, and that will cost jobs and cost this state dearly.

There has been much debate about whether we should have regulated or unregulated interconnectors. Members would be familiar with the protracted debate concerning Riverlink (and I know that this is an issue that has interested the Acting Speaker), and the government, of course, is out there championing MurrayLink, the unregulated interconnector. We welcome MurrayLink: let us make that very clear. We welcome any extra electricity supply into this state. But let us talk about this in terms of what delivers the best outcome for the state.

The report states that regulated interconnectors face many hurdles. It talks about the approval process within NEMMCO for gaining approval for regulated interconnectors and it details the need to be referred to a committee, consideration by the ACCC, further consultation and the transmission entities in each state having input. It talks about the opposed vested interests. And there is a startling admission that, in respect of the code for interconnection, in the case of the SANI proposal (that is, the Riverlink proposal), 'the code was shown to be faulty'. So, with respect to Riverlink being knocked off by NEMMCO some 18 months ago, according to the business council and its consultants, the code that detailed how that approval process should be undertaken was shown to be faulty. It states that the proposed South Australian-New South Wales interconnection (SANI) apparently failed the test because of this technicality. So, Riverlink was not stopped because of any broad policy objective or assessment of the criteria that meant it was bad for our state. It was a faulty process that knocked it out of the ring on a technicality, a technicality that has cost business in this state dearly. The ACCC has very recently proposed a new code intended to fix this problem. So, the ACCC has acknowledged that there was an error and, indeed, is fixing this problem as we speak.

I am not denigrating MurrayLink because, as I said, the opposition welcomes it. It is a private sector entrepreneurial initiative, and there is no need for government to get in the way of that. But what concerns me is that we did not help to resolve problems around the regulated interconnector which, in my opinion (backed up by this report) should have been in place. In relation to entrepreneurial interconnectors such as MurrayLink, the report states:

Entrepreneurial interconnectors may lead to under investment when compared [I think the wording is] to regulated interconnection.

What it says clearly is that an entrepreneurial interconnector makes its profits by exploiting the extent of the price differential between the source of electricity and the market which it is selling into. Obviously, it buys cheap and sells

high. That is clearly what it is there to do—to exploit that differential, according to this report. According to the report, for entrepreneurial interconnectors to maintain making good and decent profits they must maintain a large price gap between the two markets. So, it is in the interests of an entrepreneurial interconnector such as MurrayLink to have a significant, or, indeed, as this report from the business council says, large price gap between the two markets. And good luck to MurrayLink if that is what exists. I do not blame it for wanting to exploit that price differential. That is obviously where the market will lead. Hopefully, such a price gap would not exist, but government has an obligation to ensure that there would at least be enough competition in the market so that that price gap was minimised, and then allow the entrepreneurial interconnector to make its investment choices accordingly.

This report goes on in some detail about whether or not regulated and unregulated interconnectors can coexist. It highlights the strengths and weaknesses in both regulated and unregulated—that is not to say that there are not some issues with a regulated interconnector—and it raises what are clearly major issues for the state. It talks about the fact that South Australia needs to obtain access to cheap New South Wales power. That is clearly the most obvious way for the price for electricity to be forced down; to have downward pressure on pricing. How much that price will be reduced in South Australia will be determined on how the new interconnection capacity affects bidding in the markets. High prices in South Australia usually only occur when the current interconnection is constrained; that is obvious. So, the more interconnection we have, the less constraint we will have between markets and, hopefully, that will drive a more competitive framework.

As I said, this is a major report. It reveals much about what I consider to be this government's most serious policy blunder on electricity. It is not one that need exist for a long term: we can fix it. Clearly, one way to fix it would be for the government to revisit the regulated interconnector with New South Wales and to see what can be done by government to encourage that interconnector. I know the Treasurer will seize on these words and say that the member for Hart wants government to be in the market, putting taxpayers at risk with respect to electricity. He is all about retreating from electricity and leaving it to the market. The reality is that governments cannot retreat from the operation of the electricity market, because politically we obviously will get a rude awakening from the electorate. But equally, governments have to oversee the operation of this national electricity market. Indeed, the ministers in each state have an obligation and a requirement to do that under the existing arrangements. What I am saying is that, if we need a regulated interconnector with New South Wales to drive down prices, let us put it on the table and see how we can make it happen.

With respect to the issue of whether or not it costs the taxpayer, according to this report, it is already costing the taxpayer for not having it. I do not know the difference. The Treasurer asks why taxpayers should put \$20 million or \$30 million into building our side of the border in terms of the transmission corridor. I ask the Treasurer: what is the difference between putting \$20 million or \$30 million into a stretch of transmission line between wherever it may be—from Berri to the border—and the \$25 million it has cost taxpayers to build the transmission corridor from one side of the Port River to the other down to Pelican Point? That is a regulated transmission corridor and the transmission company will recover the cost of putting that in place from the

consumer. If it is good enough to spend \$25 million to build a transmission corridor on the Le Fevre Peninsula to service Pelican Point, what is the difference in putting that money aside to build the regulated interconnector? I can see little difference, and I would argue that the benefits of putting the corridor into New South Wales would have far outweighed the cost—and, indeed, would have been more cost-effective for this state—of Pelican Point. This report reinforces my view—and pulls together the strands of the debate, as far as I am concerned—that new generation is needed in this state; there has never been an argument from the opposition about that.

Mr Hamilton-Smith interjecting:

Mr FOLEY: The member for Waite chirps in 'Pelican Point'. I have never been opposed to putting new generation into this state. I argued, as any local member in this place would, that the physical location of that plant was wrong. That is my opinion and the opinion of those who elected me to represent them in this place. We were quite constructive. We simply suggested it be built two kilometres further away on Torrens Island where there is a power station already. This was not an issue of great moment: it was a two kilometre differential in where the plant should be built. The opposition cannot be accused of frustrating that issue at all.

But, clearly, for generation to come into this state we need to have more interconnection and, as the Business Council of Australia is arguing, a regulated interconnector to put the downward pressure on prices and after that, if entrepreneurial interconnectors such as that proposed by MurrayLink think they can make a buck, good luck to them. The inescapable fact derived from this report is that National Power is keen to build a power plant in this state. Why? Because it is an attractive market that has high price and lacks sufficient competition so it thinks this is a damn good return on its investment. Why is MurrayLink being built? Because there is a significant price differential between the price of power it can buy cheaply in New South Wales and the high price at which it can sell into South Australia. That is its motivation—and there is no argument with that. Why would it not want to put an interconnector in place?

But when will this government wake up to the fact that its policy blunder is costing consumers? I will send a copy of this speech to the business community and ensure that they read the Business Council of Australia report. I know that the view of the Chamber of Commerce is very much that we should have had interconnection, and it is a breathtaking revelation to actually see the new Chief Executive of the Chamber of Commerce entering public debate and, indeed, leading some public debate on this issue which, as I have said to many, is a refreshing change for the Chamber of Commerce.

This is an extremely important issue and it is one that we should free, where possible, from political rhetoric and get down to the fact that we do not have a competitive market in this state. The Business Council of Australia is now saying that; it is saying that, even with new generation at Pelican Point, even with MurrayLink, the government will still have price problems in this state for some time to come—and that is compounded of course by the obvious market influence Torrens Island has, be it under public or private ownership.

I would implore this government to do the decent thing: to acknowledge it has made a policy blunder; do not try to tough it out; and try to repair the damage it has done to the electricity market in this state by not actively encouraging the Riverlink interconnector. I know that ETSA thought it was

a good idea, because it was pushing it within government; the government thought it was a good idea; the now Premier thought it was a good idea at the time; and I suspect the member for Bragg when he was the minister responsible for electricity supply in this state would have had plenty of reports coming to him about the value of an interconnector in this state. Somewhere along the road to privatisation, the government got a little greedy when it came to the money it wanted to get for its assets.

That is not just the shadow Treasurer saying that: it was also said, in not quite so colourful language but certainly said, by Alan Asher, the deputy head of the ACCC, at a conference which was reported in Monday's *Financial Review*. He said that some states, wanting to add value to their assets in their privatisation processes, have not promoted an actively competitive market. Given that Victoria has already sold its assets, he can be talking about only one state.

The Hon. G.A. Ingerson interjecting:

Mr FOLEY: The member for Bragg asks: do I want less money in the bank? So, the member for Bragg is acknowledging—

The Hon. G.A. Ingerson: I'm just asking a question; it's a simple question.

Mr FOLEY: My position is quite clear. As far as I am concerned, it is not a matter of wanting less money in the bank. I want the cheapest electricity made available to business, and ultimately families, and fair value for the sale of our assets.

The Hon. G.A. Ingerson interjecting:

Mr FOLEY: No, not if most money comes at the expense of consumers through higher electricity prices because, ultimately, it is a circular argument. If you get more money to retire debt but consumers ultimately have to pay more for electricity, it is a zero sum game in the economy. We need to set in place a framework that delivers cheap price. Once you get that, you then sell the generators and electricity businesses at fair value. We are kidding ourselves as a market, a state and an economy if we attempt to over inflate the value of our assets because it helps a short-term political goal of this government to balance its books. It must be an issue of compromise and trade-offs; and the member for Bragg was not in the chamber when I made the comment that in the Business Council of Australia report it states that electricity prices in South Australia are double those in Victoria and that, had we had a regulated interconnector or more interconnection, particularly regulated, the price differential would be 15 per cent.

The Hon. G.A. Ingerson interjecting:

Mr FOLEY: This is what the report states.

The Hon. G.A. Ingerson interjecting:

Mr FOLEY: Well, fairness to us: you have been in government for 6½ years.

The Hon. G.A. Ingerson interjecting:

Mr FOLEY: It was a different world back in 1991-92. You have been in government for 6½ years and it is your responsibility. You have been the government presented with the facts on this matter. You should have acted; you wanted to act; you were going to act until you decided to privatise. Clearly, the consultants' advice was that, if you wanted to maximise your price, this is what you needed to do; and, given that consultants are paid success fees for the value of the transaction, that throws in other issues involving whether it raises a conflict of interest about the objectives of what you are trying to achieve—but we will leave that for the Auditor-General and others to comment on.

This is an important document. It pulls together the threads of the argument about a competitive electricity market. I hope all members in this House read it. Having received a copy only today, I have touched only briefly on some of the points in it. There are a few gaps in what I have said today because of the quality of what I have downloaded; about a quarter inch of one column is missing on a few pages, but I hope that what I have said has pulled those threads together.

I conclude my debate on supply tonight by briefly touching on the issue of the budget. One of the things concerning me about the state of the budget is that the Treasurer on his own admission has said that the budget will be in deficit this financial year between \$46 million and \$100 million as a direct result of this government's sloppy budget which factored in an ETSA tax increase but which did not eventuate because ETSA was sold—but this government precommitted the expenditure for this year and outgoing years predicated on that matter. This budget is structurally in deficit. It is not just structurally in deficit: it is in deficit proper, but the underlying structural nature of this budget is that we are and will continue to be in deficit even after the sale of all our electricity assets.

The Hon. G.A. Ingerson interjecting:

Mr FOLEY: I have never formed a budget. The point of the exercise is that I was alarmed to hear the Premier this week say that we are receiving increased receipts from increased economic activity in terms of what was forecast with receipts for government, and he implied that it would then give him more money to spend on government services. I would have thought, given this government's rhetoric about balanced budgets and financial responsibility, that indeed any extra receipts would be about reducing the real deficit and not about spending—which is clearly an increasing priority of this government as it becomes desperate in the lead-up to the next state election which is but 18 months away. Notwithstanding that, the member for Bragg is trying to set the scene that we have two years until the next election. To the nervous backbenchers, I say it will be 18 months. The member for Bragg may wish to drag out this government's term to 4½ years. Could we be so lucky? The government would be well and truly for the high jump if it tried to push out its term to 4½ years. I say that by way of aside. This is a serious debate tonight and not one for political rhetoric.

I hope that the government will be diligent with any extra income it receives from receipts and take it off the budget deficit. I also hope that it will resist the temptation to go on a spending free-for-all in the lead-up to the next state election. The member for Bragg says, with a grin the size of the Sydney Harbor Bridge on his face, that he would not do it. I hope that the Treasurer still has some influence over cabinet and is able to keep some fiscal discipline in this state because, when this opposition resumes the Treasury benches in 18 months, we would like to face a reasonable budgetary position, not one that has been caused by this government's plundering in a desperate and vain attempt to hang on to the Treasury benches. With those concluding remarks, the opposition, in yet another display of bipartisanship, will support supply.

The Hon. M.D. RANN (Leader of the Opposition): I also rise to support supply in an act of bipartisanship, and I hope that that will be recognised by the government when it makes its response. We have heard statements made day after day in the parliament about what would happen to the budget

if the government secured the sale of ETSA. We were told that we would see thousands of extra surgeries per day, extra TAFE campuses built every week and the complete refurbishment of the Murray River. My advice to the government is: the leadership that South Australia deserves involves more than finding every angry crowd and agreeing with it, because that is basically what we are seeing. Now that the government has the ETSA sale through, it is bailing out from all its promises. The problem is that those promises were received and recorded by interest groups around the state.

A government governing with the kind of majority which this government has and which has been held to ransom or is under siege and is now struggling to survive on a daily basis does not have the moral authority to do what is right for the state. That is why Labor will not be going into the next election campaign in 2001 with uncoded election promises, unfunded commitments or concealed taxes. At the last election we saw a government prepared to tell untruths to the people of this state. Government members said that they would never sell ETSA and that they would not increase the quantum of taxation. However, it has gone up 48 per cent during the time that this government has been on the Treasury benches. Of course, it is a government without policy. Its only policy is privatisation, and its only commitment is looking after its mates who are getting fewer and fewer by the day.

I want to say a few words about the new tax system which is to apply from 1 July. It is interesting to note that the government has taken this long to deal with the matter—and there has been a four month break in the sitting of parliament—and it has done so because it fears public scrutiny. We saw that in its dealings with the estimates committees last year. Instead of the usual two weeks, we saw six months or never as the norm for the government to reply to questions asked about serious budgetary issues. We have seen a government that is prepared to rort the FOI rules. With regard to freedom of information, basically the onus now is cover up at every stage. That has now gone not only to answering questions in question time—and only a handful of questions was asked by the opposition today—but also to the government's conduct in so many areas.

The goods and services tax is all the work of the Howard and Olsen governments. Everyone knows now that the GST is an unfair, aggressive tax upon low and middle income earners. As I have told the House before, the GST is a regressive package whose main adverse impact falls upon people on low and middle incomes but with great benefits for very high income individuals and big businesses. If the member for Hartley (Mr Scalzi) disagrees with that, my clear advice to him is to do what I have been doing—doorknocking in his electorate. The message I am getting from small business in the seat of Hartley is that they feel betrayed by what this government and its federal counterparts have done on the issues of the GST and the emergency services levy, respectively. Of course, what we are seeing is an attempt, bit by bit, to change the tax mix away from a reasonably progressive scale of income tax—that is, the more you earn the more you pay—to taxing people, regardless of whether they are rich or poor, for the goods and services they consume. They are taxed at the same rate regardless of whether they are buying essentials or luxury items.

Yesterday, we saw the Minister for Education make some fundamental mistakes in his political career, because every single word he uttered when mocking the concerns of parents of schoolchildren about the impact of the GST on fund raising

at schools will be delivered to every parent in the electorate of Light. So, they will be able to see how he regards volunteers and the contempt in which he regards people who put their heart and soul into raising funds for schools in his electorate. The same is true of small business.

