

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Thursday 12 October 2000

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

ADDRESS IN REPLY

Adjourned debate on motion for adoption.
(Continued from 11 October. Page 150.)

Mr De LAINE (Price): I have much pleasure in supporting the motion. I too would like to add my thanks to His Excellency the Governor, Sir Eric Neal, for his opening speech. I again pay tribute to him and Lady Neal for the way they continue to do the top job in South Australia for the benefit of the state and for the people. They are exemplary in everything they do and they need to be congratulated for that.

As Sir Eric mentioned in his speech, during the last year we have lost, through death, four people who have not only made significant contributions to the state but each of whom, I believe, made very significant impacts and set new directions for the state in many ways.

I refer, of course, to former Governors of South Australia, Dame Roma Mitchell and Sir Mark Oliphant. Dame Roma made an enormous contribution and impact during her life, not only in South Australia but throughout Australia, as a trailblazer for women and women's issues. Sir Mark made a massive impact internationally during his life as an eminent scientist, later as an educator in Australia and, more latterly, as a refreshingly outspoken Governor of this state.

The Hon. David Brookman, former state minister, also made a great contribution to this parliament and the state, particularly in country regions. The Hon. David Tonkin, who passed away just recently, also made an enormous contribution and impact on the state, first, as an ophthalmologist, then as a member of parliament and then as Premier of the state from 1979 to 1982. The death of all four people has caused a great loss, and their contributions are indelibly etched on the history of the state.

The government continues on its privatisation course, which is of real concern to me. I concede that the state debt was very high but, instead of trading its way out of debt over a number of years in a planned way, the government has adopted a slash and burn policy to sell off the state's assets to retire debt quickly. With the sale of ETSA, our water industry and other assets, we will finish up relatively debt free but, I fear, with a drastically reduced income. I am not an accountant, but I cannot see any value in selling the goose that laid the golden egg. Mark my words, although I and certain others probably will not be in this place when it happens, but the day will come when the state of South Australia will suffer very badly because of this government's shortsighted obsession with selling and leasing every state asset it can find.

It was interesting last Thursday in question time that the Premier made a great point of saying that, because of the sale or lease of ETSA, the state was saving \$210 million a year in interest payments. I remember that, when the government and the people of South Australia owned ETSA, ETSA was paying a dividend of something like \$700 000 a day into the state coffers. That works out to \$255 million a year. Therefore, in order to save \$210 million a year, the state has

forgone \$255 million a year, and, in my view, that does not add up.

Today I want to spend some time speaking about a matter that is very important to the state's economy and taking up the points that Sir Eric Neal made in his speech about the importance of the economy, and particularly the manufacturing industry, research and development and imports which earn money for our economy. I speak about a company in my electorate at Athol Park, Air-Ride (SA) Pty Ltd. The owner and Managing Director of this company is Mr Joe Dimasi, who is a South Australian and very proud of it. He is a self-made person, and over his lifetime has made substantial amounts of money in various enterprises, mostly in the area of engineering. His company is up and running, and I will go through some of the points about this very important industry.

Air-Ride is a manufacturer of quality specialised equipment for transport, materials handling and road making applications. Equipment is sold throughout Australia and overseas. The company actively falls into three broad categories, namely, standard products, specialised products, service repairs and spare parts. Information sharing between each sector creates a high and rich source of ideas for innovation and new design. There are three areas of manufacture, the first of which is Air-Ride, which markets local transport vehicle maintenance and modifications, special project design and manufacture, project management, road and rail bi-modal equipment, plus a standard product range which includes general transport, semitrailers, bulk pressure tankers, heavy handling and haulage equipment.

The second area of his expertise in manufacture and distribution is in the pavement construction area, and his firm manufactures pavement construction equipment which is marketed under the brand name of Pavequip, and it includes heavy equipment such as bitumen tankers, bitumen sprayers, bitumen storage kettles, aggregate spreaders, multi-tyred rollers, water tankers, low loaders and other associated equipment.

The third area involves industrial vacuum and water jetting equipment which is manufactured and marketed under the Vacuquip name and which includes mobile vacuum-only recovery units and combination vacuum and water jet units for drain cleaning applications.

Air-Ride's innovative design culture greatly assists its special projects team to develop equipment successfully for any unusual and demanding applications, and it is looking at expanding its range of equipment for any specialised jobs that come along: it is a very innovative company.

Air-Ride's aim is to be Australia's leading supplier of quality road transport equipment, selected road making equipment, materials handling equipment, bulk transport tankers and suspension technology, with a significant level of production to export sales. Air-Ride is committed to advanced design, high manufacturing quality and service excellence.

Air-Ride is Australian owned, employs Australians and aims at making a better Australia. As I said, the proprietor is very proudly South Australian. He could retire and have a very easy life but he prefers to make a contribution by way of the technology which he has developed, in addition to employing South Australians and keeping the money in this country and in this state. Air-Ride's new manufacturing facility at Athol Park is one of the state's largest, with an overall site capacity in excess of 33 000 square metres, which allows for considerable expansion potential.

Air-Ride's manufacturing work force is very experienced and highly qualified, consisting of boiler makers, welders, hydraulic, pneumatic and general fitters, auto-electricians and industrial spray painters. Ongoing training and development programs, combined with a technically proactive culture, produces excellent products. Joe is very strong on that aspect. Not only does Joe employ people with these skills but also he has in place a very comprehensive training program to impart those skills on to younger people to ensure that these skills are not lost to the industry or to the state.

Air-Ride currently employs a large number of employees and plans to grow rapidly over the next three to five years by targeting potential Australian and overseas markets. The plant is very well equipped and laid out. From my days at General-Motors I know that layout and housekeeping is extremely important, and I would say that Air-Ride's facility at Athol Park is world class. As I say, the premises are very well equipped and laid out and its housekeeping is exemplary. The whole facility, its products and the company's attitude are a credit to the proprietor, Joe Dimasi, and his employees.

I want to mention one particular aspect of Air-Ride's production and development this morning and that is its 'trailerail' bi-modal trailers. The concept has been developed by Joe. It is the best technology in the world. Many companies around the world are applying a lot of pressure to buy this technology but, at this stage, Joe wants to keep the technology and the business in South Australia. He loves living in South Australia; he wants to stay here; and he wants the company to thrive and be a big export earner for the state, and I applaud him for that.

This bi-modal trailer unit is technology which allows efficient road to rail interchanging. Currently road trailers are moved on semi-trailers. To a large extent B double road trains and A double road trains can be taken off the road. As large hauling distances are involved in Australia, Joe can get freight onto rail and take it anywhere in Australia at much reduced costs. That system is more efficient, gets other vehicles off the roads and everyone benefits. Joe Dimasi, the proprietor, has spent his life's savings on the development and refinement of this concept and he deserves success. His company owns the technology worldwide. It is the best system in the world and has enormous potential to be a major player in the economy of our state.

The advantage of the trailerail system is that a large semi-trailer can be easily coupled into a freight train between other rolling stock, or can be coupled with other similar trailerail trailers to form an entire freight train, if necessary, comprising up to 90 trailer vehicles. Enormous savings are to be made on the cost of freight transportation for goods. Huge money is to be made by National Rail or the owners of our major rail links, as well as getting many of these giant semis and road trains off our roads. I will give an example of the cost savings and efficiencies to be gained by the use of Air-Ride's trailerail technology: 120 trailers can be coupled into a locomotive system in four hours using five people, one prime mover and one forklift. To load the same payload onto standard locomotive rolling stock into a freight train using current methods would take four to five days. Compare that to four hours with the trailerail system. The old method uses 25 to 30 people compared with the requirement of five people for the trailerail system. It takes a shunting engine, a huge forklift and \$4 million to \$5 million worth of equipment to do the same job the conventional way.

I will repeat that. We are looking at reducing the task, which under the conventional system takes from four to five

days, 25 to 30 people, a large shunting engine, a large forklift and \$4 million to \$5 million worth of equipment, to four hours, five people, one prime mover and one forklift under the trailerail system. There are enormous savings to be made. Once coupled to a locomotive freight train, which can average 100 km/h day and night, quite heavy freight can be moved from Brisbane to Perth in three days. It takes a lot longer to take that equipment by road, and the other aspects of road transport have to be considered. Given the high cost of fuel today, the savings in that area alone are enormous, and there are also savings in insurance, road trauma, pollution and delivery time, which is very important.

This concept is being used to a limited degree around Australia but not nearly as much as it should be. Currently 260 000 of these units operate in the United States of America, and they are built under licence by the giant US corporation Wabash, which has a reciprocal agreement with Joe Dimasi's company, Air-Ride, in South Australia. The Americans are looking for more units, whereas in Australia only 2 000 of these units are operating at this time.

The life savings of this individual have been put into research and development on this bi-modal system and he is developing further products. In particular, he is developing a refrigeration trailer, or a reefer as it is called in containerisation terms, which is one tonne lighter and much stronger than a standard trailer. He has sunk something like \$3 million into this project, and he is quite confident that, with more research and development, fairly soon he will come up with a refrigeration trailer that is three to four tonnes lighter and much stronger than is currently in use.

The main aspect of concern is that Air-Ride is doing it pretty tough at the moment and has been doing so for the past 12 months. It is nothing to do with the product, which is much sought after, and several countries are pestering Joe Dimasi to sell the rights and his company. Companies in China, North America, Europe and South Africa, particularly, where there are long distances of road haulage, can see the benefits of getting trucks off the road and onto rail and the enormous savings that flow from using this system compared with the conventional system.

The problem faced by Joe Dimasi at the moment is, in my view, a political one. I believe that Joe Dimasi and the Air-Ride company are not political, but they are having trouble with Australian National, which has bought quite a lot of these units, but it is not buying any more because Australian National is owned by the federal, New South Wales and Victorian governments. Australian National urgently needs more of these Air-Ride trailerail units to increase traffic and to cut down costs, but the federal government has issued the instruction to AN that it is not to spend any more money because it is trying to sell Australian National to the private sector. They are trying to make it more profitable by not spending any money. Therefore, it is putting enormous pressure on Air-Ride, which has not sold a unit to AN for nearly 12 months, and, even though it has 2 000 in service, many more are needed to enable them to haul more freight and get more trucks off the roads.

The proprietor, Mr Dimasi, wants to keep going in South Australia; he is committed to this state and he likes living here. He wants to develop his products here and send them interstate and overseas to earn money for the state, but unless something happens fairly soon with sales he will go under. He has been carrying the load and has almost exhausted his life savings. He is in a desperate position. I have asked the state Minister for Transport and the former Minister for

Industry and Trade to come and look at the facility. They have not done that, but I will be talking to them again about this latest problem to see whether they can assist by putting pressure on the federal minister and the federal government to do something to free up the money to keep this enterprise going.

The proprietor has told me that he has on his desk at the moment a definite sale contract to sign. It is a contract from China worth many millions of dollars, and all Joe has to do is sign the contract and then he can retire, play golf, do the things that are enjoyable to him and live in luxury for the rest of his life. However, the technology and industry would be lost to the South Australian economy forever, and he does not want that to happen. He needs some help, and I hope I can get the Minister for Transport and the Treasurer (who is also Minister for Industry and Trade) to put a bit of muscle into helping this person and this company to stay in South Australia.

It is ironical that several weeks ago Senator Minchin (the federal minister) made a visit to the facility at Athol Park and presented a cheque—I think it was the second cheque that the federal government has given—for \$2 million for research and development to assist in this production, yet it does not seem to be very keen to further its intervention to allow Australian National to purchase more of these units to keep Air-Ride afloat because it wants to sell the rail links and the rail facilities.

I will approach the two ministers involved here to see whether they will have a look at the plant. I am sure that, once they do so, they will be convinced of the value and the enormity of the project. It is the best system in the world, and many countries, especially North America, are clamouring to own the technology and to take it over. If that happens it will be lost to Australia forever. These problems need to be sorted out to ensure the viability of the company. It employs something like 100 people. If it can remain viable, and in fact expand and meet the demands of the Australian transport system, and indeed grow and export more of these systems to other countries, many more jobs will come on stream for South Australians, and that would be a great thing.

