

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Thursday 29 June 2000

The **SPEAKER (Hon. J.K.G. Oswald)** took the chair at 10.30 a.m. and read prayers.

SCHOOLS, PUBLIC

Adjourned debate on motion of Ms White:

That a select committee be established to inquire into the funding of public school operating costs and in particular—

- (a) existing arrangements including the current regulation for compulsory fees, the existing levels of voluntary contributions and School Card allowances;
- (b) the adequacy of government operating grants paid to public schools; and
- (c) those cost items which should be met by government and those costs which should be met from other sources, including payments by parents.

(Continued from 1 June. Page 1360.)

Mr MEIER (Goyder): I oppose the motion. As members would be aware, the motion reads:

That a select committee be established to inquire into the funding of public school operating costs—

An honourable member interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Lee will contain himself.

Mr MEIER: We have now reached a new stage in this chamber—quite a few members of the opposition are actually able to read. I am delighted to know that. So often in the past I have been under the distinct impression that they either failed school or did not learn to read, because there has been incident after incident when they have showed—

Ms KEY: I rise on a point of order, Mr Speaker. I find the remarks of the member for Goyder offensive, and I ask him to withdraw them.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. As far as parliamentary debate goes in this House, I do not even uphold the requirement for the member to withdraw the comment unless he sees fit to do so himself.

Mr MEIER: Certainly, no offence was meant to the member for Hanson because I realise that she is very capable of reading, along with quite a few other honourable members. The government opposes this motion. As is the usual case with the opposition, this motion is way off beam and does nothing to enhance what is really happening in education. It shows the complete lack of ideas coming from ALP members. It is quite obvious that this is the way they will endeavour to prepare part of their education policy for the next election. They have not been able to take the time to work out how to get around education. They know that we are doing an excellent job in education. They try to find specific examples, and the media are happy to highlight those. Education funding and the way it is being provided in this state without question would rank top in this country—indeed, the world. It is quite obvious that this motion is seeking to provide a way for members of the opposition to have a select committee. From that they will be able to say, 'Yes, we now have a policy on one aspect of education.'

The Hon. G.M. Gunn: They want the parliament to write their policies; they don't have any.

Mr MEIER: Exactly. The member for Stuart summarises it very well. We will not allow it. Let us focus on the real world and the government's considerable list of achievements

and initiatives. I will start with Partnerships 21. Hopefully members opposite would at least know that that is about building stronger partnerships between local sites and their communities. It gives schools and preschools authority and responsibility to make decisions about what is best for their local community; in fact, 40 per cent of sites joined Partnerships 21 for the start of the year 2000. The number would have been much higher than that if it had not been for the scare campaign waged by the opposition and, of course, supported by the Australian Teachers Union. It was a great tragedy that the opposition waged that scare campaign, because Partnerships 21 represents the best move towards community involvement in education probably since education started in this state so many years ago.

So many other things have occurred, including the current review of education and children's services legislation. This is the first time that there has been a full review of the Education Act since 1972, and the first time there has been a full review of the Children's Services Act since 1985. It shows that, even though the government is doing so well and is promoting education in a way that it has not been promoted for many years, the government recognises that the acts need to be continually examined and upgraded where necessary so that our children get the best possible education available through the state's resources. That is our aim and that will continue to be our aim while we are in government. In relation to the review of these acts, according to information I obtained from the minister, over 5 800 submissions have been received, and more than 3 100 people have been involved in the review.

There have been something like 172 public meetings, forums and focus groups in both country and metropolitan areas. So, let us make sure that we do not hear any comments from the opposition when the new acts come forward, with members saying, 'We didn't know about this; there was insufficient consultation.' I say again that some 5 800 submissions have been received. That is a huge response, and it shows the interest of people in education. With more than 3 100 people involved, it is getting across to a very broad section of the community and, in particular, a broad section of the education community. With 172 public meetings, forums and focus groups, it shows quite clearly that the government has gone out of its way to make sure that everyone has the opportunity to have a say in the review of Education and Children's Services.

We can look the student-teacher staffing ratios. In 1999 it showed that South Australia had a lower government primary school ratio than New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory. So, again, we are right up there with the top. South Australia had a lower government secondary school ratio than all states and territories, except the Northern Territory. Again, our students are being looked after in the best possible way, and we can be proud of that.

Members would be well aware, as we have just gone through the budget estimates, that our budget for this coming year 2000-01 is \$1.7 billion, that is, \$1 700 million is being spent on education in South Australia—an increase of \$47 million on last year. If we compare it with what Labor spent in 1990, we find that it was a mere \$1.1 billion. We are now spending \$1.7 billion—an increase of \$600 million. Have we received thanks from the opposition on a regular basis to congratulate the government on the increase in spending over the years? No—it has been knock, knock, knock. All they have said is, 'We want more, we want more.'

They did not spend it when they were in government. Now they use it as a political outlet to try to raise the ire of the community. It is not working at all.

On a per capita basis, expenditure in government schools has increased in real terms by 5.32 per cent from 1993-94 to 1998-99—a very significant increase in expenditure per capita in government schools. Over five years, \$85.6 million has been allocated to integrate IT into teaching, learning and administration in government schools. We would be aware that when Labor was in government IT was unknown. They did not really know what the initials 'IT' (information technology) meant. This government has led the way in Australia with information technology, and we are proud of it; we make no apologies for the amount of money we are spending on it.

So, this motion is way off beam. It will not help at all. It is simply a way for the Labor Party to try to scramble together some ideas for a policy in the lead-up to the next state election, and therefore we oppose it with all the vigour with which it deserves to be opposed.

Ms HURLEY (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): It is very interesting that the member for Goyder does not like a bit of information gathering as a basis for developing policy. Certainly, the Labor Party does not share that view. We are quite happy to get some information before we actually develop our policy, whether from select committees, the 'Labor Listens' campaign or actually going out and talking to schools and parents, which, it is obvious, the member for Goyder has not done for some time if he thinks there is a great deal of contentment in the public school community with the government's actions of recent times.

However, to address the nature of this motion rather than an unconvincing parade of what this government has supposed to have done in education, this motion actually asks that a committee look at the existing arrangements for schools and particularly at how—

Mr Conlon interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order, the member for Elder! The deputy leader is having trouble speaking over you.

Ms HURLEY: This motion seeks to look at the way in which costs are shared between government and parents. That is a very sensible proposition. Parents are not averse to paying school fees. The great majority of parents understand the need for school fees and pay those fees. The debate about compulsory fees is a very complex one.

Schools in my area have a very low level of school fees and, although many of the parents in my schools are low income parents and either on commonwealth benefits of some description or are low income workers in the main, most parents find a way to pay school fees. They get very upset with parents who do not make the effort to pay those school fees, particularly if those parents are perceived to be able to afford the school fees. This occurs, so there needs to be some discussion about how fees are paid, whether they are compulsory, whether some parts of them might be compulsory and what proportion of costs the parents and the government are responsible for.

Many parents feel that the public school system should be entirely free to parents. This is not something with which I totally concur. There should be an allowance whereby parents can contribute to the cost of their children's education, and most parents are of that view. The trouble arises where parents are unclear about what they are responsible for.

School fees in most of the public schools in my area are amongst the lowest in the metropolitan area. The trouble arises when schools in more affluent areas charge higher fees. They charge higher fees because the parents are able to afford them. Those schools are therefore able to provide more resources to their children, including more educational resources. That is where we in the opposition believe that some inequities may be creeping in: schools in more affluent areas charging higher fees are able to provide a better standard of education for their children by providing better resources. That is what concerns the opposition greatly.

Among the resources being obtained by schools in higher income areas are computers. The member for Goyder says that the current government has done very well in providing IT facilities. Nevertheless, most schools are finding that they have to go to parents to be able to provide proper IT facilities for their schools. This, like it or not—and I am sure the Liberal government members who tend to be in more affluent areas do like it—means that schools in more affluent areas are able to get more in the way of fees and donations from their parents than do those schools in areas that we represent—areas where there is a predominance of low income earners.

Most parents in my area are simply not able to afford the level of fees that might be paid, for example, at Marryatville High School or Norwood-Morialta. Those sort of schools can ask for higher fees and for donations from parents to cover areas where they need extra resources. This is very unfortunate. The government has to look closely at this if it is to provide fair education for all schools in the state.

This is not simply just a social justice issue. The children in schools in my area contain amongst some very bright and able students, and I passionately believe that those students should have access to the sort of facilities they need to enable them to go as far as they possibly can in their education, whether that be in the technical or academic areas. I think the propensity of Liberal governments, both state and federal, is to gradually withdraw resources from some disadvantaged areas. This has had a very unfortunate effect on schools in my area. If the member for Goyder wishes to have this confirmed, I will be quite happy to take him to some schools in my area and have him to talk to the parents on school councils who will confirm very definitely that this is the case.

The member for Taylor has moved a very sensible motion which asks a select committee to look at the existing arrangements; to look at where they are inadequate; and to look at where the costs can be divided. If in that process the Labor Party gets information to develop better policies, I do not see the problem with that. It would be nice indeed if Liberal members of parliament also gained some information so that they, too, could draw up better policies than their existing policies.

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH (Waite): I oppose this motion. I cannot let the deputy leader get by with her recent remarks which smack of the socialist sort of doctrine that we get regularly from the other side. This whole concept that there is something morally wrong with parents wanting to make a contribution to their child's education because they happen to be able to afford to put in a little extra. To say that, because they happen to live in an area or be able to make a financial contribution to their child's education by chipping into the school and adding a few extras, that is somehow morally corrupt and morally wrong and should be opposed just typifies the sort of attitudes we get from the other side.

We happen to believe that if parents want to help out and make a contribution, want to make the school work a little better, then they ought to be able to do so. The opposition obviously takes the view that there is something wrong with that; that parents should not be able to contribute; that we should have some big, grey void out there where every school and every child and the funding arrangements into every public school are exactly identical; that those parents who want to help out and do something more should not be allowed to do so. The public schools in my constituency of Waite when we came to office in 1993 were a disgrace. I will number off some of those schools for members: Unley High School, Daws Road High School, Clapham Primary School and Colonel Light Gardens Primary School.

I was a student at Colonel Light Gardens Primary School in the late 1950s and 1960s. That school still bears a striking resemblance to how it looked in 1960. In fact, the toilet blocks and facilities at that primary school are fairly much the same as they were in the 1960s. What government did we have through a good part of the 1970s and 1980s? The tried and true Labor Party that spent absolutely nothing on the schools in the Mitcham, Cumberland Park or Daws Road areas—absolutely nothing. They were literally falling down until our government came along in 1993 and started fixing them up. I remind members opposite of the amount of money that has been spent fixing up those schools: \$20 million at Urrbrae High School, a school that was totally neglected by the opposition through most of the 1970s and 1980s; a sparkling jewel in our public school system, highly regarded both within the state and around the country, was left to rot by the Labor Party. We have completely reinvented the school; we have made a major reinvestment; the school is now a shining jewel; the students and staff love being there; and it is a great fit with what is going on at Waite Institute.

Unley High School was completely refurbished and re-equipped. The sum of \$3.5 million was spent at Mitcham Girls High School, and recently I attended there to open the new performing arts centre. They waited for years and years under the Labor Party for something to be done to reinvigorate the school. It was not until our government came to office that the money was found and the reinvestment was made to the benefit of those students and the families using the school.

We are still trying to find the money to fix the mess that the Labor Party delivered us at Daw Roads High School. The school needs urgent attention. The last budget provided \$1 million for a new basketball stadium, but more needs to be found. The socialist party opposite sits up and waffles—

Members interjecting:

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH: Well, the socialist party opposite is very quick—and I could name individual members who have stood up here and said that they are socialists. Let us not deny it: that is the doctrine which underpins the opposition. Members opposite are sitting over there saying that we need to have a big review on the way in which our public schools are funded; let us get a little bit of this social engineering going; let us get in and sledge the government; and let us stop families who want to make a contribution from doing so. It typifies the ideologically driven drivel that we had through the 1970s and 1980s when the opposition was sitting on these benches.

We are fixing up the mess that Labor delivered to us. We are actually make a reinvestment—and members need no better example that the waffle that has gone on about school closures. We all know that members opposite never closed

a single school when the Labor Party was in office. We all know that the ALP when it was in government did not close schools that were under-enrolled and falling off the edge, and reinvest the money in the areas in which the children were located. We all know that never happened. Here we are closing down schools that are struggling to survive and reinvesting where the children are located. What do we get from the opposition? We get the President of the teachers union, Janet Giles, with a stack of kids holding placards, and screaming and yelling and pretending to be the concerned mother about the closure of Croydon Primary School. I mean, what a politically motivated load of nonsense.

Members should look around at the schools and the money that is being spent reinvesting in those schools. I have seen it with my own eyes and my constituents have seen it. If members opposite want to talk about pork-barrelling, they should come out to my area and see the absolute neglect in Mitcham from when they were in office. If they want to come out and see fiddling of the books, if they want a demonstration of a government prepared to pork-barrel the electorates that it occupies and totally ignore the children in electorates it does not hold, they should come and look at Waite; they should look at the wreckage they delivered in 1993 that we are now fixing up. They should not try to pretend that any sort of favouritism is going on. In fact, I give the minister considerable credit and congratulations for what he has achieved in rebuilding our school infrastructure—not in seats occupied by us but in seats occupied by members opposite.

As the minister has explained, and as the budget has made quite clear, there is ample evidence of the rebuilding and reinvestment in primary and high schools in Adelaide and regional areas without any consideration whatsoever as to what party happens to hold that seat. That may be the way in which the Labor Party chose to operate in the 1980s: that is not the way in which our minister and our government chooses to operate. I want to particularly commend our government for its investment in IT to bring our schools into the year 2000. In 2000-01, expenditure of \$27.6 million, including \$5.545 million to schools, has been provided to complete computer network cabling; \$8.3 million has been allocated to support student learning including service systems; and \$5 million for internet access. This is one shining achievement of this government and the way in which it has administered education. The only way these kids will enable South Australia to get out in front of the pack and drive South Australia forward is by embracing the new opportunities that the new economy and IT herald. Our government, our minister and our department under our policy guidance has picked up that cudgel and delivered results to students.

As I have mentioned, this government has attempted to rectify the chaos we inherited in 1993. Our enterprise and vocational policies commit the government to the delivery of career related programs in schools, and these things are well and truly in place: 2 500 students in 1977 to over 12 000 in 1999, and 16 000 are expected in 2006. In 1999 students undertook 988 000 hours of VET and in 2000 it is expected to be 2.4 million hours. Quite frankly, the scores are on the board.

This motion is really just a bit of stuntsmanship. How can anyone take it seriously? This government has done more to reform the education system than any other government has done. Just look at Partnerships 21, which is being picked up with alacrity by schools all around the state. Partnerships 21,

which involves partnerships between families and schools, is a new and creative idea to drive things forward.

We are actually the party of reform. We have made education more relevant to our community and far more relevant than the opposition did when in government.

Where are your policies? Let us hear them. Let us not have any stunts about select committees designed to help you formulate your own policies. We would like to see what your vision is for the schools and children of South Australia beyond 2000. If less time were spent on stuntsmanship and more time spent on getting results we would all be better off as a consequence.

Mr HILL (Kaurna): I will not speak for the full 10 minutes; in fact, I did not intend to speak at all until I heard the arrant nonsense put to the House by the last speaker. I find it extraordinary that the government objects to this motion, because it is not an attack on the government, although they might see it as one: it talks about the amount of funding going into schools, and it is clear that this government has reduced the amount of funding going to our schools and put more pressure on parents. However, the motion, as such, does not attack the government: it merely says that we should inquire into these issues. I personally believe that it is about time we had a look at the balance between the contribution made by governments (at both the state and federal level) and by individual parents.

It is a good thing that the member for Waite is a member of parliament and not a history teacher, because he would never get a job in the state education system if the quality of his history lessons were the same as the lesson he tried to give the House today. It was a very selective use of facts that he used in his argument. He makes a comment about having gone to school in the 1960s. If that is the case he should remember what the quality of education—the size of classes and the quality of school buildings—was like in the 1960s, because at that stage the education system had been run by a Liberal government for over 30 years.

Mr Hamilton-Smith: We seem to have done all right.

Mr HILL: Oh, yes we have all done all right, as are the current generation. The point I make is that the education system that was in place in the 1930s was the worst education system in Australia bar none: it was recognised to be the case. When the Dunstan government came to office in the late 1960s and into the 1970s, it poured millions and millions of dollars into the education system in South Australia, and that was supported by federal funds as well. It totally transformed the system to make it the best system in Australia. The emphasis at that time was on reducing class sizes and building new schools, because the former Liberal governments from the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s had allowed our education system to fall into an absolute mess. Class sizes were huge. If you did not come from a background like the member for Waite's your chances of finishing school were very slight indeed. The retention rate, I think, in the 1950s and 1960s was around 25 per cent: an appalling indictment on a civilised country.

The Dunstan and Whitlam governments put an enormous amount of money into the education system and totally transformed the system in this state. The emphasis, though, was on building new schools, because there was an absolute need for that given the huge growth in population and the development of suburbs in the north and south. I would concede that by the early 1980s there was a back-log in maintenance and capital works in some of the older schools,

but the priorities were, as I say, giving a greater emphasis to class size.

This current government is making much of its attempt to try to upgrade some of the schools. I think those schools do need upgrading and I note, in passing, the upgrading of the Christies Beach High School, which services my electorate; it is in the electorate of the member for Reynell. That upgrading is well overdue. However, the way in which the government has paid for that upgrading has not been by putting extra funds into the education budget: it has paid for it by cutting the amount of funding that has been going to the state schools. It has cut the number of teachers and SSOs, and it has made parents pay a greater contribution.

So, it is not something fantastic that the government is doing: it is really just transferring money from one bucket into another. Government members should not come in here and pretend that they are adding money to the education system, because they are not. They are putting more pressure on the schools with this set of priorities, and the people who are paying for it are the parents and children, and the people who find it most difficult to pay are the ones who send their children to schools in electorates such as mine and those of members of this side of the House.

The pressure on individual families is immense. The amount that individual parents have to pay to keep their children going to school, to fund all the equipment and extra classes, excursions, and so on, is increasing year by year. It is about time that these measures were reviewed, because the pressure on families is getting to be great.

I say in passing that we know, of course, that one of the ways in which the government has fiddled with the education budget is to take funding away from poorer schools in the metropolitan area to prop up schools in regional and rural areas, because government members are worried about the vote that they may get at the forthcoming election. I just say to members opposite: it will not help them. The electors in rural and regional areas see through what they are doing. They know members opposite really do not care about them; they know that they are panicking; and they know they are trying to pour funding in at this last moment in an effort to buy back votes. It will not work: the government will fail there, as it will fail everywhere else in South Australia.

The Hon. R.L. BROKENSHIRE (Minister for Police, Correctional Services and Emergency Services): Talking about failing, as was just mentioned by the honourable member for Kaurna, if he was to compare the score card of this government and what it is doing in education to what the Labor Party did with education in its 11 years in office, he would see one big failure—one big 'F'—put alongside the Labor when it was in government. I cite one example.

Shortly after I was elected as a member of this parliament and given the privilege of serving my community, I visited a feeder school in my electorate, Willunga High, and spoke to a teacher there. In fact, the teacher came to see me at my home, because he was so upset about what had not happened for that school during the time when the Labor Party had been in office. The teacher said to me, 'Robert, there is only one way in which I could describe the school that I teach in, and that is as a poverty pack.' That is how that teacher described the school, which was in a key part of the electorate in which I live and work, when the Labor Party had had 11 years in which to do a job for that school and failed, with a capital 'F'.

Today, we have a school of excellence in Willunga High School. We have a school where there is commitment, where

there are partnerships and where there is progress that results in a capital 'P' for progress for the students, and that is progress into real jobs. As one example with respect to that school, capital works programs are getting up towards probably \$2 million—capital works programs that would get away from the poverty pack scenario that existed under that 11 years of Labor. We also now have the school leading the way in vocational education and training, where we are seeing partnerships between the school, the federal government, the state government and the McLaren Vale wine makers, and real outcomes, as I said, not only for students who are in the school, particularly in years 11, 12 and 13, but also adults who are able to come in through re-entry and upskill and obtain real jobs in my own community. That is just one example: there are many others. I would challenge any member on the other side to go into my electorate, have a look at the schools and then come back to me and say that they had not seen fantastic improvements if you took a photograph of 1993 and a photograph of the year 2000 and compared the capital works. That is, of course, only one aspect.

Other aspects include, clearly, information technology. It just amazes me, and I am very proud, when I visit my schools and see rooms of computer banks, where students have an opportunity to upskill and learn what it is like to live in a modern world. When I first became the local member, there were schools in my electorate that had virtually no computers other than those that were there for the SSOs to use in the front entrance foyer and reception area of the school. But if people went and had a look at what is there now, they would be pleasantly surprised.

The honourable member on the other side who moved this motion I would give credibility to as being probably one of, if not the, most intelligent members on the other side. I am surprised that the honourable member has fallen into the bearpit of the propaganda and the way in which the Labor Party tries, day in and day out, to undermine the very good work that is going on in the community of South Australia on an issue—and the issue in this case is that of education. This is nothing more than a stunt. Every day we give the opposition a full hour to come up with questions without notice. I do not see very many questions coming from the other side when the Minister for Education and Children's Services is very happy to report the facts every day on questions without notice.

Look what happened at the estimates committee. What an appalling effort by an opposition that is running around like a chook with its head cut off, telling everyone that they will form the next government. I say to members of the community: come in here and have a look at the lack of performance of the Labor Party. If I asked, 'Would you vote for that mob on the other side?', the answer would be no. The way that members of the opposition did not prepare for estimates was absolutely appalling. The way in which they thought about the only questions they asked was to ring up people such as members of the AEU and say, 'We have estimates coming up in a week. Have you had a look at the budget papers? Can you give us some questions?' That is about all members of the opposition did when it came to preparing for the estimates committees.

The fact of the matter is that this parliament has far more valuable things to do than play party politics with the Labor Party. If members opposite want to develop policy, as my colleague has said, why do they not get out there in the real world? Mike Rann talks of how much Labor listens. Labor

has not listened. And not only has it not listened: it still has not learnt. If members opposite want a good lesson in learning, they should ask the Minister for Education and Children's Services during question time what he is doing and they will get the good oil and they will get the lessons. But let us not play with children's lives and waste their time on party politics with a select committee which will get them nowhere and which will not do any good with respect to the valuable time and resource that we could put into productive work in this parliament.

Mr SCALZI (Hartley): I believe that we should review continuously. We should look at School Cards and at the way in which schools are funded, and I believe that the government does so. There is a difference between looking at the matter objectively and trying to establish a select committee to look at it for political purposes. And that is what this motion does.

I refer to point B, which concerns the adequacies of government operating grants paid to public schools. The sad thing about the opposition and some members of the Australian Education Union is that they continually try to create a climate of 'us versus them'.

Mr Atkinson: Are you still a member of the AEU?

Mr SCALZI: I am still a member of the AEU.

Mr Atkinson: Are you still paying your subs?

Mr SCALZI: I am still paying my subs. So, I am more entitled to speak on this issue than is the member opposite. Putting the argument of state schools versus private schools is not really a good education model. We should look at education in terms of the whole community. I know that we are responsible for the state education system, and one can well understand the generalisations made by members opposite because many of them have not worked in schools. I have worked in the education system and, for most of my working life, I taught in schools in the northern areas. For members opposite to generalise that somehow there is an invisible hand on the Liberal government side that tends to allocate more resources in schools in the eastern suburbs does not do us any good. The needs of the education community and schools should be met regardless of geography. I would be the first person to stand up for that. I did as a teacher and I do as a parliamentarian and as a member of government. If there are needs they must be addressed and we are doing that.

This motion specifically looks at ways to create and promote that continuous disharmony between state and independent schools and to promote the stereotype that, somehow, certain schools within the education system are looked after and that others are not. That is far from the truth. The Education Department has and does assess the needs and it acts accordingly. The opposition is committed more to committees than to education. That would be the result of this motion. Of course, a side benefit might be that a committee would assist the opposition to gather information to assist it in forming policies. If the opposition is really interested it should talk to the government, because—

Mr Hill: We can trust you!

Mr SCALZI: In areas where we must look after the needs of the education community there is cooperation. South Australia, in relation to the rest of the nation, is not underfunded, as some members opposite would believe. If one looks at the article which appeared in Monday's *Advertiser* about money in the bank for schools, I stress that, with respect to the top 20 accounts, that money in the bank is allocated for specific purposes. The article must not be

viewed as if the schools are overflowing with money and not knowing what to do with it. However, the article highlights that there is a continuous evaluation of resources to schools, and so there should be.

There is continuous evaluation of School Cards. I know that when there are specific difficulties I have made representations and those difficulties have been investigated. I know that the school councils in my electorate look at the situation very carefully. School councils go out of their way to assist those parents who have difficulties in meeting those requirements, but to suggest—

The SPEAKER: Order! There are too many audible conversations in the chamber. I ask members either to speak quietly or to go outside.

Mr SCALZI:—that somehow there is a crisis in this area and that we need a select committee to inquire into the situation makes one wonder what the opposition is doing with its time.

Ms Key: Doorknocking in your area.