It is interesting to note that we have the members for Hartley and Bragg disputing the impact of the GST on small business. Of course, we saw the Premier saying that he believed that the GST was a whole new vista for small business—that it would be cleaner and simpler for small business. Let me tell the House that Max Baldock, who is the head of the Small Retailers Association and a great South Australian, says that not only is the average small family business spending about \$5 000 setting up computer systems in order to try to comply with the GST but also the estimate now is that an extra seven hours a week is spent dealing with the GST. Of course, that is time that a small family business, under pressure from rack renting lease lords, cannot afford when trying to do what they want to do, namely, raise a quid for their family and also employ people.

It is interesting also to note that members opposite are now mocking Max Baldock and his organisation. Let me say this now: if members opposite believe that the small retailers are wrong, they should go and meet with them, as I have. They should go around the Noarlunga shopping centre and talk individually to the shopkeepers, as I have done, about the impact of the GST on them.

The Hon. G.A. INGERSON: I rise on a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker. I request that the leader retract his comment about our mocking small business and Mr Baldock in particular. We made no mention or suggestion of that at all.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Williams): There is no point of order.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: The truth will prevail. Of course, the Olsen government signed off on a deal with the commonwealth that leaves the state tens of millions of dollars worse off just to implement this bureaucratic tax. We are less than three months out from the GST and the Treasurer has not yet compiled a comprehensive and full list of state charges and services to which the GST applies. That was quite clear. We got contradictory responses from the Minister for Education about how the tax would apply. As I said, small business faces huge costs to implement the GST. They will have to invest thousands of hard earned dollars to become tax collectors for the commonwealth. They will remember what John Olsen said: how clean and simple the tax will be. Yesterday, I demonstrated how clean and simple the tax would be by quoting section 165-55 of the act, which provides:

For the purposes of making a declaration under this subdivision, the Commissioner may:

(a) treat a particular event that actually happened as not having happened;

(b) treat a particular event that did not actually happen as having happened and, if appropriate, treat the event as:

(i) having happened at a particular time; and

(ii) having involved particular action by a particular entity.

That is total legal gobbledegook, which is basically frustrating small business and businesses in this country. Of course, again I call upon the Premier to do as his government preaches to the insurance industry and local government and proclaim truth in GST pricing for state government services that attract the GST—and we will put them to the test in that regard.

It is the same story with the emergency services tax, the tax we were assured would not raise any more money than

the old levies. Try telling that, member for Hartley, to small businesses in your electorate. Try telling that to the people running the North Eastern Community Hospital who, a year ago, had to pay less than \$2 000 for their levy and now, from memory, have to pay \$15 800. My office has been inundated with complaints from all around the community about the impact of this tax. They want to know why it costs \$10 million to collect and why they are paying so much more than they ever did before. Here we have a government that is actually proud to tell this parliament that it is levying the EST on each police car, each ambulance and each fire engine.

The shadow treasurer has spoken about the sale of ETSA, and of course the public was spun a yarn that the ETSA sale would be some kind of magic pudding. In trying to get its privatisation through the government made outlandish and unsustainable claims about extra money and resources that it would have from the privatisation. There is no ETSA magic pudding and the theoretical or speculative financial benefit (if you believe in such a thing) is already committed in the forward estimates and is already being spent. Of course, this year's budget, we were told, was originally supposed to have a \$1 million surplus, but the last month's mid year budget review reported that there had been a severe budget deterioration causing a deficit of at least \$46 million this year and a deterioration of around \$30 million in each of the out years. Now the Treasurer tells us that there would be higher revenues than were estimated in this year's budget, and I hope that this is truly the result of more economic activity and not simply pull through from the impending GST implementation.

I want to talk about a number of other issues and one concerns the Aboriginal people of this country. In this state, I believe in the past two weeks we have experienced what I can only describe as infamy and shame that have scarred the national debate in this country. I must say that, in my view, we have just witnessed a week of infamy not just in federal politics but in the life of our nation. When I was Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, each week I was confronted in different ways by the continuing hurt and damage inflicted upon the stolen generation. I remember a ceremony I attended at Ooldea when I had the privilege of handing over the land title to the Maralinga Tjarutja people following land rights legislation passed in a bipartisan way by this parliament following the recommendation of a bipartisan Aboriginal lands committee. That was the last Aboriginal land rights bill to pass this parliament.

During my speech at Ooldea, I remember an elderly woman rushing over to me and crying and talking to me in an Aboriginal language. After the handover her son approached me and apologised for what had happened. He had no need to do so, but I asked him what his mother was trying to tell me. He said that as a baby she had been taken away from Ooldea, from Daisy Bates's camp, and had spent decades of hardship and heartache not knowing who she was or from where she had come. However, when she eventually found her mother she told her that she would one day return her to Ooldea—and I was certainly pleased that she was able to do so on the day that it became Aboriginal land.

We now have a federal government and a Prime Minister who does not have the decency to say sorry and now wants to diminish and devalue the reason for that hurt, the reason for the cause of that sorrow. No-one has ever quibbled when for more than 80 years political leaders have talked about losing a generation at Anzac Cove, Flanders Field, Somme or Passchendaele, but what the federal government has done

with its statement has not only damaged Australia's image abroad in an enormous way, but, more importantly, caused great hurt at home. We have a government that I believe has dishonoured the history and fabric of this country, diminished our national values and torn at the national soul.

I believe that a number of issues are about to come before the South Australian parliament where this government has to take stock to ensure that it does not also follow the lead of the federal government in dishonouring the Aboriginal people of this country. I refer to the proposed Native Title Validation and Confirmation Bill, which provides for the extinguishment of native title by reason of so-called 'intermediate period acts' and 'previous exclusive possession acts'. Whilst legislation in the terms of the South Australian bill has been enacted in some of the other states (including New South Wales and Queensland), that legislation took place before the Miriuwung Gajerrong decision, which was handed down by Justice Lee in the Federal Court in November 1998. In Western Australia, the only state to have enacted such legislation since that time, some significant amendments were forced upon the Court government by that state's upper house. I am certainly pleased that there was some modification for a bill that I regarded as implicitly and explicitly racist.

On Wednesday 5 April the Full Bench of the Federal Court handed down an authoritative decision (*Anderson v Wilson*) on whether and to what extent statutory leases might extinguish native title at common law. That decision relates to leases granted under the New South Wales Western Lands Act, but it has very substantial ramifications in relation to leases covered in this bill as supposed 'previous exclusive possession acts' and destroys the credibility of the South Australian Attorney-General's assertion that the bill simply confirms the existing legal position. I certainly believe that it is imperative that, before the government proceeds with this bill, it reads the Federal Court's decision.

In the bill that we will be considering soon, the government relies on state acts over the past 150 odd years as having provided for leases which the Attorney-General says were, as a result of those acts, 'previous exclusive possession acts'. The majority in the latest Federal Court decision, however, says that in determining whether similar leases have extinguished native title:

the test is whether the legislation authorises the grant of rights that are necessarily capable of being exercised in a manner incompatible with the exercise of any native title rights that may exist in or over the land.

Given that thousands of such leases are presently in force in this state and many thousands more presumably now defunct, which the government now asserts are covered by this bill as supposedly having extinguished native title, it is vitally important that the government withdraws this legislation, has another look at it, has some detailed consultation and again looks at the decision of the Federal Court.

I think that that is in the interest of all parties—miners, pastoralists, Aboriginal claimants and also taxpayers who are facing the very real possibility of significant compensation payouts for dispossession of lands. It needs to be sorted out in a responsible and methodical way, and in a bipartisan way, as we did with land rights acts in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s. I certainly urge that, before the bill is considered again by this parliament, we need to have a serious look at the implications of the Miriuwung Gajerrong and Anderson decisions. Certainly I think that all commonwealth, state and

territory Attorneys-General and ministers of Aboriginal affairs should certainly look into this.

I have written to the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation suggesting that the future of Aboriginal languages should be clearly addressed in the document for reconciliation to be launched in May. Language is an integral part of every person's identity, heritage and culture. At the time of European occupation and settlement there were more than 250 distinct Aboriginal languages and perhaps some 600 dialects spoken across the Australian mainland, so I am supporting the serious consideration of a national institute for Aboriginal languages with strong links to communities as well as to universities and education departments around Australia.

Mr SCALZI (Hartley): I too wish to support supply. I find it amazing that as soon as he can the Leader of the Opposition moves away from state issues. This bill is about—

The Hon. M.D. Rann: You don't think Aboriginal affairs are a state issue?

Mr SCALZI: You are out of order. You started off with the GST. I point out that this was the first parliament in Australia, under a Liberal government, to express its regret and sorrow regarding what happened in the past. However, I refer to taxation reforms, because that is what supply is all about. The Leader of the Opposition immediately turned from state to federal issues and went on about that for a long time. The member for Bragg pointed out the cheap shot the leader made, as if we were sniggering at small businesses. How could we be sniggering at ourselves? We are the party that supports small business. We understand that there will be some difficulties in the implementation of the tax reform, but that is the case with the implementation of any reform. Overall, in the long run this is the best taxation reform for Australia. The Leader of the Opposition does not mention the decrease in personal income tax, nor does he mention the compensation packages in place for pensioners and self-funded retirees. Members would be aware of the advertising regarding that matter and of the federal government's recent announcement about fuel prices in the country areas.

The Leader of the Opposition tends to stray from the matter on which we should be focusing and for which we are responsible as members of the South Australian parliament. He also failed to quote from the 5 April *Advertiser* article by the well respected journalist, Greg Kelton, headed 'We are on the up and up: good signs for jobs, exports and retail', which I believe says it all. There is no doubt that we still have a lot to do, and that is one thing this government does not run away from. There is still a lot to do, but you are prepared to do a lot if you have a good start and are maintaining good programs for the future. Greg Kelton's article points out that South Australia has a strong economic outlook with several key indicators showing healthy increases. The new Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show that the economy continues to grow in areas such as export, retail trade and car registration. Similarly, employment is growing, and the estimate for employed persons in South Australia as at February this year is up 3.2 per cent from the level of a year ago. Building approvals are up. The value of residential building approvals in February was \$111.8 million, up from \$69.7 million in the previous month.

Many times in this chamber the Premier has outlined the good economic indicators that can be seen, but of course the opposition fails to acknowledge this, and I can understand why. It is looking outside its responsibility for our South

Australian constituency to federal issues to try to confuse the public, but at the end of the day the public knows what we are and are not responsible for. We are certainly doing the best for South Australia. For example, two-thirds of the top 150 South Australian companies expect to hire more people over the next 12 months. That has to be good news for South Australia. When over two-thirds of the top companies are willing to hire people, that will bring down the unemployment rate and give greater opportunities and hope to unemployed and young people. That is what it is all about: increased business activities. Job vacancies are at a record high—an excellent indicator of where we are going—and so are South Australia's exports. At the end of the day, if you produce only for your own economy there is a limit on growth, but when we look at exports we see that South Australia is well placed to provide job opportunities for our young people.

South Australia's exports grew by 14 per cent in December 1999 to \$5 billion, a new South Australian record, while national exports declined by 2.3 per cent. That gives us a good indication. Wine exports increased by 26 per cent. We are all aware of how important the wine industry is for South Australia. Car and car part exports increased by 69 per cent on 1998-99. More cars were exported from South Australia than were imported; surely that has to be a good sign. South Australia's population showed a growth of .4 per cent in June 1999, and that was the highest growth in nearly five years. Our net interstate migration was the lowest in five years, at 2 900, and was continuing to fall. I wish to highlight some of the things happening in my electorate, such as in education. Back to school grants for the schools in my area included: the East Marden Primary School, \$26 320; Hectorville Primary School, \$33 260; Newton Primary School, \$44 500; and Norwood Morialta High School \$86 480.

There have been some concerns about the emergency services levy: no-one is doubting that. I have listened to my constituents and brought the concerns to the party room and the government, and I was pleased when the government gave a \$40 rebate for self-funded retirees. We are looking at other effects on small businesses and organisations of the emergency services levy. The 1 300 Housing Trust occupants in Hartley acknowledge how that emergency services levy has not affected them. We understand the problems of pensioners and self-funded retirees, and we are listening. I have had several breakfast meetings—with the Minister for Human Services, the Minister for Police, Correctional Services and Emergency Services and the Minister for Year 2000 Compliance (as he was last year)—to ensure that everything ran smoothly for small businesses, and those meetings were a great success. I could go on about community grants, law and order, camera surveillance installed at Paradise interchange, and so on. I support the bill.

Mr MEIER secured the adjournment of the debate.

DEVELOPMENT (SIGNIFICANT TREES) 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.

The bill is designed to save significant trees—native and exotic species—from inappropriate and indiscriminate removal and lopping, especially in the urban area.

The measures will apply across the Adelaide metropolitan area—and exclude those areas already covered by the *Native Vegetation Act* (the Adelaide Hills, the Hills Face Zone and Rural areas and townships). However, Councils in these areas can opt to come under the new legislation.

The bill reflects the recommendations agreed by all members of the Urban Trees Reference Group. This Group was established by the Government in January 2000 to report on appropriate policies and legislative mechanisms for the management and protection of urban trees.

The Group was chaired by Dr Bob Such MP and comprised representatives of a diverse range of community interests

- Local Government Association
- Royal Australian Planning Institute
- Urban Development Institute of Australia
- Housing Industry Association
- Conservation Council
- National Environmental Law Association
- Department for Environment and Heritage
- Planning SA

The Government congratulates and thanks all members of the Group because until now no Government in this State has been presented with a workable, agreed process to protect urban trees.

The Government has supported the Committee's recommendations because we recognise that trees form an important part of our urban environment, that they are highly valued by the community and play a major role in maintaining the livability and landscape character of our suburbs. In addition, trees provide habitat for native fauna, are often an important part of local biodiversity and form part of the Adelaide Plain's remnant native vegetation or rare and endangered species. All of these factors contribute to the significance of trees within the urban environment.

There are lots of pressures within the urban environment that have contributed to the removal, damage or destruction of trees. It is these pressures which often result in inappropriate and indiscriminate removal of large trees without any regard given to the significance of the tree. However, it also needs to be recognised that not all trees should be retained. Not every tree is of a size or species that can be deemed significant—and even some significant trees may be diseased, be causing a danger to property or be preventing solar access. In these cases removal or lopping of a significant tree may be appropriate.

The Urban Trees Reference Group presented its report 'Managing Significant Trees in the Urban Environment' to the Government on 21 March 2000. After considering a wide range of legislative options here and interstate, the Group recommends that amendments to the *Development Act* will provide the most workable and appropriate tools for managing and protecting significant trees in the urban environment. The measures proposed are easily implemented and not too onerous—for either the tree owner or the relevant planning authority (which in most cases will be the Council).

The *Development Act* enables controls to be applied to a wide range of acts and activities that are defined as 'development' in the Act and Regulations. The advantage of managing significant urban trees using the *Development Act* is that they can be integrated into other aspects of the development assessment and approval process. Further, the merit assessment process under the *Development Act* means that a proposal for an activity affecting a tree will be assessed against appropriate and balanced planning policy.

Essentially the amendments to the Act are broad enabling provisions. The detail of the process is already provided for in the *Development Act* and Regulations. Further amendments to the Regulations, which are being prepared in conjunction with the Members of the Reference Group, and available for consultation, will define a 'significant tree' and other relevant matters.

Overall, it has been proposed that

- Activities affecting trees that are more than 2.5 metres in circumference, measured 1.0 metres from the ground—such as removal or lopping—will be classed as 'development'. This will protect the most important trees in the urban environment.
- Any other individual significant tree (less than 2.5 metres in circumference)—any rare and endangered species—and areas or corridors of trees can be identified by Councils in their Development Plans—subject to public consultation; and

- Very important local trees can be listed as 'local heritage places'—for example, trees of special historical or social importance within a local area.