Also, Mr Dimasi is negotiating to buy Perry Engineering, which is the last heavy engineering company in Australia that does that heavy mechanical engineering work. I think he has purchased the company, but he is involved in negotiations to purchase all the land and facilities that go with it. He wants to retain it as a heavy engineering manufacturer and producer of heavy engineering goods for Australia and also to use some of that land and facilities to expand his Air-Ride operations.

So, it is a company that is worth supporting, and I hope the state and federal governments will come to the party and assist this company to survive and further expand, for the benefit of not only the number of jobs in South Australia but also for the enormous income that this company earns and will continue to earn for our economy.

In the last few minutes I would like to touch on a couple of other matters that are of concern to me. One was mentioned by the member for Goyder, the government whip, in a grievance last week about a recent article in the paper about part-time MPs. I agree entirely with the government whip that this sort of stuff is very negative and derogatory to members of parliament. All it does is prove how ignorant these journalists and newspapers are about the job MPs do, especially House of Assembly MPs. Unfortunately, this sort of garbage is read by people out there and they form an

opinion about members of this place which is completely untrue.

The article was prompted by the Hon. Nick Xenophon in another place. Nick was quite right that this parliament does not sit enough. He is talking about introducing a bill to increase the number of sitting days to a minimum of 100. That is just as ridiculous. The number of days that parliament sits is related to the amount of legislation that has to be dealt with. He is partly right in saying that we do not sit enough, but 100 is far too many days; a number such as 70 or 80 might be more realistic.

Nevertheless, I do not blame the Hon. Nick Xenophon. He says we are not sitting enough and I respect his views, but the newspaper has taken it one step further and given people the impression that, when parliament is not sitting, House of Assembly members are on holidays, playing golf or whatever. They say we come back to work as part-timers. They have no idea. I intend to invite some of the reporters from the papers down to my electorate office and show them what we do. As you know, Mr Speaker, running an electorate is a full-time, 365 day a year job, and the time we spend here in this place is a very small part of that. The impression the media gives the people is very unfair—it is outrageous, actually—so it needs to be put into perspective.

Over the years, the role of a House of Assembly member of parliament has changed somewhat. I remember the days when members did not have electorate offices or staff; their role was purely a legislative role, with some sort of local electorate content. That has changed with the introduction in about 1972, when electorate offices came into being. I believe that my predecessor, the former Speaker, the Hon. Jack Ryan, was the first person to get an electorate office and staff, and since then all Assembly members have those facilities. Because of that, the role of lower house MPs changed; from being purely legislators we are now very much social workers. We get involved in all sorts of things, and the more we get involved and try to help people, the greater is the need for that service. So, the sorts of articles that are put in the paper are totally misleading and quite mischievous and do not bear any resemblance to the work that MPs do in this place. The vast majority of them work very hard, and they do not deserve that sort of treatment.

In fact, I would say that, after the last 11 weeks that we had in recess from the last session, by the time we come back here it is good to come back and have a rest. At least we are stuck here; we speak and do a bit of work here, but at least it is a physical rest. We might work harder mentally, but it is a physical rest from what we do out in the electorate. We are invited to all sorts of functions to which the electorate likes to see us come along, such as sporting events and presentation nights, and we go on school councils and so on as well as spending an enormous amount of time trying to help people with their problems.

Certainly from my perspective, I know that my electorate of Price has an enormous amount of unemployment, social and drug problems and people who desperately need housing. All these issues come to my office and it is a full-time job. It is a 365 days a year job (366 days in a leap year) and it is unfair that the media should give the people the perception that we work only when Parliament is sitting for those 40 or 50 days a year and that for the rest of the time we are lying around on the beach, playing golf or whatever. It is mischievous and that perception needs to be changed. The media must accept some responsibility. I intend to try to teach them a few things and tell them the sort of things we do and hopefully

they will publish that and let people know exactly what MPs do rather than try to tell them what we do not do. As I am now out of time, I will conclude my remarks.

Mr HANNA (Mitchell): Yesterday it was three years since the election that saw me elected to parliament as the member for Mitchell. At this time I reflect on one of the most important issues in my electorate, namely, the care provided to older Australians. I am talking particularly of those people who have worked most of their lives, either paid work in the factories, shops and businesses or unpaid work looking after children and keeping the house in good order. Those people are now retired and look to the rest of the community for a decent standard of care, and I refer to a decent standard of care in respect of their health, accommodation and quality of life generally.

A number of factors influence that quality of life and I will talk about some of them today. One of the most important aspects of life for older people is simply making ends meet, and that has been made much more difficult over the past few years, especially with the new taxes like the emergency services tax imposed by the Olsen government and the GST imposed by the Howard Liberal Government at a federal level. In respect of the GST, I have spoken to many age pensioners who have told me that the meagre increase of literally only a few dollars a fortnight in their pensions was eaten up in extra costs, even before they got that first increased pension cheque. My experience, and the experience of the people I have spoken to in my electorate, is that a lot of prices in the supermarkets went up in the months before 1 July. It was no wonder then that when the GST was imposed as of 1 July this year there was no sudden increase in prices and so on. I suspect that thousands of businesses in South Australia, particularly in the retail sector, had increased their prices and took profits accordingly under the guise of the impending GST. I have noticed with the GST that people, especially pensioners, were worse off as soon as the GST came in, but since then they have noticed it more and more as they have received their gas bill, electricity or telephone bill, and the impact of the tax becomes more and more apparent.

The same is also true of the emergency services tax, called a levy by the government. It particularly affects older people in my area because there are a lot of people who have little more than the home they own, a car and maybe a caravan, which is their source of enjoyment when they want to take a holiday that will not be too expensive. They are people who have very little in terms of income, whether it be the old age pension or, in the case of self-funded retirees, a modest, fixed income—usually a fixed sum which might go up according to the cost of living index, but that is never enough to catch up with the prices that people regularly pay when they shop each week.

So, when people have a fixed income and they do not have any spare cash—they only have their home, their car, their trailer or caravan—and are paying extra taxes on those assets, it becomes all the more difficult to make ends meet on a week by week basis. Anxiety about the cost of living is therefore one of the main problems that I discuss with elderly people in my electorate. In the electorate of Mitchell, particularly in suburbs which were settled in the 1950s and 1960s—suburbs such as Warradale, Seacombe Gardens, Sturt, Seaview Downs, Seacombe Heights, Mitchell Park and Clovelly Park—there is a very high proportion of older people. That is why I am particularly concerned about these issues. I come

up against them all the time as I go door knocking and meeting local people.

One of the other key issues for older people is that of being able to stay in their own home. I know that in my family we have been through this issue. It is not unique to people out in the suburbs somewhere. Every one of us members of parliament must face it in our own families at some time or another. I remember that nearly 10 years ago one of my grandmothers had a fall at home and was taken to hospital. The decision then had to be made about what would happen to her family home, in which she had lived since 1933. Because her husband had predeceased her by many years, it was decided, by the family collectively, that it would be better for her to go into a hostel and subsequently move into a nursing home. It is not a unique story. I suppose by recounting that I simply make the point to people in the community that, as members of parliament, we have exactly the same issues to deal with. I am very proud and very fortunate that my other grandmother, whom I call Nanna Hanna, is actually still with us and very active.

The issue of staying in the family home is critical for a number of people, whether it be couples who are both beginning to become infirm, or for widows or widowers who are left in the family home. There comes that very difficult point when it becomes just a bit too much. There are government agencies which can help. I know the Marion council does quite a good job of helping in some cases with minor gardening issues or domestic maintenance, but the resources just are not there to help with everything that they need around the home. There is the HACC scheme (the home assistance scheme), which is largely federally funded and of some assistance, but I am finding again and again as I meet people in my electorate that the services provided these days just are not enough. So, increasingly, the issue is being raised of moving out of the family home. It is a very difficult time.

Even when the family home is sold, most of the proceeds then have to go towards the deposit, or whatever it is called, for the appropriate hostel or nursing home. So all of that money is tied up: there is usually not much money left in the bank. If there are additional fees beyond the day-to-day fees required by the nursing home—say, for pharmaceuticals—let us not kid ourselves that they are covered by the pharmaceutical benefits scheme, because people who require a fair amount of medication—and many do when they get into their 70s or 80s—are paying out, perhaps, \$50 a month on medication above and beyond what is covered by the pharmaceutical benefits scheme. This might include things such as napkins to cater for incontinence: it is quite common for that to be an added burden. There are many items which are required and desirable but which are not covered under the various systems of government assistance.

So, even when the difficult decision is made to move into a nursing home, there is a continuing financial anxiety not only for the person who moves into the home but also for their children, who wonder how it all will be paid for when the money in the bank gradually dissipates and runs out. Our society, then, is not doing as well as it can in caring for the older members of our community.

It is very strange, in a way, because, when we consider the care of our children—say, five year old children—there is no way in the world that we would say, 'It's a bit difficult to look after them: we will just put them in a home.' That is almost unheard of in society these days. But when it comes to a parent who is 85 years old, often that is the response—'Well, we can't have them living with us: they have to go into

a home.' I know it is a very difficult decision, but all I can say is that society has not really come up with the solutions for that sort of problem.

The Labor Party in its platform before the 1997 election provided a lot of clues to solving these issues. Some of the issues inevitably involve more funding, but there are other things which can be done and which do not necessarily simply mean throwing more dollars at the problem. Greater coordination, for example, between hospitals, nursing homes and other government agencies is required to ensure that people are cared for properly when they come out of hospital, for example. Systems are in place at the moment, but I really believe there can be improvement in that regard.

Another topic concerns a lot of older people—hundreds of people whom I have come across in my area—and that is the basic issue of dental care. People are worried about their teeth. A lot of older people I have met are getting to the point where they cannot afford to go to a private dentist, and the government funded dental clinic has had the guts ripped out of it in terms of funding. It is almost impossible to wait to receive dental treatment at places such as the clinic at Somerton Park. The waiting list is incredibly long for sometimes quite urgent treatment. I have met people who cannot speak properly and literally cannot chew properly, but they get by because there is no readily available alternative. I am particularly talking about people who live on the old age pension and who may only have a few hundred dollars in the bank. They are not game to see a private dentist and pay hundreds of dollars to get the problem fixed, because literally they may not be able to afford it, and there is no longer a readily available alternative.

There is also a concern about the mental health of older South Australians. We have discovered more and more about dementia and Alzheimer's disease, but we have a long way to go in terms of catering properly for people who have these conditions in our community. It is getting to the point where there is more demand for nursing home services than are supplied and, unless we find a different way of doing things, we will have a lot of people suffering in their own home or being diverted to hospital beds, instead of being properly cared for in suitable long-term accommodation.

Another issue concerning older South Australians is that of their personal security. Every week in the press we read of home invasions, bashings and so on: there is a lot of fear in the community. Every time I go doorknocking in a particular street these issues are raised, especially by older people. The statistics show that older people are not more at risk of being bashed or robbed than younger people, but understandably the fear is there because of the personal frailty of a lot of older people. The feeling that they could not defend themselves if they were attacked understandably leads to fears about their personal security. In this regard, I pay tribute to the Labor leader, Mike Rann, and the shadow attorney-general, Mick Atkinson, who have repeatedly called for measures which would meet those fears.

What I have said in the community over and over again is that the single greatest deterrent to the commission of crimes, whether or not it be against older people or whether it be against property or the person, is the likelihood of being caught; and, if you accept that proposition, it is obvious that the solution is having a more visible police presence. That is what we need and I know that the Labor Party has been firmly committed to that for a long time. I have already referred to one or two of the solutions put forward by the Labor Party in respect of these problems and I am quite

happy to supply further details to anyone who wants to inquire about these ideas.

The notion of better partnerships between health agencies, including hospitals, increased funding where it can be afforded at the most critical aspects of health care for older people and issues concerning personal security all form part of Labor's approach to health. Before the last election we also put forward the concept of a patients' rights charter, which would inform every South Australian of their rights and responsibilities in respect of hospitals and health care generally. We also put forward the idea of hospital report cards, in the sense of a careful annual assessment of hospital services. I know that the staff at Flinders Medical Centre and the Daws Road Repatriation Hospital are performing miracles under pressure, but that pressure is increasing week by week. I have met people who live in Mitchell Park and who have chosen to live in Mitchell Park because they will be near the hospital, yet when they have been taken to hospital in an ambulance they are taken into the city because Flinders and Daws Road are full. One day that extra half an hour of travel could be critical. We have not got our hospital system right and, if it means more funding to get it right, then that is what I will be campaigning for amongst my colleagues.