Mr SCALZI: The honourable member can doorknock in my area, and I welcome it. Stop and have a cup of coffee. In the future, when the resources become available, we must allocate more money to education, health and all the social infrastructures. I am the first person to stand up for that. The opposition suggests that there is an urgent need for a select committee to inquire into this matter. When we look at the facts and at the resources and the work that has been put into the education area, and if members opposite could be objective when a resource centre is opened in their area and when new computers are given to students, they would realise that there is no need to establish a select committee into this matter. Be committed to education, not committees.

Mr McEWEN (Gordon): It is interesting to see that the debate has lapsed into a general debate about education and that very few speakers have even addressed the motion on the *Notice Paper*, which relates to the operating costs of schools. It is also interesting that we have seen, again, the mentality of blame and the state of denial—the two debating stances that tend to be taken most often in this place. We have moved on in the seven years since there was a change of government but, interestingly, education is the largest and most important investment a state government can make in the future of its people. They are not my words but the words of the Liberal Party's state election policy of 1993.

It is interesting to look quickly at the report card since that time. Over 40 schools have closed; class sizes have increased; the number of SSO's has been drastically reduced; School Card assessment for poor families has been cut; special programs, particularly in the area of music, have been cut; TAFE fees have increased drastically; and school buildings and grounds are in a sad state of deterioration. I could go on but my point is that we are not doing as much as we should be doing in education. It is the second biggest budget line in the state but it is not being given the appropriate priority.

Interestingly, I have been working with the minister now on at least four significant issues related to schools in my electorate. We started on one last October and we have made no progress. We started on another more than 12 months ago, to which more than \$1 million was allocated in the budget, but work has still not commenced on it. A separate project valued at nearly \$1 million involving the relocation of a school for people with disabilities has moved very slowly. I do not support the motion but I need to—

Mr Koutsantonis interjecting:

Mr McEWEN: I do not support the motion so members on the other side have just halved my score card, unfortunately. That notwithstanding, I need to put on the record that much more needs to be done, and that if we are to make an investment in our future we do need to realign some of the priorities and allocate more resources into education as a matter of urgency.

Mr CLARKE (Ross Smith): I will not use my full 10 minutes.

Members interjecting:

Mr CLARKE: As I have been invited to do so, I will. I did not intend to contribute until I heard the member for Hartley but, more particularly, the member for Gordon. The member for Gordon said that very few speakers had addressed the subject of the motion, and he is quite right—nor did he. The member for Gordon sanctimoniously lectures us on a regular basis—all of us—and then immediately flouts his own ruling. Surely he is not leaving! What the member for Taylor has put forward is exactly what the member for Kaurna said in an earlier contribution today, that is, that the motion does not attack the government per se, despite what the member for Waite says.

The motion talks about getting some facts so that we as legislators can make determinations about the allocation of resources to the most important investment we, as a government and as a parliament, can possibly make: the education of our children. Quite frankly, as we all know, particularly in a state such as South Australia that has fewer natural resources than other states, this state must make every post a winner. South Australia is somewhat akin to Singapore or Hong Kong in the sense that we must realise—

Mr Hill interjecting:

Mr CLARKE: We are much larger but we must realise that our future is in our human capital, our human resources, our intellectual capital. We cannot succeed without that intellectual capital. To do that we must have the very best education system not only in Australia but certainly in the entire region we will be trading with and in the type of industries that we want to attract to this country. We are not treating it seriously. I have just returned from some parts of south-east Asia—from countries that are more undeveloped than we are—and seen the efforts they are putting into their education at their primary and senior schools, polytechnics, universities, and so on. It is apparent that we are not taking education seriously enough in this state. The member for Gordon quite rightly pointed out that there had been a reduction in available services. We have seen a reduction in the School Card allowances which has made it tougher on those families with the least income and resources to support themselves.

We have seen school closures and an increase in the number of students per classroom ratio. Even though there has been an increase in the number of school counsellors from 70 to 90 we have seen a reduction in the number of hours they are available. This has happened in my electorate, and I have raised this matter with the Minister for Education on other occasions. Those schools have transient populations and a whole range of social problems, and that is impacting on the ability of the educators to educate the remainder of the class and to take adequate care of those students who need that assistance.

The member for Taylor has put forward simply a select committee not for the purposes the member for Hartley has put to us—just to have a committee upon a committee—but

to ascertain certain facts. Other than the minister and perhaps some cabinet ministers, no members in this parliament would have access to the sorts of information the member for Taylor is seeking through this select committee. The member for Hartley would not have access to this information. He would do well to serve on such a select committee. He, along with the member for Gordon, with his bitching and griping about the Minister for Education's being slow in handling some of the problems in his electorate when dealing with certain schools, ought to vote for this motion, because that will be the quickest way of resolving some of his disputes—by putting the spotlight on deficiencies in the education area so that we can come to grips with the facts and not necessarily be partisan about it. We on this side of the House will be assuming government at the next election: there is nothing more certain. You only have to read the media.

Our greatest campaigners and supporters are the Treasurer and Premier with respect to ETSA. We know that we will be facing some real difficulties when we take government in two years' time, and we will have to sort out the allocation of resources and education. It would be very useful for all of us to have access to this type of information. I urge the House to support this measure. In particular, I ask the member for Gordon to reconsider his position. He came in and lacerated members of the government on the one hand and then absolved them with the other. I have heard about committing all the sins and then whipping into the confessional and suddenly feeling all absolved. But at least he could do it with a less indecent haste—

An honourable member interjecting:

Mr CLARKE: I certainly haven't. Unlike the member for Spence, I haven't. I prefer not to take the lash on the back constantly, like the member for Spence. He is not satisfied until he has lime and ash all over him.

An honourable member interjecting:

Mr CLARKE: I will come back to the substance of the debate and simply urge the House to support this measure. I ask the member for Gordon to rethink his position, because I for one am fed up with his sanctimonious twaddle and his lacerating of government members only to absolve them in the same breath.

Mr CONLON (Elder): Like the member for Kaurua, it had not been my intention to join in this debate until I listened in my office to the collection of inane fatuities and self-delusional denials put forward by a series of government ministers. After that, I felt that I should make a small contribution. Let me say this at the outset, as a person from a working-class background who had education transform his life: I find the contributions of the government offensive and disgusting.

Mrs Geraghty: And insulting.

Mr CONLON: Yes. Let me say this: for all the things they claim to have done for the people of South Australia in my electorate, two primary schools and one high school have been closed. The people in my electorate thank members opposite for that! Did we get benefits in the other schools? We did not get anything. Benefits flowed from the schools in my electorate—they flowed to the eastern suburbs, to the electorates held by members opposite. They can make all the noise they like about it, but the people in my electorate know, as do the people who have been disadvantaged by members opposite. Let me address some of the absolutely inane fatuities we have heard from members opposite.

First, we heard from 'Homer Greenspan'—the member for Waite—whose basic philosophy seemed to be, 'What's wrong with people who are wealthy getting a better education?' At least he fits in with the current Liberal scheme of government for this country, where we have seen promoted through federal and state Liberal governments notions that if you are wealthy you should have better health care, you and your children should have better education and you will be better off and the devil take the hindmost. I am not surprised that the member for Waite has embraced those views. That is why he and his colleagues are Liberal. We do not agree, and that is why we are the Labor party.

I refer to the contribution of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the member for Mawson, regarding how well we have been going. First, he says that there are far more computers. Golly gee! If in the past seven years of the information technology revolution there had not been many more computers in schools, I would have been somewhat surprised; in fact, I would have been staggered. The fact that a modern democratic Liberal nation is taking part in the information revolution and globalisation should not be paraded. It is something that should be bloody obvious, and it should not be seen as any great contribution from this government.

I refer to the honourable member's other suggestion that we were not prepared for estimates. Why did the member for Mawson become a minister? Because he was the only dumb bunny who would put up his hand for the emergency services levy. We have never seen a less competent minister in this place. He is not a minister because he is well prepared, intelligent or does things well: he is a minister so that the Treasurer would not have to stand next to his lousy emergency services tax. I say this to the member for Mawson, 'If they offer you the handling of the ETSA deal now, don't take it.'

The Hon. R.L. BROKENSHIRE: I rise on a point of order, Mr Speaker. Would the member for Elder please explain why he was not at estimates committees as the shadow spokesperson?

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. I caution the House on irrelevant points of order.

Mr LEWIS: I rise on a point of order, Mr Speaker. I question the relevance of the remarks to the subject under debate.

The SPEAKER: Order! I steer the member back onto the subject before us, namely, education.

Mr CONLON: I was merely answering a point made in the debate about our performance or preparation at estimates. I made some comments about the qualities of this so-called minister. What was the other contribution? We had the contribution from the member for Hartley, a former school teacher, about how we need to check things but not in here. I do not know what his contribution meant. In the new parliamentary vernacular he would be as nervous as a duck in a log, because the margin by which he holds his seat is very slim, and the government has done no favours for him. I am sure that anyone who was here last night would understand my reference to nervous ducks and hollow logs. I shall never eat duck in Macau; I give the parliament my earnest undertaking on that. Fortunately, we live in a high education, high wage, high economic growth part of the world. Education is the key to our wellbeing—to the future prospects of every one of us.

Mr Scalzi: We acknowledge that.

Mr CONLON: The member for Hartley acknowledges it. Perhaps he would like to explain why we have a federal

government which, for the past four years has undermined public education and transferred wealth to the wealthy private sector. We know why: because the member for Waite does not see anything wrong with wealthier people getting better education so that they remain wealthier people.

Mr Koutsantonis: It's their right.

Mr CONLON: That is right—it is their birthright, just as it is the birthright of supporters of the ALP to remain ditch diggers. That is the attitude of members opposite and the attitude that they bring to this debate. I will tell a little personal story about why I get worked up when I hear these inane people on the government benches talk about education.

I was a migrant to this country and am very grateful to be here. Education transformed my life. I went to Le Fevre Boys Tech back in the bad old days, the bad old days to which this mob would like us to return. I took a year off in fourth year and worked for a year because I needed the money. When I returned to the school, I was told by the principal of that school that I should not return to school, I had a job, and I should be happy. I did, and I did not go to university until I was 28 years old. I do not want that to happen to anyone else. That is a disgraceful situation, and we want everyone in this state to have the same opportunities. The mealy mouthed contributions, the excuses and the pathetic arguments from opposite will do nothing to change that. I will say no more, except to say this—

The Hon. G.A. Ingerson interjecting:

Mr CONLON: Perhaps I will retract that. We have had a contribution from the cabinet secretary, the member for Bragg, whose only contribution on education should be this: education never did him no good—full stop, full stop, full stop.

The Hon. G.A. Ingerson: Careful, you'll have a heart attack.

Mr CONLON: I do not think that will happen—that would make too many people happy. It is not in my nature to make too many people happy at once. The only highlight of this debate and the sitting in the past few days is that there is finally a glimmer of hope from the people of South Australia, which is that this mob is finished. They are finished. The member for Waite will get the benefit of his education. He will be the leader of the opposition in the next parliament—that is how well they are going. The member for Bragg will not be here because he is being stalked by one Chapman woman, I understand, so we will not have to worry about you, either, member for Bragg. I have made a sufficient contribution, and I look forward to hearing from the remainder of my colleagues.

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

Mr SCALZI: On a point of order, sir, I believe the member for Norwood wanted to make a contribution.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Hartley will resume his seat. The chair, and not members on the benches, will decide whom he gives the call to.

The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY: If we get back to the motion in terms of what is being asked for here, we see that it says:

(a) existing arrangements including the current regulation for compulsory fees, the existing levels of voluntary contributions and School Card allowances.

Those issues are already known. School Card allowances are known. Some 45 per cent of our student population are on School Card currently. The issues in terms of compulsory fees have been well canvassed in discussions on the new

Education Act, which will be brought into this House in October. There will be ample time for discussion by parliament. We have had more than 3 800 people make contributions towards discussions on the Education Act.

As to the adequacy of government operating grants paid to public schools, one only has to look, as the member for Hartley was indicating in the press this week, to see that our schools are adequately funded in terms of the amount of money that is held in reserve. I note that most of that money is put aside for a specific purpose, which is good: that is what it is there for and for schools to use during the year. However, schools are not out of funds or on their knees. What is more, the Australian Bureau of Statistics further confirms that South Australia spends more than any other mainland state per student in our public schools, and that is confirmed by the ABS. Even the Evatt Foundation of the Labor Party recognised and placed South Australia at No. 1 in terms of funding to students and public schools.

As to the cost items that should be met and those that should be met from other sources, including payments from parents, I point out to the opposition that the vast majority of parents are very happy to contribute to their schools in terms of a materials and services fee. They have been doing so since 1960, when the materials and services fee was introduced (which I will not get into because another motion is coming up). A number of parents who can well afford to pay the materials and services fee choose not to do so. At the moment about \$1 million is still outstanding for 1999 in terms of unpaid fees, which impacts on local school budgets and on the decision making process of local schools.

I do not have a problem in terms of people having to pay the maximum chargeable fee, which is \$215 for a secondary school and \$161 for a primary school. Anything above that is purely voluntary, and people know that. In terms of this motion, the information is already available. The information in much of it has been undertaken by the community in the lead-up to the change of the Education Act, and I see no benefit in having this committee formed.

Ms CICCARELLO (Norwood): I support the motion and think it would behove the government to support it also. Over the past couple of weeks I have been visiting the various high schools in the eastern suburbs. They are not all necessarily in my electorate, but certainly the catchment area is within my electorate. I have been appalled to see some of the conditions in the schools and conditions under which the teachers are working and the pressure on the school councils. It would behove the members for Hartley, Bragg and Coles to take seriously the state of the schools in the eastern suburbs. I constantly get a little cross with my own colleagues who cast aspersions on the eastern suburbs in saying that there is not a need. The perception might be that in the eastern suburbs we do not—

Members interjecting:

Ms CICCARELLO: We are not just talking of St Peter's College and Prince Alfred College. Unfortunately, the perception that everyone is well heeled in the eastern suburbs means that often we do not get the attention that we need in our area, and our facilities have been run down for many years. I certainly support the motion.

Mr LEWIS (Hammond): My remarks are pretty much the same as some other members have made on this side of the chamber, with the exclusion of the stuff that was not relevant to the subject of the motion—and there was plenty

of that. A great deal of that has been uttered on this matter this morning. It is my view that the sooner education goes in the general direction of greater community responsibility for the provision of education through the schools in the community, the better.

Ms White: Do you mean the cost?

Mr LEWIS: I am not sure what the honourable member is saying. I am deaf than normal this morning because of my head cold. If those who presently cannot afford to meet all the costs associated with educating their children—and there are many, and we give them in a bipartisan way School Card to enable them to ensure that their children are educated—and if those children have a weighting attached to the formula by which the amount of money given to schools ensures that adequate funding goes with the child to whatever school it is in which they choose to enrol themselves (or their parents choose to enrol them), we address that problem.

I am really saying that I believe it better not to have highly paid bureaucrats managing school matters, but rather adequately reimbursed directors of school boards. Then you would have—and this is not Liberal Party policy, this is Peter Lewis's view—school boards which pay directors on those boards who would be elected by the school councils. You would then have a cluster of campuses that were run by the board that was elected by the wider community, with a majority of the members elected by the parents of the children who were enrolled in the school and the rest of the directors, say, three of the seven, elected by a voluntary ballot of members within that geographic area served by the schools. Those directors being paid a small fee would be a hell of a lot cheaper per capita per child in the school than the current cost of highly paid bureaucrats to run those schools.

I am quite sure then that a new culture would permeate the school system where teachers were employed not by one single entity but by a large number of entities. This is what happens in, for instance, the Houston school district in Texas, which has a population of about 3.5 million (the size of Victoria). I studied that in the mid 1980s, and those educational researchers who examined the effects of doing it noted a rapid improvement over a decade in the standard of education being delivered to the children, a rapid increase in the satisfaction levels stated by parents in responses to surveys that were undertaken and the children themselves achieving higher standards of outcome. That was because the square pegs in round holes that we have in the education department were removed fairly quickly by that system and the round pegs in the round holes were rewarded for the extra effort they made.

I am saying that a small number of teachers tend to average down the quality of education that is delivered to the children. They are not good teachers: they are psychologically or emotionally ill-fitted to the work and they would be better off (and so would the children) if they were to pursue an alternative career. They obviously have ability but it is not in the area of teaching. At present they stay there because, once they are permanently appointed, there is no way that they can be removed and they feel too insecure to accept the challenge and take up an alternative career better suited to their disposition and talents. That is what has happened in the instance to which I have referred and I think we could do well to do it in this state.

It would not detract from the responsibility of parliament and the department would have to set the base standards that have to be achieved and to check that they were being achieved in the manner in which the department now does.

We do that in the private school system. It is merely a matter of ensuring that it goes across all schools that then become more functional in the sort of privatised model. I know that the teachers' union (by whatever name you wish to call it) would strongly oppose the remarks that I am making because it will result in a reduction in the number of members simply because more people are employed as teachers than are really necessary to deliver the educational outcomes we seek. Some of the staff who are presently well trained teachers spend too much of their time on administrative matters that could be done more effectively and efficiently by people who are trained as administrators to deliver that work. The boards would be able to recruit such people who had an empathy with education but appropriate academic and professional qualifications to deliver the administrative services to those multi-campus privatised school board arrangements.

Therefore, I am not of the view that, at the present time, it is necessary for us to investigate these matters, whether or not my view of where we can make improvements in the education system would be seen as desirable. In politics, as Don Dunstan said, it is the art of the possible. If we set out to discover the facts, as I believe we should, relevant to some of the inquiries that are countenanced in this motion, in a better worded proposition, I would support it, but I will not support it in this form because it will not lead us into a public debate about whether we can do better. It would lead us into a slanging match between, on the one side, what the education union wants to see happen to enhance its power base and, on the other side, what the Liberal Party in government wants to see happen to retain the general direction in which it thinks schools ought to be going. Frankly, I do not differ much from the current minister. He is probably not as radical in his ideas as I am, but I know he is a clear thinking person and a fair person.

Members interjecting:

Mr LEWIS: I am not ashamed of anything I am saying and I do not disparage any of the remarks made by any other member by making that observation about my own views and the views which they have expressed in this debate. I simply say that it is time now in the 21st century to look at better models than the huge bureaucratic model which has the arbitrary borders imposed by state boundaries on the structure and delivery of school administration and education for the children who attend those schools. I believe that there is a need for competition so that parents have free will to determine where their children will be enrolled. At present, our system in this state is inflexible in that regard in too many ways. I also believe that, wherever the parent takes the child for enrolment, that child and those parents are in necessitous circumstances granted School Cards, and then there ought to be a weighting for that and there ought to be a weighting also if the area in which the school is located geographically is lower in income than the mean. There have to be compensating factors so that the educational outcomes for the children are democratic and fair. On that basis then, given that the motion enables me to make a simple and short statement of the kind that I have been able to do, I point out that I am not happy to support the proposition brought by the member for Taylor.

Ms KEY (Hanson): My contribution in support of the motion centres on two main issues. One of them is the cut of the cake and the have and have-nots in the education system, particularly the public education system. The minister reassured us in his contribution—and I am pleased to see that

the minister has contributed during private members' time because, from my experience in the past two years, ministers do not seem to have featured in private members' time: I congratulate him on his contribution—that South Australia spends more per head of population on education than anywhere else. That is certainly a figure to be looked at in a positive light. I presume that would be an average figure and my concern is that, although we might spend more per head than anywhere else, the distribution of that money is the issue that members on this side are raising and I will point to some statistics on that in a minute.

The other point that he made was that the School Card is taken up by 45 per cent of families in the public school area. I would say that that is precisely the sort of statistic that supports the motion that has been put forward by our shadow minister in that, if 45 per cent of the population who access the public school system are having to resort to a School Card, it means that we probably need to have an inquiry on why that is so and take up the points that have been raised by the honourable member with regard to a review.

In relation to the electorate of Hanson, I asked the minister in November 1999 for some statistics on the use of School Card in a number of areas. He provided a response for School Card usage in a number of schools for 1998; he also promised to provide me with School Card usage for 1999 in the same schools. Here we are in June 2000, yet I have not received that information, so I hope the minister will provide me with it. In relation to the schools in the electorate of Hanson, I notice that the take-up rate at Cowandilla Primary School for School Card is 95 per cent; Plympton Primary School, 51 per cent; Richmond Primary School, 57 per cent; Warriapendi Aboriginal School, 100 per cent; and William Light School, which is an amalgamation of different primary schools and high schools in the area, 38 per cent. When we are talking about access to resources and qualifying for School Card, obviously the constituents of Hanson have problems with actually paying the school fees that are being asked for by the various schools.

The other point is that, although in comparison with other areas the amalgamation of schools to form the William Light Reception to Year 12 School was less obvious or public than some campaigns in other areas, particularly in the area of Spence and other areas, a number of parents came to me as a new member of parliament to say that they were not opposed to the amalgamation of the schools in the area. They said that, if it became a better school with better resources, they would support it but there were issues that they wanted to raise with me and the principal of William Light. A number of women who came to see me said that they had a real problem with the schools' shifting, particularly the primary school, because the extra half to quarter of a mile that their children had to walk in the mornings would make it very difficult for them to get to work on time. There were no flexible working arrangements about when they could start work and they did not work for pin money: they worked because they had to supplement their household income. They were very concerned about their children crossing a lot of major roads to get to the new school.

Some members might think this is a minor point. These constituents, as I said, were very positive about the opportunity—hopefully—for William Light School to be a better resourced school, but they did not have a car and they needed to turn up at their job; it was going to cause a real problem for them. A number of members in this House have demonstrated that simple things such as that are of concern.

Mr MEIER (Goyder): I move:

That standing orders be so far suspended to enable the House to continue to consider Orders of the Day: Private Members Bills/Committees/Regulations.

The SPEAKER: As there is not an absolute majority of the House, ring the bells.

A quorum having been formed:

Motion carried.

Ms KEY: I point also to the information provided by the minister in relation to the 1998 school year—because the minister has not yet responded in relation to 1999. I am advised in this response that Heathfield High School has a School Card rate of 17 per cent; Marryatville High School, 17 per cent; Nuriootpa High School, 24 per cent; Rose Park Primary School, 15 per cent; and Stirling East Primary School, 15 per cent.

The point I make to the minister is that I believe there is a need to follow this motion and set up a committee, because there are obviously big discrepancies between some of the schools in the electorate of Hanson and some other schools which have representatives from the other side of the House. As I said before, while I acknowledge the statistic that South Australia on average pays more per student for education—and I am hoping that statistic does not include private school education; I hope that is a public school statistic—from where I stand it appears that the distribution of the cake is inequitable.

On a personal note, like the member for Elder, my opportunity to go to university resulted from the fact that during Gough Whitlam's brief time there were no university fees. There was actually encouragement for people who did not have matriculation to go to university, and some support was made available so that people could actually put themselves through university. I very proudly worked as a waitress during my time at university; I worked seven nights a week and also did my best to assist other people who were in my household at the time to go through university. As a product of a public school education and someone who was given an opportunity, I take very seriously and respond very angrily to comments that are made in a flippant way about access to education. I am the first person in my family to have ever had a tertiary education. If it were not for that brief period, that window of opportunity, when there was some support and you did not have to pay the exorbitant university fees now being charged, I would not have had that opportunity.

When members opposite are thinking about education, they perhaps should take on board some of the issues that I have raised and acknowledge the fact that not everyone in our current system has the same access to secondary education, let alone the ability to get into TAFE or undertake higher education. Perhaps members opposite should think about that. The School Card statistic, that is, 45 per cent of people in South Australia in the public school system having access to School Card, indicates to me that we need a review, and on that basis I support the motion before us.

Mr WILLIAMS (MacKillop): Like many members today, it was not my intention to contribute at all to this debate until sitting in my office I heard some of the contributions, including that of at least one member opposite, and felt obliged to come down here and put the record straight. The member for Kurna said something like, 'This government is ripping money out of schools in Labor held seats and

transferring that money to rural and regional areas because that is where it has to bolster its vote.' As far as education and educational opportunities go in this state, I suggest that no-one is more disadvantaged than the children of rural and farming families.

Through no fault of their own, the tyranny of distance has made education a very hard task, particularly for young children of farming families. For people to come into this place and suggest that this government is doing something wrong by redressing the imbalance in putting some extra funds into educational services in rural and regional areas shows that they know very little about life outside the metropolitan area.

I have students in my electorate who spend close to an hour, night and morning, on a bus travelling over rough roads with no airconditioning in summer or heating in winter. I refer to children who are starting off in junior primary school. One school in my electorate has only 11 or 12 children in it, yet members opposite will try to tell me that they are not disadvantaged in relation to gaining an education. Education is more than about just being instructed in reading and writing. It is about the social outcomes and interaction as well.

For the member for Kaurna to suggest that it is wrong for the government to put in a few extra dollars, or to redirect some money into those sort of situations in an attempt to give those children an equality of education (although it is impossible) is ridiculous. I have had the good fortune to have all my children attain the opportunity to attend a university here in South Australia. I can assure members opposite that it is a very costly exercise for country people to have their children take on tertiary education. It involves not just the economic cost but also the very serious social and family costs. Those members opposite should realise that they do not have a monopoly on doing it tough. They do not have a monopoly on adversity.