Final details will be settled in conjunction with the passage and implementation of the legislation.

In addition, I highlight that landowners can already enter into Land Management Agreements with their local Council to protect a tree or groups of trees on private property. A Land Management Agreement is attached to the property title and identifies important trees to be protected.

Under the proposed changes to the Act and Regulations, once an activity affecting a significant tree is classed as 'development', a development application will be required for approval, prior to any work being undertaken. If a development application is refused, the applicant will have the option of appealing the decision through the Environment, Resources and Development Court.

The scheme will also provide

1. That a person can, in a case of an emergency, undertake a 'tree-damaging activity' to a significant tree provided that is for the purpose of protecting life or property.
2. That an activity which is being undertaken under Part 5 of the *Electricity Act 1996*, will be exempt from the need for an approval to trim significant trees around powerlines.
3. That the provisions will not apply to action taken under section 299 of the *Local Government Act 1999*.
4. That Crown agencies wishing to remove or lop significant trees as part of the provision of infrastructure will need to apply for approval to do so.
5. That any activity for which a development application has already been lodged, or a valid development approval exists as at the date of operation of the new provisions, will not be required to seek a retrospective approval to undertake a 'tree-damaging activity' to a significant tree.

In conclusion I highlight that the Government has acted promptly on the Reference Group's Report in order to introduce this legislation at this time—and I ask all Honourable Members to give immediate attention to the bill in order to provide timely protection for significant trees in our urban environment.

I commend this bill to honourable members.

Explanation of Clauses

Clause 1: Short title

This clause is formal.

Clause 2: Commencement

The measure will be brought into operation by proclamation.

Clause 3: Amendment of s. 4—Definitions

It is intended to make it clear that a tree may constitute a local heritage place and, if a tree is a local heritage place, that a tree-damaging activity constitutes development. Furthermore, another paragraph is to be added to the definition of 'development' that will relate specifically to 'significant trees'. Significant trees will be defined as trees within a class declared by the regulations, or trees declared to be significant trees by Development Plans. It will then constitute development to undertake any 'tree-damaging activity' in relation to a significant tree.

Clause 4: Amendment of s. 23—Development plans

A tree may be designated as a local heritage place on the ground that it is of special historical or social importance within the local area. This will be in addition to the existing criteria. Furthermore, it will now become possible for Development Plans to identify a tree as a significant tree, or a group of trees as a group of significant trees, for the purposes of the definition of 'development' under the Act.

Clause 5: Amendment of s. 39—Application and provision of information

An application fee for a development application will not apply if the applicant is a person who is applying to remove or cut back a part of a significant tree that is encroaching on to the applicant's land.

Clause 6: Insertion of ss. 54A and 54B

It will still be possible to carry out urgent work in relation to a significant tree to protect any person or building, or in any prescribed circumstance, without first obtaining development approval, subject to certain conditions.

The controls on tree-damaging activities will apply despite the fact that the activities may be permitted under the *Native Vegetation Act 1991*. However, approval will not be required if the activity is being carried out under the scheme set out in Part 5 of the *Electricity Act 1996*, section 299 of the *Local Government Act 1999*, or under any Act prescribed by the regulations.

Clause 7: Transitional provision

The new controls relating to trees will not affect an activity within the scope of, or undertaken for the purposes of, a development that is the subject of an application, or that is within the ambit of an approval, under Part 4 of the principal Act before the commencement of this provision.

Mrs GERAGHTY secured the adjournment of the debate.

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

SUPPLY BILL

Adjourned debate on second reading (resumed on motion).
(Continued from page 902.)

Mr MEIER (Goyder): I am happy to support the Supply Bill. It was interesting to hear the member for Hart comment on the lease of ETSA. The recent part lease of ETSA has the potential to do an enormous amount of good for South Australia. Most members here are well aware that South Australia's debt some six years ago was in excess of \$9 billion—a figure of \$9.4 billion. In more recent times under the Liberal Government that came down to \$7.7 billion, and it should not be forgotten that the debt at \$9.4 billion was rising at a rate of \$300 million a year because the previous government was not able to have a balanced budget and was spending \$300 million a year more than it was receiving, so the debt was going up by nearer \$1 billion every three years. We brought it down to \$7.7 billion in recent times and, with the recent lease of ETSA for \$3.5 billion, the debt has reduced to a figure of \$4.2 billion.

No-one knows what we will receive for the lease of the last five remaining parts of ETSA, but let us assume it is in the order of \$2 billion to \$3 billion, which would bring us down therefore to a figure of \$2.2 billion or less debt. Of course, it may not be as much as that. Using that figure, if we got debt down to \$2.9 billion, some people argue that we should not have leased ETSA. Members know that our preferred option was to sell ETSA, but the Labor Party refused to allow that and in fact refused to allow the lease of ETSA. If it had its way nothing would occur in this state in economic terms. As a result of two defections from the Labor Party in another place we were able at least to get a lease of ETSA. If that had not occurred and if, after the completion of all the leasing of ETSA, our debt was nearer \$2.9 billion, what would be the situation if we still had a debt of \$9.4 billion? It would mean that we would have to service an interest rate of \$6.5 billion more per year.

Currently we are in a phase where interest rates are going up again. I hope it will not continue in the long term, but no-one knows that. I certainly well remember when our interest rate for the average home buyer was 17 per cent. We are now down nearer to 7 per cent, thank goodness, but they could well go back up to 17 per cent if things get out of kilter. If we consider that the interest rate could go up by 1 per cent, what does that mean per annum if our debt was not nearer \$2.9 billion but rather was back nearer \$9.4 billion? It would mean we would have to pay extra interest on the \$6.5 billion—the difference between the \$2.9 billion and the \$9.4 billion. We would have to pay an extra 1 per cent interest per annum on the \$6.5 billion. That works ought to be \$65 million per annum that we would have to find.

If the interest rate went up by 2 per cent, we would have to find double \$65 million, namely, \$130 million extra per year. If the interest rate went up 4 per cent, we would have

to find double \$130 million, namely, \$260 million extra. If we are currently paying around 7 per cent on average for state debt and if, over the next year or two, the rate went up to around 11 per cent, which is not an unrealistic figure, we would have had to find an extra \$260 million had we not brought down our debt to a realistic figure. Members therefore should be able to appreciate the enormity of what this state Liberal government has done in providing a much more secure future for the taxpayers of this state.

We are all well aware that the emergency services levy has been brought in the past six to nine months. How much is that raising? The actual amount taxpayers are contributing to a direct levy will be near enough to \$100 million. What has been the reaction from taxpayers to having to find the extra \$100 million? It has been very negative in the main. I have heard very many negative comments. Can you imagine the result if we had not cut the state debt and if we had to find an extra \$260 million per year in addition to what we have? That would be almost another three emergency services levies per year. There probably would be riots in the streets—that is how the people would react. Therefore I say to every citizen of South Australia, 'Be thankful that this government has brought down the debt at this stage to \$4.2 billion.' Hopefully it will come down to nearer \$3 billion or considerably less than that once the lease of ETSA is completed. It will be an enormous benefit to the state and something from which we will benefit for generations to come.

There have been so many positives on the economic front, and it is a pleasure to be a member of this Liberal government here in South Australia and to see the way our economy has been turned around in the past few years. I have highlighted to this House examples from my own electorate, but time will not allow me to highlight them tonight. However, I will certainly take the opportunity from time to time to ensure that people are aware of how one electorate out of 47 in this state is going from strength to strength as a result of this government's being in power. The examples I use have all been from the time the Liberal government took power until now, and I certainly will continue to highlight those things.

Some recent economic statistics that we have heard mentioned occasionally during question time include the fact that the total value of South Australian exports rose by 17.4 per cent during the seven months to January this year—a 17.4 per cent increase in the export of goods. Nationally, if we compare that to South Australia, the value of exports rose by only 3.3 per cent over the same period. South Australia was 17.4 per cent and Australia as a whole was only 3.3 per cent. We are rocketing ahead compared with the rest of Australia in exports.

Members would be well aware that we have gone out of our way to encourage certain exporting industries such as the motor industry. Its increases have been nothing short of astronomical. Exports of cars and car parts increased by 69 per cent in 1998-99, and more cars are exported from South Australia than were imported, so we are a net exporter of motor vehicles in this state—absolutely wonderful! Just imagine what that is doing for our national balance of payments. No wonder the federal government is doing so well—because this state government is playing more than its part in making sure our balance of payments is in the positive rather than in the negative.

While talking about cars, I point out that our exports to the Middle East were up 36 per cent, and we are well aware of that. Those members who have toured through General Motors-Holden's at Elizabeth would have seen the Holden

Caprice that is being marketed as Chevrolet and I know that a few of us who went through the factory were very interested to see the Chevrolet badges, the left-hand models and the standard of finish, which was nothing short of excellent. It is not surprising that Middle East people are lapping up our cars.

It is also a fitting tribute to General Motors-Holden's in South Australia that it is able to manufacture an engine that, in the Middle East, is required to run up to 12 hours a day in an idle or stationary position without being switched off. In other words, when the person using the car exits it to go to the office, the driver is required to keep the car running with the airconditioning going so that, if the owner comes back and wants to go somewhere, the car is in an air-conditioned state. The V8 motors in the Holden, which becomes Chevrolet, can idle for 12 hours without any problems in extreme temperatures. They are well built for the Middle East and they are certainly well built for Australia.

Not only were exports up for the Middle East, but the European Union exports from Australia were up 19 per cent, exports to New Zealand were up 16 per cent and exports to the United States were up 34 per cent. They are truly remarkable figures, which we can be very proud of, and they reflect in the fact that our employment statistics are looking extremely positive. Our unemployment rate has fallen to 7.9 per cent, coming down from a high of 12 per cent shortly before we took office. There has been a huge drop, yet the national rate has seen an increase to 6.9 per cent. South Australia has traditionally been ahead of the national unemployment rate and that is something that we are working on very hard. At least we are at 7.9 per cent.

The most important thing is that we have had 21 consecutive months of employment growth, and that trend is a real positive for this state. Through the year in trend terms, there has been strong growth in total employment in South Australia of the order of 3.1 per cent and full-time employment increased by a significant 2.1 per cent. Nationally in trend terms total employment grew by 2.9 per cent in the year, with full-time employment growing by 2.8 per cent during the year. South Australia is not only there but it is leading the way in many areas.

The other statistics that understandably are of a positive nature prior to the introduction of the GST, when it is anticipated that building costs will increase by something of the order of 6 to 7 per cent after 1 July, show that in February South Australia saw a growth in dwelling approvals, and that trend is occurring nationally as well. South Australia experienced the strongest growth of all the states in dwelling approvals through the year, and I think that is very heartening.

That was also the case with new motor vehicle registrations, which rose in South Australia in trend terms in the month of February by 0.6 of a per cent and experienced growth of 1.1 per cent nationally. There has been an encouraging increase in new car registrations in trend terms in each of the last five months nationally and, for South Australia, again these days we are one better because for six months there has been an increase in used car registrations.

That is very significant, too, because I read newspaper reports prior to Christmas from the motor industry expressing doom and gloom because new car prices are expected to fall once the GST comes in, and members would be well aware that the GST will have the effect of decreasing car prices. Motorists have come to appreciate that the car companies are offering very significant discounts at present, probably of the

order of \$3 000 for the average motor car, either in the form of added extras such as airconditioning, airbags, ABS brakes, or whatever. The deals going around are as good as they are likely to get so, once 1 July comes, it is highly likely that, whilst prices stabilise, drivers will not necessarily get a better deal than they can get now. It should not be forgotten that, whilst new car prices will decrease from 1 July, so too will used car prices. It is a fairly logical follow-on that used car prices will drop also.

Estimates of industry employment and wage and salary earner employment released for the February quarter this year indicate that employment in South Australia increased in the last year in eight of the 17 major industry divisions, with the largest increase occurring in the construction sector. Trends in wage and salary earner employment show relatively strong growth through the year both in South Australia and nationally.

Furthermore, state final demand in real, seasonally adjusted terms, grew by 4.7 per cent through the year to the December quarter 1999 in South Australia. This compares with growth of 5 per cent in domestic final demand nationally during the same period. In real trend terms, state final demand grew by 2 per cent in the December quarter 1999 and by 6.5 per cent through the year. That compares with increases at the national level of 1.1 per cent during the quarter and 4.9 per cent during the year. Again, state final demand here in South Australia is greater than the national average, and we are coming to expect that in many areas.

The trend in jobs is so positive. If fact, two-thirds of South Australia's top 150 companies expect to hire more people over the next 12 months. They are probably the best figures that we have seen for a long time. The indication by two-thirds of the state's companies that they expect to grow and that they will employ more people is wonderful for our young people and it is wonderful for mature aged people. The chances of getting a job in South Australia are very positive. On at least two occasions in the last few months, South Australia's unemployment rate has been lower than Queensland's unemployment rate and, for many years, particularly under the Labor government, it was a foregone conclusion that unemployment in Queensland was so much lower than in South Australia. We have beaten that on at least two occasions in the last few months and I guess it will not be long before we stay ahead of Queensland and have a lower unemployment rate on a continuous basis. It is great news for our people.

Another point is that job vacancies in this state are at a record high, and that raises real hope for our unemployed. That will have a very significant impact on attracting people into this state. We heard the Premier give some statistics in the last few days in this House on the growth of the South Australian population. The statistics that I have here show that there was growth of 0.4 per cent to June 1999, which is the highest growth in nearly five years, and net interstate migration was the lowest in five years at 2 900 and continuing to fall.

It is certainly still a worry that so many people are moving interstate. But at least our overall increase is significantly higher than it has been, and it shows that people have confidence in this state. It is really positive news through example after example. This has not come about easily; it is as a result of hard work by this government. I want to compliment the government on what it has done and what it is doing, and I am certainly pleased to support the bill.

Ms KEY (Hanson): I support the bill. I look at the budget in terms of the constituents of Hanson and also the portfolios that I have been given on behalf of the Labor Party—those of industrial relations, youth affairs and assisting in multicultural and ethnic affairs. To examine the budget, one needs to look at last year's estimates procedure. I must say that, as a shadow minister, I found it very difficult to obtain answers to some of my questions relating to the budget and I do not believe that, at the end of the process, I was much wiser for the exercise with respect to the government's spending priorities. This may have been a deliberate plot or it may be that I need to improve my skills in the economics area. I suppose my point is that I am concerned that the estimates procedure is not a process where budget priorities are made more accessible and transparent, and many of us—and I am sure that some of my colleagues would support me here—felt that, basically, we were none the wiser.

Again, with respect to the budget, I also refer to other attempts that I have made, as have my colleagues on this side, with regard to questions on notice. Because of the performance during question time, it is very difficult for the opposition to ask many questions that are not on notice. I have had questions on notice now for over a year regarding outsourcing by departments and agencies. I have asked a number of what I consider to be reasonable questions of the Premier, the minister representing the Minister for Transport and Urban Development, the Minister for Tourism, the Minister for Year 2000 Compliance, the minister representing the Attorney-General, the Deputy Premier and the Minister for Government Enterprises—the minister with whom I probably had the most queries to raise with regard to his areas of responsibility, particularly industrial relations.

I am sad to report that I have not had an answer to any of those questions. I really wonder why the government is reluctant to answer questions about its own portfolio areas. If we are to have a transparent and accessible system of budgeting and expenditure, why is there a big secret about the sorts of questions that have been asked by other members; and, in my case, why have I not received any answers?