The issue of better domiciliary care needs to be addressed. We must not think that the solution to our health care problems is solely in terms of fixing the hospitals.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Mitchell has the call.

Mr HANNA: Thank you, sir. It also involves providing better care to older people who want to stay in their homes and, if they need bandages changed or medication to be ingested in a particular way, then it is the community's responsibility through state or federal government's provision of services to ensure that that care can be provided.

In the time remaining today I want to touch on a couple of other issues. This week I attended the opening of a very powerful, emotive and significant exhibition in Adelaide. It is being held in Edmund Wright House, a venue which is now used for art exhibitions and the like. I refer to an exhibition concerning the *Diary of Anne Frank*. Her story, as recorded in the diary she wrote while in hiding during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands, is inspirational to us all; and it is highly relevant to our present circumstances in Australia when time and again we see racism rearing its ugly head and we see the dangers of excluding and discriminating against particular sections of the community. It is happening in Australia today and it happened in the most extreme form under the Nazi domination of Europe.

Anne Frank put down so many positive inspirational thoughts in her diary. She showed so much understanding of herself, her community and the times in which she lived that everyone can gain something from the exhibition currently taking place at Edmund Wright House. I commend it to members and to the community generally. Opening that exhibition was Peter Sellars, the Artistic Director of the next Adelaide Festival, and he spoke poetically and powerfully of the need for acceptance of everyone in our society. He really was quite inspirational. We need people such as him in South Australia to lift us out of the cultural stagnation that I believe we are experiencing under the current government.

Finally, I take a moment to pay my compliments to Dr Bob Such, the member for Fisher: it must have been quite a courageous decision for him to leave the Liberal Party. He is one of the members of parliament who has enjoyed respect

across party boundaries more than most of the MPs around here. It is a sign of what is happening in the Liberal Party that he has decided to take this step. We have seen in the Liberal Party the increasing dominance of the executive and the domination of just one person. Parliament is meant to be running the state, but it does not work that way. The executive dominates parliament, one particular faction of the Liberal Party dominates the executive and one or two particular people dominate that faction which dominates the executive. The people are sick of it and will make their judgment at the next election.

Mr CLARKE (Ross Smith): I will try to keep my remarks to less than 30 minutes although, unfortunately, I have a habit of using the full time; however, I will try to make it quicker. The member for Gordon yesterday, I understood, when I was listening to his contribution, said that Address in Reply speeches are largely a waste of time. I think that the honourable member spoke for just a few minutes and then sat down and, in a sense, he may be right, if that is how members want to use this debate. However, I believe that it is a very important time for members of parliament, particularly backbench members who do not get many opportunities to speak on wide-ranging subjects.

Ordinarily we are caught by standing orders and we can debate only the bills that are before the House. In terms of raising other issues, whether they relate to our own constituencies or particular interests in policy areas, or whatever, there are very few opportunities other than a five minute grievance—when you can get it—to expand on some of your views. Likewise, the time available to raise issues that members would like to raise concerning their local electorate or other more broader-based issues relating to the governance of this state, by whichever party is in power, is somewhat circumscribed, particularly for backbench members. Therefore, if the member for Gordon does not want to contribute, I am happy for him not to do so. That allows other members to take up his time.

I want to touch on three areas today, the first of which is the Murray-Darling Basin. At the recent national conference of the Labor Party in Hobart of which I was a delegate, Senator Chris Schacht and I moved a proposition which we knew would be defeated on the floor of the national conference. However, we wanted to raise the issue. The deterioration of the Murray-Darling Basin and its vital restoration in health for the whole of our community, particularly here in South Australia, warrants drastic action and, in particular, the transfer of state sovereignty on matters surrounding the Murray-Darling Basin to the commonwealth government.

That proposition was defeated overwhelmingly, particularly after the speech made by the Labor Premier of Queensland, Peter Beattie, who made it quite clear that Queensland would not countenance handing over sovereignty with respect to anything, let alone something as important as the Murray-Darling Basin. People spoke fulsomely with respect to this new feeling in COAG when we will have Labor governments everywhere, state and federal, which will see the revitalisation of the Murray-Darling Basin effected through a cooperative effort between South Australia, the eastern states and the commonwealth government.

Senator Schacht and I disagreed because we do not believe that you can trust a vital resource, such as the Murray-Darling Basin, to state Premiers or state parliaments: they are far too parochial. I do not believe, for instance, that Premiers, Labor or Liberal, in New South Wales, Victoria or Queensland will

take the tough decisions that are necessary in the public interest. It was seen only recently that Peter Beattie backed out on proclaiming his own legislation with respect to the destruction of the native vegetation in his own state, which has a direct impact on the Murray-Darling Basin concerning salinity.

We also saw the Queensland government refuse to place a cap in connection with the water that is drawn from that basin. We have seen the New South Wales Labor government refuse (even though it has agreed to the cap) to adhere to the cap in terms of the amount of water and to enforce that cap because of the political sensitivities of the electorates in those areas. We have also seen, because of the volatility of Victorian politics, one Independent hold the new Victorian Labor government to ransom in the sense of insisting that the Snowy River be restored to its health, at 28 per cent of its former flow; and the natural concern we in South Australia have is that that could be at our expense.

When our resolution was defeated everyone on the Labor Party side said, 'This will be the new feeling of COAG when we have a federal Labor government in office.' Only the following day a resolution was introduced by the Premier of Victoria, with the support of the Premier of New South Wales, which said that a commonwealth Labor government would, in cooperation with those two states, do something about increasing the flow of the Snowy River. There was no mention in that original resolution that South Australia would be at the table to make sure that our interests were protected.

It was only after Senator Schacht raised that issue on the floor of the conference that it was guaranteed that South Australia would be inserted in our platform so that any such negotiations must include the South Australian government. So much for this grand new feeling of COAG, a feeling of inclusiveness, because it just will not happen. The eastern states will not do anything to their own detriment to support South Australia. The issues surrounding the Murray-Darling Basin in terms of restoring its health are well known to the scientists and to the CSIRO. All they ask are two questions: do you have the political will to do what is necessary; and, secondly, are you prepared to pay for it?

I believe that the public of Australia would be prepared to pay for it—even if that meant an environmental levy of some sort—if they actually saw the work being done and it was not wasted by time-consuming wrangling between state Premiers who, frankly, cannot see beyond the boundaries of their own state. I again adhere to my view that if we are going to clean up the Murray-Darling Basin, which is absolutely vital to this state, the only effective means of doing it is giving the constitutional power to the commonwealth and allowing it to get on with it.

I do not believe that any New South Wales government will close down the ridiculous open irrigation that occurs on the Hay Plains for rice and cotton growing, where more than 50 per cent of the water is evaporated—our most precious resource and 50 per cent of it evaporates. We know that we are spending money in terms of putting in closed piping, and the like, which was announced recently, but I do not believe that those sorts of measures will be quick enough to address the problems. The rate of deterioration of the Murray-Darling Basin is occurring at a faster rate than we can remediate it, unless very drastic action is taken.

Only the commonwealth government has the political power and should have the constitutional power and, in particular, the capacity to raise the necessary funds to be able to do it, because if people are going to have their livelihoods

taken away from them, such as closing down cotton fields, rice farms and paddies, and so on, they obviously must be compensated, as do those communities that live off them.

The other point I want to raise is the issue of electoral reform. The member for Adelaide raised this area of virtual members of the Legislative Council—cyberspace-type people. That matter has been dealt with adequately by members of the Labor Party and I agree with them: it is a nonsense. It would be far better to get rid of the Legislative Council. I adhere to that view and we should do it. However, I am also aware that to pass any resolution by way of referendum that would allow for the abolition of the Legislative Council could be done only if you made far-ranging reforms to the House of Assembly.

I believe that we could do it where the House of Assembly was elected on a proportional representation basis using the Tasmanian Hare-Clarke system. The basis of the electorates would be the existing federal divisions in South Australia, and the people would elect four members from each of the 12 divisions. Unfortunately, after the next federal election, it looks like South Australia will be reduced to 11 divisions, and that would give us 44 members. There would be an overall net reduction in the number of MPs from 69 to 44 if South Australia's federal divisions were reduced from 12 to 11. Why four? That would mean on a PR basis that any party, person or group who gets 20 per cent of the vote would be represented in one of those electorates. The two major parties would still dominate the system for the time being, but it would give a place for the Democrats and for significant Independents.

I would also use Robson rotation for the purposes of electing members because I believe that the list system as it is used in the Legislative Council is a disgrace. They are supposed to be elected by the people of South Australia, but they are not. Within the Liberal and Labor parties, candidates present themselves before the 200 delegates from each of those parties to seek their support for preselection at the annual convention or state council. The higher up the order on the ticket a candidate is, the more certain that person is of being elected under the list system.

An honourable member interjecting:

Mr CLARKE: As I said, I would get rid of them altogether. I am pointing out the problem of the Legislative Council. Its electorate, by and large, does not comprise the one million voters of South Australia but a majority of the 200 delegates whose eye they need to catch to secure their vote. They are the only ones in whom candidates are interested in terms of maintaining a high enough position on the party list to be elected. If the basis of election is proportional representation, as it is in our party, if a candidate has about 60 to 70 votes out of 200 delegates, that person will be No. 1 on the ticket and guaranteed of election, and they will never have to do any other work at all to retain their position thereafter, as long as they keep 60 to 70 people in the party happy.

I prefer the Robson rotation method. It causes members in the same party to have to compete against one another in terms of attracting votes, but what does that mean? It means that the members have to work their electorates like we in the House of Assembly must do in single member electorates. I do not think that is such a bad thing. It would mean that, whilst we are competing against other parties and also amongst ourselves, the electorate gets a better service. It

would encourage members to take more seriously their responsibilities to their electors.

Another point that I make is that the standing committees of the House of Assembly need to be changed quite significantly. At the moment they are executive dominated, whichever party is in office. By and large, particularly where the government has an outright majority, compliant chairpersons usually head the committees and little information can be gleaned. We need a series of committees in which all members of the House can be actively involved in finding out more about the workings of government and the process of legislation. The opposition, which would ordinarily have two out of five positions, if five remains the number, should have the power to subpoena public servants and ministers, as a normal committee could do, to make sure that they have to appear and answer questions. That would create greater transparency and accountability.

The argument against proportional representation in the House of Assembly, which is used particularly by the two major parties, is that there will be greater political instability. Italy is often used as an example, or some other western nations that have proportional representation, such as Israel. In those countries, PR has gone to a ridiculous length where people with a handful of votes—well under 5 per cent—get representation. In Germany a candidate must have 5 per cent across the board to score a position in its equivalent of the House of Assembly.

In this parliament, the government is subject to minor parties or Independents. In the parliament of 1989 to 1993 the Labor government was subject to the support of Independents. Legislation has to go through the Legislative Council in any event. A party may be in office but it does not govern without the support of the Legislative Council, which is controlled by the Democrats, Independents and other minor parties, and that is likely to be the case for a very long time yet. Why not have it all in the one house? In terms of government falling because of a change of attitude by some members, we face that situation already.

In my view, over the next couple of decades or so there will be one repeat, if that, of the 1993 landslide that saw Labor totally routed at the polls and the Liberal Party secure something like three-quarters of the seats in this House of Assembly. But even with three-quarters of the seats in this chamber, the Liberal Party was in office but it did not govern because it did not have the numbers in the Legislative Council. I am grateful in that sense that the Legislative Council was there because the government did not have the numbers in the Council and its legislation was often thwarted. We do not need that bulwark if the House of Assembly is elected on a proportional representation basis, using the Hare-Clark system and Robson rotation, and a strengthening of the committee system.