I thought that I had to put the record straight for the sake of the member for Kaurna. I was delighted to hear the comments made by the member for Norwood. She said that she was sick and tired of the comments being made by some of her colleagues about the eastern suburbs. At the time I said, 'Hear, hear!' and was delighted at that. Thank God somebody over there has some sense of reality concerning the way that they perform in this place.

The member for Elder came in here and did one thing that cheered me up somewhat. Along with a lot of his colleagues, he got back to the root of what this whole debate is about: it is about the old class war—the haves and the have-nots.

Mr Hill: Yes, exactly.

Mr WILLIAMS: 'Yes, exactly', says the member for Kaurna. It is about the haves and the have-nots. Fortunately in this country we do have an extremely good public education system, and the member for Elder and the member for Hanson have both said that, as a result of that public education system, they were able to bring themselves out of a disadvantaged background and obtain a university education.

Mr Atkinson: Why are fewer people choosing public education?

Mr WILLIAMS: We have been given two examples of how good the public education system is in this country and how everybody has the opportunity, through that public education system, to get a very good education and to make a go of it themselves. If we can just spend a minute or two on this class debate, what would the member for Elder have those in the community—who did happen, through education

and other opportunities, to create a bit of wealth for themselves—do with that wealth? What would he allow those who create a bit of wealth to do—those who scrimp and save, as I know a lot of my constituents do, purely to give their children an education and so that they can get away from this business of having them on a school bus for a couple of hours a day and put them into private education? That is the only viable opportunity in some instances.

Would the member for Elder say, 'No, you can't do that'? If you happen to scrimp and save and not spend your money on any manner of things, whether it be down at the pub on a Friday night, at the races on a Saturday afternoon or buying a shiny new car, would he say that those things are all right, but to spend some money to help your children get a better education is wrong? Is that what he is saying? That is what is coming across the chamber to me. Is he saying that it is all right if somebody spends their money down at the pub on a Friday night but, if they decide that that is not their wont and what they really want is to spend some extra money on their children's education, they should not be allowed to do that? That is a lot of nonsense. Today the member for Elder has destroyed the notion of new Labor. There is no new Labor: it is still the same old Labor. It is still the same old socialist left Labor.

Mr Atkinson: I'm pleased to hear it.

Mr WILLIAMS: It is interesting that the member for Spence says 'Good, I'm pleased to hear it,' because I do not think he would be a member of the old socialist left Labor. I do not think that is his natural place in life.

One word came to mind. There is not a lot for which I would thank Don Dunstan, but one thing for which I do thank him is that he brought into our everyday—or certainly into my everyday—vocabulary a series of words. One word that Don Dunstan first brought to my attention was 'persiflage'. I think it aptly describes the contribution made by the member for Elder. It had nothing to do with the motion, and it was way over the top. However, it did give a pointer to where the same old Labor party is coming from.

The same old Labor party would want to dredge up the class wars, because it believes that that is in its best political interest. I am afraid that that is from where this motion comes. That is what this motion is all about: it is trying to say to the wider community, 'All of those who consider themselves underdone or hard done by, we will help. We will whip the money out of those people up there in the leafy eastern suburbs. We will get the money off them. We will not let them spend it on their children's education. We are going to make that money go down into the western suburbs and make everything rosy for all of you.'

The facts belie that. We have lived through enough Labor governments in this state to know that the education system was almost destroyed by Labor. The physical structures of schools were literally falling on the ground. I think the member for Waite put it aptly and I will not go any further into that.

The education system itself was seriously disadvantaged, involving as it did \$50 million worth of backlog maintenance. I am aware that the back to schools grants, which go into maintenance, cannot even hope to address the current maintenance shortfall. It is just a matter of trying to patch up the most important work and, over a period of time, catch up. It will take quite a few years before we do catch up with the degree of neglect that was left to us by the previous Labor government.

I think it is rather astounding that members opposite would want to get up and parade their record in education as something that would be worthwhile and an electoral win for them. One of the big problems we have in education, or in trying to administer education, is, I believe, that we concentrate on the inputs into education rather than the outputs from it. This government has tried to do something about that. It has tried to implement some rigorous testing of the outputs, and that has been violently opposed both by the AEU and all those opposite—

An honourable member: It's a public relations stunt.

Mr WILLIAMS: Speaking of public relations stunts, that is what this is all about. I have never seen an organisation more apt at public relations stunts than the AEU.

For all of the reasons which I have been through and those which I do not have time to address I will be opposing this measure, and I commend the comments that have been made by my colleagues.

Ms THOMPSON secured the adjournment of the debate.

SCHOOL CHARGES

Adjourned debate on motion of Ms White:

That the regulations under the Education Act 1972 relating to material and service charges, made on 4 May 2000 and laid on the table of this House on 31 May, be disallowed.

(Continued from 1 June. Page 1361.)

The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY (Minister for Education and Children's Services): As I said in an earlier debate, this matter has been the subject of much discussion in the review of the Education Act. It is certainly a matter where parents have recognised the need to be able to enforce the payment of the school fee. The other issue that has come out of the review of the act is that there must be some very defined areas to which this applies, so that schools cannot build things into a school fee that should not be there. We received 5 000-odd submissions with respect to the act, and some 3 800 people have provided other submissions as well, and we would only be duplicating (as the member for Taylor relates to the last motion) what has already been done.

Parents have always made a financial contribution towards their children's education. They have always purchased materials and services, school books and pencils for their students to use at school. In 1960, the then government decided that it could lower the cost to parents by introducing a materials and services fee, because the government could buy under bulk purchasing, and without tax, and could supply those goods and services required by the students at a cheaper price—

Mr Hanna interjecting:

The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY: —and that is a very good idea. The member for Mitchell asks, 'Why is it not itemised?' and I support that, because that is the whole idea of where the review of the act has gone in terms of parents saying that they want to see what is included in the charge. I fully support that and I have no problem with it at all, because I believe that parents should be able to see what they are paying for. All of us usually want to see what we are paying for, and I do not have any problem with that at all.

The problem that we have is that there are a number of parents who, for whatever reason, decide that they do not want to pay the materials and services charge. They can well afford it: they are not parents of School Card children who

fall into that income category but they are parents who decide for one reason or another that, unlike the rest of the parents in the school, they do not want to pay this fee. Thankfully, it does not involve a large number. In 1998-99, schools reported some \$1.2 million of bad debts. That means that the schools had to pick up \$1.2 million to supply the materials for students to learn. Most of the other parents in the school were picking that up themselves but the school had to pick it up for a certain number of parents—and I am informed by the school principals and also by the councils that they are parents who could well afford to pay. That is the point of this measure. It is not looking at trying to hit those parents who cannot afford to pay, because they are covered by School Card—and just under 90 000 students out of the 179 000 in our public schools have a School Card and do not have to pay. If those parents want to make a contribution, they can: it is purely voluntary. If they do not, their children miss out on nothing in the school that other children whose parents pay the fees would undertake. We put some \$11.2 million into School Card each year and it supports those people who are on lower incomes.

The materials and services charge fee, of course, is set by each school council; it is not set by the government. Each school council sets that fee, and it involves a discussion within their school community and with the principal of the school. The government sets the maximum enforceable fee that can be charged by a school, and that is \$215 for a secondary school and \$161 for a primary school. No parent need pay any more than that, because if a school sets above that recommended maximum the parent has the choice whether or not they want to pay for that. They cannot be forced by the school to pay above that fee, and this regulation does not force them to pay anything above that maximum charge of \$161 for a primary school and \$215 for a secondary school. That is the issue. The principals of schools support the enforcement of a materials and services fee, as do the school council organisations, because they see that a number of parents who are not paying are those who can well afford to pay.

As I said, this is an issue that has arisen in the review of the Education Act, and a large number of people have made comments in respect of that. When the draft act goes out for public consultation within the next month or so there will be a period of six weeks within which the community can comment on it. It will then be introduced in parliament in October, and we will then be able to see what the community again records on that draft act and what it requires and wants.

I think that we have undertaken a lot more community consultation in the review of this act than, I would say (in my time, certainly), any other act that has come before this parliament. I think it has been very good that that has occurred. It has given members of the community the opportunity to have an input into the act and to say what they think is important about their schools and what they want for their children out of public schools and out of the education system—because the act, of course, covers not only public schools but also the private sector—and the sorts of regulations and aspirations that they see the government should be aiming for.

The regulation of a materials and services fee is consistent with the regulations of previous years, and I just reiterate that it is not those parents who cannot afford to pay a materials and services fee in South Australia who are avoiding it: it is those (so I am told by the principals and school councils, who

have experience in this area) who can well afford to pay. As a result of that, I do not support this motion.

Mr De LAINE secured the adjournment of the debate.

**ROAD TRAFFIC (HIGHWAY SPEED LIMIT)
AMENDMENT BILL**

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 11 November. Page 425.)

Mr KOUTSANTONIS (Peake): The member for Stuart has distributed a petition in his electorate calling on his constituents to support him actively in his measures to increase the speed limit on certain roads in his electorate extending towards the Northern Territory, New South Wales and Queensland. The opposition's candidate in that electorate, Mr Justin Jarvis, has been looking at the proposal and members on this side of the House believe that it has some merit. Of course, we would prefer that the matter first go before the Joint Committee on Transport Safety. I understand that the member for Stuart will seek to defer this bill for consideration by that committee, which will investigate its merits and deficiencies.

I believe that this bill has some merits but, before any decision is reached, I will discuss it with my caucus colleagues. I understand that the member for Stuart's brave proposal has caused a bit of angst among some of his colleagues. Some of the honourable member's colleagues are not as sympathetic to his cause as are members on this side of the House. The member for Stuart is not one to walk away from controversy: he usually meets it head on. In this case, I suspect that the honourable member will receive a little more cooperation from members on this side of the House than he will from the Minister for Transport.

I will be very interested to see not only how members line up on this issue but also the result. I understand from my sources within the Liberal Party that the minister almost chokes in the morning on her Weet-bix when she reads about the member for Stuart's endeavours in his electorate. The minister is not entirely impressed with the honourable member's endeavours in the area of speed limits and road safety. Of course, the transport safety committee will investigate whether or not this option is viable and whether or not it will increase or decrease the incidence of road accidents on the highway.

I feel certain that some of our country members, such as the member for Giles, have some important evidence to give to the committee and I am sure that committee members will listen to that evidence very carefully. I wait with bated breath to hear the Minister for Transport's contribution on this matter. I understand that the honourable member will defer this matter to the transport safety committee.

Mr WILLIAMS (MacKillop): I support the bill introduced by the member for Stuart. I represent not only a rural seat but a vast rural seat. The geographic necessities of my electorate mean that my constituents spend many hours on roads not only travelling to and from their places of enjoyment and entertainment but making necessary trips back and forth to Adelaide.

Mr Conlon interjecting:

Mr WILLIAMS: I am down there all the time.

Ms Key interjecting:

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Venning): The member for Hanson will come to order.

Ms Key interjecting:

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order!

Mr WILLIAMS: Thank you, sir.

Members interjecting:

The ACTING SPEAKER: I suggest that the honourable member ignore the interjections.

Mr WILLIAMS: Thank you, sir; I am trying to. I certainly do not recall having said that. Constituents in my electorate spend many hours travelling on the road. I travel some—

Members interjecting:

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

Mr WILLIAMS: In my journeys as a representative of that constituency, I travel some 70 000 to 80 000 kilometres a year on the road. I can vouch that one of the most serious problems on our roads today is not speed but fatigue. That is the one issue that has for a long time been ignored by road traffic administrators. Many issues should be considered. One issue would be lessening the amount of traffic on the roads. If one travels, as I do, the Dukes Highway between here and Bordertown on a regular basis, one sees on that road a huge amount of heavy transport carrying goods which I believe should be carried by rail.

Those sorts of issues should be considered. South Australia has roads of a very high standard, which lead in all directions from Adelaide right across the state. We now drive vehicles that have a configuration of suspension and handling far superior to that which was available a few years ago. Road surface conditions also are much better than they were a few years ago. It is only sensible that we have a fresh look at the upper speed limit.

Mr MEIER (Goyder): I also support this bill. Last Friday and Saturday I was privileged to visit Darwin and, during that period, among other things, I was briefed by Mr Greg Constantine, ministerial officer to the Hon. Mick Palmer, Minister for Transport in the Northern Territory government. Members may or may not know that the territory has an unrestricted speed limit on roads outside built-up areas. In fact, the official terminology is that the default speed limit in built-up areas in the Northern Territory is 60 km/h, with open roads being derestricted.

We are not looking at derestricted speeds: we are looking at a limit. The limit is restricted to four particular roads as identified in the bill, namely, the Stuart Highway, Eyre Highway, Barrier Highway and the Hawker to Lyndhurst Road. This is an excellent opportunity for the matter to be further examined, and I am aware that the member for Stuart intends to refer it to the Joint Committee on Transport Safety. That process will, as I have just indicated, give members the opportunity to consider the matter further. I support the bill.

The Hon. G.M. GUNN (Stuart): I thank those members who have contributed to this debate. This matter has attracted a considerable amount of interest. I look forward to the matter being effectively considered by the transport safety committee. I advised that committee this morning that it is my intention to have this matter investigated by the committee. It is important that this measure proceeds to the second reading and into the next stage so that in the next session of parliament the bill can be restored to the *Notice Paper* without experiencing all the delays and difficulties normally

associated with private members' business such as this. I thank the House for its cooperation this morning.

Bill read a second time.

In committee.

Clause 1 passed.

Progress reported; committee to sit again.

WHYALLA AIRLINES

Ms BREUER (Giles): I move:

That this House expresses its sympathy to the families and friends of those people killed in the Whyalla Airlines crash on 31 May and extends its gratitude to the police, emergency services and other services involved in the massive search following the crash.

My heart goes out to the people of Childers, because I know the impact of a tragedy on a small community. Unfortunately, I heard this morning that last night in Whyalla there was a murder and also a serious accident at BHP, where someone was killed this morning. I wonder when our community will stop experiencing these problems.

Just after 7 p.m. on Wednesday 31 May 2000, Whyalla Airlines flight 904, en route from Adelaide to Whyalla on a normal commercial flight, reported a mayday advising a loss of power to both engines. On board were the pilot and seven passengers. At the time of the mayday, the pilot indicated that he was 28 kilometres, or 15 nautical miles, south-east of Whyalla and tracking direct for Whyalla. Police were alerted and an immediate search began. Two bodies were recovered that night. Later, on 5 June, the aeroplane's wreckage was located, and the next day police divers recovered the bodies of five people from the wreckage. One person is still missing.

On a global scale, this may not be seen as a major tragedy, but the lives of the people of Whyalla and the other communities affected by this, the families and friends of the people who died, the searchers, both professional and volunteer, who were involved in the search, and many other people including the local media, have been touched in many ways, and we will never forget.

Many of us will get on with our lives, but the families of those who died have been changed forever. I refer to young pilot Ben Mackiewicz, whose great love was flying and who was in the prime of his life; Wendy and Peter Olsen, deeply respected and obviously loved by members of the Cleve community and who were the parents of young girls (and the hearts of those of us who are parents went out to those young girls); Neil Marshall, a tireless and hard working national organiser for the AMWU, who was on his way to assist BHP workers in Whyalla in the transition to Onesteel; Richard Deegan, although quoted as an Adelaide person, was very much felt to be one of ours, having lived at Whyalla for much of his life, and who was known as a lawyer with a social conscience; Teresa Pawlik, an active sportswoman in our community, who was a mother and grandmother and loved by many; Joan Gibbons, a dear friend of mine, whom I was proud to call a friend, a tireless worker for this community, particularly for women, who took part in so many community organisations, including her beloved Neighbourhood House, yet never sought recognition for anything she did; and Chris Schuppan, musician, father, friend to so many, part of a family which is well loved in Whyalla, and husband to Marie, who waited hour after hour on the shore for her husband, yet still he has not been found.

When one hears of an event such as this, one feels sad. This morning a Whyalla person said to me, 'I have never known such a sad time.' However, when the victims become

people, and people you know, the awfulness of it is overwhelming, and there is great sadness which is almost insurmountable. The Whyalla and Cleve communities have been deeply touched by this, and we have shared our common grief. In Whyalla, I believe there is a new community spirit, and the wonderful remembrance service organised by the ministers fraternal in Whyalla brought us together to grieve and enabled us to move on.

Today I want to pay tribute to all those involved in the aftermath of the crash. Being with these people throughout the three weeks has been an experience I will never forget. I now know what true heroism is, what dedication and devotion are, and what a wonderful generosity of spirit exists in so many people. On the night of the crash, I went down to search headquarters, and within two hours the place was ablaze with activity.

Chief Inspector Terry Harbour asked me not to mention him, but I believe he is the man who held us together throughout the search. He was a rock, and his calm, compassionate and efficient manner inspired confidence and hope in everyone. I am so glad that Terry Harbour was in charge of that search. All the police attached to the Mid West local service, or Whyalla Division, must be congratulated on their efforts and dedication. All put in hours above duty, worked extra shifts and contributed willingly to keep the station functioning, as well as mounting this incredible search.

However, in particular, I must mention senior Sergeant Phil Hart, Steve Kameniar and David Walker, who spent hours and hours at the search headquarters plotting the search area, and coordinating the search. It was their local knowledge that was invaluable in finding the plane. There is an image of tough, hard-headed unfeeling coppers in our society. Well, these fellows may be tough and hard-headed, but I know that they felt like all of us, and I have the utmost respect and admiration for them.

I also want to mention Senior Constable Sue O'Connor from the Whyalla police, who spent much of her time with the relatives. She cared for, supported, informed and comforted the families. It was an incredible effort for a young woman. I also thank Detective Sergeant Peter Dunstone and his team, Detectives Gray, Mazik, Goodwin and Foweraker who had a particularly hard job of having to identify and sort debris and personal items from the aircraft as they were found.

Other police were involved, including the police divers who were underwater for hours and hours in freezing water, and also the Star Force. My thanks also go to Doug Knuckey and Reverend David Marr from SAPOL's psychology and welfare branch, who were very quickly on the scene and who helped workers there, and were a great help to me personally. Thank you, Doug and David. Support staff at the Whyalla Police Station also worked long hours, especially Annette Waters, who spent days in the search headquarters helping the search coordinators.

The Air Sea Rescue Squadron Whyalla Inc. needs special mention, as it provided the headquarters for the search under very difficult circumstances—I might add very much hampered by space problems. The minister will certainly hear from me on this matter, but I know that he already is aware of the problems and I believe that we will get a sympathetic hearing.

Those involved from the Air Sea Rescue Squadron included Stan Sutton, Commodore, who was there constantly, and Tony Johnstone, who was also on scene. The radio operators were Keith Mebberson, Bill Hatherley, Bill Taylor,

Lyn Steenson, Charlie Bristow and Jeremy Cross, and they worked two at a shift. Also in base station on stand-by radios were Carol Johnstone and Keith. Many boats went out searching.

In the boats were Andy Robertson, Alan Slater, Allen Hall, Robbie North, Allen Perrett, Dick Morris, Paul Davies, Ron Burnett, Eric Murray, Adam Moenkedieck, Dean Butson, Gary Yates, Jeff White, Rowley Fenwick and Gary Zbierski. They spent hours in those waters. Also with them were their crewmen Wayne Walden, Terry Corbett, Brenton Thomas, Paul Johnstone, Mark Harvey, Graham Harrowfield and many others who assisted.

Additional help came from 39 prawn boats from Wallaroo, pilchard boats from Port Lincoln and on the first night about 50 craft were out in the area. Very special to me in the search process was the State Emergency Service in Whyalla. I spent many hours with them and I feel I have almost earned my stripes with them and cannot speak too highly of them. Mr Rick Santucci, who was this year's Citizen of the Year in Whyalla in January, was a co-ordinator of the service—unpaid of course, but I am hoping we can get a full-time paid officer out of this and certainly Rick could not be surpassed and his people skills and organisational ability were unmatched. Jackie Abbott ably assisted him and Rick could not have been better assisted. Jackie was calm, organised and effective throughout the search. The rest are a group of characters, but their dedication and hard work are all unmatched. They included: Chris Abbott, Trevor Beck, Kathy Cook, Mark Crighton, Rhonda Crighton, Wayne Crompton, Allan Ebdell, Ethel Ebdell, Paul Ebdell, Eddie Hurlle, Sue Hurlle, Adrian Kovacevic, David Lane, Karren Lane, Raymond Leane, Darryl Marden, Phillip McWaters, Peter Rawnsley, Almina Rajepi, Bill Skinner, Mick Smallacombe, Maria Smallacombe, Klaus Stange, Robert Wall, Vince Wheeler, Robert Woodland, Sue Young, Donna Searle, and Jodie Pycroft. You can see by the names that many family groups are involved in the SES.

I also thank the Whyalla Surf Life Saving Club, which was involved in the search. They checked shore lines and the sea constantly and on land provided a safe, warm haven for the families who day after day waited for news and looked out over the sea from their headquarters. They provided food, comfort and care for everyone. I saw baskets of scones going up and down the stairs constantly and I know the families appreciated it. Young Emma, daughter of Chris Schuppan, was 10 years old on the Thursday following the accident. The lifesavers organised a party for her in the clubrooms. Many were invited from the search and the club provided a beautiful spread. Young Emma shared her birthday that day with the Premier of South Australia and the Minister for Human Services. Organisations like the surf lifesavers were a major contributor in a way that we seldom appreciate, and thank you to them.

Many boats were involved, including the Prawn Fishermen's Association, which in kind contributed about \$250 000 just through the loss of their catch by devoting themselves to the search. I refer also to Peter White of the *Gemma Marie*, Jeff White of the *Juntta*, Raymond Zimmerman of the *Warrior* and many local boaties whom I mentioned before. Many support services were involved, including Family and Youth Services, which provided much counselling support to everyone involved, including families and searchers. With an incident like this it really is very important that these counselling and support services be there. Over the past three weeks I have cried with the Premier of South Australia, the

Chief Inspector of Police, the head of FAYS—every one of them have had a cry at some stage—fairly constantly.

Alan Morris from FAYS was quickly on the scene and Peter Burford and many of his workers were there for many hours and were very much needed. The Whyalla City Council contributed in many ways, and I pay tribute to Mayor John Smith, particularly for his role with the media and the memorial service. Another group who did not get much recognition were those refuellers and people at the Whyalla airport including Kevin Rogan, Glen Sturgess, Bruce Deslandes and Tim Elkington. Planes were out for hours and they worked there at the airport refuelling and talking to the family members.

Our local media deserves congratulations for their sensitive handling of the news, including the Whyalla News, GTS4 and 5AU. I make special mention of Nance Haxton and Tim Jeanes from the ABC who sat for hours on the beach and did not sensationalise anything and earned the respect of all the people there, despite the fact that they were working for national television and radio. Brickbats to the Channel 9 helicopter which took off during the Bishop's blessings during the memorial service. However, you only matched your colleagues in insensitivity in the whole exercise.

To Dick Smith: we do not know what caused flight 904 to crash, but I condemn your insensitive and callous criticism of Whyalla Airlines within a few hours of the crash. Relatives had enough to cope with without your comments and their implications. Your timing was very wrong. To Chris and Kym Brougham from Whyalla Airlines and your staff: I know that your grief is as heartfelt as everyone's grief and I hope that your hopes are realised very quickly.

To the ministers' fraternal in Whyalla: the memorial service will ever be remembered by the people of Whyalla and it was the start of the healing process for us all, which we all needed. Many were involved with the families and special thanks to Father Tony Redden, Paul Bourke and Michael Hillier, who helped me to cope, and to Father Brian Mathews, Reverend Dianne Grimm, Pastor Greg Koch, Sister Eugennie Levinson, Pastor Bob Bishop, Envoy Stan Babidge, Pastor Dario Noonan and Bishops Hurley and McCall, who were both present at this united service. I also thank His Excellency the Governor for coming to the service because I know people were comforted by his presence there. I also thank the Premier, who was so personally involved in all this, Deputy Premier Rob Kerin, Minister Brokenshire for coming to Whyalla so soon and the Minister for Human Services, Dean Brown, for his presence during the week. I also want to thank the Leader of the Opposition, Mike Rann, for this personal support and presence at the memorial service.

All these people needed a lot of feeding and many local businesses contributed. The amount who came forward and donated food, goods and services was incredible. Food arrived by the truckload: however, it was all eaten. Very special thanks to Jim Hewitson from the Westlands Hotel, particularly for the hot chicken packs that kept arriving. He spent many hours helping people there. I know that I have forgotten many people. I say to every member here: I hope that you never experience a tragedy such as our community has experienced. It has had a profound effect on all our lives and has given our community a new strength, but what a terrible way to do it.

On the Tuesday following the crash I was present on the marina when the passengers were brought back from the sea. I will never forget the poignancy and emotion. We were all so pleased that they had been found and we were awaiting

their return, but half an hour earlier we were told that there were only five people—someone was missing. The boat slowly came into the mooring and all the relatives and many of the searchers were gathered waiting. There was an incredible hush and slowly each person was carried up the mooring to the waiting van. I thought it was so fitting that they were carried by the police, the SES and SA Ambulance, all of whom were part of the search team. It was done with dignity, grace and compassion—so typical of the whole of the search process. It was a tribute to the people lost, their families and the searchers, voluntary and professional. I commend the motion to the House.