Over the past year, since our last opportunity to speak to the Supply Bill, I have also written letters to various ministers. With the exception of the Minister for Education and Children's Services (formerly Education, Children's Services and Training), the Minister for Human Services and the previous Minister for the Environment, I have not received too many answers to the letters I have sent to various ministers. And in some cases when I have received responses my constituents, or the people who have asked me to ask these questions, have been none the wiser. So, I really question the whole budget process and the supply process when my constituents, or people who contact me in relation to my shadow portfolio areas, do not receive answers. I have some real concerns in those areas.

Some other points that I would like to address tonight relate to privatisation, commercialisation and outsourcing. As I said earlier, I have received no answers to my questions about outsourcing, and I find that quite disturbing. But also on a general political level I have real problems with and, in fact, opposition to the fact that the state (the public sector as we know it) has less and less control over our water, our electricity and many of our utilities, including public transport. Of deep concern to me is the future of employees in the government public sector. I may be old-fashioned, and I am known to be a socialist, so maybe my views are out of skew with those of some of the people in this chamber. I

noticed that a couple of people opposite looked at me strangely when I mentioned the word 'socialism'. However, my view is that we need to have a strong public sector. We need to make sure that services are available in our community, and I view with great concern the current debate about privatising the public sector even further. I refer particularly to the TAB, the Lotteries Commission (although I heard something on the radio today to the effect that that proposal may be shelved but I am not sure whether or not that is the case) and the Ports Corporation.

I believe that we need to have a strong public sector and I also think that the public sector needs to act, certainly in the case of employment, as a model employer. I would be hard pressed to be changed from that point of view. I also believe in a very strong local government sector. Again, I think that the local government sector has, in the main, not only provided services to the people in its different areas but also been, in many instances, a model employer. I hope that this trend continues.

As I mentioned earlier, I have responsibility in the youth affairs portfolio. What we have found this year, since the last Supply Bill was introduced, is that, despite the Liberal Party's stated policy, the youth affairs portfolio has now been subsumed by the employment and training area. I am advised that (as I said earlier, as much as one can glean from the budget papers), in the last financial year, some \$960 000 has disappeared between Minister Hall and Minister Brindal in that budget. It is of great concern to me that Minister Brindal is not in a position to explain what happened to that money. We hear the rhetoric about youth affairs all the time. I believe that Minister Brindal is sincere in what he says about the youth portfolio that he represents. I know that from personal conversations I have had with him as well as the fact that he has been involved in many initiatives in this area.

But my criticism is that, since the reshuffle, youth affairs is now subsumed into a bigger portfolio area and I do not think that youth is any better off for it. I have raised the issue of ethnic youth liaison officers a number of times in this House, and I am yet to be persuaded that the initiative of having youth liaison officers in the multicultural and ethnic affairs area is a bad idea. I also would like to hear the details of why local government is not capable of carrying out that function.

My office receives a number of complaints, particularly about traineeships and apprenticeships, and I am sad to report that, despite the fairly speedy response from Minister Buckby with respect to these questions, I think the system still needs to come under further scrutiny and needs to be improved. There are particular complaints about the cost of receiving training in South Australia. Despite the rhetoric, many young people are telling me that, although the schemes look good in writing and the publicity is quite attractive and, in fact, inviting, the reality is that if you are fortunate enough to become an apprentice or a trainee life is very difficult for you, especially if you are a trainee or an apprentice who does not live at home with your parents—an independent person—and you are trying to survive on the miserable amount of money that is made available to young people. I see this as a real concern.

Today we have heard a lot about the rising employment figures in South Australia and, of course, that is good and positive news. However, the statistics in relation to trends in the work force in South Australia indicate that many more people have casual and part-time jobs, and with that comes the insecurity of being a casual or part-time worker. It is very

difficult for casual workers, contract workers and people on short-term jobs to move forward. They cannot secure loans, even for motor vehicles let alone for houses or other things, that most of the work force expect when they become independent workers. True, the statistics look good, but I still wonder about the number of hidden unemployed in South Australia and whether these people are getting full-time secure jobs or whether, in fact, they are getting scraps of work here and there, as the statistics show.

As the shadow minister in the industrial relations area, I have great concerns. It is difficult to work through the budget of the Department of Administrative and Information Services to determine exactly how much money is being expended, and the indicators to which I refer do not give me any reason to be cheerful, as Ian Drury would say. Concerns have been raised throughout the Labor movement not only by unions but also by workers in relation to health and safety monitoring. I am very sad to report that enforcement by this government with regard to health, safety and welfare has been very poor, and many incidents over the past three to four years show that there has been a 60 per cent to 70 per cent decrease in the number of improvement notices and prohibition notices that have been distributed by the health and safety unit and the workplace enforcement unit.

At the last estimates report, we had comments and details about the fact that inspectors for workplace services would have to join a car pool to do their inspections, and there was a joke (although I do not regard it as being very funny) that workplace inspectors would have to ensure they had their bus passes up to date because that was the only way in which they could get to work places to carry out enforcement. A number of concerns have been raised by the Public Service Association (which represents the majority of the inspectors) and the Australian Professional Engineers and Scientists Association that the resources for inspectors to carry out their jobs just were not there. As I said, it is very difficult to work out the financing arrangements in this area, but one of the indicators is that the improvement and prohibition notices have decreased by such a shocking level.

We are also advised every day that the number of workers killed in the workplace far exceeds the number of people killed on the roads. We can look also at the number of people who report accidents, injuries and diseases associated with their work. To my mind this shows that workers are not any better off under this government, and it raises quite serious questions about the resources that are made available in workplace services.

Last year, Minister Armitage proudly announced that there would be a \$25 million rebate to employers, whatever their occupational health and safety status. At least a number of employers had been responsible for workers who had been killed on the job yet, despite that, they still got part of the \$25 million rebate. I consider this to be not only offensive but also very hard to understand or justify. I again call on the minister to explain how he can justify an employer, who had been through a lot of litigation—one of the few employers who had gone through a legal process with workplace services—still being an exempt employer and getting a discount, or rebate, from WorkCover because this \$25 million was being dished out.

Another area of great concern to me in my industrial relations portfolio is WorkCover's bonus and penalty scheme, which was introduced in July 1990 and is basically based on companies' claims record over a two year period compared with other firms in the same industry. For example, company

A's claims in the transport industry are compared with other companies in the same industry, and this is how the bonus and penalty scheme is worked out. The scheme provides for bonuses up to 30 per cent and penalties up to 50 per cent. The aim of the bonus and penalty scheme is to provide financial incentives for employers to make occupational health and safety a priority.

It sounds good, but the problem that I have with this scheme is that in recent times secondary disabilities (as defined under the act as an aggravation or recurrence of a primary disability) are excluded from the bonus and penalty calculations. It is very difficult to interpret the statistics because, quite often, secondary disabilities, by their very nature, take two or three years to develop—and these are not my words but the words of the people at WorkCover. In 1995-96, secondary disabilities amounted to \$66.246 million, or 33.6 per cent of total claims costs. The real concern of both the union movement and the Labor Party is that we believe a lot of rorting is occurring on the part of employers. In many cases, certainly in the \$66.24 million area, they are getting primary disabilities reclassified or recoded as secondary disabilities. For example, a nurse with a back injury obtains compensation and subsequently returns to work; that person then suffers another injury, this time to a shoulder. Instead of reporting the new injury to the employer, many people report it as a recurrence, even though it is a totally separate injury. This is done to avoid the penalty part of the bonus and penalty system.

The WorkCover board has raised this issue a number of times with the minister—first, with Minister Ingerson as far back as 1996—at least with a view of including secondary disabilities for the bonus and penalty system. The present minister should be aware of this situation because this has been discussed for quite some time at the board level, as I understand it, yet nothing has been done about it. The bonus and penalty scheme cost about \$9.5 million a year when it was introduced and it was supposed to be revenue neutral. As I said, with 33.6 per cent of total claims cost in 1995-96 being secondary disabilities, it is not unreasonable to assume that at least \$1 million to \$2 million is lost each year through employers falsely having primary disabilities recorded as a secondary disability. The full extent can only be known when this development takes place over one or two years.

My point is that, despite the fact that a lot of money is being put into the WorkCover system, the minister last week in reply to a question asked by you, Mr Acting Speaker, was heralding how well it was doing but did not take this question into hand and certainly has never adequately addressed the issue of employers' rorting the WorkCover system. I therefore ask the minister whether he could, for a change, rather than never answering any of my questions on notice, perhaps get back to the House about this issue and perhaps consider an independent inquiry, perhaps by the Auditor-General, on this very serious matter.

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH (Waite): I support the bill, and I will take the opportunity to make a few points on the future direction of the state economy and the impact of changes in a global and national context that will have a dramatic effect on our future budgets and economy. I listened carefully to the member for Hanson's contribution to this debate, and I was inspired to go over why we Liberals and this government do not agree with the socialist philosophies put forward by the member for Hanson. I respect that it is her right to put forward those philosophies, but we fundamentally feel they

are the wrong way for this state to go. We do not believe in big government and in large numbers of public servants being on the public payroll. We do not believe that the best way to reduce unemployment and to target taxpayer funding is to hire hordes of people with no real jobs, doing things that do not need to be done, simply so that we can have a large public sector full of unionised workers, padding out government and swallowing up huge amounts of public funding.

We believe in small government. We believe that the best way for the South Australian economy to go forward is by harnessing the energy of the individual and private enterprise, by throwing off the shackles that so frequently enshroud public sector activity so that human beings can go forward and create jobs, profits and companies, create and innovate, provide good service, build good quality products, attack export markets and create new opportunities. That is what we believe. We do not believe in a big thundering public sector and a slow sluggish economy. That whole doctrine went down with communism and the fall of modern socialism as we have seen it in this century, and it has been swept aside by a more private enterprise oriented philosophy which is booming today and which is bringing about one of the greatest world economic booms seen in modern times—now, as we speak.

We do not believe in the old paradigms that the world is divided into big business and big unions and that the whole work force needs to be represented by a union. We respect the right of unions to exist and we listen carefully to what they have to contribute, but we do not believe that workers should be compelled by force to be members of a union, and many of our friends opposite believe that that should be the case. We believe in the rights of the individual to choose. We also believe that the new economy we are seeing today is opening up opportunities for workers. It is enabling workers to profit, to earn more income by working cooperatively with their employer and not in accordance with the old paradigms of 'them and us', the old thinking that big business is there to drive employees into the ground, to abuse employees, to undercut their workers' compensation, as the member for Hanson has said, and to take advantage of workers at every turn.

It simply does not make sense. Why would business want to screw its work force into the floor, when its work force is generally the means for its success? Employers now are recognising the value of their employees in ways that were unimagined 50 to 100 years ago. Employers want to form partnerships with employees so that everybody can win. I am probably the biggest employer in the parliament, having employed well over 100 people until recently and still employing about 40. I have some involvement with the workers' compensation scheme and, while I recognise, as the member for Hanson has pointed out, that some employers no doubt abuse the system, I remind her that, if she checks the court records, she will find example after example of employees also ripping off the workers' compensation system. On the particular issue—

Ms Key interjecting:

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH: That is not exactly correct. If the honourable member checks some of my earlier addresses in *Hansard* she will find an address where I gave numerous examples of employees ripping off the system. With respect to the bonus penalty scheme and the issue of secondary injuries, whilst much of what the member for Hanson has said can probably be substantiated in a few cases, equally quite a number of employees can use that secondary

injury scheme to their own advantage as well in the knowledge that an employer is much more likely to cave in and agree to a payment if they can wrap up their claim as a secondary injury in the hope that the employer will then not resist because he knows he will not suffer a bonus penalty. It is quite a common practice—although the member for Hanson may not recognise it—for some employees to be advised to do exactly that in the knowledge that the employer is more likely to cave in and flick the whole matter over to WorkCover.

This whole WorkCover system needs improving. Let us just be honest. It is open to abuse on both sides of the equation, and it is being abused. I want to make clear that half the people who are suffering are involved in small businesses. I remind the member for Hanson that WorkCover provides that the first two weeks of a claim generally be met by the employer if a worker is off sick or injured and then later WorkCover kicks in and starts picking up the wages. It may come as a total shock to the member for Hanson, but if she were running a hairdressing salon, deli or small business and had to pay two weeks' wages for an employee who is absent as well as paying to hire a casual, that could mean the difference between making any money that month. It could be the difference between being able or not able to pay the mortgage or rent. This whole WorkCover scheme has to be looked at not on the basis of what works at General Motors-Holden's, Mitsubishi or some large manufacturing site but from the point of view of what works for those people who are creating the vast bulk of employment in this state—small business.

I urge the member for Hanson to try to step out of the paradigm, to stand up on the table, look around the room and see the WorkCover scheme from the point of view of both employers and employees and not simply from that of employees. I know that it is hard to do when you have come up through the union system, and I understand that. It is equally hard for someone who has been an employer for most of their life to look at it from the employee's point of view. Everyone looks at it from the point of view from which they have come. We need to communicate better on this matter and come up with outcomes that work for the employers and also the employees.

That whole issue leads into the thrust of my remarks in this debate, that is, that the economy is changing. I urge members opposite to pick up Mark Latham's book. The Labor Party's own intelligentsia—and I know Mark Latham is not very popular at present—is warning it that it risks going down the lane hand in hand with Pauline Hanson. I saw evidence of this recently in the Economic and Finance Committee, when the Secretary of the Footwear and Textiles Industry Union gave evidence. I give him credit. He gave excellent evidence; it was extremely interesting and informative, and I valued it. However, the thinking was that we need turn back the clock. We need to have more tariffs. It is suggested that the government has abandoned the footwear and textiles industry. We cannot compete with footwear and textile manufacturers in Fiji and Taipei, and need to put in place barriers or make some arrangement so that our footwear and textile industries can compete with those of Fiji and Taipei.

I am terribly sorry to have to tell members opposite this, but the global economy is here whether or not they like it. If you think governments can just click their fingers now and suddenly cause the governments in Fiji or Taipei to institute the sorts of industrial, WorkCover and workers compensation

arrangements or other imposts we have in this country to push up their costs of production so that all of a sudden we can produce \$10 T-shirts and \$5 sandals the same as Fiji, that will not happen.

I am sorry to be the one to tell members, but changes are going on in the global economy that will rearrange the South Australian and the Australian economy forever. Footwear and textiles is one example of an industry where, if we are to succeed, we must innovate, produce goods of outstanding quality and provide first-class service if we are in an industry sector that is a services based sector. We can no longer get by on trying to achieve competitive advantage on the basis of having lower costs of production, because frankly—and, in the case of wages, I am not saying it should not be so—our wages and our costs of manufacturing are immeasurably higher. We have to find new ways of achieving competitive advantage.

There is this thing called the 'new economy'. I know that members opposite know nothing about it—and that is very apparent from listening to parliamentary committee consultations and some of the debate in this place. It is more than just the internet. Changes are occurring in the world economy at the moment and, if members opposite would like to come and see me, I can recommend some excellent articles, particularly from the *Harvard Business Review* and a number of other sources that can explain to them what it is. This new economy is about sustainable faster growth and lower inflation through technology. It is about enabling companies and economies to grow without inflation in ways that render inappropriate all the old paradigms and old indicators.

The levers are not working: the old levers that we always understood were available to us are no longer working. We have now got the United States Federal Treasury finding an economy in the United States that is absolutely rocketing with low inflation. They do not know how to deal with it. They do not know whether to increase interest rates (which has always been the lever to pull) or whether to leave interest rates down. The old rules are not working. These structural changes are changing South Australia and Australia in a way that we must recognise.