Many people in the executive arm of government, Liberal or Labor, will say that this would impede how we do our work. Well, that is tough, because members of parliament on both sides of the House, on the back bench in particular, are fed up with having to do the bidding of ministers on issues of which have little understanding and with which they have had no involvement in the policy deliberations. They are just expected to support positions in parliament and in public that they themselves do not understand or agree with. With the type of system that I have outlined, I believe there would be far greater comprehension by ordinary members of parliament and greater scrutiny of individual ministers in the way they conduct their business. Quite frankly, a minister who

does not know his job and who cannot put up with the pressure of scrutiny should not be here in the first place. We are not here to cuddle mugs. We are talking about the governance of this state and, if ministers are not up to it, I have no hesitation in saying that there is an army of volunteers waiting to take their place if they cannot or do not feel that they are up to the job.

I believe that the electorate is getting so disenchanted with the major parties overall—of Tweedledum and Tweedledee and of no real accountability or transparency, no matter which party is in power—that they will increasingly move away from the two major parties. Under preference arrangements and so on there must be a two-party preferred vote, so one or other of the two major parties gets a vote. The non-committed or swinging vote has grown from when I first started getting interested in parliament in the early to mid 1960s, when the swinging vote was less than 10 per cent, to now, where it is at least 25 per cent and growing. If state parliaments are to remain relevant to the community, the major parties cannot be blinkered and say that that this is how it is going to stay, that it will remain preferential voting and single member electorates. I think the population will demand more radical reform.

My last point is in relation to the question of democracy. We have good laws with respect to the conduct of elections, whether it be at local government or general elections; we have fairness in the electoral boundaries and tight laws governing the way in which we run ourselves in terms of the parliament and the Public Service. But what we do not have are any laws governing how political parties govern themselves. We have seen One Nation, for example, get public funding when only three people actually control One Nation: David Ettridge, David Oldfield and Pauline Hanson were the directors. It was a private company. They had members but the members could not discipline or control the executive arm. They had access to a lot of taxpayers' dollars. We have seen the most recent example with the establishment of the No GST Party and the No Nuclear Dumps Party. The electoral laws do not provide legislative backing that the political parties themselves have to be democratic.

Trade unions hold a privileged position in society in terms of their ability to represent members and non-members to seek or vary awards, to seek enterprise agreements, or to undertake protective action, and society demands, in return for the privileged position, that there is a clause in the Industrial Relations Act which provides that 'the rules of that organisation must be democratic'. At the end of the day, the officers and executive of the organisation must be responsive and responsible to their members: one member, one vote. I believe it is high time that our electoral laws at an Australian national and federal level did likewise.

There has been much said about branch stacking in the Labor Party, whether it be here or in Queensland, but let us also remember the seat of Morphett in the lead up to 1997 election where the Liberal Party membership grew in leaps and bounds in the matter of a day or two by several hundred members. We recall that, in the preselection for Colton, because of the rules of the Liberal Party, they had a huge influx of members who never lived in Colton. Liberal Party rules allowed for that. Branch stacking also took place in the federal seat of Ryan, in Defence Minister Moore's seat, by a large number of people who never lived in the electorate.

I firmly believe that when political parties put their hands out for millions of dollars of taxpayers' money in subsidies to run the political parties, as was evidenced in my own case

in the Supreme Court last year, the public interest demands that the political parties are subject to electoral laws which provide that 'the way in which you govern yourselves must be democratic and your executives must be accountable to your members'. Just as we insist on voting for our ordinary members of parliament and for our trade union officials, it is one member, one vote. There is little point and it is a farce in having a democratic system in terms of our individual electorates, whether it be the Senate or the Legislative Council, if the political parties who put up their candidates for public office are not based on democratic principles, on democratic control by their membership. We have witnessed in all major political parties, not just the Labor Party, stacking and illegalities that have taken place—and will continue to take place—unless we start applying the same rigorous tests to our internal governance as we apply to others.

In relation to public companies, for example, we insist that minority shareholders cannot be oppressed by the majority; in relation to trade unions we insist on a system of governance on the basis of rank and file control—and rightly so. It does not mean that the parliament has to legislate exactly and be totally prescriptive as to how political parties govern themselves, what their federal and state divisions should be. The trade unions are not told by the Industrial Relations Act, 'This is how you must run yourselves.' It gives a very general guideline. I would continue to encourage debate on that issue and, in fact, I have submitted my thoughts along those lines to a joint standing committee of the federal government on this point.

Mr CONDOUS (Colton): I support the Address in Reply and the Governor's speech outlining this government's proposals for the next 12 months. Having been here for some seven years, I know it has been depressing to be in government and continually run a budget that did not allow us to carry out the programs we would have liked to carry out. Governments and parties come and go: it is the way in which politics operates. One party is in power today and then it is out; and it comes back again a few years later. But I would like to see, just for once, when a Liberal party is re-elected to govern, that it comes into a situation where at least there is some money in the Treasury.

I know that even David Tonkin's coming in after Des Corcoran—and it is not fair to blame Des because he was not there for very long following the Dunstan government—there was very little finance left in the Treasury. Certainly, when we came into government in December 1993 what was uncovered was one huge financial mess. In a way, I did feel sorry for John Bannon because, having worked with him for six years as Lord Mayor, I know that he was a genuine and honest fellow who had his entire interests in the state of South Australia but was let down badly by people he appointed to positions that caused the financial mess.

That being said, it still did not alleviate the problems that we encountered when coming into government. Even today, having sold off many assets and bringing the debt down to \$3 billion, we still find that we cannot carry out public works programs or spending in public hospitals that we would have liked. The philosophy of the Liberal Party is quite clear: if you do not have the money then you cannot spend it. It tends to be the opposite situation with the Labor Party: it wants to stay in government for as long as it can and, therefore, it will spend to try to be all things to all people, to deliver everything irrespective of what it costs. That is when we were seeing budgets of \$350 million running over year after year.

It is like running a household: you just cannot spend more than you are earning because there comes a day when you have to tally it up and you cannot do it.

That is what Labor governments have done and we have always had to come into power, take over, try to get the mess straightened up entirely, and run a state at the same time. I have been impressed with this government's actions over the past seven years—I think it is the business background. The Premier has gone out and delivered so many new industries to South Australia. We have seen call centres established; we have seen information technology expand; and we have seen agriculture bring in crops at record levels.

Only a few months ago, I was at Virginia, where, not having been out there for 10 years, I was absolutely amazed to see the number of Cambodian, Vietnamese and Chinese along with the old, established Greek and Italian families. The volume being produced out there, especially now with the extra resources of the pipeline bringing treated effluent from Bolivar, which was this government's initiative, is something I have never seen grown at Virginia previously. When I spoke to quite a few growers, especially the Asian growers, I asked how Australia or South Australia could possibly take this volume of fresh fruit and vegetables, and I was told that in many instances some of them never sold a solitary thing to the Australian market, because they had established export markets in the South-East Asian region and were therefore selling to the Malaysian markets and into Hong Kong and Thailand, and that we are virtually the food basket of South-East Asia.

Credit must go to the Premier, because he spoke to a lot of South Australian industries whose focus was on manufacturing and selling to the Australian market and said, 'Why don't you expand your horizons and look to expanding your business by supplying the overseas markets?' He also set up trade missions attended by various ministers together with major South Australian companies, and these markets were established. That is why today on a per capita basis, South Australia's exports, which are now in excess of \$6 billion a year, are the largest of any state of Australia; it was the result of the foresight and vision shown by the Premier and the ministers who have supported the policy of looking at that market.

We have seen what has happened to manufacturing establishments such as Holden's and Mitsubishi since we came into government in 1993. The present level of exports and the manufacturing taking place in GMH are at record levels, never having been achieved previously in the history of South Australia. That market is expanding all the time. We have seen the change of ownership of Mitsubishi, with a different philosophy, and already I notice that they now have orders coming in from Saudi Arabia. They are looking for a complete turn-around of their business and to remain a very important part of South Australian manufacturing for a long time to come.

We have seen the development of aquaculture, and I suppose a lot of that credit must also go to the Deputy Premier, who has taken on that portfolio. Aquaculture activity is increasing at the rate of 40 per cent a year. The world demand for South Australian products such as tuna, lobster, prawns, blue swimmer crabs, abalone and oysters produced in the pristine waters of the West Coast of South Australia is expanding at an amazing rate. Let us give some credit to the previous government for setting up SARDI at West Beach, because that research centre is now spawning and providing

fingerlings and stock for all these products, and again there seems to be a huge market for our fresh sea products.

We have also seen the development of the olive oil industry. I know that the three major producing countries, Italy, Greece and Spain, are very concerned about the activity that is going on here in Australia, but mainly in South Australia where I see that, along with the wine industry, the olive oil industry will be very important in years to come. Already the Greek and Italian governments are subsidising their producers. At Gaganis Brothers the other day I asked why a particular four litre tin of olive oil had dropped by \$4 to \$5, and I was told about the concern of those overseas governments about what is to happen here in South Australia. They are really afraid that their market to Australia will collapse entirely once the South Australian market comes on line.

I believe that, like the wine industry, eventually South Australia will produce probably the very best virgin olive oil and also that we will also be able to put on the table unadulterated olive oil, unlike what I believe has been coming from Italy, Spain and Greece, when other things have been mixed in and we do not get the product we want. Recently I have tried the olive oil of some of our boutique growers, and I must say that the product that I have tasted from South Australia is the finest I have ever had in my life. I can see in another 10 years' time that industry being one of the greatest employers of the lot.

I will not speak for long, but I always say that the success of a government is judged by the amount of building activity and investment shown by the private sector. When you have confidence in a government you invest in the state. What is happening in the state at the moment reflects on the government. At this moment a new, five star, boutique international hotel is being developed in the old Treasury building in Victoria Square adjacent to the Adelaide Town Hall. A new five star hotel is also being built in the Adelaide Building in Waymouth Street opposite the Topham Mall. The new Convention Centre is there to be seen by all South Australians and will be completed by 1 September 2001, with the first world conference of the wine industry, which it is estimated some 6 000 delegates will be attending.

In January 2001 we will see the demolition of the old police building in Victoria Square and the development of the commonwealth courts. Earthworks have already commenced on the new international and domestic terminals at the Adelaide Airport, with the completion date scheduled for June 2002. We have seen that the bridge has now been joined at Hindmarsh Island, something that could not be accomplished by the previous Labor government, because it wanted to cave in to the demands of the Aboriginal community, when it is now evident that not all of those allegations about native title and women's business were correct. In April we will see the commencement of the \$45 million refurbishment of the Adelaide Oval that will lift the amount of seating for cricket patrons from 30 000 to 40 000. We are also seeing the commencement of building on the apartments in Hindmarsh Square. That \$85 million project will make a significant change to city living.

We have seen an increase in city living. We saw this government support Max Lieberman in the development of the East End markets, and that has probably become one of the best residential developments in the city of Adelaide. There have been some wonderful other announcements too, with the Adelaide based company Vision Abell being awarded a contract by the Australian defence ministry to

build a \$62 million advanced ground radar system, which will include innovative night goggles, night weapons, sights and laser aiming devices that will allow for 24 hour operation by our defence forces. We have seen General Motors-Holden's make a commitment to develop an \$80 million South Australian production facility which will be known as General Motors Defence Australia and which will be used to establish a United States military industrial plant to produce turrets for high tech armoured personnel carriers.

The Premier's comments were that many companies will be required to supply components, technology and expertise and that we are planning that in the future South Australian companies with steel fabrication experience, including laser and steel cutting, x-ray weld testing and ballistic welding will be included. Again, it is a new industry. We have seen our own Hills Industries recently purchase a company in Queensland called Welded Tube Mills. This again will mean more manufacturing industry, and they are expecting next year to lift their manufacturing to about \$130 million a year.

One of the other most exciting things happening in South Australia because of the expansion of the wine industry—and credit must go to the government for this—is the establishment of a \$130 million wine bottle manufacturing plant announced for the Barossa Valley. AMCOR Limited is saying that it is to build a state-of-the-art glass wine bottle plant near Gawler that will produce over 200 million bottles annually and employ more than 300 staff when full capacity is reached.

We have seen the Premier go out and win the support to establish Malaysia Airlines here, with its fleet of more than 100 modern aircraft servicing over 110 destinations across six continents. It has given its commitment and confirmed its choice of Adelaide for its new consolidation Australian reservations call centre. This will create more than 100 new positions—additional employment opportunities—as well as benefit the state in commercial tourism and promotion.