The Hon. G.M. GUNN (Stuart): I support the motion and commend the honourable member for bringing it to the parliament. Of all members here I have probably flown with Whyalla Airlines more than anyone else, not only on its regular air service but also around South Australia. I have flown with Kym Brougham on many occasions and I know him particularly well. The young pilot who was flying that Piper Chieftain that night brought me to the parliament on the Tuesday morning on which I celebrated my 30 years in this institution. He was a fine young South Australian—strong, fit and happy and one who would instil confidence in anyone who flew with him. When I go out to the Wudinna airport in future I will always have a vivid memory of this young blond man and the way he used to load the luggage and smile. Early in the morning before the sun was up he was there getting organised.

I share the comments of the member for Giles in relation to the ill-conceived and unfortunate comments made by Dick Smith—someone who has had every opportunity in this world, someone who has had the ability to fly in the most sophisticated aircraft that money can buy. Whyalla Airlines has provided a service to the people of Whyalla, Cleve and Wudinna that did not exist in the past. Few companies have been able to supply a regular, reliable air service to those communities at a fair and reasonable price. They should be commended. They did not deliberately do anything that contributed to this unfortunate happening. It is appalling that someone would cast aspersions on them, as did Dick Smith. That family has already suffered one tragedy as a result of an air crash. They know what happens if there is a problem with aircraft.

Kym Brougham is a most experienced pilot. As I said earlier, I have flown with him in a Cessna 210 around South Australia under the most difficult climatic conditions and I have never had a problem. I have flown with Whyalla Airlines under some of the most difficult flying conditions that one could ever experience. As someone who has had a private pilot's licence and who has had some few hours of training in a twin-engine aircraft, I do understand what is happening, and on occasions I pay particular attention when we are flying across the gulf. Only a few weeks ago I flew with another young pilot from Whyalla Airlines and never saw the ground—and I was watching very carefully. We had to abort the landing at Cleve, and everything was done strictly in accordance with the airline navigation act to ensure our safety. The prime consideration was not the passenger who was going to have to go on to Wudinna, but the safety of the rest of us on that plane.

I say to this House that I sincerely hope that this unfortunate happening will not bring about the cessation of Whyalla Airline Services to the people of Eyre Peninsula because that in itself would be a very sad occasion. If this happens it

would mean that people from Cleve will have to go to Whyalla, Wudinna, or Port Lincoln and people from Wudinna, Minnipa, Warrambo, Kyancutta and Streaky Bay will have to drive to Ceduna, Whyalla or Port Lincoln. In those communities, the local councils have supported the airline by putting in decent strips. They have power operated lighting. They have all cooperated and it has been a great boost and has given people the ability to fly to Adelaide in the morning and return at night. It has allowed children who go to school in Adelaide to come home for exit weekends, which is very beneficial to them. It has been a great service to the rural community.

Those aeroplanes are some of the safest aeroplanes that have been produced. The engines in those aeroplanes are absolutely reliable. I sincerely hope that we can very quickly determine what took place, because that is in the interest of us all. I certainly want to extend my condolences and sympathies to all the families who had people on that ill-fated aeroplane. When you are flying around and you hear a mayday call, it is a fairly chilling experience wondering what will happen to them and it is a great relief when they safely reach the ground. Obviously, the last few minutes of that flight would have been a terrifying experience for them all, particularly in the dark.

We all need to think very carefully about where we are going. If we as a parliament and the government are unhappy about the age of this type of aeroplane, then this parliament will have to support regional airlines such as Whyalla and provide financial assistance to them to allow them to upgrade their aircraft. I would support it wholeheartedly. However, if people such as Dick Smith and other instant experts want to condemn the use of aircraft of that nature, which have been flown all around the world for about 30 years, then this parliament and other legislative bodies will have to give those people the ability to upgrade, because we all know that the running of these airlines is a very expensive operation.

I know how deeply the staff at Whyalla Airlines and the other small operators in Adelaide have felt this particular event. I use those airlines, as does the member for Whyalla, and you get to know the people who fly on them and the people who work at Emu Airlines and for Tony Kingham's airline at Port Augusta. I have much pleasure in supporting the motion and commend the honourable member for bringing it forward.

Mr MEIER secured the adjournment of the debate.

[Sitting suspended from 1 to 2 p.m.]

AUTHORISED BETTING OPERATIONS BILL

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

AUTHORISED LOTTERIES BILL

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

TAB (DISPOSAL) BILL

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

LOTTERIES COMMISSION (DISPOSAL) BILL

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

SELECT COMMITTEE ON A REHABILITATION TRIAL

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN (Premier): I seek leave to make a ministerial statement.

Leave granted.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will remain silent.

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: Late last year, the Select Committee on a Heroin Rehabilitation Trial reported to this parliament. After 10 months of widespread consultation and research, this committee presented a report which will contribute significantly to the nation's, and indeed the world's, body of knowledge on this subject. While many areas covered in the report's recommendations have been addressed over the past 12 to 18 months by this government, we recognise that extensive information in this report makes a valuable resource for the development of the state's strategic directions for drug programs in the future.

The select committee made two recommendations specifically related to the use of heroin. First, that South Australia support a scientific investigations of the effects of heroin on the body in heroin dependent people with a view to gaining a better understanding of the effects of heroin on the mind and body to increase the ability to prevent and respond to heroin overdoses. This recommendation will be referred to the cabinet committee on illicit drugs for further advice. However, the government notes that commonwealth and state laws currently preclude such an investigation.

The government has noted that in relation to the second such recommendation the majority of the committee supported trialing medically prescribed heroin as a treatment for recidivists. However, the committee acknowledged that because of complex legal issues it would not be possible without legislative change to pursue such a trial. Similarly, it recommended that the provision of supervised injecting rooms should not proceed now but they warranted further investigation; that was recommendation 7.

This government agrees with the committee's general conclusion that at this time a higher priority should be placed on the expansion of current treatment programs and implementation of new programs, some of which are already under trial in South Australia. For example, the select committee recommended the implementation of a Buprenorphine program as an entry point treatment (recommendation 2).

This and other treatment options are already under trial in South Australia or being considered for further expansion. The committee recommended the formation of a Drugs Ministerial Council and a Drugs Action Taskforce. They were recommendations 17 and 18.

This Government has a cabinet committee on illicit drugs and a chief executives' coordinating committee to perform these roles and to ensure the coordination across government

of our drugs action strategy. They were recommendations 15, 17, 18 and 20.

As recommended the chief executive will report to the Social Development Committee of Parliament annually on its progress (recommendation 19). As the committee carried out its work a number of the subsequent recommendations were, in fact, implemented. For example, 14 new illicit drug programs have now been funded and cover a wide range of areas including drug supply reduction, demand reduction and harm reduction programs. These programs comprise a mixture of new trials and expanding existing services as recommended by the select committee (recommendation 5). Programs also cover law enforcement, crime prevention, education and early intervention and research. They are recommendations 8, 9, 13 and 14.

In relation to the extension of needle and syringe exchange programs, the state government recently provided an additional \$330 000 to meet increased demand, and places a high priority on the continuation and extension of the clean needle program from a public health perspective (recommendation 6).

Other recommendations (10 and 11) deal with an increased role for police in drug diversion programs and community education. The state government is already trialing a two year drug court program which is receiving widespread support and involves government and non-government agencies. The government, with the commonwealth tough on drugs strategy, has developed a police diversion program for simple use and possession offences.

The police drug diversion scheme will access commonwealth funding of \$9.2 million over four years. With reference to drugs in prisons (recommendation 12), the state government is already providing a range of activities to address drug-related problems in the state's prison system. Examples include the recent expansion of the methadone maintenance, detoxification and counselling programs in prisons and increased surveillance to intercept the supply of drugs.

The state government's response to the select committee report recognises its important contribution to the fight against drug abuse in our state and the contribution it has made to the national body of knowledge. There is no doubt, on anecdotal evidence, that much street crime is drug related. Every addict in treatment is one less addict on the streets and one more South Australian on the road to recovery. Investing in drug education, rehabilitation and treatment is an investment in a better community. The government welcomes this report and, as I have explained, has taken action on most of the recommendations. I congratulate the parliamentary committee—and particularly its Chairman, the member for Waite—on the calibre of the report.

In keeping with the Liberal government's commitment to fight against drug abuse in our society, I announced earlier today that more than \$31 million will be spent in South Australia over the next four years. These funds will be spent on ongoing programs ranging from school-based education programs to rehabilitation services as well as on new initiatives. The state government has outlined its wide range of programs in its submission to the federal government's Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs Inquiry into Substance Abuse in Australian Communities. As I have said, the issues associated with substance abuse are extremely complex. The government is committed to doing all it can to tackle this, one of the most important social problems facing our community this century.

PAPER TABLED

The following paper was laid on the table:

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

Architects Board of South Australia—Report, 1999.

NORMANDY LANDING

The SPEAKER: At 4 p.m. this afternoon, I will represent the parliament at a ceremony in Old Parliament House that is being conducted by the Consul-General for the government of France, at which they will present certificates in recognition to some 45 veterans who took part in the Normandy landing in 1944. I issue an invitation to all members present that they would be most welcome to attend if they are free at 4 o'clock.

QUESTION TIME

ELECTRICITY, PRIVATISATION

The Hon. M.D. RANN (Leader of the Opposition): My question is directed to the Premier. Were the consultants responsible for the mistake in the ETSA sale process the accounting adviser KPMG, which received over \$7.5 million this year, including a success fee payment, and also the lead negotiator, Pacific Road Corporate Finance, which received part of a \$13 million payment this year, also including a success fee? If so, will the government now be withholding further payments to these companies or seeking some other financial or legal redress?

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN (Premier): Mr Speaker—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: —in response to the leader's question, I am not prepared to, as the Treasurer has declined to name the consultant to date, and also—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: The well rehearsed lines from the opposition are showing up today. In reply to the leader's question—if I might, without interjection, get back to the substance of his question—the Treasurer has declined to name the consultant who erred in this instance and, as the Treasurer has said, it is not the intention of the government at this stage to take any action. The reason for that is this, as I advised the House yesterday. There will be no impact on consumers; no tariff variation is accorded as a result of this. There is no reduction in revenue to government whatever.

The Hon. M.D. Rann interjecting:

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

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: There is no bill for the taxpayers of South Australia to subsequently pick up. Therefore, there is no net detrimental effect to the South Australian taxpayers. That is the point that needs to be made at this stage.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: The advice that has been given to us, as advised by the Treasurer to me, is that this matter will not be a position of eventual litigation. Our position on the matter is clear and strong, but should those circumstances eventuate—

Mr Hamilton-Smith interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order, the member for Waite!

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: —the government would reserve its right, as appropriately it would. The point I want to make to the Leader of the Opposition and those members opposite is that what they cannot question is simply the fact that we have retired \$3.5 billion worth of debt. We had the Leader of the Opposition suggesting that our reputation would be damaged. I can tell this House who damaged the reputation of South Australia: the Labor Party.

Earlier this year members might recall that the Leader of the Opposition said that we would have the Red Guard looking after our electricity assets. That sort of ill-informed and emotional claim by the Leader of the Opposition—scaremongering at its worst—will do more damage to the reputation of South Australia. What the Leader of the Opposition cannot undo are the reports that we now see in the financial press of this country, indicating that the economy of South Australia has turned the corner and that the economy of South Australia is now building positively for the future. That is what members opposite cannot change.

I understand why the Labor Party would want to go on a scaremongering campaign on this issue: for base political purposes. The government has been diligent in this matter—

The Hon. M.D. Rann interjecting:

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

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: —and that is in contrast to actions of governments in the past. This is a complex contract containing quite sophisticated and detailed formula—

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: Well, there is a detailed formula, and the honourable member would have seen some of that in today's newspaper. The simple fact is that this is a complex matter. A technical issue—

Mr Foley: No, it wasn't.

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

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: Once again, the member for Hart does identify his ignorance of these matters. The honourable member's penchant is to take up matters for political one-upmanship. We know that is where the member for Hart will be coming from and we know the game that he will attempt to play. But the simple fact is that in a complex contract of this nature it has been identified that there is a technical hitch in relation to this formula. What did the government do about that? It acted in a diligent manner. It took a submission to cabinet. And it is introducing legislation to ensure certainty and predicability. We did not need to take that position, but indeed the Treasurer made a decision and the cabinet endorsed his action and his approach.

But let me return to the point. We have rebuilt the finances of South Australia—something that the Labor Party destroyed. We have rebuilt them. I am more than happy to be judged on the basis of rebuilding the finances and the future of South Australian children rather than actions of the past, ignoring the problems and the billions of dollars of costs flowing onto the shoulders of taxpayers of South Australia. That is the Labor Party's record. Compare and contrast it with our record of rebuilding the economy that is now being endorsed by no less than the *Financial Review*.

EMPLOYMENT

Mr MEIER (Goyder): My question is directed to—

The Hon. M.D. Rann interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The leader will remain silent. I warn the leader.

Mr MEIER: —the Premier and follows the positive comments made by the Premier about rebuilding the finances of South Australia. Will the Premier outline to the House comments made by the Managing Director of EDS, Mr Bob Young, about how South Australia exhibits such a great lifestyle and how easy it is to attract highly-skilled workers to this state from overseas?

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN (Premier): I am delighted to answer this question, because only this morning I had the privilege of being at the Embassy Apartments on North Terrace—a \$60 million development. The construction industry is again alive and well in South Australia, and it has a future. There will be 200 jobs in the construction phase, 600 jobs associated—

The Hon. M.D. Rann interjecting:

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: The Leader of the Opposition doesn't like to endorse. He wants to whinge, whine and criticise all the time. We only have to look along the North Terrace boulevard.

The SPEAKER: Order! I am sorry to interrupt the Premier. We will not go into an afternoon of scattergun-style interjections. If members want to stay here for the rest of the afternoon, they should cease interjecting, otherwise they will be dealt with when they interject.

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: In Labor government days, the News building had not been used for a number of years, and North Terrace boulevard was a shame to South Australia. I ask members to look at North Terrace boulevard now, with this \$60 million, bought-off-the-plan private apartment block, just opposite—

Members interjecting:

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

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: —where we will be doubling the size of our Convention Centre business in South Australia, demonstrating the construction industry's rebuilding this state. Why? I mentioned yesterday that no less than Ralph Willis, a former Labor finance minister, was endorsing the fact that South Australia was now a place in which to invest. The march quarter figures reflect a 9 per cent increase in the construction industry in South Australia, and the guys operating the backhoes there today were pleased with the direction of the construction industry. Whether it is the David Jones building, the National Wine Centre or the upgrade of the museum, the projected upgrade of the state library or any other project, we are seeing the rebuilding of the commercial and industrial base of South Australia.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: Let us talk about the EDS building. The member for Hart was the champion. He, as opposition leader on the matter, was carping, opposing, whingeing and whining. What do we have: an EDS building that is full. Through our policy of attracting back offices Cable and Wireless Optus has taken three or four floors in that building. Members opposite should go and talk to the hundreds of young South Australians who have a job there; ask them what they think. It clearly demonstrates how the member for Hart will take a short-term political initiative, pass it on and move on to the next one after that. Clearly we see a rebuilding of South Australia's economy. You might not like it, you might like to ridicule it, but it is a statement of fact: South Australia is having its economy diversified and rebuilt.

ELECTRICITY, PRIVATISATION

The Hon. M.D. RANN (Leader of the Opposition): My question is directed to the Premier.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. M.D. RANN: It's very positive; that's right. It is true that the government cannot attribute any blame to or seek any redress from the consultants for their mistakes in the ETSA process because of the very problems the Auditor-General warned the government about in November last year? Sir, with your concurrence, I will explain the question.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. M.D. RANN: I know they now want to keep the Auditor-General out of the loop.

The SPEAKER: Order! Explain your question.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: Last November, the Auditor-General warned about problems associated with the lead advisers in the ETSA sale process, having success fees written into their contracts. The Auditor-General said:

That means that they [the lead advisers] have a proprietary interest in seeking completion of a deal, probably as quickly as possible.

'A propriety interest', said the Auditor-General. The auditor also warned parliament's Economic and Finance Committee that the government had no means of seeking any redress from consultants if they made major errors. The Auditor-General warned that the ETSA sale control structure:

... significantly dilutes the accountability of people who are advisers—people who have been paid very considerable sums of money to provide professional advice. . . It is virtually impossible to attribute accountability.

That is a quote from the Auditor-General. It is a pity you did not listen to it.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN (Premier): Who should take some blame for delaying it the 500 days this legislation was before the parliament? You are absolute hypocrites to frustrate and delay this legislation that would otherwise have had the opportunity to maximise the return, maximise the debt retirement and maximise the interest savings for South Australians. There is no doubt that you are first-class hypocrites in relation to this matter.

The Hon. M.D. Rann interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: As it relates to the Auditor-General, he has an office in connection with which he can take any initiative he wants at any time he sees fit and he is entitled to do so. He makes a value judgment on it, and so he should. Let us not forget—

The Hon. M.D. Rann interjecting:

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

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN:—that from day one they attempted to frustrate this process. This is an opposition that from day one was a scaremonger and an opposition that from day one attempted to see that this was not successful. They have not worried about our reputation or about getting the best result for taxpayers. They have simply wanted to frustrate the process. Here we are, having banked nearly \$4 billion of retirement of debt and they are still at it. Why? For cheap political point-scoring purposes. That is the base bottom line in this exercise. I repeat my answer in part to the first question from the Leader of the Opposition. The fact is that there has been substantial debt reduction and retirement

as a result of this policy and thankfully so for the future of our kids.

POLICE GRADUATES

Mr SCALZI (Hartley): My question is directed to the Minister for Police, Correctional Services and Emergency Services. Will the minister advise how many police officers graduated yesterday?

The Hon. R.L. BROKENSHIRE (Minister for Police, Correctional Services and Emergency Services): I thank the member for Hartley for his question, acknowledging that he is a great supporter of police in his own area. The honourable member will be delighted to know that as a result of so many graduations going on at the moment police officers will go out to his local service area. I was privileged yesterday to attend what was a fantastic graduation—one at which I would have liked to see the member for Peake so that he might have started to understand a little about policing. Instead of, as he does in this chamber, knocking police and all the work they do, the member for Peake, had he been there, might have seen the calibre, quality and commitment of the police. The future for South Australia is great when you see, as I did yesterday, young people graduating through the police force.

In answer to the question, 46 police graduated to become probationary constables yesterday. That is in addition to 23 who graduated during the month of June. In June alone at Fort Largs we have seen 69 police officers graduate through the academy.

Members interjecting:

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

The Hon. R.L. BROKENSHIRE: I am delighted and I do not mind if I spend 10 or 15 minutes giving the shadow spokesperson a briefing. I have checked and I understand that in the history of this parliament when estimates committees have sat there has never been a shadow spokesperson who has not attended an estimates committee in order to ask questions of the minister—other than the member for Elder, who was on a conference and did not even turn up to cross-examine me on the very good work we as a government are doing with the police. That is appalling. Someone who purports to be a potential Minister for Police did not even show enough interest in the Police Department to attend the estimates committee. I am very happy to spend as much time as is required now to give the member a nice slow briefing so that he may be able to understand just what is happening with police.

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. R.L. BROKENSHIRE: A holiday, not even a conference. Did they not cover well for the honourable member, Mr Speaker? At least the opposition said, 'We had better protect him somehow; we will say he is at a conference'—but a holiday! I wonder what the police think about the shadow spokesperson now—and he purports to care for them—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! Members on my right will settle down.

The Hon. R.L. BROKENSHIRE: This means that 69 police officers have graduated as probationary constables in the last month. Interestingly enough, this is part of the number of police that I announced in May last year, when I indicated that there would be an acceleration of police recruitment against attrition and that 140 officers would go

through the academy. I am pleased to advise the honourable member that more than 240 officers have gone through the academy in the last 12 months. The member for Peake ought to pick up the annual report—or I am always available 24 hours a day if he wants to talk to me about what we are doing with police recruitment—because then he would not look so foolish when he says in this chamber that we actually cut police numbers in 1999, when last year we had one of the biggest police recruitment programs in modern history.

On top of this, an additional 113 persons will go through the academy this year. I want to put this on the record again for the shadow spokesperson: 113 is not the total recruitment for the year 2000-01; it is 113 extra police on top of the police whom we will recruit to cover attrition. Therefore, the estimation for next year is that we will see 255 police officers go through the academy. The message for anyone interested in joining a top police force and working for and supporting their community is to go to the recruitment centre in Flinders Street and put their name down.

It is interesting that the shadow spokesperson is a little active and a little sensitive on this—and I can well understand why. The shadow spokesperson (the member for Elder) is on the public record as saying that 'the numbers that we used to have in 1993 are the appropriate level for policing in South Australia.' That is what the shadow spokesperson said. With the recruitment program that we have under way at the moment, we are clearly doing more than the shadow spokesperson has said is an appropriate number.

I finish by mentioning two other very important points regarding policing. I know that the member for Elder wants me to finish because he must be the most embarrassed member of parliament in this chamber—and so he should be. He abdicated all his responsibility and he left it with the B grade team for part of the estimates committee, and later on in the evening along came the C grade team. They could not even get through the whole session; in fact, they wanted to finish by 9 o'clock. Interestingly enough, when the C grade team came in, I noted that they had done some homework and asked a few specific questions, which is more than I have seen from the shadow spokesperson.

I also put on the record my appreciation—and I am sure the appreciation of many members in this House—of the services given by Assistant Commissioner Jim Litster, who last week announced his retirement. Assistant Commissioner Litster has been a fine example of the professional and committed police officer whom we have come to know over a long period in South Australia. Other police forces and other police officers around Australia would aspire to be of the same professional calibre as Assistant Commissioner Jim Litster. Sadly for me as police minister, I think he retired too young at 53, but he always said he would be retire then to go travelling. To Assistant Commissioner Jim Litster and his wife, I wish him all the very best for a long, fruitful and enjoyable retirement.

His retirement allows an opportunity for more people to come up through the ranks. If members look at the situation at the moment not only are there some great opportunities for advancement for assistant commissioners but for chief inspectors, superintendents, sergeants, and so on. Today I am pleased to see that, for the first time under the new act where the commissioner now appoints the assistant commissioners, another shining light in the South Australian Police Department, namely, Gary Burns, has been promoted to Assistant Commissioner and I know that—

Ms HURLEY: I rise on a point of order, sir. I am querying the relevance of this. The minister has been talking for nine minutes already. He has strayed well away from the answer to the question.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The chair was also starting to try to pull together the relevance. I ask the minister to come back to the question or wind up.

The Hon. R.L. BROKENSHIRE: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I will wind up with a very relevant point: I wish Assistant Commissioner Gary Burns all the very best for the future; and as a result of this promotion there will be an opportunity for another cadet in the academy.

ELECTRICITY, PRIVATISATION

Mr FOLEY (Hart): My question is directed to the Premier.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr FOLEY: Exactly; here we go. Given that the independent Industry Regulator, Mr Lew Owens, notified the government's consultants Pacific Road Corporate Finance and KPMG of their basic mistake in the electricity pricing order, where they omitted a CPI adjustment in the formula in early April, when did the Premier first learn of these basic errors?

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN (Premier): I have already answered this in a press conference earlier today. I could send the member for Hart a copy of the transcript from the press conference, if he wants.

The Hon. G.M. Gunn: You'll have to explain it to him slowly.

The SPEAKER: Order, the member for Stuart!

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: One word at a time, perhaps. As the member for Hart has identified, an officer in the office of the regulator, I understand, identified the issue. It was then referred for further work. The Treasurer instructed that the whole matter be reviewed thoroughly. The nature of the legislation—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: —as I indicated to the parliament was drawn to my attention by the Treasurer on Friday last week. On the basis of the request from the Treasurer, then I agreed a cabinet submission could be drawn and presented on Monday morning.

Mr Foley interjecting:

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

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: The difference between the way in which the Labor Party acted when in government and the way in which this government acts is this: when a minister identifies a problem they then pursue a solution to the problem, so not only a problem is presented to cabinet but also a solution is presented to cabinet at the same time. It is diligent, thorough and efficient of any minister to undertake that review. What the Treasurer rightly did was instruct them to go back with a fine toothcomb and, if this technical error had been found in the formula, to ensure there was no other such technical error—that is what he did, and diligently.

Mr FOLEY: I rise on a point of order, sir. My question was specifically to the Premier: when did he first know. He is ducking and weaving and refusing to answer the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member will resume his seat. There is no point of order and I am sure the member will have ample opportunity to ask further questions on this subject if he sees fit later in question time.

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: I have clearly indicated—

Mr Foley interjecting:

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

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: Late nights. I answered this question in the House yesterday. My answer today is consistent with yesterday. As I indicated—

Mr Foley interjecting:

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: Yes—the nature of this, including the need for legislation, was drawn to my attention by the Treasurer on Friday with a request and I acceded to that request. As a result of a media question I got at the press conference today—and I understand it has been confirmed—Mr Owens said the government had two choices: it could do nothing or it could proceed to put great certainty and predicability in the outcome. What we have taken is the diligent course. We have taken the diligent course, which is in quite distinct contrast to the way in which events unfolded under the former administration that did not take appropriate action; walked away from the issue; and was not prepared to be big enough to front up to it. The difference between this government and the former government is that issues of this nature are not swept under the carpet: issues of this nature are proceeded with. The regulator has confirmed that we had two choices and, clearly, there were two choices. The diligent, appropriate and efficient way to handle it is, in fact, what we have done.