Let me give members another example. A person may be working in a Kodak factory, and let us say it is in Whyalla; 500 people work in this factory and their job is to produce prints from films. When people drop their films off at the pharmacy, they all go off to Whyalla and the Kodak factory produces them in a nice print so that people can take them home and put them in the photograph album. I am sorry, but we now have a camera that has a disk in it and we can take 100 photographs on this disk. You can take it home, load that disk into your computer, pick the 10 you want, press a button, print your 10 photographs almost to camera quality—and that technology will be with us shortly—and put them in your photograph album.

Again, I am sorry, but, if you are one of those 500 people working in the Kodak factory, your factory is about to close; it will not be there in a couple of years' time. New jobs will be created elsewhere in another new branch of the camera and film industry. If you are not up with these changes that are occurring in this new economy, this new technology-based economy, you will not have a clue what is happening. I would urge members opposite, if they are genuine about their keen interest in the future of the South Australian work force, to sit up and take note of these changes, because it is no use trying to hang on to manufacturing bases or to jobs that are destined to be obliterated. We have to identify the new jobs

that are coming and we have to ensure that South Australia is at the front of the pack in getting a foothold in those new industries.

Let us not go back to tariffs, quotas or the things that worked in the 1960s—read Mark Latham. Let us go into this new economy and identify the areas for potential growth. People say you cannot pick winners and losers, and I question that. You cannot pick individual companies, but you can pick characteristics and only three characteristics matter to the South Australian economy: quality, innovation and service. If a company is not showing those three characteristics, it has no future in this state and it will not be a successful company. There are ways for South Australia to rearrange itself for the new economy. One of them is to ensure that the innovational needs of this new economy are brought about by a better marriage between our businesses and our universities. We have to form linkages between our universities and our companies which enable both to grow.

This has been done most successfully in a number of places overseas. I want to talk briefly about one of them, namely, Austin, Texas (sometimes referred to the Austin-San Antonio corridor), in the United States. This is an example of where a local government body in a town not much bigger than Adelaide decided early to get smart about the way in which it approached creating jobs and creating enterprise within its economy. Government got together and created an attractive business environment through interaction with businesses to foster economic and social development in their region near Austin. The corridor evolved from a small university town which turned itself into a modern technopolis. The major features underpinning their success in Austin were the achievement of scientific pre-eminence, the development and maintenance of technologies for emerging industries and the attraction of major technology companies and the creation of home grown technology companies.

The conceptual framework for the development of this technopolis (they called it the 'technopolis wheel') basically involved bringing together individuals or influences in the universities in the large technology companies, the small technology companies, their federal government, their state government, local government and support groups. These all interacted in ways that created inseparable relationships. Some weeks ago I visited a company at Technology Park called Dspace, a very innovative company that works in the area of satellite communications. What it does is decipher very weak satellite transmissions, and by using smart technology it makes them clear transmissions, which means that your satellite only needs a very low amount of power output.

It is involved in an amazing world cutting edge. It has developed a relationship with the University of South Australia through a particular department, and that department virtually does all the R&D for Dspace on a contract basis. The two are inseparable. Dspace cannot survive without the university: the university and this particular department cannot really survive—and these are Ph.D. students—without the company. Most importantly, a foreign company cannot easily come in and buy that company and take it away from South Australia because of this marriage. These are the sorts of arrangements that the state government (any state government) needs to engineer, because it is no use creating the innovation in a company that can just be picked up, plucked away and taken to Sydney, Melbourne or overseas. I would say—

Ms Key: A bit like ETSA.

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH: I am sorry, but the poles and wires of ETSA are very difficult to pick up and take outside South Australia. Indeed, I put to the honourable member that what is happening with the electricity industry through deregulation is creating the sorts of opportunities on which we can then build. In contributing to this debate—and I will have more to say about this during the year—let me just say that a state government, regardless of which major party is in power, needs to face up to this new economy. All the old rules are out the door, as are all the old arrangements and relationships between unions and employers.

We need to work out what the new paradigm is, and the indicators are there for us. Most of these changes have taken place in the past four to five years. This government understands what is going on and most of the ministers to whom I have spoken about it and who have spoken to me about it clearly understand it: I urge the opposition to do likewise.

Mr WRIGHT (Lee): The education budget commands about \$1.6 billion of our state budget; I think it is about a third of the budget. Undoubtedly, education is a critical area that we all feel very passionately about. I will speak briefly tonight about two schools that have amalgamated into one school, the Semaphore Park Primary School in my electorate of Lee and Ethelton Primary School in the electorate of Hart. The member for Hart had responsibility for Ethelton Primary School. Last year those two school communities worked very hard in an extensive round of negotiations over a long period of time. The member for Hart and I attended many of these meetings. Like any school amalgamation (I am sure other members have been through it), it was a very emotive process, but I must say that the two school communities went into the round of negotiations voluntarily and entered into the amalgamation process with some goodwill, commonsense and maturity. Having said that, because of the very nature of the beast—an amalgamation of two schools—obviously a fair amount of emotion would be spent, and it was a delicate, protracted process of two school communities working together in good spirit and in the best interests of the students learning environment coming to that big decision to amalgamate into one school.

That happened last year—in fact, it probably commenced back in 1998 and worked into 1999—and we have now seen the amalgamation of two schools, still with some problems occurring; there is no doubt about that. At one stage this year we had students on both campuses, split by Bower Road down the middle. Despite the fact that the amalgamation has been agreed to in principle, some of the students were attending the site at Ethelton and some were attending the site at Semaphore Park. That has now changed and the new principal has all the school operating out of Ethelton while redevelopment takes place at Semaphore Park Primary School, where the new school, to be called Westport Primary School, will be located. This process is well under way. The school population primarily took the view that it would look at and achieve something that would enhance students' learning. The two local school communities have reached a decision and have amalgamated.

We now have a new school and, obviously, with any new school there are teething problems. But I highlight to the House tonight that we really have not only a number of ongoing concerns: we have a major concern. Throughout this very lengthy amalgamation process that took place, the school community had expressed its belief that the open space units should have four general learning areas plus one

specialist area. That was the principle which the school and the school community worked to in negotiations with education department people, but now they find that the open space units will have six general learning areas. So, rather than four general learning areas plus one specialist area, that will be increased to six general learning areas in this open space unit.

Both the member for Hart and I have been down to the campuses to look at the open space area that will be used. They are in existence and, despite the fact that the new site (Westport) is being redeveloped and will take some considerable length of time (much longer than the school community ever thought), existing open space units are sitting on both campuses. We have been down to visit them, so we know specifically about this area. We now have a situation where, after this long negotiation process, the school community has now been advised by the education department, Mr Spring and the minister that we are no longer looking at what we had thought we would have (and these discussions are all minuted), that is, an open space area containing four general learning areas plus one specialist area. Rather, we are now looking at six learning areas in that open space unit. The whole discussion, the whole principle, the whole notion has been turned upside down.

The school community feels duded, having gone through an exhaustive process involving many hours of sitting around tables, bringing the two school communities together as one, and sitting down with education department people to go through and discuss this long, protracted process, then going out and talking to the local school community to get on side hundreds of parents who were very difficult to convince that this would be the best way forward for the local area and for student learning; after all that, it feels like it has been duded. It now seems there has been a change in the givens. This has occurred without any consultation with the school community. The school communities entered into this amalgamation based on the information presented in the education and facilities brief. The failure by the department to keep its promises now calls the entire amalgamation process into question. We cannot and will not revisit those issues which have been discussed and debated for so long and which now should not be reappearing as major concerns in the local community.

We now have a situation where this whole principle—this whole process—has been turned upside down, the local school community having participated in the lengthy consultation process that took place and following extracts from educational briefs that referred to the current open space units on each campus having the capacity for four classroom spaces—not six. The feasibility study of the same document suggests that the open space units be subdivided into five general learning areas (GLAs); that is the four, plus the specialist area. It discusses the area and states that this would allow for four GLAs which can be used as dual teaching areas with one self-contained room that can be used for LOTE or other programs which require separation from the general learning area. A practical activity or computer area can be placed in the middle of the unit.

So, what we are talking about is an in-principle agreement, arrived at during the process of this lengthy negotiation, involving both members of parliament and education department people: an agreement was reached that in this given area there would be four general learning areas plus a specialist area. Computers would take up some of the space in those general learning areas. Now, however, the school

community finds that the education department says, 'No, sorry; that is not on.' It is not the four areas plus the specialist area (and the specialist area probably would not take up as much as one of the general learning areas): we are now finding that in that open space unit there will be six general learning areas. As I said earlier, I have been to school council meetings, as has the member for Hart. The local school community feels extremely agitated and aggrieved about this. They believe that the spirit of cooperation and respect that had existed between the school community and the staff of the Department of Education, Training and Employment (DETE) has been severely damaged. They believe that the community came together and dealt with all the local difficulties—and they did; they showed great maturity. At every turn the school was promised that children would not suffer as a result of the process.

That is the bottom line for these school communities going into this amalgamation process: that the children will not suffer. The children will suffer if we have this situation whereby the agreement of four LGAs plus a specialist area is not honoured. I wrote to the minister some two weeks ago asking him for an urgent meeting so that we could discuss with him what has taken place here and what compromise can be reached. I asked for a delegation to meet with the minister as a matter of urgency. I want to bring in people from the school council, representative of both school communities, representative of the total age spectrum of the school population and at this stage some two weeks has gone by and I have yet to hear from the minister.

I re-emphasise to the minister that this is a very major problem in a process that two local school communities have entered into with faith, honesty and care for the local school population. At the very least the minister should program into his diary as a matter of urgency, certainly before Easter, the opportunity for the local member of Parliament to bring in these people to meet with him so they can put forward their views. Education departmental people have said to representatives of the local school council that the only way they will get this fixed is by the minister fixing it. We want to see the minister. We believe we have every right to see the minister and I would expect a minister for education of any political persuasion to respond to a concern of this nature and to respond to it quickly because education is too important to play politics with, is too important to muck around with.

Where you have a very delicate, emotive amalgamation taking place and now hitting a large hurdle because of a back down by education department people, we must resolve this issue very quickly. I make a plea tonight in this chamber for the Minister for Education and Children's Services as a matter of urgency to program into his diary, bearing in mind he has had the letter for two weeks, an opportunity for these people to come in and present their case. That is what we are asking for and what we expect.

I will also briefly touch on a couple of other areas. I have acknowledged the announcement made by the minister last week about the Port Adelaide sewage treatment plant. We in the Port Adelaide area are delighted and in bipartisan spirit acknowledge the announcement by the minister—a \$100 million announcement to remove the Port Adelaide waste water treatment plant at Royal Park. In the process the effluent will no longer go into the Port River. As a result, the environment will be greatly improved, marine life will get a chance and thousands of households, particularly in West Lakes and Royal Park, will no longer have to put up with the obnoxious smell they have had to put up with as a result of

the treatment plant at Royal Park. We welcome that announcement.

The Port Adelaide waste water treatment plant has been a problem for many years in the local area. I have spoken regularly in this Parliament about the problems affecting the environment and local people in residential housing, and about the difficulties for the Port River. We will for the first time in a long while give the Port River a chance. We will for the first time give that local environment, that marine life, a chance.

We certainly acknowledge the announcement by the government. I said at the time, and repeat tonight, that it highlights what can be achieved as a result of good grassroots community action. On all fronts we have in that whole region seen a great effort by individuals, community groups and council and the list goes on. The member for Hart was also involved in that debate, which has been going on for a long time. We are delighted that the Government has announced that the treatment plant will be removed from the area. There will be a lot of benefits for the local environment and community and it is a positive step and one that we welcome.

I also noticed, much to my surprise, in the *Weekly Times* today an article about local sporting organisations receiving active club grants. The minister is in here talking about money that has been allocated, but the member for Colton is in here congratulating a number of groups in his electorate that are receiving specific grants. I still await the letter and, to the best of my knowledge, so do my colleagues. This program has received unanimous bipartisan support and I hope and trust that the minister will not place that in any jeopardy. The active club program has received unanimous support. I stand to be corrected, but not about my own electorate as I definitely have not received any information from the minister or from anyone else about which clubs in my electorate have received their grants. To the best of my knowledge neither have my colleagues on this side of the House. I do not know what has happened on that side of the House, but I know that the member for Colton in today's *Weekly Times* (and I presume the publishing deadline was Monday) was able to congratulate clubs in his electorate. I would have thought that we would all receive that information at the same time.

Mr Hamilton-Smith: You wouldn't do anything like that.

Mr WRIGHT: The member opposite is dead right—he is 100 per cent correct. He knows that the Labor Party plays it fair and square, right down the line; no mucking around and no deviating. He knows that when the Labor Party comes to power, whatever we receive we will give in the other hand and will give at the same time—no funny business with us. You know, Sir, as you are an experienced member of this House, that when Labor was in power we played it right down the line. When the member for Waite has a bit of experience—

Mr Hamilton-Smith interjecting:

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

Mr WRIGHT: I do not mind him interrupting—he makes better interruptions than he does speeches, so I do not mind. When the member for Waite has a bit of experience in this House he will be like you, sir—

Mr Hamilton-Smith interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Waite will come to order!

Mr WRIGHT: He will know the Labor Party plays it straight down the line and does not play favourites. When the

information is handed out for Labor members the Liberals will get it on the same day. That is another commitment and pledge from the Labor Party. The member for Waite will quickly realise that because, in 18 months when we are in power and hand out grants via the office of recreation and sport for the active club grants, everyone will get the information at the same time and all will be fair. I call for the Minister for Recreation and Sport to do the same thing: just play it fair, be like the Labor Party, be straight down the line, be honest, be fair and play no favourites. This program is good for everybody, for all the local communities and for everyone in the community, so you do not play favourites. You do not give it out to your mates and not give it to the opposition. When you have a good program you give it to everyone at the same time.

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH: Mr Speaker, I draw your attention to the state of the House.

A quorum having been formed:

Mr VENNING (Schubert): I am pleased to support the Supply Bill, especially given the success of the government in the last couple of years. We have seen a massive turnaround in the state of our economy, particularly in relation to gross state product, which has increased by 9 per cent. The agriculture, forestry and fishing sectors have grown by 24 per cent, which is a tremendous result considering that, in that time, commodity prices have not been all that good. The grain industry is going through a torrid time because of the dual problem of lower commodity prices and pretty difficult seasons on the farm.

Over many years, as most members would know, the cost of production for farmers has been rising. The graph shows it as a steady increase and, although commodity prices have been rising, it has been at a much lower rate. We have reached the point where the two axes will cross; in other words, the income for the farmer is almost at the same level as the cost of production. That is a great concern. That is why farmers are doing all they can to reduce their cost of production.

I believe that farmers in our state are looking to the sky, first of all wondering about the weather. There has been some heavy rain but it has not been general because it has been mainly thunderstorm activity, and that concerns me because some areas have missed out completely.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! There are too many audible conversations in the chamber. Members will resume their seats or leave the chamber.

Mr VENNING: I am concerned—

Ms Key: Weather supply or money supply?

Mr VENNING: The weather, but it has to do with supply. I am very concerned and I hope that members of the opposition are, too, because this state has relied for many years on the grain industry. I hope that opposition members understand and realise that, for the last 30 years, the two graphs, the cost of production graph and the income graph, have been getting closer together. For many areas of the state, particularly the northern areas, these graphs are touching. What can we do about it? We can increase the price or we can reduce the cost of production or both.