Moving to the Auditor-General's Report, I know that the shadow Treasurer, the member for Hart, has made public that, because the Auditor-General's Report is coloured red, there is a warning to the Government. I find his comments amazing, because he is a man who was political adviser to two previous Premiers—Bannon and Arnold—and a part of a government that painted South Australia in red and did not simply print reports in red. He is picking up the Auditor-General's Report and trying to make something out of it, and in reality we know, having watched him thumb through as soon as he received it, that it would not have pleased him very much because the Auditor-General's Report has given substantial support to the government's activities on a number of policy issues.

We took over from a government that thought there was nothing wrong with spending \$300 million over budget a year. I found that mentality when I came here rather alarming as I came from the position of Lord Mayor of the Adelaide City Council, and our policy there was to leave \$2 million in a contingency plan to fund anything unforeseen that arose. There was a strict policy that if it was not in the budget you did not spend it. You did not do it but were told to put it into next year's budget and, if we had the finances, we would do it then. That is why today the Adelaide City Council is one of the most, if not the most, financially sound local government body in the country: because it works within its budget. I hope that all future governments realise that they cannot satisfy any future needs because you have to work within that budget.

The Acting Speaker would be well aware that as a mayor in a previous local government body it, too, adhered strictly to the budget, and let us hope for the sake of the people of South Australia that, as governments change in the future, they realise they have a responsibility to work within the budget and not just hand it out and worry later how they will pay it, because there are very few assets now left you that can be sold in future to try to balance the budget.

I will make a couple of comments about my own electorate. I am very proud that in the past seven years the real estate values in the areas of Henley and Grange, in the Colton district which I represent, have escalated alarmingly because the younger people—second and third home buyers—are now realising what great benefits there are in living at West Beach, Henley and Grange. You are only 10 minutes from Glenelg, 10 minutes from the West Lakes shopping centre and football stadium, and you are 15 minutes away from the city; and real estate down there on the latest figures released were second only to North Adelaide as one of the fastest growing areas.

The other thing with which I am happy in my time here is that I have been able to retain each of my seven primary schools and my one high school. Henley High School, which now has in excess of 900 students, has something like 350 on the waiting list and, through the generosity of the Minister for Education and back to school grants, when I went to that school in my first few months in office it was experiencing huge problems because of gutters that had rusted through and equipment that was out of date. We had a downpour in February 1994, and the principal called me up because, as the students were trying to go from the schoolyard into the school, they were getting showered by the water because the gutters were rusted right through. I phoned up and within a matter of days everything had been replaced.

I recently had a problem with Henley Primary School, where the old pipes that were built of the old corrugated iron were rusted through. I telephoned the Minister and said that the children would not drink water from the taps because of the problem. Within two weeks everything had been dug up and all the pipes were replaced. I even got a mention in the local school community paper for the efficiency with which the matter had been handled.

Mr Scalzi interjecting:

Mr CONDOUS: They did not do anything. Not only have I retained my seven primary schools and one high school but also I am proud to walk through them knowing that they are in great condition and providing good education facilities for the local community.

Henley Square has continued to develop. Another five restaurants have set up since I have been representing the area. I have encouraged people to come and establish, and Henley Square has now become the focus of an area where one can have a wonderful array of people of multicultural and different backgrounds and enjoy the ambience of probably one of the best seaside resorts in South Australia. I say that because I find Glenelg appalling. I cannot stand the Magic Mountain. I am sick and tired of being there with all the high-rise buildings. You feel that you are in Surfers Paradise, whereas in Henley we have that wonderful feel and it is a wonderful area.

In my position as Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier on Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs, I have enjoyed the relationship I have had with 152 different nationalities and ethnic communities in South Australia. It is a bipartisan approach, but the wonderful thing about South Australia is

the fact that here we have these 152 nationalities, irrespective of colour, race or religion, living in total harmony with each other. My duty to attend functions of those multicultural communities—from the Cambodian, Vietnamese, Chinese, Italian, German, Polish and Greek communities—has been an absolute delight. I throw them all in together. It has been an honour to have worked with them and I admire the input that they have had in the development of South Australia. Had we not had this great multicultural mix in this state, we would still be in the dark era. Those multicultural and different communities have made the state of South Australia what it is today.

I also pay tribute to the CEO of the Office of Multicultural and International Affairs, Sev Ozdowski, who I think has been an absolutely wonderful CEO. The support he has given me in carrying out my job has been fantastic.

Of course, I have made a decision that the time has come for me to retire from parliament at the calling of the next state election because, after 33 years of public life, I would like to wake up in the morning and say, 'Well, Steve, what do you want to do today?' That might include going back to my father's island of Kastellorizo in the Dodecanese Islands in Greece and spending a bit of time there. Yes, I can see that the Acting Speaker wants to go along as well, and I would be delighted to take her.

I would like to pursue my great love of cricket. Eric Freeman takes a group of some 25 people away with him to follow the Australian cricket team around the world. I would not do it on my own but I would certainly do it with a group, and I know that Eric puts together a fine tour. I would also like to spend more time with the two most important loves of my life, my wife Angela and my daughter Stacey.

I would like to say that the greatest single achievement in my 33 years of politics has been working with the community of South Australia, because I think South Australians are a different type of person from people in any other part of Australia, and I have travelled the whole of this wonderful country. But I think we are more compassionate people: we cry when we are hurt and we scream when we are angry—and rightly so. I know that South Australians are critical, but they deserve the right to criticise when they believe that it is justified to do so. Deep down, I find that the people that I have represented over the past 33 years are some of the most genuine people that I have ever been associated with. That, along with the people to people contact and experiences that I have gone through, will live with me forever.

Probably the single most important thing was the relationship that I had with those people. I love my state, I certainly love my city, but, most of all, I love the people that live in it. All I can say to the ratepayers that I represented for 25 years on the Adelaide City Council and to my present constituents in my electorate is thank you very much for giving me the honour, through the ballot box, to represent you. May God bless you all, and thank you for giving me a great time and a great life.

Mr WRIGHT (Lee): I would also like to support the motion and on behalf of the electors of Lee extend my thanks to both His Excellency the Governor and Lady Neal. I think we are all very lucky that we have people of such high competence who go about their duties in such a generous way. I think it is something that we should all be very proud of.

I would like to draw to the attention of the House a very serious local issue that has occurred in the electorate of Lee

during the parliamentary recess period, and that is the announcement that was made by the government on 25 August about the finding of cadmium in a certain part of the West Lakes area. I use the terminology 'a certain part' very deliberately, because when this appeared in the media that day, and also following that particular day, local residents were concerned because first public impressions were that this particular finding was for all of the West Lakes area, and that is certainly not the case.

The day that the government made the announcement about the finding of cadmium was the very same day that I was informed by the minister about this particular problem. Obviously, it went into the public domain as a result of media announcements and so forth. At the time—on that weekend, I believe, but also following—information was sent to local residents as a result of the EPA sending out a newsletter. So it tended to be a little bit of a trickle approach, in that the first some local residents found out about this was as a result of the press conference that was held by the government in conjunction with the EPA. At that press conference two ministers were present (the Minister for the Environment and the Minister for Human Services), as well as Stephen Walsh, representing the EPA. I was also informed on that day that it was the intention of the government to have a series of meetings that would commence on the following Monday, that these meetings would be limited to about 30 people and that, if need be, these would be strung out over the next few weeks.

Needless to say, that was hardly a strategy which was going to work, and, of course, at the first meeting that was held on the following Monday night at the Lakes Resort Hotel—a meeting that had catered for 30 people—there were approximately 80 people present. It became very evident very quickly that this particular strategy would not work, that the people of West Lakes deserved the opportunity to come together in a bigger public meeting so that concerns could be expressed about the issue at hand and also, of course, giving the opportunity for local residents to be able to come together en masse.

Subsequent to that first meeting a decision was very quickly made—and I acknowledge the decision that was taken by Stephen Walsh as Chairman of the Environment Protection Authority—to immediately facilitate and give the opportunity for a bigger public meeting, which was subsequently held on the Thursday. Some 500 people attended the Thursday public meeting, which provided people with the opportunity to be able to express their particular point of view. Also, of course, it enabled people to release some of the tension that had obviously built up as a result of the announcement that had been made on the previous Friday.

As members would appreciate, an issue of this delicacy is obviously a very sensitive issue. It is an issue which has to be handled very carefully, and it is an issue where a process needs to be established. I might say that after what I think was a very sluggish start by the government, the Environment Protection Authority, led by Stephen Walsh, needs to be acknowledged, because from the time that agreement had been reached at the first meeting on the Monday evening that a public meeting would be held and that public meeting took place, I think that a process has been put in place. The community is working with the EPA in a very constructive way to try to find solutions to the issue at hand. That is what we must now be about: we must be about finding solutions.

Preliminary testing, since the first information was made available to us as a community, is of a positive nature. The

initial announcement left us in some uncertainty as to how big this problem was but, subsequent to the first announcement that was made on 25 August, we have received preliminary information as a result of the next batch of testing which is fortunately suggesting that the cadmium is limited to a confined area. Further testing in sensitive locations is now being undertaken, and we would hope that results will show that we are looking at a problem which is limited in nature but, of course, we have to await that further information.

I think it needs to be said that the local residents have handled this issue with a great deal of maturity and calmness and are to be acknowledged and congratulated for that, because we, as a community, are going to be working through this issue very carefully and clinically with the Environment Protection Authority to arrive at solutions.

Obviously, the testing needs to be complete. Further testing is taking place in those sensitive areas where there have been some findings and where the cadmium level is higher than the recommended rate, but there also needs to be subsequent testing done in spot areas in the region. I guess that we are working through a process of elimination. The government must assure the local community that the Environment Protection Authority (led by Mr Stephen Walsh) can go ahead and do the work that now needs to be completed unfettered by government. We need a categorical guarantee from the Minister for Environment that no resources will be spared to complete the testing that has started in the region so that we know the magnitude of the problem with which we are dealing.

The other thing that needs to occur—and, to date, this is happening reasonably well—is that all residents in the region must be informed as quickly as possible. The testing results will become available on a staged basis, if you like, and I think more results will be available maybe today or later this week—that is the information we were given last week. As those results become available, it is critical that we make that information available as quickly as we can to local residents, because one thing worse than having a problem is not knowing about the problem. That is something that the government must assure local residents will take place as a matter of urgency.

The government must assure residents, first, that no resources will be spared in completing testing; secondly, no resources will be spared in regard to the follow-up testing undertaken in confined areas where there may be a problem; and, thirdly, of course, the ongoing spot testing will continue around the region so that those areas can be eliminated. One thing is certain: if the government allows the Environment Protection Authority to work with the consultative committee—which has been established as a result of the large public meeting held on the Thursday following the initial announcement—they will work through this problem. We would all hope that they can do that relatively quickly—obviously, it has to be done carefully—so that we can achieve solutions.

It is a sensitive issue. Obviously, it is something that has to be handled delicately. Different people have different problems, including health issues. Some people naturally have expressed concerns about values, but we would hope that would be of a limited nature. At this stage we do know that, according to the Environment Protection Authority, there are no immediate health problems. In relation to other areas of concern, we would hope that it will quickly settle down, but, of course, we are reliant on the further testing taking place and on the elimination process that is occurring. I ask that the government make a commitment to the local

community that no resources will be spared to enable all the testing to be completed and that information from the authority can be supplied as a matter of priority to local residents. I am confident that the West Lakes Consultative Committee group (of which I am delighted to be a member) representing the broader local community will work carefully with the Environment Protection Authority to bring about solutions for our local area.

Another issue on which I would like to spend a little time this afternoon is the ongoing debate at the moment about the racing industry. We know that the twin policy of the government has been the corporatisation of the racing industry and the privatisation of the TAB. There is no secret whatsoever as to what its agenda is: this government will walk away from the racing industry; this government will leave the industry high and dry. After grappling with the racing industry for a number of years—using RIDA as the government's authority to try to implement policy—the government has now given up on the racing industry and that is what its twin policy of the corporatisation of the racing industry and the privatisation of the TAB is all about.