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr VENNING (Schubert): My question is directed to the Minister for Education and Children's Services. Can the minister clarify for the House how many parents will be affected by the introduction of the GST on their children's schooling?

The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY (Minister for Education and Children's Services): Despite Labor's whingeing and whining both here and elsewhere, the commonwealth government's reformed taxation package will come into place in two days' time. The commonwealth has been successful in its intention for education that it will, largely, be GST free.

Mr Koutsantonis interjecting:

The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY: Yes, 'largely' the member for Peake interjects, and 'largely', I inform the member for Peake is 99.9 per cent GST free. That is what I call very largely. I know that the member for Taylor will be just a tad disappointed about this. Why will this happen? Let me tell you: because she will get just a wafer, just a teeny slice (that is, 0.1 of 1 per cent) of that now very long trotted out cake which was announced by the member some time ago about GST and which is now getting extremely stale. Only 0.1 per cent GST will apply. This is good news because it has a minimal effect on parents as far as school education goes.

Let us help some of the opposition get some of their facts right. I will outline the components of education charges that will be GST free and those that will be taxable after 1 July. If the opposition actually wanted to get this information, they could go to the GST ruling, which itemises the supplies that will be GST free for preschool, primary and secondary education courses. Put simply, education supplies that will be GST free under the new legislation include facilities (includ-

ing grounds maintenance), courses, consumables and resources; hire and lease of equipment; curriculum related excursions and text book hire.

The Australian Taxation Office has ruled that supplies not falling within the definition of course materials and becoming the property of the student will be taxed. That includes things such as musical and sporting equipment and calculators, for instance, that become the property of the student. In fact, any item that becomes the property of the student will be taxed.

So, it is quite clear. It is quite simple. If there is a change of ownership, it will be taxed. It is similar to what has been happening in schools in terms of wholesale sales tax for many years. It is the same as going to your local shop: if you buy the item and you own it you will be taxed.

ELECTRICITY, PRIVATISATION

Mr FOLEY (Hart): My question is directed to the Premier. Given that government advisers, Pacific Road and KPMG, on the electricity sale were informed of problems with the process in early April, why were his own cabinet colleagues only first informed of the need for legislative changes on Monday of this week, and why is the parliament now having to deal with this as a matter of urgency three months after the government was informed of these problems?

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN (Premier): The answer to the question recently asked by the member for Hart ought to have answered that question. It is the same question. I detailed the steps and the process that the Treasurer followed through. In my view, the Treasurer has taken a diligent course in this matter. He has taken it through to the point of introducing legislation. I find it somewhat hypocritical of the opposition. Let us think back a few years to when it was in government—

Members interjecting:

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: No, they don't like this. Let us compare and contrast. You were the government, and when matters were drawn to your attention you ignored them—unlike this government, which has been prepared to show fortitude, front up, explain and move forward. The choice, as has been clearly identified, was to do nothing. We decided not to do that. We decided, rather, to put certainty and clear predictability into the outcome.

One other thing that the member for Hart seems to have overlooked in this matter is that that component of the asset was leased to one company. That company on-sold to another company.

Mr Foley interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Hart for the second time under standing order 137.

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: The member for Hart seems to be overlooking that important fact, that is, that there was one purchaser of this component of the asset, and that was CKI. CKI, in turn, on-sold to AGL.

There is another point that I would like to make for the benefit of the member for Hart, if he thinks that he is so smart and everyone else is not. It so happens that none of the lawyers, accountants or professional people representing the purchasers identified the issue, either. So, let us keep this in clear perspective. First, there is no cost to the consumers of South Australia in tariffs. Secondly, there is no reduction or change in the revenue flows to government. Thirdly, there is no bill being picked up by the taxpayers of South Australia.

Given that, we had, in an efficient way, responded to the issue. I would far sooner, in terms of the passage of time,

have people look back and say, 'They acted appropriately, swiftly and responsibly.' The Labor Party wants to make political gains out of this and have a day in the sunshine politically: let it have its day in the sunshine. But it will be registered eventually that we acted responsibly and in the long-term interests of every South Australian.

RURAL COMMUNITIES

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): Will the Deputy Premier outline to the House initiatives that the government is implementing to revitalise rural communities in South Australia?

The Hon. R.G. KERIN (Deputy Premier): With respect to the Regional Development Task Force last year, one of the things that was well and truly identified was the desire of the people in the regional areas to maximise the control they had over their own future, and one of the requests was for some facilitation to give them the best means of doing so.

I recently launched a new pilot program called Community Builders, which is aimed at rejuvenating the economies of our rural towns. The concept is one which was used initially interstate and also overseas, and it focuses on grassroots leadership development within the community and helps people to better understand the way in which communities can operate by learning from examples elsewhere.

This program is a partnership between state, federal and local governments. It will involve four clusters of regional communities each year, and the regions this year are the Eyre Peninsula, the Fleurieu Peninsula, the Flinders Ranges and the Mid Murray area. Each of those clusters has between six and 10 communities, each of which will have between two and five representatives as their community team.

The major objectives of the program are to foster both community and economic leadership; to help provide local people with the skills, information, motivation and confidence to allow them to become more involved in their community and its economy; to identify and develop new and local regional economic development initiatives; and to stimulate collaboration between communities in each of those areas, something which is often lacking. In each of the four areas the program will be managed and given support by a local facilitator who will play a key role in recruiting the participants for each of the local teams.

Participants in the Eyre Peninsula program will include Ceduna, Elliston, Le Hunte and Streaky Bay; in the Fleurieu region, Port Elliot, Goolwa, Mount Compass, Strathalbyn and several smaller communities; the Flinders Ranges program will be based around Quorn, Hawker, Leigh Creek, Nepabuna and other communities; and in the mid-Murray area the program will be based around Mannum, Cambrai, Blanchetown, Mount Pleasant and, again, some smaller communities. This government is taking up the challenge of rebuilding rural and regional areas, and a range of initiatives have been focussed on working alongside local people who want to drive their communities forward.

The Regional Development Council very much has a focus in that direction. A draft strategy of a regional development framework has been released for consultation, and a national conference on rural community leadership in the Barossa has been organised for later in the year. In addition, there have been initiatives such as the Regional Development Infrastructure Fund. For a range of reasons regional areas in South Australia are experiencing a resurgence in many areas but, unfortunately, that is not the case across the board—

many challenges still remain. This government is active in working with communities in a creative way to try to empower those communities to build healthier futures for both their towns and their regions.

The SPEAKER: Order! Would the member for Lee either sit beside the minister or return to his seat.

ELECTRICITY, PRIVATISATION

Mr FOLEY (Hart): Will the Premier confirm that Crown Law has provided advice to the government that the state could be open to a lawsuit even if legislation designed to fix the ETSA mistake is passed?

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN (Premier): Certainly not to my knowledge. I will check.

OLYMPIC TORCH RELAY

The Hon. R.B. SUCH (Fisher): Will the Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing provide an update on planning in relation to the Olympic torch relay, and could he also indicate progress in respect of training for Olympic athletes in South Australia in the lead-up to the Sydney games?

The Hon. I.F. EVANS (Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing): Members are probably aware that 15 million Australians will have the opportunity to view the torch relay before the flame arrives at Sydney's Olympic Stadium on 15 September. The torch relay will enter South Australia on 11 July and arrive at Port Augusta on 12 July via the *Indian Pacific*. The torch will remain in South Australia for eight days and eventually move on to Victoria on 18 July via Mount Gambier. During this period, 800 torch bearers will be involved in carrying the flame through 33 South Australian towns and 14 celebration sites.

Mr Clarke: All through your electorate.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: No, it will not travel all through my electorate but it will travel up Shepherds Hill Road via Bellevue Heights and Eden Hills. I will definitely be there. I look forward to being involved with my electorate as the Olympic torch travels through dear old Davenport. I certainly look forward to being involved with my community. The relay travels for approximately 10 hours every day and involves up to 150 people and 40 vehicles at any one time. It is a huge logistical exercise. In fact, it is one of the biggest and more complex road events ever staged in the world.

During the period the torch is in South Australia it will travel 11 046 kilometres by road and 500 kilometres by air. It will average 143 kilometres per day. I am advised that, for the first time in the history of the Olympic torch, it will be carried underground while on the South Australian leg of its journey. The two Olympic torch bearers will carry the flame underground through the Blanch cave at Naracoorte on 17 July. The cave will be lit with 1 000 candles as the torch passes through, no doubt providing a spectacular backdrop.

While the Olympic torch is moving around the state, it will travel by O-Bahn between Modbury and Paradise; by kayak at West Lakes; on tram between Glenelg and Morphettville; by solar car from Mount Barker to Murray Bridge; and by horse en route to Hahndorf. I mentioned earlier that it would be carried by some 800 torch bearers. They will be chosen from a range of people representing the general community, including mothers and daughters, husband and wives, and a number of past and current Olympians.

There will be a spectacular ceremony to mark the end of the Olympic torch journey through the city of Adelaide. It will take place in front of the Adelaide Town Hall on Saturday 15 June July, and both the Premier and the Lord Mayor will be present on that occasion. It will be a free family and community event—which means the member for Ross Smith will be there—featuring a 300 voice choir and the band of the South Australian Police. South Australia's opera stars Brian Gilbertson and Wendy Hopkins will be singing the official Olympic Sydney 2000 anthem *United in One Dream*. After the Olympic cauldron is lit to signal the end of the journey, there will be a concert featuring Acoustic Juice and then a spectacular fireworks display.

The celebration will be a joint venture between the state government and the city of Adelaide. It may be of interest to the member for Ross Smith that the first torch relay of the modern Olympiad was in Berlin in 1936. Having been lit in Olympia, it travelled through seven countries in 11 days, arriving in Berlin. Since then, the Olympic values symbolic with the flame live on. They are values that are universally respected, that is, respect for others, human excellence and fair play. I am sure that everyone looks forward to being involved in their various communities with the Olympic torch relay, and I am sure South Australians are pleased to host it.

ELECTRICITY, PRIVATISATION

Mr FOLEY (Hart): My question is directed to the Premier. Given that the AGL company was not informed of mistakes made in the ETSA privatisation process until yesterday, and the eleventh hour meeting of government officials with AGL in Sydney this morning, has the government received an assurance from AGL that it will not be taking legal action against the government?

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN (Premier): As the meeting is still taking place, I think the question is a little premature.

Members interjecting:

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

AUSTRALIAN MAJOR EVENTS

The Hon. G.A. INGERSON (Bragg): Will the Minister for Tourism outline to the House the value of Australian Major Events for the tourism industry in South Australia and to the wider economy?

The Hon. J. HALL (Minister for Tourism): I thank the member for Bragg for that question because, when he was the Minister for Tourism, his portfolio was the one that established Australian Major Events, which we know is an extraordinarily impressive organisation these days, and it is filled with a very talented team of professionals. The events that Australian Major Events sponsor and support give an enormous amount of international media coverage to our state. Importantly, they also provide a great deal of pride to our state, knowing that we have great capacity to host and stage events of great significance. That is an important component of the operation of the organisation.

Since 1994, Australian Major Events has generated approximately \$253 million worth of economic activity in our state with the events that it has supported. That is a pretty impressive record. There is absolutely no doubt that the events supported by Australian Major Events are giving the tourism industry and the international travelling community another reason to visit South Australia and, of course, spend

their money here. As we know, over the past few years, our reputation as a host to international events in particular has certainly grown—and I think well deservedly.

Over the past 12 months, we have supported or been involved in sponsorship with 74 key events. The economic activity for the past 12 months alone has been in excess of \$100 million. The estimates at this stage are that it has also generated more than 37 000 interstate or international visitors to this state who would not otherwise have come to visit our wonderful place.

One of the impressive figures that is extraordinarily important is that Major Events activities have given this state more than \$950 million worth of free-to-air exposure throughout the world. That is a sum of money that we would not have been able to spend in any other way. Some of the one-off events that have been incredibly successful and have generated enormous economic activity include the Australian Masters Games and the Golden Oldies Rugby. I suspect that just about every member of this chamber could tell a story about the activities of many people during Golden Oldies. It was an event that was enjoyed by everyone who participated, and we have had many interesting discussions with the organisation about future activities in which they would like to be involved in our state.

Some of the more successful events have been widely supported by the community and one to which I could refer particularly is Tour Down Under, which generated support from the community of more than half a million people turning out for the six stages of the tour. The records show that it was the most popular community event that has ever been staged, and we all look forward to Tour Down Under next year. The new circuits will be announced very soon.

The Hon. W.A. Matthew interjecting:

The Hon. J. HALL: I cannot give any idea at this stage because it will be pretty exciting when we announce it, and many members of this House will be delighted that the stages are going through their electorate. I know the member for Bragg will be particularly interested to know that the working relationship between the Clipsal 500 and Australian Major Events has become very close, and the marketing activities of the Clipsal 500 and Major Events has ensured that each year is getting bigger and we are getting more international and interstate visitors coming to South Australia for events such as that.

One of the figures I know will be of interest to you, Mr Speaker, because of your electorate and the important role that the city of Glenelg has played in Tour Down Under, is that during the last tour more than \$21 million worth of media coverage internationally was generated by that event. The member for Light will be very pleased to know that the town of Gawler in the centre of his electorate was recently highlighted in a very important cycling magazine. There is a double page photograph featuring Gawler and the riders. It has been distributed throughout Europe in a cycling magazine called *Tour*. I will ensure that he gets a copy of it because it is wonderful, and I suspect that many of his constituents in Gawler would like to see the photograph. We will see what we can do about that.

Other major events take place in this state that generate enormous economic benefit and pride in South Australia. Their reputation continues to grow because of the very professional way in which these events are managed and worked with. I am sure you, Mr Speaker, would be interested to know that more than 19 towns across the regions of our state participated in the festival performances or exhibitions

during the last Festival of Arts. I could detail all of them, but I know that you, Mr Speaker, would not want me to do so. However, I would be happy to provide you with some of the details if you are interested.

Over the next 12 months Major Events and its activities will be very important to South Australia with the economic benefits and pride that are generated. I look forward to all members of the House participating in a lot of those events over the next few months.

In conclusion, I urge all members to take particular note of the calendar of events for the next 12 to 18 months, because I am sure there are many areas of involvement in which they will be able to participate. I would like to give members an update on olympic soccer: as of now we have one sell out game and two that are nearly sold out. I urge all those people who have not yet bought their tickets to get in and do so.

The SPEAKER: Order! I urge ministers to use ministerial statements for those appropriate parts of their replies.

ELECTRICITY, PRIVATISATION

Mr FOLEY (Hart): My question is again directed to the Premier.

Members interjecting:

Mr FOLEY: As I said, my question is directed to the Premier. Does the Premier continue to have full and total confidence in the Treasurer, given—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr FOLEY: —the following facts: that the Treasurer allowed highly paid consultants, Pacific Road and KPMG, to make a basic error in omitting a CPI adjustment to the electricity pricing order; that the Treasurer was first informed of the ETSA sale problems in early April but failed to inform cabinet colleagues until Monday of this week; that the Treasurer said that there was no need to inform the Auditor-General, despite the Auditor-General's legislative role in overseeing the sale process—

Mr Venning interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The member for Schubert.

Mr FOLEY: Thank you, sir. I might commence again if you do not mind.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member does not need to commence the question again.

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH: Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

The SPEAKER: What was the point of order?

Mr FOLEY: The Treasurer said—

The SPEAKER: Order! We have a point of order.

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH: Standing orders call for a question to be asked and for leave to be sought to make an explanation. The member seems to be making some sort of statement.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order, thank you.

Mr FOLEY: I will continue: that the Treasurer failed to heed the advice of the Auditor-General last November to slow down the process to ensure that we got the process right to avoid mistakes; and that the Treasurer failed to tell AGL and Hong Kong Electric of the formula problem until yesterday?

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN (Premier): I can assure the member for Hart that I do have absolute confidence in the Treasurer—far more confidence than I have in the member for Hart. As I referred to the House yesterday, it was the

member for Hart who lost \$200 million in their costing program at the last election. He went silent when he was reminded of that debacle of theirs. The member for Hart is the member who used to put those yellow stickies on cabinet submissions—do members remember that? He used to write these notes on yellow stickies and put them on cabinet submissions.

As I have indicated to the House throughout the whole series of questions today, the Treasurer has acted with diligence and in a responsible manner and in quite distinct contrast to the way in which the Labor Party in government acted. I make the point that members of the Labor Party are being absolutely hypocritical. On the one hand they say that they do not want to question South Australia's reputation, yet, on the other hand, they do everything in their power to drag it down for base political purposes. It is the Labor Party that fought us every inch of the way in our effort to have the capacity to retire debt and create a future for our kids. All I can say is I do have absolute confidence in the Treasurer in that his performance has been second to none as Treasurer of South Australia and will continue to be so in a most efficient manner on behalf of all South Australians.

YUMBARRA CONSERVATION PARK

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): Will the Minister for Minerals and Energy inform the House whether there have been any interesting discoveries resulting from exploration in Yumbarra Conservation Park since its reproclamation on 25 November 1999?

The Hon. W.A. MATTHEW (Minister for Minerals and Energy): The member for Flinders has been—

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. W.A. MATTHEW: Does the member have something to say—perhaps you would like to use grievance time? The member for Flinders has been a champion of exploration activity in this region because she realises the significant mineral potential of the Yumbarra region. The member for Flinders championed the cause in this parliament when the parliament approved the proposal and an essential part of the park was reproclaimed on 25 November 1999.

An exploration licence granted to Dominion Gold Resources Pty Ltd and Resolute Resources, partnering as Gawler Joint Venture, authorises them to explore for minerals in the reproclaimed section of Yumbarra Conservation Park. If all the members who think this is a shame would like to stand up during the grievance debate and put their beliefs very firmly on the record, I am sure they will find themselves an appropriate place in history as the activities in this region start to unfurl. Many times in this parliament over the years, Labor members of parliament have stood to fight against development. Roxby Downs is in this state now, despite members of the Labor Party, and the wealth that that mining activity has generated for this state significantly helped the state get through the Labor years of the State Bank disaster. They can say, 'Shame' until the cows come home, but the fact is that this area presents significant potential for our state.

Approval has been gained from my colleague the Minister for Environment and Heritage to grant a licence within the park and, of course, that is subject to conditions required under the National Parks and Wildlife Act. The public had 28 days—and, indeed, all members opposite had 28 days—in which they could lodge objections to the application for the exploration licence. But that licence was actually granted without any objection at all on 5 January this year. Members

opposite may sit there and say, 'Shame' but not one person here—not one of them—raised an objection. In their role as members of parliament, beyond all others they would have been aware of their right to do so—or, indeed, their right to get some of their rabid Labor mates to do so. Of course, we know why the Labor Party did not object. On the one hand it likes to negatively oppose these things but in the times when it happens to be in government what does it do? It rakes in the royalties from it. There are many on that side who probably actually support activity occurring.

Now that that process has been completed, as part of the conditions of the proclamation, Ecologia Environmental Consultants who were approved by the Minister for Environment and Heritage have conducted a biological survey. Indeed, the member for Kaurna is well aware of this, and I know that he supports the EL process. That has been taken on behalf of the licensees. As the member for Kaurna is aware, that biological survey report has been presented to the Department for Environment and Heritage for assessment. That is an appropriate process, I believe, for government to go through.

On 20 January, approval was granted to conduct a detailed low level aerial geophysical survey over the exploration licence area. For the benefit of the members who have concern, the survey involves magnetics, radiometrics and digital terrain modelling. That is done from fairly low flying aircraft. They fly at about 20 metres above ground level or at a height deemed safe by the pilot, and they work at 40 metre intervals. This survey took about three weeks and provided a no impact method of obtaining good information about the geology of the area. The results are extremely encouraging.

Members may be interested to know that the joint venture completed an anthropological survey with the relevant elders of the six claimant groups. Information obtained in that survey will be released in the near future. The next stage of activity is likely to be calcrete sampling. If a calcrete survey is undertaken, the joint venturers are aware, of course, that again they go through an environmental impact assessment process and provide management plans for approval at each stage. That approval must be given by not only me as Minister for Minerals and Energy but also my colleague the Minister for Environment and Heritage. Using the results of any calcrete surveying, the joint venturers can determine then whether to undertake exploration drilling in the area. Thanks to the support of this parliament and thanks to the efforts of the member for Flinders' advocating the potential of this area, we now have a significant opportunity being explored in our state. The local Aboriginal people, the community of Ceduna and the economy of South Australia stand to be significant beneficiaries from that—and all this is happening despite the negative carping and knocking by Labor members of parliament who at times will try to give the impression they would rather no mining activity occur in this state. I look forward to reporting to the House in the future as developments proceed in this very significant area.

GRIEVANCE DEBATE

Mr FOLEY (Hart): All South Australians would have been shocked and appalled last night to see the Premier of

South Australia on television smiling and laughing about this terrible mistake. John Olsen, the Premier of this state—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr FOLEY: —was smiling and laughing about the mistakes that have been made. Today, we found out that the government knew three months ago about this terrible error, this terrible mistake, a mistake Premier John Olsen was laughing about on television last night. It was covered up by the Treasurer and the Premier; it was kept from the cabinet. The secret was out this week but what has occurred? Accounting firm KPMG and the lead advisers on the ETSA sale, Pacific Road, who are paid tens of millions of dollars, made a mistake. What was the mistake? The Industry Regulator in South Australia, Mr Lew Owens, on radio today called it 'a very simple error'. The error was that up to \$30 million or \$40 million worth of consultants forgot to add an inflation adjuster, a CPI adjustment, in the revenue for electricity in this state. The electricity pricing order did not have an inflation adjuster in it. KPMG and Pacific Road should be condemned for their appalling work that has seen a major error occur, with the result that our state faces litigation and is severely embarrassed.

How was this error uncovered? How was this error created by multimillion dollar consultants? It was uncovered by an officer in the office of the Industry Regulator. A person who is paid less than \$100 000 a year uncovered a simple error that consultants who are paid tens of millions of dollars could not find; consultants to whom this government has paid a success fee; a group of consultants that this government would not even name publicly; a group of consultants with which this government is complicit in covering up this appalling, damaging, embarrassing error. Thank goodness this officer, this public servant who earns less than \$100 000, was diligent when the advisers of this government were not; when the Treasurer of this state was not; and when the Premier of this state could only but laugh and smile.

The Industry Regulator did uncover this error. That is the role of the statutory authority of the Industry Regulator. It was a simple mistake. Let us not have any of this nonsense that it was a complex, detailed error; that it was a formula that even the highest paid experts in Australia could not uncover. It was the simple omission of a CPI adjustment. I have it here; it is page 125 of 'distribution tariffs'. They forgot to put a CPI adjustment in it; they forgot to adjust for inflation. How silly! How foolish!

The Hon. R.G. KERIN: I rise on a point of order, sir.

Mr FOLEY: Now the Deputy Premier is running scared.

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

The Hon. R.G. KERIN: The member for Hart was deliberately flaunting the rules by making a display.

Mr Foley interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member knows he cannot display material in the House when he is making a speech, and I ask him to observe that.

Mr FOLEY: As I said, I have it right here and the Deputy Premier can get up and huff and puff as much as he likes, but this is the end of his Liberal government; this is the end of his tenure as Deputy Premier; this is the end of his government—an incompetent, deceitful government; a government that covers up; a government at the end of its term in office. You are a government that will be incapable of getting the confidence of the people of South Australia. Your Treasurer covers things up. Your Treasurer does not come forward with

the truth. Your Premier is unable to admit the error. And your Premier tries to cover for his mate Rob in another place. Make no mistake: you have failed South Australians with the sale of ETSA and you have not even been able to get the process right. Your government—\$90 million success fees and all—has been undone by an officer of the public service earning less than \$100 000 per year who has potentially saved this state many millions of dollars. We owe this man a great debt.

Time expired.

The Hon. R.B. SUCH (Fisher): I would like to focus on what I believe is a very important part of our history, namely, the acknowledgment and recognition of Anzac Day. One of the things that has happened in recent years is that Anzac Day now usually falls within the school holidays. I do not wish to assign blame to anyone for that, but that is fact. It has concerned me for some time because it is important that our schoolchildren, the young people, appreciate and recognise the sacrifice of the 100 000 men and women who gave their lives for this country, as well as the many more who suffered as a result of injuries.

To that end I have been in touch with the RSL and received a response from John Spencer, the state secretary, on behalf of the State President, Mr John Bailey, supporting what I am trying to do: that is, to ensure that within our education system—and working with the relevant authorities and hopefully supported by the Department of Education and Children's Services and the federal Department of Veterans Affairs—our schoolchildren fully appreciate the sacrifice which is recognised in that day.

Given, as I indicated earlier, that Anzac Day usually falls in the school holidays, what is envisaged is working in conjunction with Mr Bob Harris, the State Vice-President of the RSL, to produce materials which can be used in the schools and to encourage other activities, including visits to schools by RSL members. That does currently happen, but we want to make sure that happens on a universal basis.

In addition, material activity sheets are to be produced, encouraging schoolchildren to find out about those local people in their area who gave their lives and whose names are recorded on local war memorials.