Since a lot of the grain industry was deregulated, commencing with the domestic wheat market some years ago, followed by the barley market, much speculation has been introduced into the industry. Farmers not only have to be growers but they have to be marketers, too. It is very difficult

to pick the market and there can be a difference of \$15 to \$20 a tonne in the market. We have gone back to the 1930s when our fathers took their grain along to the bag stacks. They were price takers. They did not know until they got there what the prices would do.

The areas around Orroroo, Peterborough, Wirrabara, Melrose and Wilmington in the electorates of the member for Stuart and the member for Frome have had four difficult years out of five, and I am very concerned about what this will do to the economy. As we know, most of our world markets are supported or subsidised by governments but, in Australia, our farmers do it on their own. I am very curious and interested to know what the long-term future is of government involvement in support for our farmers. After all, the most important thing is that we must eat and be clothed. Everything else is being imported. Do we want to import our food too? That is what will happen if we do not do something about it.

It is remarkable that the agriculture, forestry and fishing industries have grown by 24 per cent and I am interested in the breakdown of that figure. I know that incomes in the grain sector have been subdued but a lot more has been grown through our efficiencies. That is also of concern because farmers have almost reached the point at which they cannot become more efficient because some would say that we are very close to mining our farms. We are on very close rotation; in other words, a crop every year. I know that the member for Ross Smith understands farming because he has a friend at Spalding who is a farmer. We used to crop only two years out of three, cropping for two and pasture resting for one, but now we are cropping every year, pouring on the fertiliser, pesticides and weedicides, purely to stay viable.

Given available technologies, farmers are into direct drilling and minimum till, and our farmers are probably the most technologically advanced farmers in the world, but the time bomb continues to tick. I wonder what our government will do, whether it be this government or a future government, to bolster the industry that is so vital to our state, that is, our grain industry and our food industry. I will be interested to hear what other speakers have to say on the matter.

I am pleased to note job improvements in the state over the last year, especially the statistic that our top 150 companies expect to hire more people over the next 12 months. That is great news because our employment figures have been spiralling down for many years. I know that because I have three children who found it difficult initially to get jobs, particularly in country towns. That has been the biggest travesty. It is very difficult for young people who are educated in the country to find a job and stay in the country. If they cannot get a job at the local council or with the local bank (and there are not many banks left), what do they do? Some 80 per cent of our young people head to the city. Of my three children—

Members interjecting:

Mr VENNING: I agree. Maybe we do not want to elect them until they are at least 44 years of age. That is another problem, because not many of our young people have a desire to serve in this place. What does that tell members? I have three children, and none has the desire to follow either their father or their grandfather into this place. Maybe they will improve with age, like a good wine. We cannot blame them, because the media has certainly given us a pretty bad name. Certainly, I believe that I am here to represent my electorate, and I hope that, by the time my term has finished, I will have

made a difference. After all, if one can leave this place saying, 'I did make a difference,' I think one's time has been worthwhile. As I said, the situation with respect to young people and employment is very difficult. I have been lucky that my three children have good jobs with very good companies. One son is in the country, on the farm. The other two have professional jobs in the city. Certainly, things are changing very much. Today job vacancies in South Australia are at an all time high and that is fantastic, because it certainly is a big turning of the tables. As the Premier said earlier, we are still losing people from South Australia, but that loss has slowed to a trickle whereas, for example, eight to 10 years ago it was a flood. So many of my relatives went—

An honourable member interjecting:

Mr VENNING: Eight to 10 years ago. The honourable member can work out who was in government then—and it was not us. I remind the House that we could not continue like that, because the eastern states were just sucking us dry. They would come and take all our expertise; all our brain power was being enticed interstate.

As an exporter, I was very pleased to hear that our exports grew 14 per cent in December 1999 to \$5.9 billion, a new South Australian record. I ask members to compare that with the national export figure, which declined by 2.3 per cent over the same period. That is probably because now all the eastern states have Labor governments; that must be the reason. I certainly cannot understand the Victorians changing government, because the Liberal government was performing so well. But I think that, if we are smart, we will maximise the opportunities for South Australia. I believe that we already are doing so in many ways; one has only to look at some of the businesses that are establishing themselves here. I just wonder about the wisdom of the Victorians changing their government as they did, because—

Mr Koutsantonis: You know better than democracy; you know better than the people?

Mr VENNING: I am sure, in hindsight, that Mr Kennett could have run a better campaign, and I think we may also have learnt from him.

Mr Koutsantonis interjecting:

Mr VENNING: No doubt. I am very pleased that our exports have climbed as they have. As a result of the export growth, the total cargo handled by Ports Corp rose by 11.6 per cent in 1998-99, and the container traffic grew by 13½ per cent. I am a little concerned with respect to container traffic. As the member for Hanson would know, we are losing a lot of our container traffic over rail to Melbourne. I hope that we can reverse that trend by operating a better, more efficient port. Of course, this leads to the subject of the sale of ports. It is a very topical issue, and I hope that the government can address that matter very soon and give surety to the market and to the grain industries, as the main users of the port. Certainly, my constituents know that we have spent a lot of time on this issue and, hopefully, by the end of the year we will not only have the ports sales sorted out but also the matter of the deep sea port, which is a very important issue to this state. Indeed, it is an issue which has been around for 25 years and which subsequent governments have been going to address but have never done so. Now, because we must use small ships, it really adds a lot of cost to the industry, particularly to the growers of feed barley—low commodity cost and high dense weight.

Of course, I could not make any speech to this House without reminding members about our wine exports. Certainly, they are going from boom to boom. If I asked members

to tell me the increase in our wine exports in one year, I would expect them to say 5 per cent, 8 per cent or 10 per cent. But, no: in 1999 there was a 26 per cent increase in our wine export sales, and these were at the super premium end of the market. I am certainly very pleased. One has only to visit the Barossa, the Coonawarra, McLaren Vale and the Clare Valley to see the increase in business activity.

Members interjecting:

Mr VENNING: Members are making fun of the statistics, but I think it is a very serious matter, and I am very pleased. Were it not for the success of the wine industry, where would we be? It has seen us through some very difficult times. This success has continued for seven to 10 years. Five or six years ago we were in the doldrums and the wine industry pulled us out, and is still doing so. We all thought that the success would have reached a plateau by now. We thought that it would last five years, but it has already lasted eight years. I believe that it will be good for at least another four or five years. I am forecasting not a fall but purely a plateauing of prices, as long as we can maintain the premium end of the market, as we have with our Coonawarra quality cabernets, our shiraz from the Barossa, our riesling from the Clare Valley and, of course, a mixture of them all from McLaren Vale and the other wine regions.

Mrs Maywald interjecting:

Mr VENNING: And how can one forget the excellent wines that come from the Riverland today? I am amazed that the member did not remind me earlier.

Mrs Maywald interjecting:

Mr VENNING: About 50 per cent of the crush does come from the Riverland. Certainly, I am very pleased that there is not the animosity that used to exist between our wine regions. There is a lot of cooperation now. Much of the wine comes from the Riverland down to the Barossa and is crushed, bottled and blended there. So, I am very pleased that the wine industry has been so positive. I am also a very keen supporter of our car industry. I own and drive an Australian made motor car, and I am proud of it.

Mr Koutsantonis interjecting:

Mr VENNING: For the member's information, my car is a Holden Statesman. I drive an Australian made motor car by choice and I am very pleased about that, because it is of excellent quality. Production of car parts increased by 69 per cent in the 1998-99 period, and more cars were exported from South Australia than were imported. The success of General Motors, particularly in the Arab countries, has been phenomenal—especially with respect to the deluxe motor cars.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind members that this is the Supply Bill and not a general grievance debate.

Mr VENNING: I am talking about the economy, and this is the—

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr VENNING: I am talking about our exports.

The SPEAKER: Order! Nevertheless, it is the Supply Bill and not a general grievance debate on the economy.

Mr VENNING: Certainly, sir, we are talking about the money in the state. I will conclude my remarks, because I will take up this matter again—

Members interjecting:

Mr VENNING: I have five minutes, and I will use them. Certainly, I speak in support of the Supply Bill. I know that the government has very important programs to continue with over the years—

Members interjecting:

Mr VENNING: I also have a memory, the member for Peake. Just look out. I had intended to apologise for what I said last week, but I do not think I will do so now. I will conclude my remarks. I look forward to the next two years of this government. We have made some tremendous progress. I look forward to the budget process in a few weeks' time. I know that it will be a very responsible budget and that it will certainly progress the state in the future. I support the bill.

Mr KOUTSANTONIS secured the adjournment of the debate.

NATIONAL TAX REFORM (STATE PROVISIONS) BILL

In committee.

(Continued from 4 April. Page 758.)

New clause 4A.

Mrs MAYWALD: Initially, when this new clause was first introduced, I certainly had sympathy for it, as I believe that it has a user friendly approach for business within this state. We are looking at a transitional period for the introduction of GST that will be painful enough for small business and we should be working towards anything the state government can do to provide some sense of confidence to the people and the business community, in particular.

This amendment provides for the state government agencies to be required to print on their invoices for accounts for payment that the GST component be separately listed. In the scheme of things there are three types of accounts that the government will actually introduce. There is the account with no GST whatsoever within the components of the bill, and on that bill the government will have to print 'no GST applies'. There is a second type of account which determines that a partial GST component must be listed separately and must be identified on the bill as an individual component. The third type of bill is where a bill has GST applicable to all components on the bill and the federal government provision is that there is a choice: we can either print the amount or we can have the amount inclusive in the total and a line on the bottom that states 'GST is included in this bill'.

I believe it would be right for this government to list on those bills the actual amount of the GST and this new clause provides for that. Within that context, I sought some advice from the government on its position in relation to this bill and I was disappointed that it is totally opposed to the entire concept. The issues raised with me included that the intention of the amendment was to include bus tickets and zoo tickets. Quite clearly, this amendment talks about 'accounts for payment' and anyone with any accounting background or knowledge—and I would have thought the Treasurer might have that background and knowledge—would know that an account for payment does not include tickets for receipt. It is quite clearly my intention to support this amendment on the basis that it does not include zoo tickets or bus tickets or lottery tickets or receipts: it is purely for accounts for payment, that is, accounts sent out to consumers and business people on the basis there is a requirement that they remit an amount of money.

Another reason that was put forward why I should not support this amendment was that some agencies may not be in a position to comply with this particular amendment by

1 July 2000. I have some sympathy with that position in that there may be agencies that have already made provision as to how they would cope with the GST, and we would now be inflicting upon them a provision that would require them to change their system again, two months out from the introduction of the GST. In that light, I would like to amend the proposed new clause, as follows:

After 'government account', insert 'issued after 1 January 2001'.

This will provide a transitional period for government agencies to be able to comply with the amendment without unduly burdening them to comply by 1 July 2000.

The other issue raised with me by the government was that many of these agencies already intend to manage invoicing in accordance with this particular amendment. That is an important point. If many agencies are prepared to manage invoicing in this way, I think it is important for the community to know that all government agencies when invoicing consumers or businesses will apply the same principle to all invoicing. So, consistency in government is what I support and I believe that this amendment ensures that all government agencies will be required to comply with what most intend to do, anyway.

In our previous questioning in relation to how this would apply, the minister made comments in relation to car registrations. I also raise at this point the situation that car registration and compulsory third party components of GST may be subject to an exemption to which the minister did not refer in his answer to questioning on the previous amendment. I refer that to the minister at a later stage to answer what the position is with compulsory third party on the invoicing. I support the bill as amended and as I propose to amend it because I believe it is a good thing to do for business. The GST will be difficult enough for business, particularly small business, to implement and I think it is a token from this parliament to show that we are in the business of making things easier, not harder, for small business.

The position that this should not be supported because it was not introduced from the right side of the parliament is of concern. It is of no concern to me: I believe that each and every issue should be looked at upon its merits and the benefits that it may bestow upon the community. I will be supporting the amended amendment as I have proposed.

Mr FOLEY: The opposition will support the member for Chaffey's amendment to the opposition's amendment. It is pragmatic. I must say I am a little surprised that, while the government is requiring business to be ready for the GST on 1 July this year, it is not capable of itself being ready for 1 July by simply having printed on government invoices the GST component. I find it a little surprising that an expectation government is putting onto business, government itself is incapable of meeting. However, as we have demonstrated time and again in opposition, we are a constructive opposition prepared to work with all members of this House, Independent and government, to get a constructive outcome.

While I may have an opportunity to talk a little later, I think it is worthwhile to put on the record that I am pleased that, after many hours of discussions and negotiations within the corridors of this place, the government has seen the sense of the opposition's amendment and I understand has agreed to not oppose the opposition's amendment with the strong support of the cross benches, the Independent members and others.

That is a good outcome—that this parliament has demonstrated that it is able to rise above cheap political point

scoring and put into law meaningful improvements to legislation proposed by government. I am pleased that the opposition has played its small part in ensuring that this important piece of reform is indeed supported. At the end of the day, the opposition believes, as do the Independents, that it is just and right that people receiving goods and services from government should have on their invoice the GST component. Clearly, it has to be calculated. Transparency in government is such an important thing. It is an important principle, as my colleague the shadow minister for health quite rightly said. Transparency and accountability are fundamental principles that this parliament, wherever possible, should ensure are put in place.

It would be easy tonight for me to stand here and gloat or perhaps attempt some cheap political point scoring on the fact that, just on a week ago, we had those terrible scenes in this parliament. We all played our role in the mayhem that occurred at that time when we thought arrangements had been broken, and there was what I thought was a bit of panic. However, on reflection, I bear the government no ill will about those events, and I do not intend to gloat at all. When parliaments are tight in number and do not have absolute majorities, good law sometimes is the result of that. To those members who have supported the opposition tonight and to those who, perhaps in a far away place, were supportive of endeavours of government—

Ms Stevens: Who are they?

Mr FOLEY: I do not know, but perhaps there are members of government who do not agree with the government's position on this and felt supportive of the opposition's position. For those brave members of government who, from time to time, show an independent streak, it is worthy to note their contribution. I look forward to the very first invoice rolling off the government printing press with the GST on it. I would like to be a fly on the wall of the office of the federal Treasurer, Peter Costello, who has moved heaven and earth to stop such amendments occurring in the federal parliament. We on the opposition benches are just pleased to have played our little role in ensuring that the taxpayers of South Australia ultimately know how much GST they are paying on state government services.

Mr McEWEN: All is well that ends well.

Members interjecting:

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr McEWEN: As I said, all is well that ends well. It has taken a week and a lot of pushing and shoving to end up with some good public policy. At the end of the day, the politics are out of it, and what we have in front of us is some good public policy, I might add, leniently imposed upon the government, because I am standing now to support the further amendment from the member for Chaffey to the original amendment from the member for Hart—the further amendment being, of course, that the requirements of this amendment do not need to be enforced until 1 January next. It is good public policy, with six months to put it in place.

In reflecting on a good outcome, I will remember for some time the briefing I received from the Treasurer on this which actually had very little to do with the intent, substance or wording of the amendment. The Treasurer took a great deal of time to tell me all the inherent dangers, all the costs involved and all the disruption to the governance of the state that would be brought upon us if we chose to enforce GST on receipts. Nowhere in the amendment was the word 'receipt' mentioned. I know that the Liberal Party was told recently that I am very much like Peter Lewis but not as intelligent.

Tonight, in the absence of that member, I thought I might adopt the stance he would have taken in standing here tonight to address this amendment. It is a fine amendment to an amendment and I support it.