Just this week we had the Minister for Government Enterprises on radio talking about the TAB and whether it should be sold. In that particular radio interview the minister said that it has been sold for 'lots of good reasons', the most important being that the racing industry 'will tell you that in government hands their profit share is decreasing'. That is not a correct statement. The minister has gone on radio talking about the profit share of the TAB decreasing. Let me say that the TAB management is livid with the minister. It is incensed, and rightly so, with comments of this nature. The TAB says that the profitability of its organisation has increased or has held the line.

When the minister talks about lots of good reasons for selling the TAB and says that it will tell you that in government hands its profit share is decreasing, he is just not getting it right. What this government is about—as it has always been about when it comes to privatisation—is its mad right wing doctrine about selling assets. When it comes to the racing industry its twin policy of corporatisation and the privatisation of the TAB is all about walking away from the racing industry. It has given up on the racing industry and it wants to leave the industry high and dry. What has become extremely obvious in the past few weeks—now that we have had a little time to analyse the figures that were brought into this chamber some time ago in respect of the privatisation of the TAB—is that the numbers do not stack up and the minister on radio further highlighted the point.

People in the racing industry now know that the figures put forward by the government in respect of the privatisation of the TAB will not have the racing industry any better off than it is currently. On radio the other day when commenting about the TAB the minister further said:

It is in fact not an asset that is growing. As the racing industry would tell you, their profit share is at risk.

If that is the case, if the TAB is not growing, how is it that, according to the figures put forward by the minister about the privatisation of the TAB, from year three to year 10 the TAB will grow from \$620 million turnover to \$850 million—that is what he told us—and, as a result of that growth in turnover, the profit share to the racing industry will increase? However, on radio two days ago he said:

It is in fact not an asset that is growing. As the racing industry will tell you, their profit share is at risk.

What is at risk is this government's credibility. He said that the asset is not growing. He simply cannot have it both ways. If it is not growing, how will the racing industry benefit from the sale? These figures being put forward by the government to the racing industry are nothing but a pup and the racing industry knows full well what will happen after year three when the guarantees no longer exist. The minister cannot have it both ways.

He cannot talk about growth and profits not increasing and, on the other hand, when he puts forward the figures to the racing industry, try to demonstrate how it will be better off. The minister cannot argue it both ways. The Minister for Government Enterprises has done a great disservice. He has talked down the TAB. If the government is going to proceed with the sale of the TAB and the minister talks on radio like this, how, on behalf of the government, will he maximise the price that it will get for any sale of the TAB?

But we can go one step further. After key people in the racing industry have put forward their case for there not being enough money for the government to sustain that industry (as a result of the rubbery figures put forward by this government, and the government always denies this but it has been caught out in the cold again), Minister Armitage always says, 'Well, what about Cheltenham?' Of course, that is code for, 'You go and sell Cheltenham to prop up the racing industry.' That has been the agenda of this government for some time. The government knows that there is not enough money in the racing industry; it knows that its figures are crook and rubbery; so the code for, 'What about Cheltenham?' is 'Go off and sell Cheltenham and that will prop up your industry.'

Again, when it comes to racing this government has nowhere to hide. The other side of the equation is the so-called Minister for Racing—the Basil Fawly of the South Australian racing landscape. This is the minister who said, 'We do not need a racing minister.' The minister came into this place yesterday trying to justify himself with respect to Labor's policy and our saying, 'We will have a Minister for Racing.' He knows full well, when he stands up here and shrugs his shoulders and says, 'Well, we've got a Minister for Racing' that he is the minister, especially when talking to industry people, who said, 'Well, why would you want a racing minister, anyway?' It is a case of the Minister for Racing not wanting a Minister for Racing in a Liberal government.

It is the Minister for Racing who introduces corporatisation and then appoints Ian McEwen as the first Chairman of the corporatised body. He said in this place yesterday that when Labor says, 'We would have no Ian McEwen appointments' that that is a nothing promise. That is so far from the truth that it is not funny because, under the minister's corporatisation model, he subsequently appointed Ian McEwen as the first Chairman of the Harness Authority. Corporatisation is all about taking away government appointments from each of these codes, yet the minister comes forward, after the corporatisation bill has been debated and passed, and makes a government appointment.

Unfortunately, as a result of ill-health, Mr McEwen had to resign from that position. It was not unfortunate from the point of view of his resigning but, obviously, we are all disappointed that his health has obviously not been good. This minister also identified to the House that he now needs to bring his corporatisation bill back into the parliament. So, not only has the minister gone through this process but also we now find that he got the corporatisation bill, which we

have previously debated extensively, wrong. He has to bring that bill back into this parliament—

Mr McEwen interjecting:

Mr WRIGHT: Surely, yes, because after a very extensive debate (although the minister did not debate it very much) on this side of the House, the minister informed us yesterday that he has to bring it back into the parliament, and he is looking for the full cooperation of Labor members. As always with racing matters, we will provide the minister with full cooperation, as we have provided him with all the ideas with respect to racing.

The minister made his maiden speech on racing yesterday when he did a dorothy dixer talking about the Office for Racing, which now has been established as a result of corporatisation. He said with some sort of surprise, 'We announced it back in July.' To my understanding corporatisation started on 1 October; RIDA was in existence until then; so I presume that this great initiative of the minister's, establishing the Office for Racing, must have happened in very recent times. I am sure that the industry will be delighted to learn of its establishment and that it has now been informed that Mr Barrett is heading up that office.

We can be certain of a couple of things. We can be certain that when it comes to this government's policy with respect to the racing industry it wants to walk away; we know that this government wants to leave the racing industry high and dry. This government has not been able to cope with the debate that has been occurring for some time within the racing industry, and its only answer is to corporatise the racing industry and to privatise the TAB. It believes, incorrectly, that, as a result, it has washed its hands completely of the racing industry. The government believes that no longer will the racing industry come to government. Well, how wrong has the government got it? If the government thinks that it can get away with that easily, it best think again. The government should quickly reassess the situation and be aware that, when it comes to the big issue topics that will be debated within the racing industry, you do not get away with it that easily.

If the government thinks that, in a platform convention some 18 months out from the election, we would be stupid enough to put forward our policies so that it can grab hold of them, it can think again. I assure the minister that the platform that will be debated this coming convention with respect to racing and all other issues will be done in a logical and calm way but, when it comes to racing, let me also assure him that our policies are in the can, ready and waiting to go. Our policies have been put together over a long period of time, after long and far-reaching discussions with key people in the racing industry—people about whom this government does not want to know, talk to or deal with. Let me assure the minister that, as soon as this government has the courage to call an election, he will then find out all about them.

Mr SNELLING (Playford): I want to use this opportunity to raise a few issues that are topical in my electorate as well as some issues of a more general nature. The first local issue relates to the problems in my electorate with Montague Farm, which is a part of Pooraka. It is an area which, I understand, was developed by the Housing Trust and which comprises a combination of Housing Trust-owned properties as well as privately-owned properties. All in all, it is not such a bad place. The problem, however, is that, in terms of urban design, a very poor effort was made in relation to it. Montague Farm has only three exits onto Montague Road,

and approximately 2 000 people make their homes there. Trying to get out onto a busy double carriageway each way in the morning in order to go to work is almost impossible and I am often told by residents about the very long queues as people try to force their way out into the traffic in order to head into town or wherever they happen to be going to work.

There seems to be a good case for installing traffic lights on one of the Henderson Avenue-Montague Road corners. Henderson Avenue intersects with Montague Road in two places and there seems to be a good case to have traffic lights installed on one of those corners to allow commuters some chance of getting out in the morning. It would help to prevent some of those enormous queues building on Henderson Avenue as people try to fight their way into the traffic. It is also a question of safety. It is only a matter of time before a serious accident happens on that road. The speed limit on that part of Montague Road is 70 km/h, and that means that most of the traffic travelling along that road, as the Police Minister would be interested to know, is doing 80 km/h because drivers know there is a tolerance in the speed cameras. That traffic is moving fairly fast and to have to make your way out into that traffic is pretty difficult.

A related issue, which could provide a compromise of sorts, would be to install some sort of pedestrian crossing at the intersection. A young lad was killed trying to cross the road at that intersection earlier this year and it seems to me that there is a good case to be made for the installation of a pedestrian crossing. I have had discussions with Transport SA but it has a few problems with the suggestion. It argues that there is not enough traffic trying to get out, that the queues are not long enough to warrant traffic lights and that the pedestrian traffic is not heavy enough to warrant lights being installed. I suspect that installing lights on that corner might pose some problems in terms of traffic flow because it is quite close to the intersection of Montague Road and Main North Road. Given that a young lad has already lost his life trying to cross the road at that intersection, I hope that Transport SA will at least consider the installation of a pedestrian crossing at that intersection to prevent any future loss of life.

Another matter that has been raised with me is the need for a bus shelter to be installed on Kylie Crescent where the buses that service my electorate often stop. I am a frequent bus user and I know how much public transport users rely on bus shelters. The Kylie Crescent stop is a particularly busy one because it is the main bus stop for Ingle Farm, and it is terribly exposed. There is no protection from the rain or the sun and, as we head into summer, the weather will get hotter. This will affect the elderly, in particular, if they are forced to stand out in the sun, often for a while, waiting for their bus.

As a result, people wait under the shade of the Ingle Farm Shopping Centre. When they see the bus come, they make a mad dash to try to catch the bus and quite often they miss the bus altogether. I am particularly worried that an elderly person will have a fall and injure themselves making a dash to catch the bus. All that could be fixed by the installation of a bus shelter at the stop. I have had discussions with the Passenger Transport Board and Salisbury council about this matter. The problem is that the bus route through Kylie Crescent is meant to be only a temporary bus route. Kylie Crescent was not built to take that load of buses because it is narrow and curving. It is not safe for big buses to be using that road on such a regular basis.

This situation occurred as a result of the upgrading of the Ingle Farm Shopping Centre. Until then, buses came into the

centre and that is where the bus stop was. A year or so ago extensive renovations were done and the Ingle Farm Shopping Centre was upgraded, which I applaud, but an unfortunate side effect was that the buses were moved temporarily to route around Kylie Crescent and were taken away from the shopping centre. The Passenger Transport Board is in negotiations with Ingle Farm Shopping Centre management to try to re-route the buses into the shopping centre, but the shopping centre management has problems with this.

One problem is the claim that it would cost management hundreds of thousands of dollars to upgrade the car park in order to make the asphalt strong enough to withstand the load of buses going over it every day. Management also has a problem with people parking their car in the shopping centre car park early in the morning, grabbing all the prime spots before hopping into the bus and going into town for the day, leaving their cars in the shopping centre car park and not spending a cent at the shopping centre. The shopping centre management feel fairly aggrieved about that and it would like to see some way of resolving that issue, as well. So an impasse has developed between the Passenger Transport Board and Ingle Farm Shopping Centre management in order to try to get the bus routed back into the shopping centre. That would certainly be my preferred option and it would be very sad if the bus was forced to stop only on Beovich Road. That is a fair hike from the shopping centre, and I think that its management has an interest in getting the buses to come into the shopping centre.

I know there are obviously costs involved, but I think that there is a good argument that the buses would be bringing in passengers who would get off the bus and buy drinks or spend money in the shopping centre, either prior to catching the bus or on alighting from the bus. My hope is that this dispute between the Passenger Transport Board and Ingle Farm Shopping Centre management is, in fact, resolved satisfactorily, because it would be very sad, indeed, for that bus stop not to be so conveniently located as it was when it was located near the entrance to the centre; it is not too bad at the moment despite the need for a bus shelter.

Moving on to broader issues, there has been quite a bit of debate, mainly sparked by the Hon. Nick Xenophon and some publicity in the *Advertiser*, concerning the number of sitting days. While I am not specifically endorsing what the Hon. Nick Xenophon is putting, it is an argument for which I do have some sympathy. During the past three years that I have been a member of this place, I have observed that power is becoming increasingly concentrated in the hands of the executive and that the opportunities for parliamentary scrutiny of the executive are becoming less all the time. Question time is increasingly becoming a farce with ministers' giving extended and unnecessarily long answers to dorothy dixers in order to run down the clock. This practice seems to indicate that those ministers, indeed the government, does not have much respect for this place, the institution of the parliament and the concept that the parliament is there to be a watchdog on the executive. Any proper executive, any proper government, you would think, would have some respect for the parliament and would understand the role of the parliament, in particular, the role of question time in holding the government accountable.