Several years ago, I had produced, with the assistance of a local artist, a drawing of Private Simpson and his donkey. Members would recall the story of Simpson and his donkey at Gallipoli. What I am trying to do, in no way trying to glorify war (and the RSL seeks not to do that as well), is highlight the fact that the 100 000 people who gave their lives did so for their fellow citizens so that we could enjoy freedom.

The theme of the material I have produced to date follows on the theme that these people cared for their country and, indeed, gave their lives or suffered injury, and to promote that notion of doing things for others, in this case their family, friends and country.

At the most junior level that could be something like colouring in a drawing of Simpson and the donkey and then following it up with questions such as, 'Why do we remember Anzac Day?', 'What was Simpson doing with his donkey?' and then, extending it out further, 'How can we (that is, the children) care for our family, friends and country?'. Of course, at the higher levels of primary school it is much more sophisticated than that.

I believe it is a very important project, and I look forward to working with Bob Harris and hope that, as a result of

submissions to the relevant authorities, we might get some funding for a project officer to assist in the preparation of materials and suggested activities.

I would like, in the vein of acknowledging this important part of our history, to pay a tribute to the work that has been done by the local RSL groups and the City of Onkaparinga in the restoration of two very important war memorials in the hills valley area, one of which is on Chandlers Hill Road at Happy Valley. An excellent job was done there by the City of Onkaparinga. It is now called the Keane Memorial Gardens. That was subsequently followed up by a restoration and relocation of the war memorial adjacent to Waymouth Oval at Coromandel Valley. Both of those projects are a credit to the council, the local RSL, the local councillors and the Veterans Affairs Department, which supported the restoration of those memorials. We should acknowledge and be proud of our history and continue to recognise the sacrifice of those who gave their lives for this country. To that end, I am keen to ensure that Anzac Day is commemorated and that the lead-up to Anzac Day is acknowledged, promoted and recognised in our schools with appropriate activities so that the young people of today will recognise that sacrifice.

Time expired.

Ms KEY (Hanson): Today I would like to discuss the issue of the Barcoo Outlet. As we have been advised, the overall estimated capital cost is \$21 million, inclusive of the pre-construction costs comprising concept development, environmental investigations, preliminary design, public consultation (although I cannot imagine that much of that went into it), independent review and documentation. I was also pleased to receive a copy last night of the Senate Environment, Communications Information Technology and the Arts References Committee inquiry into Gulf St Vincent. I note that the committee, after receiving evidence on the Barcoo Outlet, made the following points. At point 3.111 the document states:

The state government, using a proportion of federal funds, is going to construct a stormwater control weir to divert stormwater flows from most rainfall events directly to the gulf. The weir will have flap valves in it to enable south-north tidal circulation.

It further states:

The Barcoo Outlet will consist of a new watercourse and a buried duct that will run under the sandhills and the beach, and out to sea. It will release stormwater about 200 metres offshore. The proposal will cost approximately \$15-\$16.8 million.

My first point is: exactly how much are we talking about? A number of figures are being bandied about, and I would like the Minister for Government Enterprises to clarify how much money the state will have to put into this project and what sort of federal funds will be involved. The committee states—and I think it is instructive to all of us:

In light of all of the evidence on the effects of urban run-off and sewage effluent on the gulf environment, it seems to be a backward step to be constructing yet another stormwater outlet to the gulf.

They quote Councillor Harold Anderson (who is now mayor) from the City of Charles Sturt, who said:

This proposal is akin to mending a broken leg by bandaging its big toe.

I must say that Harold is always very good at his descriptions of what is happening and mismanagement on the part of the government. But it seems to me that the authorities concerned with the Barcoo Outlet are, in fact, ignoring the fact that the leg is broken and that there have been suggestions that remedial treatment should be taken further upstream and are

making sure not only that the Patawalonga is a pleasant place for the rich people who will live in the \$250 000 plus condominiums on the shore but also that everyone else who lives farther up near the Barcoo Outlet has all the pollution running through there.

Mr Venning: That's me.

Ms KEY: Including, I must say, the very good member for Schubert, who acknowledges what I am saying. The state government and supporters of the proposal argue that, at the present time, the pollution to the gulf is worse without the outlet. This is because available toxicants from sediments of the Patawalonga Lake are remobilised during storms and then overflow to Gulf St Vincent from the lake. The people who support the Barcoo Outlet say that less environmental harm will be created by a combination of catchment works to improve stormwater quality and direct the discharge of stormwater into the sea. At least there is one comment of positive thought on the Barcoo Outlet.

When you analyse, as I have, all the documentation that has been available to the Public Works Committee, the Environment, Resources and Development Committee, the West Torrens council, and more recently I received a document that was commissioned by the Charles Sturt council, it seems to me that the conclusion in looking at all these issues, both from a scientific point of view and from a practical and design point of view, is that the Barcoo Outlet is a stupid idea. I refer, in particular, to the Charles Sturt report, the Manly Hydraulics report that was presented to the Public Works Committee, where they go through in detail the failure of this proposal to improve any of the circumstances along the coast or, in fact, to the area of Gulf St Vincent. So, I urge this parliament to rethink this proposal and to make sure that they have the same information as we have.

Mr MEIER (Goyder): Members would recall that earlier this year I moved a motion in this House complimenting those who had been involved in the rescue of the yacht the *Doctel Rager*, which sank off the coast of Yorke Peninsula. During my comments I particularly referred to the works of the SES, the CFS, the police, the ambulance and the community generally. It was interesting that a short time after that motion went through this House I was contacted by the owner and skipper of the *Doctel Rager*, Dr Gary Shanks. Dr Shanks practises here in metropolitan Adelaide. He wished to thank me for the comments made in the House and indicated that he was appreciative of those and, certainly, of the parliament generally. That is acknowledged, but much more important than that is the fact that Dr Shanks said that he would like to make a gift to the people who had been involved in the rescue. Whilst he had been over to Yorke Peninsula once since the yacht capsized, he indicated that he would like to donate a pulse oximeter to the appropriate ambulance in that area and he asked whether I could assist in determining who should receive that device.

I was pleased to undertake that task. In fact, I rang the Yorketown ambulance service and spoke to a Mrs Janice McEvoy. She indicated that it would be best if it went to the Marion Bay section of the ambulance service, because they did not have a pulse oximeter and that, because they are quite some distance from Yorketown—in fact, the better part of 80 kilometres—it takes quite a long time for the Yorketown ambulance or the Minlaton ambulance to get there. For members' information, a pulse oximeter is a digital instrument used to monitor a patient's pulse and it also measures oxygen saturation levels. In fact, I was fascinated to see it

work. They clipped it onto my thumb at the end of a wire and instantaneously it was able to tell what my pulse was and was able to tell—

Ms Key interjecting:

Mr MEIER: Yes, they were quite happy with it. It was also able to tell the oxygen saturation that I have in the body—and thankfully that also seemed to be satisfactory. It is a very useful instrument. I believe that it cost about \$1 500, so it is a significant piece of equipment.

I asked Dr Shanks whether he would like to have the presentation at Yorke Peninsula, and he asked whether I could be there as well, as his token of appreciation for my comments in the House, and I told him that I would be delighted. However, he said that it would not be convenient for him to travel to Yorke Peninsula for a while, so I said that we could have the ceremony here at Parliament House. I indicated then that perhaps the person that he was going to present it to could come, as well as a Mr Peter Stevens. Whilst I referred to no-one by name in my last contribution, Mr Stevens was one of the persons rescued—in fact, he was photographed in the *Sunday Mail* at the time, and he made some very positive comments about the rescuers. So, Dr Shanks, Mr Stevens and Mrs McEvoy were invited to attend. I left it up to the people involved to see whether anyone else would like to attend, and Mr Peter and Mrs Christine Van Rysingen from Marion Bay and Jenny Lomblad, a SAAS volunteer from Marion Bay, also attended.

The presentation was excellent, and I thank Dr Schanks very sincerely for his generosity. He also made available other medical equipment to the volunteers which will all help with future rescues. For the benefit of members who do not recall, that was a successful rescue: 12 persons were rescued from the yacht. The good news is that the yacht is being rebuilt and we will see the *Doctel Rager* sale again some time in the future. May it sale very safely in future years. To Dr Schanks and his crew I say a very sincere ‘Thank you’ from the electorate of Goyder, which includes the southern part of Yorke Peninsula.

Mr KOUTSANTONIS (Peake): Today in question time we saw an example of a government running scared—a government that is afraid of accountability and of letting the opposition know the truth. What amazed me most was that when this government came into the chamber and told us about the sale of ETSA we were given assurances one after the other. We were told, ‘There will be checks and balances. We will make sure that we do this properly. We will make sure that we get the best deal for the state.’ Two question times have passed since we discovered the monumental blunder made by the Premier and the Treasurer, and how many questions on the issue were asked by Liberal Party backbenchers? Not one.

Only one Liberal backbencher had the courage of his convictions to go outside this place and say exactly what he thought of the blunder made by the Treasurer and the Premier—the member for Hammond. The member for Hammond is the only member on the other side of the House with any sense of conscience and dignity. He had the courage to stand up for what he believes to be in the best interests of South Australia. I believe that this blunder has sealed the government’s fate. I have compiled a short list of seats in which the government, at the next election (in about one year’s time), will be tested.

The member for Stuart will have a hard time explaining the blunder to his constituents. Where was that honourable member when the blunder was happening? The member for Hartley is already gone. It is already game over for the member for Hartley. I even believe that the Labor Party will win Morialta. I also think that we will win the seat of Newland. The members for Bright and Mawson are also in a lot of trouble. How will the member for Mawson, for all his grandstanding, explain this huge risk to which the state has been exposed as a result of the Treasurer’s and the Premier’s incompetence?

The Minister for Education is gone already. The Liberal Party is already out trying to find the minister another seat. I understand that there was talk within Liberal Party headquarters of moving the member for Schubert away. Brave, lion-hearted Ivan Venning could lose his seat of Schubert to make way for the new Leader of the Opposition, Mr Malcolm Buckby. Of course, every day the member for Schubert defends the rights of Barossa residents—from West Beach. He works hard for them every day and also rolls over for the government so that it can scratch him on the belly. I also think that he is in a lot of trouble.

Already there is a very good National Party candidate working in that electorate. I am sure that the people who elected the member for Schubert would like to know his whereabouts when all this was happening. Where was the member for Schubert when the Premier and the Treasurer made these blunders? Then, of course, there is Switch Williams, who joined the *Titanic*. He said, ‘No, no, don’t leave without me. I want to get on board as well.’ That honourable member is also in a lot of trouble. The member for Gordon has also been telling me that the member for MacKillop is not as popular with his constituents.

The member for Elder tells me that he drove past the member for MacKillop’s electorate office on his way to Mount Gambier and not a single sign was displayed on his office saying ‘Liberal member for MacKillop’. Not one sign said that he is the Liberal member for MacKillop. I wonder why that is. Is it perhaps that he is afraid to be tarnished as a Liberal? Is he trying to hide his switch to his electors? I move on to the members for Heysen and Davenport. I am sure that the Democrats will be doing very well in those seats. Of course, Lord Armitage is in a lot of trouble. He is out trying to find a way to move to the Legislative Council.

I do not think that that will happen either. I cannot see the Minister for Tourism helping the member for Adelaide move to the Legislative Council—she has other plans for that vacancy when the Attorney-General resigns. I do not think that the Liberal Party will be feeling very charitable towards Michael Armitage when he loses his seat of Adelaide.

We did not hear one question in two question times from government backbenchers about the Premier’s and the Treasurer’s stuff-up on the ETSA sale. Members opposite should hang their head in shame. It is their job, as well as ours, to scrutinise the government and to fight for our electors. Where were they in question time? Gone missing. Instead, we had questions for the Minister for Tourism which would have been better answered in ministerial statements. We had silly questions to the Minister for Police about how many graduates—

Time expired.

Mr VENNING (Schubert): I am quite concerned by the member for Peake’s speech because it would appear that any honourable member who is silly enough to sit here and listen

to him is attacked. I was attacked because I was listening, albeit not directly, and then the member for MacKillop came into the chamber and he was attacked. If the honourable member wants to be heard in silence by no-one he should keep it up. I am just trying to give the honourable member some advice but I am probably wasting my time. I hope the point sinks in with the member for Peake: if he wants members to listen, do not criticise them for being in the chamber.

I want to raise another serious issue. I want to dissociate myself completely from the quite disgusting and offensive remarks made by the member for Hammond last night during the prostitution debate. The subject is emotive enough without inflammatory and emotive language from an elected member of parliament. I know that there is a time and place for colourful language but using it in this place only heaps fuel on the fire of the current disdain shown by the public towards parliamentary conduct. We are all very concerned at the continual denigration of our profession and I am afraid that speeches such as that justly add to it.

The honourable member, knowing that he has a great command of the English language, could have used other words and phrases to express his feelings on this issue. I wonder whether anyone can find a worse speech on the record in this place. The words used, I believe, denigrate not only parliamentary standards but also further diminishes our public image as plausible and responsible legislators. I took umbrage at the honourable member's implication that the gallery was full of prostitutes. Many members of the Festival of Light were also present in the gallery and, no doubt, they would have taken great offence at that implication.

I have said before that emotion is lost from a speech after it is made, but those words are on the record forever. I suggest that the honourable member consider this. It would no doubt please many members if this manner of speech were banned from this place. If members use such language they should be made to withdraw it. Surely this was unparliamentary language. I suggest that the Standing Orders Committee should consider what happened and recommend accordingly. I deliberately did not make a contribution last night. I had a speech prepared but I refused to take part in the debate and be associated with such base behaviour.

If speeches are circulated to promote public interest in this debate the member for Hammond's speech will turn people right off and turn the debate away from those wishing for change. Also, this morning in private members' debate, the member for Elder used at least two expletives. They were not as bad but just as unnecessary. I again dissociate myself from this type of language in this place. I feel that the issue should be brought to account now. If this style of debate becomes acceptable in this place I think that it will be a very sad day and we will deserve the scorn shown by public commentators.

Once politicians or parliamentarians, even statesmen, were looked up to and used as good examples. To many people we were public icons and, at the very least, leaders in our community. This sort of speech would not have been acceptable in the past and should not be in the future. I will not quote any part of the speech nor will I encourage anyone to read it. Reading only the first three sentences, I found the first bad example, not to mention that the implications made in the speech were, I believe, in quite bad taste.

The saddest fact of all is that the speech was made right in front of the photograph of this place's greatest statesmen, Sir Thomas Playford. The member for Hammond used emotive language in this place, and I feel I am justified in

criticising him for doing so. It is not good form to criticise any colleague in this place. My attitude has always been, 'Let he who is without sin cast the first stone.' However, the honourable member's speech is beyond what is acceptable.

As I said, the member for Hammond is blessed with a good command of the English language. I have been very appreciative of many of his great speeches in the past. However, on this occasion he should have done what I did—left it in his pocket. I am sorry for all those who took discomfort from this speech—other members, particularly women members, people in the public gallery and *Hansard*, particularly the women in *Hansard*, who had to write this down.

Time expired.

Mr ATKINSON: I rise on a point of order. How is it, sir, that you have allowed the member for Schubert to make a commentary on debate on legislation which is still before the House, in clear violation of standing orders?

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. I am not aware of the honourable member's making any commentary that fits into what the member has just said.

Mr Atkinson: On the five bills.

The SPEAKER: Order! He was not referring to the bills or the subject matter of the bills.

Motion carried.

HISTORY TRUST OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA (OLD PARLIAMENT HOUSE) AMENDMENT BILL

Received from the Legislative Council and read a first time.

SUPERANNUATION (MISCELLANEOUS) AMENDMENT BILL

Adjourned debated on second reading.
(Continued from 31 May. Page 1320.)

Mr FOLEY (Hart): I will speak only briefly on this bill. It has come from another House where it was scrutinised by the shadow minister for finance. It is a bill on which the opposition was briefed some time ago. Very broadly, it contains further amendments to the Superannuation Act 1988. Of course, that act established and maintains the two defined benefits schemes for government employees, both of which are closed to new entrants. The amendments deal with some technical issues and matters that are designed to simplify the administration of the scheme.

Four new clauses, which were inserted in the bill during debate in the Legislative Council, cover issues dealing with salary sacrificing, various superannuation arrangements, issues to do with resignation and preservation of benefits, payment of benefits, effect of workers' compensation on pensions, the closure of contribution accounts, proportion of pensions to be charged against contribution accounts, repayment of contribution account balances and minimum benefits, some issues to do with the Electricity Industry Restructuring and Disposal Act 1999, and a number of other issues.

As I said, in many cases these are technical amendments on which the opposition is prepared to support the government so that they can be carried. As I said, this bill was passed some time ago in another place. I was briefed on it in October last year. I am not quite sure why it has taken so long to find its way through to this House.

I suppose this is as good a time as any to reiterate my longstanding annoyance with the fact that the government had to appoint a Treasurer in another House. I am annoyed that it did not feel comfortable or confident that it could put a treasurer up against me in this House; it had to hide the person in another House. In a sense, I suppose that is a back-handed compliment. However, it would be nice to face your political opponent in this Chamber and not have to deal with him by code, message, smoke signals, semaphore flags and so on.

That will not change for 18 more months. It might be interesting to see whether, with a future Labor government, my political opponent, the shadow treasurer of the day, will be in place or whether the government will still not feel confident in having him or her in this House and have that minister in another place. However, that is slightly off the main game of this legislation.

We have another bill to follow this bill. That is a consumer affairs bill, and my colleague the shadow consumer affairs minister will be dealing with that bill at the conclusion of my short contribution. As I said, the bill contains a number of technical arrangements designed to further refine the measure. That is the issue with superannuation: it is not a static piece of legislation but an evolving piece of legislation. Federal laws change, lifestyle issues change and people want to be more flexible with their superannuation and they might want to incorporate more superannuation by way of salary and salary sacrifice.

The Labor Party has been at the forefront of superannuation reform. It has been sad to see a number of superannuation issues regress under this conservative government. That is quite sad, because superannuation is a great bit of public policy—one championed very loudly and strongly by Labor. With that small contribution, I indicate there will be plenty of time for me to talk further about Labor's role in ensuring that we have a good superannuation policy nationally—one that provides a good retirement income for working people and one that can be improved. Indeed, one of the great Labor reforms of the late twentieth century was to put superannuation policy at the forefront. With those words, I indicate that we support the bill through to the third reading.

The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY (Minister for Education and Children's Services): I thank the member for Hart for his contribution and excellent summation of the bill. It is a serious area in superannuation. This bill tidies up a definition of 'salary'. As the member for Hart has said, prior to this bill's coming into the House the old act did not recognise salary sacrifice and just how that fitted into superannuation. These amendments give an additional definition of 'salary' so that it can be incorporated to determine what the salary is as a proportion of the total employment and then to work out a superannuation amount on that total employment cost.

These are technical amendments. As the member for Hart has said, as industrial relations and salary packages change, it has an impact on superannuation and, as a result, the changes then have to flow through to the legislation. Some of this ensures that a person on a total employment cost contract cannot manipulate the contribution system to an extent that results in his or her receiving a windfall gain which would be an amount equal to the value of the employer contribution. So there are certain circumstances where they might revert to a non-total employment contract and seek to pick up lost contribution points during the period of the TEC

contract, so it is important that these amendments pick up things such as that. With those few words, I support the bill.

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

STATUTES AMENDMENT (CONSUMER AFFAIRS—PORTFOLIO) BILL

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 31 May. Page 1324.)

Mr ATKINSON (Spence): The bill deals with time limits for bringing prosecutions under four acts. It justifies the Department of Environment, Heritage and Aboriginal Affairs charging a fee that it has long charged for information provided to vendors of land and it deals with the composition of the Trade Standards Advisory Council. Under the Fair Trading Act and the Prices Act proceedings for an offence against the act must be started within 12 months of the date of the alleged offence. The Commissioner for Consumer Affairs normally brings these prosecutions. Under the Land and Business (Sale and Conveyancing) Act, proceedings must be started within two years of the date of the alleged offence, but may with the permission of the minister be started within five years of the alleged offence.

Under the Trade Standards Act proceedings must be started within three years of the date of the offence or within one year of the day on which the offence came to notice. The bill changes the limitation of prosecutions for offences for which an expiation fee may be paid to six months from the date of the offence or six months from the expiry of the expiation period. The bill does this by adopting the time limits in the Summary Procedures Act. For non-expiable summary offences the period will be two years, except if the permission of the Attorney-General to bring proceedings is obtained, in which case the limitation period will be five years.

The Fair Trading Act is also amended to convert some minor indictable offences to summary offences. The second aspect of the bill amends section 12 of the Land and Business (Sale and Conveyancing) Act to allow bodies prescribed by regulation to charge fees for information. The current section 12 allows councils and statutory authorities to charge such fees. However, it seems that it does not allow a government department to do so, yet for many years now the Department of Environment has been charging \$129 for a statement for vendors required by law. It appears that the charging of such a fee has been unauthorised and I bet that the Department of Environment will be the first body prescribed by regulation.

The third aspect of the bill relates to the Trade Standards Advisory Council, which consists of six members. One is appointed by the Minister of Consumer Affairs, one by the Health Minister, one from a panel of three nominated by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, one from a panel of three nominated by associations that represent the interests of suppliers of goods, one from a panel of three nominated by the Standards Association of Australia and one who, in the opinion of the minister, represents the interests of consumers.

The Attorney-General argues that the Standards Association is no longer active in South Australia and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry has changed its name. He adds that some of the organisations named or contemplated by the act have not responded to invitations to nominate a panel. The Attorney proposes by this bill to change the way the council is nominated. Now the minister will nominate all six, guided

only by the requirement that one nominee should represent the interests of employers, one should represent the interests of suppliers of goods and one should have experience in the standards of safety or quality in the manufacture of goods or the supply of goods and services. I notice the representation of consumers has been dropped. I think that this is regrettable, as does the Consumers Association of South Australia.

The other aspect of the bill—and it is one that occupies the majority of the bill's pages—is the standard statute law revision provisions. I notice that the government is continuing with its folly of removing divisional penalties and replacing them in legislation by nominated maximum penalties. When the Labor Party comes to office we will restore divisional penalties and I hope the Attorney-General's Department is ready for the change.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS (Minister for Environment and Heritage): I thank the member for Spence for his contribution.

In committee.

Clause 1 passed.

Clause 2.

Mr ATKINSON: What is wrong with this bill's coming into effect on assent? Why the need for proclamation?

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: That is the choice of the Attorney.

Mr Atkinson: Yes, but why?

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: I did not ask the Attorney that when I was being briefed. I did not even look at that, to be honest. It will be done by proclamation at the appropriate time.

Mr ATKINSON: It is a pity that the minister was unable to answer such a simple and inoffensive question.

Clause passed.

Clause 3.

The Hon. G.M. Gunn: They've got longer arms than the Jews.

Mr ATKINSON: The member for Stuart has just made the remark that a certain member has longer arms than the Jews and I ask him to withdraw it.

The ACTING CHAIRMAN (Mr Scalzi): Why do you ask a short chairman?

Mr ATKINSON: I ask him to withdraw it because it is offensive.

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: I am very happy to do so and indicate that members of the legal profession have longer arms than certain ethnic groups.

Mr ATKINSON: Under the law of the state—not in this chamber but outside, under the law of the state—the remarks of the member for Stuart would be contrary to the law and so, Mr Acting Chairman, I think it is appropriate that even in this chamber you at least ask him to withdraw. I refer to the Racial Vilification Act.

The ACTING CHAIRMAN: I ask the member if he wishes to withdraw.

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: I am very happy to do so. In fact, it gives me the opportunity to again indicate that the profession I referred to is a law unto itself and, if I have offended the honourable member, I would withdraw that part of it, but nothing in relation to the group that I indicated appeared to be a law unto itself, particularly when charging people in the community.

Clause passed.

Clause 4.

Mr ATKINSON: I notice that the government is converting some offences from minor indictable to summary. Could the minister explain the government's policy in making this change?

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: They are minor offences.

Mr ATKINSON: The offence which the minister characterises as minor has a maximum penalty for a body corporate of \$100 000 and in any other case a maximum penalty of \$20 000. Could he explain why he regards that as a minor offence?

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: I am advised that the penalties to which the honourable member refers apply to indictable offences.

Mr ATKINSON: So, the minister is telling us that proposed subsection (1) of section 75 of the principal act is a minor indictable offence. Is that his advice to us? Furthermore, could he explain why sections 56 and 57 are exempted from what I thought to be a conversion to summary offences?

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: Sections 56 and 57, in accordance with the Trade Practices Act, are not offences and therefore it is in uniformity with that.

Clause passed.

Clause 5.

Mr ATKINSON: Will the change in the limitation period for these offences and other offences in the bill where the limitation period has changed have retroactive effect? Just to explain it to the minister: if I committed an offence or was alleged to have committed an offence against the Fair Trading Act, let us say three years ago, under the Fair Trading Act provisions as they existed at that time and do now, I would be unable to be prosecuted by the Commissioner for Consumer Affairs because the period would have expired, but now under this measure I can be prosecuted because of the amendment. Does that have an unfair retroactive effect?

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: I am advised that it is not intended that the bill be retrospective.