Mr HANNA: I rise to speak briefly in support of the amendment in its final shape after consultation between the member for Chaffey and the opposition. I want simply to point out that, from the small business people to whom I have spoken in the electorate of Mitchell, one thing they are clear about is that they will ram home to every customer they can possibly tell that any increase in prices that takes place this year will be due to the GST, because they do not want to be blamed for it. The second point is that the consumers to whom I have spoken—

Members interjecting:

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr HANNA:—the pensioners, the wage earners and the mums and dads—also want to be very clear about how much GST they are paying in the shops and every time they get a bill from the government. Therefore, I am glad that the collective position of this chamber is now to ensure that people will be able to see how much of their state taxes or bills of any kind will be GST heading off to Canberra. So, it is a win for the people, and it is a real tribute to members of this parliament like the members for Chaffey and Hart and one or two people on the Liberal side who have been able to see the wisdom of this position.

Mr WILLIAMS: I want to highlight a little of the information that the member for Mitchell outlined.

Mr Foley: Are you supporting or opposing?

Mr WILLIAMS: I just want to add a little information, so that it will be on the record and so that, if the member for Mitchell wants his small business operators to be honest with the people with whom they deal—and being honest might be difficult for some members opposite—they can just look through all the things they are selling and determine what effect the GST might have. We can put on 10 per cent, for example, and start off with adhesives, on which currently there is 22 per cent wholesale sales tax.

Mr Hanna: We need those.

Mr WILLIAMS: If the member for Mitchell knows anything about the wider economy, he would know that adhesives are an important product in the economy.

Mr Hanna interjecting:

Mr WILLIAMS: They certainly do, and the honourable member's party does not really understand anything about adhesiveness.

Mrs MAYWALD: I rise on a point of order, Mr Chairman. What is the relevance of this to the amendment?

The CHAIRMAN: Order! There is no point of order.

Mr WILLIAMS: As stated earlier in the week, the relevance is that we are implementing a measure—and I understand that it will probably be passed in this chamber, but it is an absolute nonsense measure—which will, in effect, say that, every time a price goes up, it will be shown on the docket or invoice. Any members who are purporting that this is a good measure which helps everybody would also advocate that this information should be put on the docket every time the price goes down. There is plenty of politics and hypocrisy in this place and very little science and commonsense.

Members opposite like to talk about what might happen in 18 months or two years' time and what the electorate will think. I can stand in this House and say that the people in my

electorate do think when they vote, and they are not that much different from people in a whole host of other electorates. Members opposite want to be a little frightened because the electors do think when they vote, and I am testament to that. We will move on. We can move through the alphabet, if you like, Mr Chairman, and I can list literally hundreds—

Mr Foley interjecting:

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr WILLIAMS: I can list hundreds, if members opposite wish me to go through the list verbatim as it is—

Mr Atkinson: Please do.

Mr WILLIAMS: All right. Adhesives, building, glues, contacts, coverage, 22 per cent; adhesive dressings 22 per cent; airconditioners, household, 12 per cent; and aluminium foil, household, 12 per cent. So when the constituents of members opposite go into the local deli and buy some aluminium foil, will the storekeeper tell them that it is 2 per cent cheaper than what it was pre GST? Is that what their storekeeper will do? Is that what this amendment will do? No, it is not, because we are not interested in honesty; we are only interested in hypocrisy—and you are very damn good at it—and they were best at it last weekend, weren't they, Ralph? However, we will move on because there are some important things that happen around here. The list goes on: baby rattles—and the member for Chaffey will know about this—

Mr FOLEY: Mr Chairman, I rise on a point of order. Does the member have a question?

The CHAIRMAN: There is no necessity for the member to have a question.

Mr WILLIAMS: Thank you, Mr Chairman. I refer to baby rattles, of which the member for Chaffey has probably purchased a few in recent times. Does she realise that they will decrease in price by 12 per cent? Will she insist that the storekeeper from whom she purchases the baby rattles tells her that they have come down by 12 per cent? I refer also to baby wipes, which will see a 2 per cent reduction, as well as to backpacks (she probably has a backpack to carry around the baby wipes, the rattles and the nappies), the figure for which is 12 per cent.

Mr FOLEY: Mr Chairman, I rise on a point of order. I thought the opposition had set the tone for a meaningful, constructive, decent bit of policy debate—

The CHAIRMAN: What is the point of order?

Mr FOLEY: Sir, the member for Chaffey is being treated with gross disrespect—

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr FOLEY:—by being continually called 'she' instead of 'the member for Chaffey'.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! There is no point of order.

Mr WILLIAMS: I think I have made my point. There are 11 pages, and I would suggest that each page contains close on 70 or 80 items. So, we are talking literally hundreds of everyday household goods the prices of which are being reduced by an average of about 10 per cent or even more, and that is on top of the most serious personal income tax deductions that this nation has ever seen. Will they be listed? This is nothing more than a bit of base political hypocrisy. I repeat that, at the end of the day, in spite of the best efforts of opposition members, the electors do understand.

Amendment carried; new clause as amended passed.

Clauses 5 to 12 passed.

Clause 13.

Mr FOLEY: We will get back on track with constructive dialogue here after that extraordinary outburst from the member for MacKillop, who clearly is having trouble finding

his niche in the government benches. He hides behind that corner and they wheel him out at about 9 o'clock each night. It must be noted that the only people whom he really gets stuck into are his former cross bench colleagues—I cannot understand why he would do that.

Members interjecting:

Mr FOLEY: Remember Mitch? He was the bloke who saw the *Titanic* pulling out of port and said, 'Hey, wait for me.'

Members interjecting:

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr FOLEY: This issue was raised at the briefing but I want to clarify it further. Will the minister explain how the state based petrol rebate scheme for rural areas will now be dealt with in terms of this legislation, and particularly in the light of the federal government's recent announcement in respect of petrol subsidies to rural areas? How will we as a state see the petrol rebate scheme being dealt with? What will the method of payment be to rural users? Will it be administered by the state office, through the commonwealth or what?

The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY: I am advised that we do not yet have advice on the publicity which appeared in the paper and to which the member for Hart is referring. We are awaiting advice on the story that was in the *Advertiser* only a couple of days ago. We will be able to forward that advice to him as soon as we get it.

Mr Conlon interjecting:

Mr FOLEY: I think Peter will be telling them something after tonight's amendment. I appreciate that, but what will now be the case in relation to the actual state based scheme that we have had in operation?

The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY: I am advised that the off-road subsidy that did apply will be repealed and the excise surcharge that was collected by the commonwealth on behalf of the state will also be repealed on 1 July.

Mr FOLEY: Will that result in no net increase to rural users?

The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY: I am advised that the off-road diesel rebate scheme will be expanded to ensure that it covers 100 per cent of the previous situation. Therefore, there should not be any increased costs to rural people for off-road use of diesel.

Clause passed.

Remaining clauses (14 to 27), schedule and title passed.

Bill read a third time and passed.

GOODS SECURITIES (MISCELLANEOUS) AMENDMENT BILL

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 5 April. Page 791.)

Mr ATKINSON (Spence): The bill seeks to achieve national uniformity in the priority of interests in title to a motor vehicle. We now have a national database that keeps track of security interests in motor vehicles. The aim is to ensure that crime does not pay. If potential purchasers of an interest in a car can look at a national database of security interests, the incentive to take stolen cars interstate is much reduced. Not all states have signed up to the database, but New South Wales and Victoria have and Queensland will. With 10 000 cars a year being stolen or used illegally in South Australia each year (and that is about 950 per 100 000 registrations), anything that might reduce car theft or illegal use will be supported by the opposition. Not even mandatory

minimum sentencing, namely, three months imprisonment for a second and subsequent offence of illegal use of a motor vehicle provided in section 86(a) of the Criminal Law Consolidation Act seems to have deterred illegal use of motor vehicles in South Australia. The opposition supports the bill.

Mr MEIER (Goyder): I add my support to this bill. I believe that the second reading explanation summarised the important aspects of the bill, and it was very good to hear the support from the Opposition.

Bill read a second time and taken through its remaining stages.

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

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

Motion carried.

SUPPLY BILL

Adjourned debate on second reading (resumed on motion).
(Continued from page 914.)

Mr KOUTSANTONIS (Peake): I rise to support supply, as it is the long-time tradition within the Labor Party of always supporting supply, unlike members opposite who in 1975 brought down an elected government by not supporting supply. We on this side never try to hamstring governments by not supporting supply. While the opposition is supporting supply for the government I want to reflect on the past six years of government incompetence and failure. We heard today in question time that 500 hospital beds since 1993 have been closed. That is 500 reasons not to re-elect this Olsen Liberal government. If we calculate those 500 beds every day from 1993 until now, that is over 1 095 000 beds that have gone unused since 1993. That is 1 million reasons not to vote for this government at the next election. This government's policy on health care is totally inadequate, unfair and hypocritical.

We heard the government gloating about how much extra money it will have in the budget through the emergency services levy. We hear how the Treasurer said that through good financial management the government will have extra money. Even though there is a \$10 million blow-out in the budget and this government has imposed the highest tax impost the people of South Australia have ever seen, the people of South Australia will face a hospital system with 500 fewer beds than there were when we were in government. We can go on. The South Australian police force has 300 fewer police officers, along with attrition, since 93. That is 300 further reasons not to support this government at the next election.

In my travels through my electorate while talking about the emergency services tax, hospital bed closures, cuts to health care, cuts to mental health care, and the hurt, pain and suffering this government is inflicting on ordinary South Australians, one thing I hear repeatedly from my constituents. Some things you should not cut; there are some things we expect, and they include adequate police numbers. The community of South Australia will not accept this government further slashing and burning our police numbers. The community will not accept this government going on its merry way of cutting and attacking our essential services.

What we have now is the government introducing basically a property tax and cloaking it by calling it an emergency services levy. If the government were serious about the emergency services levy and about supporting our emergency services, rather than cutting police and the fire department it would be increasing those numbers. If it were serious about providing adequate health care, it would not slash 500 beds—over 1 million beds over six years—and would not come in here and gloat about sound financial management after it has a \$200 million blow-out in its own budget and does not know exactly how much the GST will impact on government finances or how much it will cost to implement.

We can move on to education. I asked the minister a very simple question yesterday: will education costs go up under a GST? Will there be a tax on learning? Will there be a tax on ordinary South Australians going about their right to educate their children? We were horrified to find that there will be a tax on education. There will be a tax on education in every South Australian school—in fact, in every Australian school. We will be the only country in the world to tax education. That will be John Howard's legacy. And who is the person supporting John Howard on the GST? Who has been his champion in South Australia: John Wayne Olsen.

The Hon. G.A. Ingerson interjecting:

Mr KOUTSANTONIS: Here we have the champion of truth and honesty, the defender of the small and weak, the defender of the ordinary South Australian, honest Graham Ingerson; 'I cannot tell a lie' Graham Ingerson, the man who says, 'Full stop, full stop'. I will tell you what we will do: we will be a compassionate government, a government that has its priorities right, a government that looks after the weak, the poor, the needy, the battlers, the workers, small business and the farmers, because this Liberal government has abandoned its natural constituency; it has abandoned small business and the rural sector. An example of that will be when the members for Frome, Stuart and MacKillop all lose their seats. This government does not deserve a majority because it is so incompetent.

The Hon. G.A. Ingerson interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Bragg will come to order. The member for Peake.

Mr KOUTSANTONIS: Thank you for your protection, sir. Being attacked by the member for Bragg is like being flogged with a wet lettuce, but even that is uncomfortable. Another casualty of the government's mismanagement is the member for Unley. He will not make it to the ballot box or the general election.

Mr Clarke interjecting:

Mr KOUTSANTONIS: He might. Would his loyalties lie with John Wayne Olsen, the Liberal Party or himself? Baldrick is more interested in himself than in his party.

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: On a point of order, sir, I thought that people in this House had to be addressed by either their title or by the office they hold. I do not know anyone called 'Baldrick' in this place.

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the honourable member to be cautious in his use of words and to adhere to the standing orders.

Mr KOUTSANTONIS: I apologise, sir. It is often easy to confuse Baldrick with the member for Unley. I apologise if I have offended Baldrick—I mean, the member for Unley—but the resemblance, the attitude and the intellect are very similar. The honest member for Bragg, the defender of truth and justice in this House, has abandoned small business.

The former pharmacy owner, the man who rose to the heights of Deputy Premier before falling so violently on to the backbenches, has imposed on his constituency the most regressive tax known to small business—the emergency services levy.

The Hon. M.K. Brindal interjecting:

Mr KOUTSANTONIS: I think the member for Unley is having a fit.

The Hon. G.A. Ingerson: What are you going to do? Will you take off the tax? Will you remove the tax?

Mr Wright: He's a cabinet secretary now.

Mr KOUTSANTONIS: That is right. I understand that the member for Ross Smith is giving the member for Bragg lessons in shorthand. There is not much the member for Bragg can do, but he very quickly is learning shorthand. He is wandering around this place pretending he is Deputy Premier again and pretending that he is in charge of the House.

The Hon. M.K. Brindal interjecting:

Mr KOUTSANTONIS: I am glad the member for Unley interjects: I can tell him that, from talking with small business, I know that there is a concern among small business owners, because their natural party has abandoned them. That is why I understand that a number of prominent small businessmen, especially in Unley, are seeking to retake their party, to recapture the party they love, to recapture the party they believe represents them. That is why a brave young warrior called David Pisoni is taking on the machine of John Wayne Olsen in Unley.

The Hon. G.A. INGERSON: On a point of order, sir, every member of parliament has a title, in particular, the Premier. I ask you to rule that members use those titles.

The SPEAKER: I uphold the point of order. I have asked the honourable member to use electorate names and observe other formalities within this chamber. The member for Peake.

Mr KOUTSANTONIS: I apologise, sir. Of course I would never refer to you in any way like that, sir. The Premier's machine seems to have forgotten Unley. I remember reading in the press before the last election—

Mr WILLIAMS: On a point of order, sir, I was under the impression that this was a debate on the Supply Bill, and I ask that you rule that the honourable member come back to the matter at hand.

The SPEAKER: Order! I will try to give members some guidance on the nature of a debate on the Supply Bill compared with a grievance or other type of debate. The Supply Bill is just that: it is a debate restricted to the spending of money on state programs. It has nothing to do with money coming out of Canberra, the GST or revenues being raised by Canberra: it is a debate about the spending of money on state programs. I ask members to come back to that context in this debate.

Mr KOUTSANTONIS: In reference to government programs, small business feels abandoned by this government in terms of state government programs. Small business owners are seeking to retake the party to make sure that this government's initiatives and programs benefit their constituency.

There is a ray of hope for the Liberal Party. A young businessman, Mr Pisoni, seeks to retake his party back to its natural constituency. I understand he will be victorious but, unlike previous times when Mr Pisoni sought to retake his party and to bring it back to where it belongs, there was intervention. The former Premier, the member for Finnis, the Minister for Human Services, extended a helping hand to the member for Unley—the hand of friendship, the hand to

welcome him back to his breast. Of course, the member for Unley took that hand welcomingly and said, 'Of course, help me, help me—I will do anything you want Premier.' At the first opportunity he bit the hand that fed him. How times have changed, how the wheel has turned!

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: On a point of order, sir, I do not understand this debate, but the honourable member accuses me of biting somebody's hand and I certainly never did.

The SPEAKER: Order! It is not unparliamentary and I do not accept the point of order.