I understand that there was a time under the former Premier (now the Minister for Human Services) when there was a guaranteed number of 10 questions to be allocated to non-government members. Even if the 60 minutes was used up, question time would be extended in order to give non-

government members an opportunity to ask questions. I would like to see that practice reinstated by the government because I think non-government members should have every possible opportunity to ask questions without notice of ministers and also avoid the absolute farce of ministers' giving ridiculously long answers to questions and running down the clock, just to avoid scrutiny and perhaps to protect some of their more vulnerable colleagues who are sitting there obviously nervous and worried that a potentially embarrassing question might be asked of them. I can recall one instance where a minister was worried about such a question being asked, but ministers often seek to protect their more vulnerable colleagues by simply running down the clock. It is a disgrace and I call on the government to reinstate the practice of having a guaranteed 10 questions to non-government members. At the moment, we are falling well short of that, indeed.

My other criticism of the government in terms of its management of the House is the appallingly bad planning as far as legislation is concerned. In the last session, there were often days where we were rising either just before or just after dinner time, not making full use of the time available, while legislation was sitting on the *Notice Paper*. As a result, in the last week of sitting, important bills were rushed through without any proper accountability, without proper opportunities for the opposition, the Independents and the National Party member to ask questions of the government about the legislation. I am not sure whether or not it is a deliberate attempt by the government, but it does seem to be poor practice and I would like to see it resolved.

Debate adjourned.

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

EDUCATION (COUNCILS AND CHARGES) AMENDMENT 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.

LIBRARY FUNDING

A petition signed by 392 residents of South Australia, requesting that the House ensure government funding of public libraries is maintained, was presented by the Hon. M.H. Armitage.

Petition received.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

The Hon. G.M. GUNN (Stuart): I bring up the 32nd report of the committee, being the annual report for 1999-2000, and move:

That the report be received.

Motion carried.

The Hon. R.G. KERIN (Deputy Premier): I move:

That the report be published.

Motion carried.

QUESTION TIME

FISHER, MEMBER FOR

The Hon. M.D. RANN (Leader of the Opposition): I direct my question to the Premier. Was the member for Fisher telling the truth when he said in a news conference today, after announcing that he had resigned from the Liberal Party, that the government was arrogant, out of touch and uncaring, had not been open and in fact had been secretive with the South Australian public, the parliament and even with Liberal members of parliament, had made decisions on the run, had forgotten the needs of the South Australian people and had not given enough priority to the important areas of health, education and public safety, and had an ideologically based obsession—

The SPEAKER: Order! The leader will resume his seat. The Premier is not responsible for any statements or thoughts attributed to the member for Fisher.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: I rise on a point of order, Mr Speaker: I had not finished the question. The member for Fisher said he had discussed this with the Premier, which is the next part of the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The chair has heard quite enough of the question to know that it is totally out of order in that the Premier is not responsible for any of it. I call the member for Waite.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: I rise on a further point of order, sir. I know that the government's mantra is 'No, no, not responsible'—

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. M.D. RANN: —but you cannot protect the Premier—

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

The Hon. M.D. RANN: —from—

The SPEAKER: Order! I warn the Leader of the Opposition.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! I suggest that the honourable member resume his seat. The members of this House have a very clear understanding of the standing orders, and members would be well aware that that question was not in order.

EMPLOYMENT

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH (Waite): Will the Premier outline to the House how the government's economic management is having a positive effect on employment prospects for South Australia?

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN (Premier): If the opposition is one thing it is very predictable. What the opposition would not ask a question about today is the recent ABS figures, employment and unemployment rates. Why would they not ask a question about it: simply because we have seen yet again an improvement in the level of employment in South Australia and a reduction in the levels of unemployment in South Australia. We have now 681 000 South Australians in employment. That is historically the highest level of employment ever in this state. We have come down in the level of unemployment to 7.5 per cent. That is in contrast to the Leader of the Opposition who, as Minister for Employment, presided over an unemployment rate of 12.3 per cent. We are more than happy to compare and contrast with the Leader of

the Opposition the level of unemployment in South Australia in the period for which he had responsibility for it—

The Hon. M.D. Rann interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order, the leader will remain silent!

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN:—as distinct from the level of unemployment that exists in South Australia today. Importantly, also—

The Hon. M.D. Rann: Face your back bench.

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. M.D. Rann: They are the ones—

The SPEAKER: Order! I warn the leader against shouting down the chair. This is not the afternoon to start it.

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: The leader has resorted to type again today. It does not take long for the Leader of the Opposition to resort to type.

The Hon. M.D. Rann interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order, the leader!

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: When the Leader of the Opposition was minister for unemployment (because that is what it should have been called), youth unemployment skyrocketed to something like 40 per cent. That was the level of youth unemployment when Mr Rann was Minister for Employment in the Arnold Government. That is a very significant difference between what they delivered and what we are delivering. As I have said on a number of occasions in the House, we have come a long way but we still have much to do. We want to ensure that all South Australians who are seeking employment opportunities have the opportunity of the job of their choice in this state. How do you achieve that? You only achieve it by some policy direction that can create the climate for investment in this state. If you do not have investment in the state you do not have jobs growth and that is exactly what we have been seeking to do and delivering.

Some reports due to be released next Monday clearly indicate that in economic direction terms the South Australian economy has turned the corner. In turning the corner prospect and opportunity is now being created for our young people. Our focus has been on investment, which creates jobs, and in looking at those areas such as education, health and public safety. I remind the House that in the last budget we increased the number of officers in the process this year—some 113—and supplemented them with 27 additional clerical staff to support them. That is a change taking place in economic terms which brings about lifestyle choice for people. If you do not have security of job and prospect you do not have lifestyle choice and quality of life. The other point I make is that there was no magic wand to fix the woes we inherited seven years ago. There was never going to be a quick fix. It would have to take determined policy direction.

I have said on a number of occasions in this House, and I repeated today, that some of the policies that we have put in place have been difficult. Had we had a choice would we have preferred an alternative course? In a number of instances the answer would be yes. But we have done the right thing by South Australia, as difficult as some of those decisions might be, because instead of the \$8.9 billion overdraft the opposition left us we are now down to about \$3 billion. The financial security of the state is intact and, if you get the financial security of the state right, you can invest in a range of other areas. If you do not get the finances right, you cannot reinvest. That is exactly what the government has sought to do.

QUEEN ELIZABETH HOSPITAL

The Hon. M.D. RANN (Leader of the Opposition): My question is directed to the Minister for Human Services. Can the minister tell the House what the government is doing to fix the crisis at the emergency department of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital? On 21 September this year the Director of the emergency department of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital wrote a minute describing in graphic detail the deterioration of services of the hospital's emergency department. The minute says that ambulances went on bypass on six occasions in two weeks in September, that patient safety could not be guaranteed, that patients were herded together in overcrowded cubicles and that patients detained under the Mental Health Act, under guard, shared cubicles with other patients for up to two days. The minute says that overcrowding is endemic, with 143 patients in August waiting more than 12 hours for admission, that waiting times for urgent cases were among the worst in Australia, that minor adverse patient outcomes are already frequent and that it is inevitable that a major adverse patient outcome will occur in the near future. In August, 50 elective surgery cases were cancelled.

The Hon. DEAN BROWN (Minister for Human Services): I indicated to a press conference about three weeks ago that the public hospital system had faced unprecedented demand and pressure over a period of two or three months. That was despite the fact that we put additional money into opening additional beds to cope with the normal winter ills.

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: Well, we put additional money in, and we opened additional beds, over and above the normal level. We looked in great detail at some of the reasons for this. First, it is not just occurring here in South Australia. I will highlight for honourable members the sort of comments and things that are occurring in some of the other states.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Police will come to order.

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: In late September the Victorian newspapers were covering exactly the same sort of issues.

Mr FOLEY: I rise on a point of order, Mr Speaker. Consistent with your ruling to the Leader of the Opposition, the Minister for Human Services has no responsibility for health outcomes in the state of Victoria or any other state.

The SPEAKER: Order! I do not uphold the point of order. The Minister for Human Services has every right to draw comparisons with what is happening in the health field anywhere in Australia.

Mr FOLEY: Your ruling to the Leader of the Opposition was that the Premier had no responsibility for the comments of the member for Fisher. My point of order is that the Minister for Human Services has no responsibility for the health outcomes in any other state but here in South Australia. To be seen to be consistent, sir, you must rule in my favour.

The SPEAKER: Order! The chair does not uphold the point of order at all.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Stuart will come to order. The Minister for Human Services.

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: As I was pointing out, other states of Australia have found even greater pressure than has occurred here. I stress the fact that perhaps the area of greatest demand and pressure has, in fact, been the private

hospital sector. We have had, day after day over the last two months, the only three emergency departments in private hospitals—Ashford, St Andrew's and Wakefield—diverting into the public hospital system. We have taken it up with the private hospitals because when they divert that puts additional pressure and unexpected and unplanned pressure on the public hospital system. We also looked at some of the reasons why there was so much demand in terms of the public hospital system.

We found that there was a much longer delay in getting older people into nursing homes out of acute care in the public hospital system—much longer than had previously been occurring—and that the number of older people within the acute system was much greater. In fact, we found that up to 160 people in the public hospital system were waiting to get into a nursing home.

We then looked at some of the problems and why that was occurring. We found that a number of nursing homes were in the process of relocating and redeveloping, particularly as a result of accreditation at a federal level. We found that a number of the nursing homes had closed, yet had not opened their new facilities. Of course, the federal government currently has out by way of advertisement an application for 700 new low care nursing home care beds for South Australia, with a further 600 (approximately) home care packages, and they are due to be announced later this year.

When we looked at it, we found that one of the reasons for the intense pressure in the public hospital system was both the lack of nursing home beds and the longer period it was taking to be able to find a vacant bed—

Ms Stevens: What have you done?

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: And that was causing enormous pressures. Well, I immediately spoke to the head of the commonwealth department and asked whether they would work with us in ensuring that we could get older people out of the public hospital system quicker. I stress that any community must look after its aged people, so in no way am I decrying the fact that they need a hospital bed. However, there is a responsibility on the federal government to ensure that adequate beds are available in nursing homes. We have been arguing this with the federal government for some time. We believe that the formula that the federal government uses to allocate nursing home beds is inappropriate. It should be looking at the proportion of the population over 80 years of age. Instead, it looks at the proportion over 70 years of age, and we have a much higher percentage of people now who are 80 plus, who are living longer but who need low and high level, particularly high level, nursing home care.

Of course, you then have other problems (and we have seen some of those in the South-East) and the problems associated with accreditation that have occurred. This is one of the reasons why some of the nursing homes have closed facilities. For instance, the one at Tennyson closed and relocated to the Southern Vales. This has been part of the problem, particularly at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, because the nursing home which was traditionally the place for location from the Queen Elizabeth Hospital was then transferred to the Vales Hospital; that is, those beds were transferred to the Vales Hospital in the southern suburbs, so the Queen Elizabeth Hospital did not have immediate access to beds close to hand.

Ms Stevens interjecting:

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

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: I can indicate that, yes, both the inability of the private hospitals to cope with the demand and beds within the public hospital system, despite additional beds being opened, being absolutely full as a result of the demand for care for older people within our community, has caused us considerable concern. We are working with the federal government—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! It is inappropriate to have a conversation across the chamber.

The Hon. DEAN BROWN:—in trying to speed up the placement of people from the acute care area in our public hospital system. We are working with the private hospital system. I have given the department permission to spend additional money as well to try to help place some of these people in step down care out of the public hospital system.

I apologise to the people in South Australia who have had their elective surgery cancelled, because quite a few people in the last month in particular have had their elective surgery cancelled. It distresses me and my staff and, on a regular basis, my staff have kept me up to date and we are looking for solutions, but there are no short-term immediate solutions. However, in the meantime we are coping with demand in our hospital system which is—

Ms Stevens interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Elizabeth can ask another question later.

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: I assure the honourable member that we give absolute priority to making sure that those with the highest demand receive treatment, and in cases of emergency those people are not diverted to another hospital. If there is an emergency or a semi-emergency it is dealt with in that particular hospital and we cope with the demand in that hospital so that people's health is not being put at risk through the diversion system. However, I do acknowledge that there is enormous pressure in the public hospital system.