Mr ATKINSON: It is all very well for the minister to say that it is not intended that the bill will be retrospective, but what if the courts decide that its plain meaning is that it does have retroactive effect? If someone committed an alleged offence, let us say 3½ years ago, under the Fair Trading Act, and as at 29 June 2000 was beyond the period of limitations, will this amendment (when it is proclaimed) allow the Commissioner for Consumer Affairs to prosecute that person; or would it allow the Attorney-General to give permission to extend the limitation period to five years in which the alleged offender would be embraced?

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: I sought specific advice on this detailed question by the opposition and the answer is no.

Mr ATKINSON: Could the minister explain why it is no, because, on the face of it, it provides:

Proceedings for a summary offence against this act must be commenced—

... within two years of the date on which the offence is alleged to have been committed or, with the authorisation of the minister, at a later time within five years of that date.

That is five years. So if one is accused of an alleged offence against the Fair Trading Act, what is to stop the Attorney-General authorising a prosecution for an alleged offence for which under the current law the limitation period would have already expired?

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: The advice to me is that because of the way in which the bill is drafted the answer is no. I understand the point the member is making and the way he is attempting to read it but the advice is—

Mr Atkinson interjecting:

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: The way you are reading it. The answer is as I have previously given. The advice is that the answer to your question is no.

Mr CLARKE: I am also somewhat concerned, particularly given the Attorney-General's well-known attitude to retrospective law. I do not have quite the same fixation on retrospectivity as the Attorney-General has in terms of tax evasion, tax avoidance, wage increases and so forth—I have always been in favour of retrospectivity—but nonetheless the Attorney-General has a particular view on retrospectivity and, in general, I would probably say I would agree with him.

Clause 5, as the member for Spence points out, on its face would allow the Attorney-General to commence proceedings if he so chose, even though the existing act at this point in time would show that the alleged offence could not be initiated because the time allowed for such initiation of proceedings would have expired, but by this clause it reactivates it.

You may well say that the Attorney-General's view is that they would not do it, but on the plain face of the law in relation to the bill that is before us it could happen and, whilst the present Attorney-General believes that he will be the Attorney-General probably infinitum, as far as he is concerned, he is mortal and sooner or later he will not be the Attorney-General. It may be that someone less kindly motivated than he might occupy that position; or it could be a more vengeful character. In fact, I could think of a number of vengeful characters who could end up as Attorney-General and who might apply the law retrospectively. Why do we not fix that up by making it clear in an amendment, by simply saying that clause five has no retrospectivity from the date on which it is proclaimed so that it makes it clear for everyone?

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: I accept that the member for Ross Smith is far better at fixing up things than I. This matter was raised in another place. There is no need for an amendment. The issue has been raised as to whether or not the amendments extending the time limits for instituting prosecutions under the acts which are the subject of this bill will operate retrospectively. The officers have consulted Parliamentary Counsel, and it is agreed that the amendments extending time limits for instituting prosecutions under the acts which are the subject of this bill will not operate retrospectively.

It has been stated in many cases that the general rule that statutes are not to be given retrospectivity in relation to operation does not apply to statutes concerned with matters of procedure only. If the honourable member wishes to further research this, I refer him to *Maxwell v Murphy* (1996 Commonwealth Law Reports at page 261), a case with which I am sure he is familiar, where the courts have, however, recognised that a change which might be described as procedural in character may nevertheless affect a vested right adversely.

Clause passed.

Clause 6.

Mr ATKINSON: I notice that the government is continuing with its frolic of removing divisional penalties from our statute law. Members should be aware that under section 28A of the Acts Interpretation Act a system of divisional penalties is employed. Division 1 is imprisonment not exceeding 15 years and a fine not exceeding \$60 000, down to division 12, which is a fine not exceeding \$50 and an expiation fee of \$25. As the consumer price index moves ever upwards, the divisional penalties can be amended by the expedience of

amending one section of one act, namely, section 28A of the Acts Interpretation Act.

The government is systematically removing the divisional penalties from our statute law and inserting in lieu maximum penalties with specified cash sums. What will happen if we go through another period of considerable inflation or a sustained period of minor inflation is that all these maximum penalty provisions in our statute law—and there are literally hundreds of them—will have to be amended. So, this parliament will be besieged by statutes amendment bills.

We have already got a number of statutes amendment bills on the *Notice Paper*, and I suggest that any member who remains to be convinced should look through his or her bill folder. All this was handled quite simply through amendments to one section of one act when we had a policy for divisional penalties. I want the minister to tell the House why the divisional penalties system has been overturned, indeed vandalised, by the Hon. K.T. Griffin.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: That is the policy of the government of the day. It is the parliament's and government's right to change the system or to use a different system, if it so wishes. The member for Spence has on three or four occasions when this issue has been before us raised this particular point in every bill.

Mr Atkinson: You would think you would have an answer to it by now.

The ACTING CHAIRMAN: Order! The minister has the call.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: I give the member the same answer.

Mr Atkinson: What is the answer?

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: I keep giving the same answer: the answer is that it is government policy to make it more transparent to those who are looking at the bill as to what the penalty is. I know that the member and the government have fundamentally different views, but that is the response.

Mr ATKINSON: The minister says that it is too much to expect the lawyers of South Australia to refer to section 28A of the Acts Interpretation Act to ascertain what a penalty is. I find that a remarkable thing for a minister to say. I should have thought, quite frankly, that when the divisional penalty system was operating well most lawyers would have memorised the divisional penalties.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: This may come as some surprise to the member for Spence, but there are people, other than lawyers, who read acts. He has been privileged enough to be trained in the law, but people out there deal with acts, perhaps only once or twice in their life, when they find themselves in some difficulty and seek an act to try to understand it. While the member for Spence treasures himself as being clever with the language, people out there do not have his skills and understanding of the written word. By putting in the amounts as they have and not using the system he describes, it makes it simpler for those who are not as highly trained as lawyers. I never mentioned lawyers: the honourable member did. I have no problem with the policy adopted by the government to make it more transparent and easier for the lay person, the untrained person, to pick it up and to try to make head or tail of what an act is attempting to achieve.

Mr ATKINSON: I disagree with the minister. I think it was a very good little number that he played on the violin, but we all know from experience that most people do not try to handle statute law themselves. They rely on a leaflet prepared by the government or they take advice. I think in those

circumstances that the divisional penalty system is much the better system.

I want to move on from that to another aspect of the statute revision, which is removing the word 'shall' wherever it appears in our statute law and substituting the word 'will'. There is a shade of meaning between 'shall' and 'will'. Why is 'shall' being removed and 'will' being substituted?

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: I am not sure how that relates to the clause about which we are talking.

Mr Atkinson: Schedule 1.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: I see.

Mr Atkinson interjecting:

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: A lot of the text. The words 'shall' and 'will' do not make up most of the text. They make up part of the text, but 'shall' and 'will' do not make up most of the text.

Mr Atkinson interjecting:

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: The view was that the word 'will' makes it clearer than the word 'shall' in those circumstances.

Mr CLARKE: We in parliament extol to industry to be more efficient, world's best practice and all of the hyperbole that the Premier is so good at using. Yet we in this place want to go back to a system whereby, in the next few years, we will have to go through and amend every piece of legislation by increasing the money amounts in line with increases in the CPI which will consume an enormous amount of time at the Attorney-General's office together with members of Parliament.

Members interjecting:

The ACTING CHAIRMAN: Order! The member for Ross Smith has the call.

Mr CLARKE: That seems a total waste of time and of the resources of not only this place but the Attorney-General's office, when we had a perfectly good system. Whilst I had some sympathy for the point made by the minister about making it more transparent, particularly for those not in the legal profession who might want to look up an act and find out what the penalty may be, I would suggest to the minister that if a person looks up an act and wants to find out whether they might be contravening a provision or want to enforce a right they may have under a piece of legislation—and that they see division five or whatever penalty it might be—they will find out what that penalty is because they did not go reading through the legislation just for light reading. They went there for a purpose and will quickly find out where they can find it in the Acts Interpretation Act—whatever the section is to which the member for Spence referred; I think it was section 28a—which will set out the list of penalties that apply for particular breaches.

I do not think we add a great deal in terms of transparency and accountability simply because we write in the money amounts. I think all we do is burden ourselves with far more clumsy, ineffective and time wasting administrative procedures that subsequent parliaments will have to come to grips with in the future.

My specific question to the minister is this: in terms of the government policy of changing from divisional fines to money amounts, what representations were made to the Attorney or government that influenced the Attorney to adopt the policy that he has? For example, had he had representations from the ordinary person in the street seeking such a change and, if so, how many of those representations were made? Were representations made along these lines by the law society or by any other professional body seeking such a change?

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: I will have to seek that information for the member from the Attorney-General.

Mr CLARKE: I appreciate the minister's getting that information for me. Do you think I could get an answer to that with a bit more haste than the last time the minister, representing the Attorney, said he would get something from the Attorney for me, as I am still waiting for it some three months later down the track? That was with respect to the prices legislation that was passed here at least two months ago when I referred to the Prices Commissioner doing a survey of the prices charged by the medical profession particularly in rural and regional South Australia. There was a point I made in my submissions to the minister in this chamber. The minister gave me an assurance that he would refer the matter to the Attorney and get back to me on it but I am still waiting.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: Yes, I will attempt to do it as quickly as the officers find themselves able to provide an answer and then get the Attorney to sign off and me to sign off and present it to the House. I will try to track it as quickly as I can for the member for Ross Smith.

Clause passed.

Remaining clauses (7 to 14), schedules and title passed.

Bill read a third time and passed.

NATIVE TITLE (SOUTH AUSTRALIA) (MISCELLANEOUS) AMENDMENT BILL

Received from the Legislative Council and read a first time.

ESTIMATES COMMITTEES

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

That the report be received.

Motion carried.

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

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

Motion carried.

Mr MEIER (Goyder): I bring up the report of Estimates Committee A and move:

That the report be received.

Motion carried.

Mr MEIER: I bring up the minutes of proceedings of Estimates Committee A and move:

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

Motion carried.

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

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

Ms KEY: Sir, I draw your attention to the state of the House.

A quorum having been formed:

Ms HURLEY (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): The budget process was really very much a continuation of what has occurred before. I think that we made the point many times during estimates that information has been far more difficult to extract from the budget papers. It seems to the opposition that this has been done very deliberately, and that it is part of a pattern by this government to avoid scrutiny of as many of its procedures as it can hide: it is the familiar story that we seem to have with respect to conservative governments around Australia. There is so much which is commercial in confidence, which is not necessary for the parliament to scrutinise, or in respect of which it is not necessary for members of the opposition to obtain the detailed information. The attitude is: just leave it all to the government; let it get on with the job in whichever way it chooses. Indeed, this was never so evident than during the Department of Industry and Trade estimates, by a device where John Cambridge filed a defamation action and then questions by the opposition were ruled to be sub judice, so we could not undertake any investigation of that issue. Then, during the government enterprises session, our serious questions about issues involving water were guillotined and we were not able to have the time that we asked for to consider those issues.

The Hon. M.H. ARMITAGE: I rise on a point of order, sir. The deputy leader asserted that the questions in relation to water were guillotined in estimates. That is factually incorrect, and I ask her to correct the record.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I do not believe that that is a point of order.

Ms HURLEY: As I was saying, the opposition had a number of questions about water issues. We, in fact, moved a motion to consider this matter during the lunch break for an extra hour, and government members of the committee, when they had the numbers in the chamber, moved that that be cut short.

The Hon. M.H. Armitage: That's not true.

Ms HURLEY: That is true.

The Hon. M.H. Armitage interjecting:

Ms HURLEY: No.

The Hon. M.H. Armitage interjecting:

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The deputy leader has the floor.

Ms HURLEY: We regard this as part of the pattern of this government, as it seems to have been with every other conservative government around this country. The point is that not only is the opposition—and, through the opposition, the public—not able to obtain information about where their money is being spent and on what, but facts are also covered over. I think that what we have seen with the ETSA mistakes by the government illustrates that the real problem with it is that there is not proper scrutiny of the government. Although government ministers seem to think that they, by definition, perform procedures properly, the mistakes they have made throughout their two terms of government show that this is absolutely not so. With respect to the water contract, we had the embarrassing and unjustifiable mistakes with probity and queries about the tendering process—bids that were in late; bids that were opened before other bids that were submitted. So, the water contract was a complete debacle. The next major contract was ETSA, of course, and now it appears as though that is another debacle.

What the government should be learning out of all this is that there are good reasons why these parliamentary scrutiny processes are put in place. There are reasons why, under the democratic Westminster system, we have these measures for

accountability in place and why we have people such as the Auditor-General. It is because these are the checks and balances required for the system to function properly and to ensure that taxpayers' money is being used in a proper manner.

A number of mistakes have been made in all sorts of directions by ministers of this government. They do not like scrutiny: they like to be able to make decisions and give jobs and contracts to their mates without the sort of scrutiny that is provided by the parliamentary system. The opposition does not believe that this is proper, and the ETSA debacle just shows why it is not proper. The government still seems to refuse to recognise any culpability in this respect. Certainly, the contracts that it has let in minor areas also show this pattern, examples being the Hindmarsh Soccer Stadium and the blow-outs that we now know about with respect to the National Wine Centre. There may well be others about which we are not able to obtain information. The opposition, to a great extent, relies upon leaks coming from the government and outside sources—and thank goodness some members of the government do leak matters, otherwise a lot of these mistakes and embarrassing problems would not be revealed to the public.

We would not have a chance to go back and look at them. Indeed, if it were not for the good functioning of one of our standing committees, the Public Works Committee and, to a large extent, the Economic and Finance Committee, we would not have an opportunity to scrutinise many of these projects. We have seen the government's trying to ensure that the Public Works Committee does not look at several of these projects. The government has tried to ensure that the Public Works Committee is locked out, either by not referring the project to the committee or by ensuring that the committee does not get the information that it requires.

The opposition, when we are in government after the next election (and I think that is starting to become obvious), is committed to changing this method of operating. The government still continues to hark back to try to tar the opposition with the problems of the State Bank. Indeed, the opposition recognised very early that the electorate rightly punished the Labor Government in 1993 for the State Bank. It was an appalling loss of a great deal of money for the taxpayers, and the state will take a long time to recover.

The general public feels gypped (and the 1997 election reflected this) because the Liberal Party was elected promising to fix the problems of the State Bank, but it has not done so. It does not seem to be anywhere near doing that, even though a great deal of the state's assets have been sold off. In the first term of the Liberal government the small number of Labor Party opposition members had to sit back and watch a great many assets being sold and a great many departments being restructured. We witnessed outsourcings and the signing of various contracts.

Although we disagreed with much of what was happening, we felt that the government obviously had a huge mandate and, to some extent, was entitled to govern and to run the state in the way that it saw fit. But before the end of the first term it became obvious that the government was not the good manager that it had purported to be. Indeed, members of the opposition were lectured very regularly by government members about our lack of business expertise and business management. Government members cited their own small business experience and their ability to manage the economy.

As I said, I think that even before the 1997 election it had become obvious that that was not so. Since that election, the

government, in its second term, has become even more inept in the way that it manages the economy of this state. The asset sales have not resulted in the social dividend spoken of by the Premier. The budget is obviously not in the state that it should be during a period when the national economy has dragged along the state economy. It has been a very good situation in that there has been strong growth in the national economy and good conditions for some of our exports, such as wine.

Despite the fact that the national economy was growing very strongly, South Australia did not recover as strongly as it should have. Opposition members believe that one reason for this is that the then Premier, Dean Brown, squashed flat the emerging recovery by sacking so many public servants. It had a very detrimental effect on consumer confidence. It had a very detrimental effect on the economy generally, and we never really took off with the rest of Australia; and we have not had an opportunity to take off since. Now that the national economy is slowing, it looks as if this state might be hit even harder as a result of the downturn.

This is very unfortunate for the state of South Australia. The government has not been able to realise any benefits from the huge injections of cash that it has received from asset sales. One reason is that payouts for voluntary redundancies in the public service have been so huge. Those payouts have taken up a large part of the income from asset sales. The government assured us that the long-term savings and benefits of those reductions in the public service and the outsourcing of that work to private companies would result in medium to long-term savings. Those savings do not appear to have materialised.

It would seem that much of the failure lies at the government's door: it has not managed those contracts in the most efficient and effective way. Recently, one of the outsourcing contractors, CKS, failed because it was not able to perform the building maintenance work required of it under the contract. The government has had to rescue that essential maintenance operation at the expense of some of the workers who had transferred from the public service to this private contractor. That is a small incident but it is reflected generally in the larger contracts.

Questions are still being asked about the efficiency of the EDS and United Water contracts and whether the benefits from those contracts have flowed to South Australia in terms of export income and jobs. But when the opposition has asked questions to try to establish the cost effectiveness of these outsourcing contracts, the government refuses to answer questions and does whatever it can to avoid being held accountable for its actions.

I would think that the government members look forward to the next election with a great deal of trepidation. They must surely feel embarrassed about their record. How on earth will they manage to defend a record where the state government's assets, built up over many decades, have been sold off, yet our education and health sectors are still crying out for extra funds and our community services are suffering from reducing funds?

This is at a time when our unemployment rate is still very high and when we have an ageing population and therefore the demands on services are greater than ever. It is, indeed, a very depressing picture in some respects. Fortunately, there are factors about the South Australian economy which give us, in the opposition, hope for the future. Certainly, we are very keen to get into government to try to take advantage of some of these bright spots in the economy and to try to revive

the economy, particularly in regional areas, to ensure that South Australia does not lag behind as a rust-belt state and does not maintain its position, holding its line just above Tasmania in terms of where the state stands in relation to its economy and delivery of resources.

The opposition believes that South Australia can once again generate some excitement with a government of vision. We believe that we can take advantage of South Australia's natural resources and the good things about South Australia and once again have South Australia as a leader in this country rather than as a dreary follower with a government that has a policy which means that we must have no more than average in all our social services. Everyone in South Australia is realising that South Australia is a bit of a laughing stock, a bit of a joke in many other states. It is even the butt of a number of comedy routines. We would like to try to reverse that position and have been working hard on our policy to ensure that that is the case, that we are ready for government, that we are prepared to act quickly to reverse the decline that South Australia has been suffering. It seems obvious that the policies followed by the Liberal government have failed. They have failed in many other places, and they are failing here.

It is difficult to know why conservative governments follow this dismal record of other conservative governments, whereby government stands away from any assets, risk and from any policy that would drive society in a certain direction. That is rightly interpreted by South Australians as a lack of vision rather than a responsible economic stand. South Australians are ready for a government that will take reasonable risks, that will ensure that there is responsible and sustainable development, that will encourage South Australian businesses and new businesses in South Australia rather than buying in call centres and other businesses such as that. Of course, call centres are a valuable business and many of my constituents have jobs initially in that sector.

However, it is not enough to get just those start up jobs. We want the education system that develops skilled workers in South Australia, and we want those skilled jobs brought into South Australia so that the natural optimism and resourcefulness of South Australians can be used to build South Australian businesses in this state. We believe that we have the policies to ensure that that will happen. Certainly, we will bring in the people and businesses of South Australia together with us, whereas the government is not consulting with communities, organisations or businesses.

Ms KEY (Hanson): This year I felt as though I was better prepared for the estimates process. I was extremely disappointed by my over preparation for my first experience of estimates, and I have learnt from that process. I have worked out that estimates is a joke and our participating and spending so much time trying to get answers for our questions is probably a waste of resources—especially being a member of this House with a number of constituent responsibilities that are much more pressing and important. Needless to say, I decided to take my portfolio area seriously, and in my supply speech I tried to deal with the constituent issues that I could find from the budget. So my speech contained much of that detail. I will come back to the portfolio areas. In the youth area, I sought to find out what happened to the \$851 000 that went missing from that portfolio during the handover from Minister Hall to Minister Brindal. I am none the wiser as to where that money went from the minister's response. Of course, there are rumours that Minister Hall

went on a spending spree, but I still have no idea about whether that is the case; if it is not the case, I may be speaking harshly.

I also tried to get to the bottom of the interesting position Minister Brindal takes with regard to what he thinks should be happening in the multicultural area for youth. I questioned him about his new initiative grants for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. I understand that this is the new signage for what we used to call non-English speaking background people. This is the term we are to use now. Needless to say, despite the terminology I use, again there was some confusion on the part of the minister about where this grant was to go—some \$120 000 over the next two years. From a number of organisations that applied for this grant, I understand that the minister—and I question his real goal—decided to tell the three organisations that put in separate and quite different applications that they would have to join together and share the money—some \$90 000 over two years—and work out a project for a multicultural area for young people. That was the case despite the fact that there were three different aims and target areas for the projects. It did not fill me with hope that there was a serious concern to advance the condition of young people who come from those backgrounds.

The length of time allocated for the portfolio areas I represent for our party shows a lack of interest on the part of the government to be transparent or to seriously answer questions. I can accept the fact that as a new member of parliament I am quite naive about the role of a minister. However, if you are the minister for the important portfolios of youth, industrial relations and WorkCover, I would have thought that you would be pleased to answer questions on those areas and make sure that what is happening in those areas is as transparent as possible. As I said, I am obviously very naive, because it is very difficult to get any information whatsoever from all the ministers, hence my view that estimates is a complete joke.

Then we come to Minister Armitage. I would have to say that not only is he the most arrogant person I have dealt with but his disdain for workers and the industrial relations arena is absolutely astounding. I tried to ask him about a scheme called the bonus and penalty scheme which is an incentive scheme that was set up in 1990—supposedly cost neutral which now costs WorkCover \$9.5 million. I would have thought that was a reasonable question. But what does he do? He starts attacking me personally, because I had the temerity to ask him about one of the schemes in WorkCover. I also asked him about the safety achiever bonus scheme. Again, it involved quite a few million dollars. I cannot remember the exact figure, but between \$4 million or \$6.5 million goes into the safety achiever bonus scheme. Again, I would have thought it would be perfectly reasonable for me as the shadow minister with responsibility in those areas to ask the minister what is happening to that scheme and whether the aim of the two schemes—the bonus and penalty scheme and the safety achiever bonus scheme—to improve the health and safety performance in the workplace was working. But what do I get? A non-answer. I see this as being a quite serious matter.

I am also concerned that some people in the community seem to think that these schemes may be being used in conjunction with the \$25 million rebates that employers are receiving under the WorkCover scheme as pork barrelling. I hope I am wrong, but we are talking about quite a few million dollars. We get half an hour to ask questions, and I do not get any answers. While we are on the subject of

Minister Armitage, I have had questions on notice for nearly 18 months to do with different issues in the WorkCover area, as I know has the member for Ross Smith, and the minister has not had the decency or the sense of propriety to answer those questions. We get to estimates and I think, 'Maybe this is the opportunity to ask questions about the budget, in an area of his responsibility,' but I get no answers.

I see this as being very serious. I may be naive and too enthusiastic about my job as a shadow, but I would expect the minister to be able to answer those questions and feel quite comfortable about doing that and being transparent about the millions of dollars we are talking about. I need to go a little easier on Minister Lawson as he has only just been put into that portfolio. I hope he will bring some light to the area of industrial relations because his predecessor did such a shocking job. I want to give him the opportunity to prove that he is a reasonable Liberal with views in the industrial relations area that may actually bring some joy to both employees and employers in this state.

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 5 p.m.

Motion carried.

Ms KEY: I have asked Minister Lawson a number of questions about health and safety and the fact that there are still thousands of people injured in this state as well as, unfortunately, people who die through work-related circumstances. Although he bothered to answer my questions, I am concerned that a lot of those issues will not be answered directly and I will have to rely on my colleagues in the upper house to ask questions of the minister because now the IR minister is in a different House from this one, which will cause problems with transparency. I do not know whether it is a deliberate ploy, but we will certainly make sure that those questions are asked.

The minister so far in trying to be positive about this new appointment has sat on his hands because as yet we still have no response, meeting or any consultation of any meaningful type about the health and safety penalties and the bill introduced by the Hon. Nick Xenophon in the other place with regard to the ability to prosecute on the part of a person or their agent. I have asked Minister Lawson a number of times to convene a meeting of all parties to discuss the Xenophon amendment to see whether we can come to some finality on the issue. While this issue is not dealt with, the idea of making sure that health and safety penalties are increased sits on the table with no action.

As much as I said it in my speech in this House about the penalties and workers having the penalties they can sustain going up five times and everyone else having the penalty rate doubled, with that exception it is important not only to have penalties that are in line with those interstate but also to make sure that it is very clear that there is a penalty for not observing health and safety legislation. I asked Minister Lawson about the health and safety inspectors and the award and enterprise inspectors and received some answers, although the minister did not seem to be aware of a recent crisis in the inspectorate about the role and powers of inspectors. This is an issue I will be following up with him.

The second to last point I make with regard to Minister Lawson involves the issue of asbestos. I and the Hon. Ron Roberts have asked a number of questions about the inspec-

tion and registration of places that have asbestos. I am talking of the asbestos that is harmful to humans. We have not had any real answers. The Hon. Ron Roberts did not receive an answer from Minister Armitage and finally Minister Lawson decided to answer him on a question about David Jones. Most of the questions I have asked have not been answered, so I have asked Minister Lawson whether there would be an opportunity for us again to have a meeting to discuss the issue, whether through the parliamentary committee (which is a bit of a joke), the Parliamentary Committee on Occupational Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation, or through convening a meeting to discuss the issue of asbestos, asbestos related diseases and the Nick Xenophon bill with regard to survival of causes. The minister seems to be sitting on his hands on this one and I urge him to convene a meeting shortly so that we can avoid a lot of demonstrations planned in the next week on behalf of people who are dying or have died from asbestos related diseases. It is urgent and I ask the minister to act on it. I hope he will read my speech and follow up on it.