Mr KOUTSANTONIS: After biting the hand that fed him, the member for Unley then rose rapidly through the ranks of the junior ministry into cabinet, breathing down the necks of other cabinet ministers such as the Minister for Information Economy and the Minister for Human Services, but I understand that his rise will be short lived. I understand that the member for Unley is desperate for the Premier not to call an early election, desperate for the Premier to hang on for as long as he can to keep his superannuation ticking over—tick, tick, tick! I see him nodding his head in acknowledgment that that is his strategy, and it saddens me to see that the main objective of the member for Unley is his own personal gain rather than a concern for the people of South Australia.

I go back to hospitals. This government, in abandoning its obligations in the area of health care, has set South Australia well behind the national average. We heard the Premier today also talking about the declining number of people leaving the state and claiming that the ABS keeps statistics on this and a record of how many South Australians leave the state. When I interjected, 'You just made that up, Premier', he said, 'No, of course I haven't; no, I have the ABS figures.' I have checked: the ABS does not keep figures on the number of people who leave and enter South Australia in a financial year. I can, therefore, only draw the conclusion that the Premier made up that statement about a decline in the number of people leaving the state.

The Premier just made it up. He had a good speech to make and thought, 'I've got a bit of good news—unemployment has come down in one of those dips in the unemployment rate.' He thought, 'I'll just add this in; no-one will know; no-one will pick it up.' He thought that he could just make up things and quote statistics as he saw fit. The Premier has been caught out, as the ABS does not keep these figures. I would like to know, when the Premier comes back into the House tomorrow, exactly where he got those figures from. Maybe he can enlighten us and let us know exactly how many South Australians have left the state, as I am sure he is keeping accurate records.

The Hon. G.A. Ingerson interjecting:

Mr KOUTSANTONIS: The fact is that the ABS does not. That is the whole point of my argument. If the member for Bragg had been listening and not interjecting out of his place, he would understand. Some people in the party are keeping accurate records, and one of them is the member for Unley. He knows exactly who has moved into Unley. He knows exactly who has moved into his branch, and unfortunately, they are not friendly, they are hostile. I understand that he has one new friendly member, the candidate for Lord Mayor, Stormy Summers. I understand also that, since Ms Summers has moved into the Unley Liberal Party sub-branch, there has been an influx of new members, and I hear that the raffle prizes just got a whole lot better.

The SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member is

getting away from the Supply Bill.

Mr KOUTSANTONIS: In terms of government supply and government programs, they are few and far between indeed. If I list the number of hospitals and schools that have faced the axe under this government—

The Hon. M.K. Brindal: Name one hospital that has faced the axe.

Mr KOUTSANTONIS: The Queen Elizabeth Hospital is a proud hospital in the western suburbs, serving a huge number of people. It has lost its maternity ward because of this government. Now the government wants to take away the QEH's ability to treat cancer patients. Well done to the member for Unley, the Minister for Human Services and the Premier! What a great service to the western suburbs—taking away cancer treatment at the QEH! You disgraceful lot.

I can name a number of schools that have been closed by the Olsen Liberal government: Findon Primary School and West Croydon Primary School. Also, Adelaide High School, which is not in my electorate but in that of the member for Adelaide, has not had any major capital works for 10 years. It is the state's first school, the pride and joy of this state, and not one bit of state funding has been spent on upgrading that school. As the member for Spence interjected earlier today, I wonder whether the member for Adelaide still thinks that the Lord Mayor, Jane Lomax-Smith, is a breath of fresh air.

The important thing about the economy is perception—the perception that the government has its priorities right and the perception that the government has the interests of South Australians first. It is not about photo opportunities in the River Murray or races and sporting events. It is about sound economic growth, and this government has failed on every single one of those points. This government has failed to maintain infrastructure in health, education and police numbers. It is no wonder that people are continuing to leave the state. It is no wonder that there has been a flight of capital out of South Australia. It is no wonder that South Australia is languishing behind the eastern states. It is no wonder that we are now the basket case of Australia, when it used to be Tasmania. It is no wonder, because of six years of neglect by this government.

I heard earlier the member for Hart say that the member for Mackillop saw the *Titanic* leaving the Liverpool docks, and said, 'Wait for me. I want to get on board. I want to abandon my constituents. I want to abandon the people who elected me at the last election as an Independent. I want to abandon the people who gave me a mandate to sit in this House as an Independent.' He has betrayed every single one of the people who voted for him or gave him their preference, and we in the Labor Party will remind everyone in Mackillop exactly what their member has done to his electorate.

Mr WILLIAMS: I rise on a point of order. What relevance does this have to the Supply Bill?

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr KOUTSANTONIS: After that frivolous point of order, I will not be silenced. I will tell the truth about this government. You can try to silence me, sir, but this government has neglected its responsibility. It is just serving its two years because it knows it is finished. It is gone. There are a million reasons not to vote for this government; there are 500 reasons not to vote for it; and there are 300 reasons not to vote for it: police numbers slashed, hospitals beds slashed, and one million people have missed out on staying overnight in hospital because this government has slashed the health care budget.

Time expired.

Mr WILLIAMS (MacKillop): I am sure the House is delighted that the honourable member's time has expired. I have never heard so much rot in all my life. Earlier this evening I spoke about the intelligence of the electorate and the fact that, despite the protestations of the member who has just finished delivering what he would like to think of as a speech but was really verbal garbage, the people of South Australia do understand what is going on. They do think when they go to the polls, and I certainly believe that, come the next election in about two years' time, they will look at the facts, not the garbage, the hyperbole and the rhetoric that has been coming from the opposition benches this evening.

I will go over some of the things that they have said, beginning with the would-be Treasurer of South Australia. He protested that, when he downloaded a paper from the Business Council of Australia on his computer, a few words were missing here and there, and that was pretty obvious because I could not believe that the opposition's would-be Treasurer would make such a good case for the privatisation of South Australia's electricity assets. He did a great job and quoted from that report, which said that South Australia, along with New South Wales and Queensland, had a mix of generating capacity that was not sustainable in producing reduced electricity charges into those markets into the future. That is precisely why, in the last period, the government of South Australia has moved to divest itself of those assets and open them up to true competition.

As the would-be Treasurer of this state said, the Business Council of Australia report suggested that the only state in Australia that had achieved a mix of electricity generation and distribution capacity which would deliver true competition—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Peake will go into the gallery to finish his conversation.

Mr WILLIAMS: The would-be Treasurer quoted from the Business Council of Australia report, which confirmed that the only state in Australia that did have a mix of generating and distribution capacity set up in such a way to deliver true competition to consumers was Victoria. It is strange that the would-be Treasurer would set up Victoria as an example of success and New South Wales and Queensland as examples of failure. I suggest to the would-be Treasurer that South Australia is certainly going down the track taken by Victoria, not the track that New South Wales and Queensland have chosen to take.

He did say, and I freely admit it, that South Australia cannot at this stage deliver the electricity tariffs that are delivered in some of the eastern states. However, he failed to say that, because of conscious decisions taken by the Labor government in that state, New South Wales taxpayers will be subsidising the state-owned electricity assets in New South Wales to the tune of at least \$680 million and possibly \$1 billion over the next couple of years. It is worthwhile that we have those facts on the record.

The honourable member talked about the interconnector between the northern part of Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia, and the government of this state is supporting the building of an interconnector that will not call upon a subsidy from the taxpayers, the consumers, of South Australia. That interconnector is expected to deliver electricity into South Australia by early next year.

When he talked about the price of electricity in South Australia compared with that in the eastern states, the would-

be Treasurer overlooked the historic reality that South Australia was forced by his mates in the union movement (and they are still out there and they have still got the same mind-set) to—

Mr Foley: You are an economic troglodyte.

Mr WILLIAMS: They are economic vandals, as he said, and they forced South Australia into a position of producing electricity from very low grade coal. We broke the nexus where we had to rely on the unions at Newcastle, back in the 1940s. We have now brought South Australia to self-sufficiency with respect to electricity, and we can stand alone. The would be treasurer has ignored history, and those who ignore history will tend to repeat it and, indeed, repeat the mistakes of it.

I have already made a few passing comments about the member for Peake's contribution, and I would ask him to stop whining, whingeing and being wrong. The Premier has highlighted the fact that members opposite whine, whinge and are always wrong. The www is normally followed by a dot but, unfortunately, in the case of the opposition it is not a dot: it is a full stop. That is what they want for South Australia: a full stop. This government will ensure that that does not happen. We will ensure that we do move ahead. I would say to the member for Peake, if he wants to talk about health, can he come up to speed—

Mr Hill interjecting:

Mr WILLIAMS: Five hundred beds in South Australia. I would ask the member for Peake, the member for Kurna (who is over there interjecting '500 beds') and the member for Elizabeth, the opposition spokesperson, whether it is part of the Labor Party's policy, after the next election, to build 500 new beds, or whether they wish to rule over a modern state, instead of keeping patients in hospital for days on end, at great expense to the taxpayer, because of outdated methodology and technologies? Is that what they want for South Australia? As the minister pointed out in the House today, we are now achieving something like a quarter of a million more procedures per year in the South Australian hospital system than was the case in 1993-94. Unfortunately for the opposition, unfortunately for the member for Kurna—and bleat as he might; www full stop—these are irrefutable facts.

Mr Hanna interjecting:

Mr WILLIAMS: And the member for Mitchell chimes in. These are irrefutable facts. But, of course, the opposition does not want to know anything about facts. I will inform the member for Peake of another fact—because he talked about education and school closures. He mentioned the famous Croydon Park, the schools at Croydon. The facts did get a little besmirched at the last election, but it is the case that the schools made the decision. It was the union: the secretary of the union happened to have a couple of children in one of the schools and she thought that it was a school down the road that was to close, not her school, and away it went. These are the facts, and everyone knows the facts. But the opposition is not interested in facts. The fact is that, in the seven years from 1986 to 1993, the trend was between three and four schools closing in South Australia each year.

An honourable member interjecting:

Mr WILLIAMS: This is fact. The trend rate for school closures has, indeed, dropped off in the last six years of this Liberal government. That is an irrefutable fact. I do not expect the opposition to acknowledge that, because it will not acknowledge any of the good news in South Australia.

I think it was the leader who used the name of Max Baldock and said some very nice things about him. I concur with the nice things he said about Max Baldock. I do not accept that the average small business in South Australia is spending \$5 000 on systems to comply with the GST. Along with a lot of people whom I represent and a lot of the members on this side of the House, I happen to come from small business, and I can tell members opposite that the cost for me to comply with the GST will be in the order of \$170.

The SPEAKER: Order! I drew the attention of the member for Peake, I think it was, to mention of the GST during the debate on the Supply Bill, and I also draw it to the attention of the honourable member. It has nothing to do with GST.

Mr WILLIAMS: Thank you for your guidance, sir. I felt it important, because so much time was spent earlier in the debate on the GST and much has been made of it. In fact, we had a couple of debates earlier this evening with respect to the GST and its effects on the state and I thought it was important just to highlight a few facts.

The SPEAKER: Order! The chair has made a ruling. I was not in the chair earlier tonight. I would like members to adhere to my ruling.

Mr WILLIAMS: I accept your ruling, sir. The effect on small business over various financial arrangements which will come into play over the next period will be significant and positive. I think it is important that we do talk about facts, because in this place we spend far too much time on political hyperbole, rhetoric, nonsense and garbage. If we want to talk about the effects on small business and what government can do for small business, let us look at the unemployment rate of 7.9 per cent. It is the lowest unemployment rate in South Australia for many years. This certainly is a fact that those opposite do not want to know anything about. It is one fact that they cannot deny. They talk—

Members interjecting:

Mr WILLIAMS: Twelve per cent and over. What drives small business is economic activity, employment and spending. As a small business operator, I know full well that if you throw another 5 per cent of the work force out of work and they are relying for their expenditure on those who are still in work to provide the finances for them, that is a big hole in the total economy and that affects every small business in every street in every community. So, the most important thing that any government in this state can do is to get people into work and into jobs—get the fundamentals right. So, we will not be out there building hospitals with 500 beds in them that nobody needs. We will not be spending hundreds of millions of dollars building hospital beds that no-one needs, as the member for Peake would have. We will not be building schools all over the state with no students in them. What we will be doing, and what we will continue to do—

Mr KOUTSANTONIS: Sir, I rise on a point of order. I draw your attention to standing order 128: tedious repetition. I ask, sir, that you withdraw leave from the member because he is becoming tedious and repetitive

The SPEAKER: Order! I caution the member against frivolous points of order. There are also penalties involved in that.

Mr WILLIAMS: Thank you for your protection, sir. Small business will get up, and indeed has, got up and running because we have the fundamentals right.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Peake has had a fair go, I think.

Mr WILLIAMS: Thank you, sir.

An honourable member: Is this the royal 'we'?

Mr WILLIAMS: This is the royal 'we'. I remind members opposite of one of the most significant financial measures taken in this state for many years which will, in fact, at last redress the absolute mess in which this state was left—and the mess that members opposite would have happen again—and that is in the disposal of our electricity assets.

I happened to be involved in that, and from a very early stage I saw that it was an essential measure. I am very proud not only to have had a significant role in that particular disposal to put this state back on track but also to make sure that those people whom I represent were well looked after. I have no fear, and I am very proud to stand here and say that I had a significant role in that matter and a significant role in making sure that every rural and regional South Australian was protected in law better than they were protected ever before.

It does not matter what economic indicator one looks at, whether it be retail activity, housing construction, exports, retail turnover or anything else: the situation is improving. These are, indeed, irrefutable facts. It ill-behoves the member for Peake to sit back there and interject when he has just delivered a lot of nonsense. The facts have been given in this House over the past couple of weeks, and all he needs to do is pay a little attention to what is going on in the House, because one of his duties as a member of parliament is to look after the people who put him here.

Mr Meier interjecting:

Mr WILLIAMS: That is expecting a little too much. There are now 678 000 South Australians in employment, and that is a record. Never in the history of South Australia have as many as 678 000 South Australians been engaged in gainful employment in this state. We talk about small business. That is what is driving small business and that is why this government will be returned at the next election. In spite of all the protestations from the other side, in spite of all the nonsense, the false humour, the laughing and carrying on, the facts speak for themselves. Instead of whining and whingeing and continually getting it wrong, if members

opposite have problems with what is happening with the way in which South Australia is going ahead—the way in which the economy is growing, the way in which South Australians are now being employed, the way in which South Australians are now driving large and small business, or the rate of growth in our technology, which is operating in South Australia better than ever before—I would challenge them to stand up and tell us what they would do.

The member for Peake shakes his head; they all shake their head because they do not have an answer. Not only do they not have an answer: they would not do a thing. It is a policy vacuum on the other side. It is my pleasure to support this bill. It is also my pleasure to promote some of the good things going on in South Australia, because good things are indeed going on in this state. Every time another South Australian gets a job, I think that is good news, and I do not mind shouting that from the roof tops. I do not want to sit around in this place and try to get people put out of work as some members opposite do for their own political ends. Every time a South Australian gets a job I am proud of it.

Mr KOUTSANTONIS: I rise on a point of order. The member for MacKillop just indicated that members of the opposition take joy in people losing their jobs. I ask him to withdraw that statement.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. I cannot put words into other members' mouths. They are responsible for their own remarks.

Mr WILLIAMS: Thank you, sir. I am very proud to say that South Australia over the past few years has started to go ahead at a very rapid rate. I know that is a great source of disappointment to those opposite. I know they are quivering over there because they thought they made such a mess of it that nobody would be able to fix it, but we are fixing it, and it is getting better day by day. The figures are coming out in black and white and they are irrefutable.

Time expired.

Mr CLARKE secured the adjournment of the debate.

ADJOURNMENT

At 10.25 p.m. the House adjourned until Thursday 13 April at 10.30 a.m.