The last point with regard to Minister Lawson is the issue of door-to-door selling by young children. The member for Torrens and the minister will be having a discussion on this issue, but I was surprised to hear this morning that the minister was not aware (admittedly this is second hand) that in January 1998 the member for Torrens and I attended a meeting with representatives from Workplace Services, the Children's Interest Bureau, Human Services, the Shop Distributive and Allied Employees Union, the then Retail Traders Association and the Employee Ombudsman to come up with some solutions to children selling door to door, some for charitable purposes and some for employers who were trying to make money using this method. Here we are in June 2000 and basically nothing has happened. It has got to the point where the member for Torrens has had to put her bill back on the *Notice Paper*. It seemed from the information we had that the minister was not aware that if anybody has done work on this area the Employee Ombudsman, the union and the employer association have made sure that there has been action in this area because they have varied the retail trades award, I understand.

As far as government responsibility is concerned, the only thing that has been suggested to us is that we take up the shocking amendments to the Industrial Employee Relations Act that Minister Armitage was trying to push on us last year so that we can have some proper legislation with regard to the issue of door-to-door selling by children. As this House would be aware, the opposition made clear that the amendments, which were identified as being the worst industrial relations proposals in Australia—even worse than those of Minister Reith, which is really saying something—were the only way we could get redress on this issue.

The member for Torrens and, to a lesser extent, myself have come up with a number of suggestions about how this issue can be facilitated. I understand that through the Industrial Relations Advisory Committee a working party was set up consisting of people from the employers peak bodies (I am not sure if it was Business SA, but I suspect it was) and the Assistant Secretary of the United Trades and Labor Council to come up with a way of dealing with this issue. I understand that the working party came up with a number of suggestions that reflected the vehicle that the member for Torrens had identified at least 18 months ago. Still we have nothing. Those recommendations will not be acted on and we are back to square one in that, if we do not

take them up on the outrageous amendments to the Industrial Employee Relations Act, there will be no action at all. I give Minister Lawson some grace because he has only had the portfolio for a short period, but I urge him to do something about the issue before someone is kidnapped or injured or something awful happens to one of these kids selling lollies on the street. It is still happening—this government has taken no responsibility whatsoever.

With those few points, I finish by saying that I am sure I will probably over prepare again for next year's estimates in an effort to ensure that at least we attempt to gain some transparency in this area. Despite the fact the government has made sure that it is very difficult to read the budget and to interpret it, and it is very difficult to get some clarity about where the money is being spent, I will continue to ensure that, wherever possible, in the areas that I represent, whether it relate to my constituency or portfolio areas, I will continue to ask those questions. I call on this parliament to ensure that this does become a serious process and that things such as questions on notice, which are supposed to be a vehicle for us to obtain information, are taken seriously and not sneered at, as is the case with Minister Armitage at the moment.

Ms STEVENS (Elizabeth): I concur with the comments of my colleague the member for Hanson in relation to the estimates process. I, too, spent a great deal of time preparing for it, only to find that we simply did not have the time to ask most of the questions that we had prepared. I recall that in the previous parliament during estimates, the area of health, including disability services, was allocated from 11 a.m. through until supper time. It was only at that time that the vote relating to Aboriginal Affairs (Minister Armitage's other portfolio) was called on. As well as that, we had from afternoon tea through to the end of proceedings (10 p.m.) to deal with the areas of FACS and ageing. Now we have health, disability, FACS, ageing and housing all compressed into one day. Quite frankly, with a portfolio totalling a value of nearly \$2.5 billion, that is a disgrace.

The other point I make, in the same way that my colleague did, is that the budget papers are virtually impenetrable in terms of getting any specific answers in order to ask questions and being able to compare one year with the other. It has got to the stage of our deciding whether we are serious about this and, if we are, we should make the budget papers transparent so that people can see what is going on and can ask informed questions, or we just give it away.

Having said that, I make some comments in relation to some matters that came out on that day in my shadow portfolio areas. I start by addressing some remarks in relation to the Minister Brown's answers to questions that I put to him in relation to the future of the Domestic Violence Crisis Service. In his answer, the minister was very critical of that service and its officers in relation to the processes that had gone on—or had not gone on—around the issue of the future of the Domestic Violence Crisis Service. I was very surprised at the minister's comments because, as I had said to him in asking the questions, I had been contacted by a range of people in the women's emergency services area who had all expressed concerns about what was happening in relation to the future of the Domestic Violence Crisis Service.

As it happened, I had been asked to attend a meeting of the Women's Emergency Services Coalition the very next day after estimates, and I took a copy of the first draft of *Hansard* and read it to them. They were shocked at Minister Brown's comments and believed that he had been entirely

misled in terms of the facts about what had happened over a number of months. I asked them to gather some information together for me so that I could set the record straight from their point of view, and that is what I intend to do.

I hope that the minister will revisit his own comments and compare my comments now with the transcript, and perhaps we can resolve some of the apparent difficulties that have been occurring over a number of months. First, one of the comments that the minister made in answering my question is as follows:

Officers from the Domestic Violence Crisis Service spoke to me at a function at Elizabeth in March when I opened the shopfront service. I was somewhat surprised when I talked to my own staff that they had been trying to get DVCS to talk to them and for months they had refused to even talk.

I am informed that the reality is that this was the four month time span during which the department did not communicate by mail or telephone—that is, from November 1999 until the day after the discussion with Minister Brown in March. During this time the service had written to two departmental officers, including Arthur van Deth and the joint officers group and had not received one letter in response. DVCS has never refused to meet with the department on any occasion. The only formal request that the department has issued was to meet with the Central Mission and this occurred. They provided me a summary of the dates of their letters, and I will put that on the record.

They say that on 10 November 1999 the DVCS wrote to Arthur van Deth for an explanation regarding decision making, outlining concerns regarding the process. There was no reply, aside from a telephone call from a secretary in March 2000 explaining that the matter was with the minister. They followed up with a letter on 10 November 1999 which they refaxed three weeks later. They followed it up with another letter on 21 February 2000 and another letter again on 3 March 2000.

On 15 December 1999, they wrote to Mr Brian Gillan and explained that DVCS had met with the Adelaide Central Mission, and they listed factors that impeded the process of progressing the issue. They explained that the patch through model was problematic. There was no reply to that letter. On 21 December 1999, they wrote to the joint officers group. The content included the concerns 'listed as above' with the other letters. A history of the process was also given, and it included a list of unanswered questions that impeded DVCS's ability to proceed. They received no reply and they followed up that letter with another letter on 3 March 2000. They say that between November 1999 and mid March 2000 no correspondence was received in response to concerns and no telephone calls were received from senior people at the Department of Human Services—very different from the minister's reply.

They say that on 6 April this year, after they had sent a letter to Mr Brian Gillan from the DVCS board of management requesting a meeting, that a letter was finally received from the department indicating a willingness to meet. That is from 10 November last year right through until a reply to a letter from DVCS dated 6 April was received.

Then finally on 6 April they wrote to Dean Brown, the minister—again a response to an article in the Messenger press where the minister was quoted as saying that the Domestic Violence Crisis Service refused to work with the Adelaide Central Mission. They say they wrote to the minister to clarify that they had met with the Adelaide Central Mission, but the model was the thing of concern. They

received a reply from Dean Brown's office to that letter. They have given me copies of all that correspondence, and I certainly agree that those letters were sent by that group. The minister also said:

It was almost as if they did not wish to talk to the government. It was almost as if they thought they were not accountable or if they were even willing to cooperate. All we asked was to have a discussion. This went on for month after month. I was surprised that they had been asked repeatedly.

The reality, they say, is that the department has never formally asked to meet with the Domestic Violence Crisis Service. In mid March 2000 an officer offered to visit the DVCS board. It was the impression of DVCS—and this accords with their records on this telephone call—that this was an offer not a request. No meeting time or time frame was suggested. However, this was an offer that DVCS accepted. DVCS initiated contact with the ministers' department via Ms Sue Barr and cooperated with her to ensure the organisation of this meeting. DVCS wrote to the department stating that a meeting time would be organised after the April board meeting. The April board meeting was cancelled due to several DVCS board members being ill. There was a meeting in May. DVCS contacted the department and a meeting time was made for June. DVCS attended this meeting.

In regard to meeting the Central Mission, DVCS was asked to and did meet. Meeting outcomes were sent to the department via a letter dated 15 December 1999. The department never responded. Regarding accountability, there were four months of no responses from the Department of Human Services, despite numerous letters. What is the department's accountability? Another quote from the minister is:

... after speaking to Rosie, the next thing I heard. . . was that I was about to withdraw all funding. I found this incredible.

The reality is that agencies faxed the minister the day after the meeting at Elizabeth and expressed concerns about what may happen to the DVCS. DVCS is aware that funding for the domestic violence telephone service is likely to remain the same. However, DVCS sought clarity regarding funding for crisis telephone work. This clarification has still not been forthcoming. The minister also said:

All I had said was, 'The department has asked you to sit down and work through the details'. . .

The reality is that DVCS does not recall this statement. Ms Gleeson says she requested to meet with the minister when they talked at the launch as at this point the department had not responded to DVCS for four months. DVCS did not know what else to do and was feeling incredibly frustrated at the lack of response. Another comment from the minister:

'The department has asked you to sit down and work through the details', to see whether there was some way of producing a service that did not have three almost separate silos and, where there was clear problems, ensuring provision of appropriate service. . .

The reality is that the agencies are not separate silos. DVCS has daily contact with Crisis Care. DVCS gets all the Crisis Care domestic violence referrals each morning. DVCS refers all the women in motels to Crisis Care on the weekends. DVCS meets regularly with Crisis Care to ensure smooth running of procedures. Crisis Care is the helpline after hours so it is a myth that the agencies do not work together. DVCS is not sure what are the clear problems of appropriate service provision. The domestic violence helpline review had some ideas on this, but this was an agency review, not a systems review. It did not pretend to look at the system as a whole.

Everyone at the meeting indicated that they would like any specific information that looked at the system as a whole. The minister also said in his answer to me:

There has to be cooperation.

Perhaps this could be both ways. Is it unreasonable to expect that the department give clear parameters about funding, management models, consultation and decision making processes before a major change? These have been asked for repeatedly. As I have mentioned before, DVCS has no written responses. This issue may well have progressed some time ago if concerns and queries were responded to in November 1999 when first requested. Consider this process from the experience of the DVCS board of management. DVCS spent three years participating in the widely distributed consultative Women's Emergency Services Review. DVCS tendered for the current DVCS model and was successful. The current service model was endorsed by the Department of Human Services in 1999. DVCS then asked to participate in a change process, unlike the Women's Emergency Services process in that the domestic violence helpline review document was not public, parameters of funding or management were not given and the processes of decision making were not clear. The recommendations of the steering committee were not endorsed and there were no responses to numerous letters of concern.

I hope that the minister has heard or, if he has not heard, will read these comments and take them on board. It seems to me that the minister is unaware of all the facts about the process that has gone on in relation to this agency and this very important service. The issues not only were raised by the Domestic Violence Crisis Service but also were agreed to by all the people. About 25 of them were at the meeting I attended the day after estimates, and they were representatives, coordinators, managers of the Women's Emergency Services, the shelters, and the people who actually have to work with the victims of domestic violence.

We all agree that domestic violence is a major issue in our community. We have to ensure that what we put in place does the job. It is quite clear that a number of issues need resolution, and the sort of thing that has gone on between the Department of Human Services and the people in the field is clearly quite unacceptable and needs to be fixed. Minister, that is the other side of the story. I was pleased to put it on the record because people at the meeting I attended were horrified to think that the facts had been so misrepresented. I hope that the whole matter can be progressed in a spirit of goodwill and in a spirit of getting the best service outcomes for people, as I said before, who are the victims of domestic violence.

Mr CLARKE (Ross Smith): I will not repeat all that has been said by my colleagues, but looking at the *Hansard* report of the various estimates committees I could only concur that what happened this year is what has happened for the past six years I have been in this place, that is, the estimates committees are not being used in the way in which they were originally designed. If my memory serves me correctly, the Tonkin government brought in estimates committees in the early 1980s. I think it might have been an election promise it made in 1979, that is, to try to make the workings of government more open and transparent, in particular where ordinary members of parliament would have a greater opportunity to scrutinise the different government programs and the expenditure thereof, and to put the exec-

utive arm of government under closer scrutiny. That has been eroded.

I do not know what happened when Labor was in office. I was not a member of parliament nor did I attend, thankfully, any of the estimates committees hearings. I do not know whether they behaved in the same manner in which this government has, that is, to give very little time for the opposition to effectively question ministers and the executive arm of government. For example, the Minister for Water Resources had a day set aside yet sat from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.; environment was 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.; education and training went from 11 a.m. to approximately 5.30 p.m. and then the employment minister came on until 10 p.m.; human services went from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. But, as the member for Elizabeth has pointed out, in the previous parliament, except for an hour that was set aside for Aboriginal Affairs, it was totally devoted to health. The member for Elizabeth had a separate opportunity to quiz Family and Community Services on a separate day under a separate minister.

The way government has now reorganised its ministries puts an intolerable burden particularly on shadow ministers in large portfolios to be able to get their questions asked and, more particularly, answered. The member for Hanson quite rightly pointed that out with respect to industrial relations and Workcover. At least when the member for Bragg was the minister for industrial affairs and I was the shadow minister in the last parliament I think I got at least three quarters of an hour on Workcover. On Aboriginal affairs we got at least an hour which was far too little given the significance of the Aboriginal affairs portfolio. However, I understand this year only half an hour was allocated for Aboriginal affairs of which the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs spent the first 12 minutes reading a prepared statement. That is just an absolute debauchery of the whole process and of what the estimates committees are supposed to be about.

I do not hold out any hope whatsoever under this government that things are going to improve. Next year is an election year so I am afraid that the member for Hanson, if she thinks she has been a bit naive concerning the openness of government, next year, an election year, can expect even less cooperation from the executive arm of government. Therefore, we have to turn our attention to what a Labor government will do when we get into office, which is inevitable whenever the next state election takes place.

Mr Wright interjecting:

Mr CLARKE: I think that 35 might be a trifle too many. It did not do Dean Brown any good to have as many seats as he won in 1993. It is nice to have a margin but not necessarily too large because when we win seats that you would not ordinarily expect to win you find that those backbenchers believe they are going to survive and, when governments have to do unpopular things, they get very restless. So, sometimes it is better not to have them at all. In any event, I would hope that when the next Labor government takes office it would carry out the original intention of what estimates committees are about, that is, allocate sufficient time for not only opposition spokespersons to ask questions but also other members of parliament, particularly backbenchers whether they be in government or opposition. That would enable those concerned to follow through at least some questions they have raised at a constituency level: questions that they cannot raise in the normal question time atmosphere within the parliament. Of course, questions of notice have largely fallen into disuse. It is a constant surprise when I actually get any of my questions answered by this present lot of ministers.

As a broad brush approach the way I would do it is that if I had the authority I would have estimates committees not once but at least twice a year. However, I would not have it in the same format. The speaker groans but if you actually worked it the way it should work there would not be the problems that you are envisaging, Mr Speaker. You are envisaging two estimates committees along the same lines as we currently conduct ourselves and, quite frankly, that would be purgatory: it would be a total waste of public servants' time.

We now have senior public servants spending an inordinate amount of time writing answers to hypothetical questions that ministers might get from the opposition as well as preparing dorothy dixers for government members. I would dispense with all of that. I see no reason why there should not simply be a minister and, perhaps, one or two of the senior heads of the departments sitting down with the minister, where the minister can take questions from the shadow ministers and members of parliament. There should not be any of the dorothy dixers. If ministers cannot give the answer then and there, they do what they do now: they say 'We will get back to you.'

In the main, except for the various statistical sorts of information that is useful for the parliamentarians concerned to get, the minister, if he or she knows anything about their portfolio and is competent and confident, should be able to address, fairly reasonably, 80-90 per cent of the questions. I do not know precisely how the Senate estimates committees work, but it seems to me that they are held far more regularly than we hold them. And, in fact, far more information emerges in terms of providing greater scrutiny of the executive arm of government in that context than we have here in the South Australian parliament.

I think it was a good initiative of the Tonkin Government (as I said, I think it was its election promise in 1979), but it has been debased ever since, because once you get into government you want to hide things. And oppositions often want to do the same thing when they become government: that has been the way that things have gone on. But I do not think that it does the institution of parliament any good whatsoever. It may surprise the executive arm of government that members of parliament—backbenchers—occasionally have a good idea and that they also can follow through with a series of questions and keep government, whichever political party is in power, to some degree of accountability.

It was interesting, for example, with respect to the ETSA scenario that was the subject of question time today and yesterday. As the member for Hart pointed out, it was a public servant on a modest salary who picked up the mistake that highly paid consultants earning 50 times what that public servant earned missed. And it could well be that it is the backbenchers who, because of their particular interests, could in fact hold the executive arm of government to a greater degree of accountability than now exists.

We can allocate the time. We waste time because of the way in which we organise things. Many of the committees finished before 10 p.m. simply because they had one portfolio, such as water resources. And, with respect to human services, it is such a broad, huge portfolio that inadequate time was allocated for shadow ministers and members of parliament to ask their questions. Too much time was wasted by government public servants writing answers to hypothetical questions which were never asked. We debase our own senior public servants by having them go through that sort of routine. I would hope that, when Labor gets back

into government, it reforms the estimates committee process so that it does what it is supposed to do, and so that more of the backbenchers are involved in the deliberations.

The situation now is that, because of the limited amount of time that is available to shadow ministers on the opposition side, most of the questions formulated are asked by the shadow ministers, for very good reason. But that limits the opportunity for other members of parliament to get their questions up—whether it be about their own electorate or about the particular interests that they have in different portfolios. Again, it is a great waste of time, talent and the resources of this parliament. We could far better utilise those talents if we reformed the estimates committee process.

As I said, there is no reason why we could not hold the estimates committee twice a year. We could do it in a far more efficient fashion, without the use of all the senior public servants' time in writing dorothy dix answers to hypothetical questions. We could save a lot of time with ministers not making prepared statements that cover 15 or 20 minutes. No-one reads them: they are simply used by ministers to cut into the time allowed for questioning, such as the one read by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, which was one of the most blatant examples that I have heard about in terms of avoiding questions being asked.

Mr Wright interjecting:

Mr CLARKE: And, really, I think, as the member for Lee rightly points out, inadequate ministers who are not confident in their portfolio, who are basically incompetent, fear estimates committees. Those who know what they are doing—as you know, sir—do not mind the cut and thrust of an estimates committee: they enjoy it, in fact, and get on with it. I remember the former Minister for Finance (the former member for MacKillop, Dale Baker), when he was the Minister for Primary Industries, somewhat cavalierly, perhaps, would sit in the estimates committee. Members could fire any questions at him, and he would either answer the question or give it to the head of his department to answer. There was not a great army of bureaucrats around him. Basically, he turned it over to the opposition side to ask most of the questions in those portfolios. Some on his side might have said that he was a little too cavalier, but it was a refreshing change from the type of ministers whom we must now endure.

I conclude by appealing, I suppose, to my own side of politics—because the Liberal Party will not change things, particularly with an election year next year—that when we get into government, as we will next time around, we strike a blow by reforming the estimates committee process to make it do what it should do. I would hope that an incoming Labor government and its ministers would not turn around and say, 'Let us take a bit of revenge on opposition members and do to them what they did to us for eight years,' because that debases the whole system. We never get out—

Ms Stevens interjecting:

Mr CLARKE: No, not even a small amount, member for Elizabeth; not even a small amount of vengeance. The best revenge you can have is to show opposition members just what a paltry lot they are, particularly when they were in government—small minded, mean spirited and not prepared to hold themselves out to be accountable. At the end of the day, we want to try to restore some faith in the public in our parliamentary democratic system.

The number of people who no longer actively involve themselves in party politics—whether it be Labor, Liberal or Democrats—is staggering today compared to what it was 20

or 30 years ago. When you go to the hotels and the clubs people do not want to talk about politics any more: they do not want to talk about and debate politics. They might take up with their local MP the issue of politicians receiving another pay rise and they should not have received it, or whatever. But it is trivialising it. People have had a gutful of politicians, generally, because they think that we are all the same: that we do not want to be accountable, that we do not want to be transparent, and that we do not have the guts or the courage to stand up for our convictions and be prepared to accept our responsibilities.

There is this enormous widening gap between those of us in the parliament and in the political process and the vast mass of people out there who feel disengaged from the political process. I think we can help part of that re-engagement if the Labor Party, on taking office, takes the estimates committee process seriously, reforms it and does

the opposite to what we complain that the Liberal Party does when it is in government. That will be the great challenge for the incoming Labor government: whether we stick by what we say we will do.

Mr MEIER secured the adjournment of the debate.

**STATUTES AMENDMENT AND REPEAL
(ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S PORTFOLIO) BILL**

Received from the Legislative Council and read a first time.

ADJOURNMENT

At 5.50 p.m. the House adjourned until Tuesday 4 July at 2 p.m.

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday 27 June 2000

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

POLICE COMMUNICATIONS

96. **Mr ATKINSON:** Did police communications take approximately one hour on the evening of 20 March 2000 to relay a possible sighting of escaped prisoner Anthony Wilson at Port Wakefield Road between Salisbury Highway and Globe Derby Park to patrol car Elizabeth 20 and if so, why did this delay occur?

The Hon. R.L. BROKENSHIRE: I have been advised by the police of the following information:

At 12.05 a.m. on Tuesday 21 March 2000, a call was taken at police communications from a resident of Mallala. She stated that near the salt plains, on the western side of Port Wakefield Road, between the Salisbury Highway intersection and Globe Derby Park, she saw a male she believed might be Anthony Wilson. She believed he fitted the description, wearing a pale t-shirt and blue jeans, of average build, although she could not see any handcuffs.

These details were entered on to the computer aided dispatch system at 12.08 a.m. at the conclusion of the telephone call, and then dispatched via radio and data communication to an Elizabeth night shift patrol at 12.11 a.m. The time taken to relay the information to the patrol was 3 minutes, not approximately one hour as claimed.

The practice at police communications is to receive information and task the next available police patrol as a matter of urgency. This call was assigned a Priority 'A' status that requires immediate response by a police patrol and this was achieved.

The patrol advised police communications at 12.18 a.m. that they had checked the area and had located nothing.

PUBLIC SERVANTS

103. **Mr HILL:** How many state public servants are currently located in the offices at Noarlunga Centre and, by department, how many have been relocated from the centre since 1 January 2000 and where have they been placed?

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: I have been advised the following agencies are located within the Noarlunga Centre:

- Department of Education, Training and Employment
- Legal Services Commission

The Minister for Education and Children's Services has provided the following information:

There are 71 Department of Education, Training and Employment staff currently located at the Noarlunga Centre.

Since 1 January 2000, 16 payroll staff have been relocated from Noarlunga Centre to 100 Waymouth Street, Adelaide.

Following which on 28 and 29 April 2000, another 16 departmental staff were relocated from Morphett Vale to the Noarlunga Centre.

The Attorney-General has been advised by the Director, Legal Services Commission, of the following information:

Employees of the Legal Services Commission are not technically state public servants. The Legal Services Commission is an independent statutory authority funded by both the state and commonwealth governments.

OLYMPIC DAM FIRE

115. **Ms KEY:**

1. Did any officer from the Radiation Protection branch of the Department of Human Services visit the Olympic Dam site immediately after the fire on 23 December 1999 and if so, was the site surveyed for possible radioactive contamination?

2. What investigations has the government undertaken into any possible radioactive contamination resulting from the fire?

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: The Olympic Dam processing plant is large and complex. Some sections are specific for the extraction of copper from the ore, some for the extraction of uranium, and some are involved in both.

The Radiation Protection branch of the Department of Human Services has a clear understanding of the construction and operation of the various sections of the plant. This knowledge arises in part from numerous briefings held by the operators during the design and construction of the plant, partly from the requirements for approval of the plant under the code of practice for radiation protection in the mining and milling of radioactive ores, and from inspections of the plant during construction and operation.

The fire on 23 December 1999 was confined to a holding pond for solvent from the copper solvent extraction section (Cu SX). The solvent contains reagents which are specific for the extraction of copper, not uranium, and the uranium content is low, comparable with the natural concentrations of uranium in normal backyard soil. None of the uranium extraction sections of the plant were involved.

Under these circumstances it was clear there would not be any radioactive consequences to either the firefighters and other workers, residents of the town, or the environment, and the Radiation Protection Branch did not consider it necessary to conduct an immediate inspection.

Monitoring was undertaken by the operators (WMC (Olympic Dam Corporation) during the fire, adjacent to locations occupied by firefighters, and subsequently around the plant and in the environment in the direction of the plume of smoke from the fire. The results have been supplied to the Radiation Protection Branch of the Department of Human Services, and they confirm that radionuclide levels are consistent with normal operations.