EMPLOYMENT

Mr SCALZI (Hartley): Will the Minister for Employment and Training detail the key points of the latest employment statistics for South Australia and does he see any—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the honourable member to repeat the question and ask members on my left to at least have the courtesy to remain silent so that we can hear the question.

Mr SCALZI: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Minister for Employment and Training detail the key points of the latest employment statistics for South Australia and say whether he sees any emerging trends in these figures?

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL (Minister for Water Resources): I thank the member for Hartley for his question and for his interest in youth unemployment. I am reminded this morning of our propensity all too often to labour over the bad news and never celebrate the good news. Indeed, in—

Mr Foley interjecting:

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: The member for Hart laughs but I have not heard the member for Hart actually asking any questions on employment and especially any questions on the positives when employment is positive, and I think that there are some positive signs. When the Premier rose to answer the first question on unemployment, South Australia's achieving a record result for a decade, highest levels of—

Members interjecting:

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: Could I ask the backbench opposite that if they are going to interject to at least do so coherently—I cannot understand the babble.

Ms Thompson interjecting:

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

Ms Thompson interjecting:

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

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: We have the best employment figures in a decade, the highest level of full-time employment on record in South Australia and rising full-time employment for a number of consecutive months, and what does the opposition say? Nothing. If it goes down .1 per cent the world as we know it is falling to bits. If—

Ms Key interjecting:

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: I will read it with interest. If—

Members interjecting:

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: I happen to have some respect for my shadow colleague opposite and do sometimes wish that she would challenge the government policies more, but I will acknowledge if I am wrong on that little matter. Nevertheless, I am sure that this chamber will be delighted with the release of today's employment figures, particularly where it concerns jobs for our young people. There are those who question in this House, as is their right, whether we should have been shifting from traineeships to training. I say to this House today that perhaps the bold move that the government made in this direction is starting to pay dividends, for not only do we have the lowest unemployment figures in South Australia since June 1990 but full-time youth unemployment has fallen 3 per cent to 22.1 per cent.

The number of young people seeking full-time employment last month fell by 700—I thought that the member for Peake would actually be interested in this; he is still in that cohort—or nearly 12 per cent. More importantly, the youth full-time employment to population ratio (and that is the statistic that the Leader of the Opposition always quoted when he was minister) has fallen now to only 5.1 per cent—a fall of nearly 1 per cent. That is a measure of the number of young people who are actually out there looking for work, and that is a darned sight higher than when Mr 23 Per Cent was a minister in the early 1990s, when overall unemployment rocketed to 12.3 per cent and youth unemployment at that time was beyond 40 per cent. His solution was to call for a jobs summit and it has been the solution if nothing else on which he has been consistent. He has called for one ever since. We have moved—

Ms Key: You had workshops; come on!

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: Exactly. The member opposite will remember that that was the point in question. At that time the Leader of the Opposition was bleating for a jobs summit and the Premier sent me stumping up and down the state, talking to meetings and talking to people. Instead of having a talkfest of the few people in this state who think they matter, we got out and talked to the people in this state who do matter—the people right around the state, the ordinary people in this state—and, as a result of the Premier's leadership, we are putting a few runs on the board.

HOSPITAL WAITING LISTS

Ms STEVENS (Elizabeth): I direct my question to the Minister for Human Services. Given the Governor's statement to the parliament that the government is committed to better hospitals, what is the minister doing to stop the blow-out in the number of people waiting for elective surgery in public hospitals? Federal parliament has been told that the number of people waiting for elective surgery has increased by 40 per cent from 7 500 in March 1998 to 10 500 in July 2000. In June 1999, the minister told the estimates committee that a budget cut of \$46 million from the state government would reduce elective surgery in public hospitals by 14 000 admissions and force up the number of people on waiting lists.

The Hon. DEAN BROWN (Minister for Human Services): As the honourable member knows, fairly recently and since the estimates committee hearing, I have put an extra \$4.5 million specifically into non-urgent elective surgery. That is \$1 million for the country areas and \$3.5 million for the city, mainly for orthopaedic surgery, ophthalmic surgery, such as cataract surgery, and ear, nose and throat surgery. That is where the main waiting list has been and, if one looks at the list of people waiting more than 12 months, which is the benchmark period, one will see that those people are waiting particularly for orthopaedic surgery.

Let me read something to the honourable member that she might be interested in. This newspaper article states that the number of patients waiting more than 30 days for urgent surgery and the number waiting more than 90 days for semi-urgent surgery rose from 3 623 in July 1999 to 5 704 in 2000. That is almost double, and it is a report from Victoria on urgent and semi-urgent surgery, not non-urgent, elective surgery. I highlight that the blow-out in waiting times in Victoria and New South Wales (I have not seen figures for Western Australia and Queensland) has been greater under Labor than it has been here in South Australia.

I know that the Leader of the Opposition in South Australia and the federal Leader of the Opposition are going to the Flinders Medical Centre tomorrow. The Flinders Medical Centre notified me that they were paying a visit, particularly to the emergency department. I have heard both the federal Leader of the Opposition and the state Leader of the Opposition talking about the new deal signed by Labor in Tasmania.

Ms Stevens: Why don't you get one?

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: Well, I have had a look at the policy that came out of the federal Labor Party's conference in Tasmania and nowhere can I find any mention of \$1 extra that is to go into health. So, when the two opposition leaders face the press tomorrow at the emergency department of the Flinders Medical Centre, I challenge them to tell us how many extra dollars will be given to South Australia to ensure that we can deal with the pressure within the public hospital system. Now there is a challenge, because I have heard time after time what a good deal it was out of Hobart, but nowhere can I find the actual substance out of Hobart.

They are going to Flinders Medical Centre tomorrow, so let me reveal some of the facts about Flinders. I talked about the impact of the shortage of nursing home beds in South Australia and its resultant impact on our acute public hospital system. Flinders Medical Centre normally has about 10 to 15 or 20 older people in longer-term stays in hospital beds. I have been told that during August in fact Flinders had about 25 people staying and that the average length of stay for these

people rose from 19 days to 26 days in August alone. That highlights the pressure in the public hospital system as a result of the shortage of nursing home beds in South Australia—and I know in other states.

The federal government challenges me on the statement that there is a shortage but, if there is not a shortage, why is it about to allocate an extra 700 beds and an extra 600 home packages in South Australia if we are not substantially below the national quota? The other problem is that many of the licences allocated in South Australia have not been taken up by private operators. The licences have been allocated but the nursing homes have not been built, so beds are not available for people to go into. That concerns me and, as a result, I have been asking the federal government to increase pressure on the people who accept a licence for a nursing home bed so that they are required to provide that bed very quickly indeed. I know that if they do not it saves the federal government money, but it puts immense pressure on the public hospital system. My request to the federal government is: for goodness sake, give a fair and reasonable allocation of nursing home beds to South Australia so that older people within our community can get the long-term care and accommodation that they deserve.

SCHOOL RETENTION RATES

Mr VENNING (Schubert): Can the Minister for Education and Children's Services advise the House of government initiatives which have been put in place to increase the number of students remaining at school?

The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY (Minister for Education and Children's Services): When the Leader of the Opposition talks about retention rates, it is worth just reflecting for a while and remembering exactly what retention rates were about when Labor was in power. Labor remembers retention rates as being able to keep young students in school and off the unemployment list—to retain them in school so it will not bump up the unemployment list.

The Minister for Employment and Training, who is also the Minister for Youth, mentioned previously that when the Leader of the Opposition was in the position in mid 1992 our youth unemployment rate was over 40 per cent. Today, it is 22.1 per cent, as the Minister for Youth and the Minister for Employment and Training has said—and I would say, 'What a good minister.' What a dramatic turnaround from over 40 per cent down to 22.1 per cent. While we are talking about Mr 23 per cent, I must say that it is probably why he sends out only the *Bulletin* Morgan polls to his backbenchers and not the News polls because they are quite different. Media Mike: 23 per cent, half his own youth unemployment rate. What a failure; what a spectacular failure!

We are doing something about this, because 93 per cent of our 15 year olds are currently in school and 83 per cent of our 16 year olds are still in school, both of those figures being well ahead of national averages. In fact, we top the states and territories for participation of 16 year olds in our schools. Why does that happen? Well, I will tell you. Five years ago only a handful of schools had vocational education and training subjects. That is because during the 1980s the Labor government had closed all the technical high schools; there were no other options. When I was on the farm, my neighbour went to Elizabeth Technical High School, but that closed during the 1980s and Goodwood Technical High School closed in 1991. What could students do if they wanted to undertake vocational education and training but had only the

academic side available to them? There was a very simple answer. Well, we have done something about it.

Last year, in 1999, more than 40 per cent of our students undertook vocational education and training. Let me put that in context in terms of the number of hours. In 1999, some 988 000 hours of vocational education and training were delivered in our schools. That was in 1999. This year, the expectation is that 2.4 million hours of vocational education and training for our young people in our schools will be delivered. That is something those young people can aim for. They can now undertake apprenticeships and traineeships while they are at school. They can commence subjects in TAFE—their next step in education—while they are at school. We are currently working with the universities to have TER scores assigned to vocational education and training subjects so that they will be able to be used for tertiary entrance. That gives maximum flexibility to these young people in terms of their options. So, there are real options for these kids now.

We have students attending the reopened Windsor Gardens and Christies Beach vocational colleges. A couple of years ago Windsor Gardens had 400 students; it now has more than 600 students at that vocational college. Young people completing a Novell course in data management have been offered private industry jobs at \$45 000 each—at the end of Year 11. That is exceptional and great for those students, because it gives them real options and real training while they are at school and prepares them for the work force—exactly what industry is asking of this government and our education system. None of this occurred under Labor—and the leader is only concerned about a little dot com. That is all Mr 23 Per Cent has going for him.

HOSPITAL WAITING LISTS

Ms STEVENS (Elizabeth): Will the Minister for Human Services explain why the waiting time for semi-urgent cardiac surgery at the Flinders Medical Centre is now four months, compared with 77 days a year ago? The Flinders Medical Centre has confirmed that cardiac patients at the hospital are now waiting an average of 123 days compared with 77 days a year ago. Patients requiring non-urgent surgery are now waiting an average of 239 days, more than four times longer than applied a year ago.

The Hon. DEAN BROWN (Minister for Human Services): That sort of increase has occurred for the very reasons I have been talking about. When the member for Elizabeth is down at the Flinders Medical Centre with the leaders of the opposition she will find that this is despite the fact that we have opened 22 extra beds at the Flinders Medical Centre.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: We get accused of shutting beds: here we open 22 extra beds at the Flinders Medical Centre and it highlights the pressure that is occurring in the hospitals. If the honourable member happened to read the Messenger Press, she would have found that at the Lyell McEwin and Queen Elizabeth Hospitals 33 beds are taken up by people who would normally be in high dependency in an aged nursing home. That is a large number of beds in the Northwest Adelaide Health Service hospitals alone.

It concerns us that there has been an increase in the waiting times. We still handle the vast majority of people within a fair and reasonable time, but that is starting to blow out and we are concerned and monitor it carefully. That is one

of the reasons why we have allocated extra funding, so that if we put the extra funding into non-urgent elective surgery it will allow the pressure to come off to allow some of the urgent and semi-urgent surgery to proceed as quickly as possible. We will continue to monitor that situation closely.

At the Flinders Medical Centre in particular just over the past 12 months we opened what must be the best cardiac laboratory that you will find probably in any hospital in Australia, and that is acknowledged. Therefore, the demand for people to go to the Flinders Medical Centre for cardiac surgery, which is one reason I suspect that the—

Ms Stevens interjecting:

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

The Hon. DEAN BROWN:—list involving semi-urgent surgery has blown out, namely, that it is now such a world-class facility with the two new angiographic laboratories—

Ms Stevens interjecting:

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

The Hon. DEAN BROWN:—that the demand is very high indeed. The demand goes up because you provide really good facilities—and this is the facility the honourable member actually criticised: she criticised the fact that we got Ramsay in its new private hospital to put in a world-class cardiac laboratory facility with two laboratories. We attract people to the hospital and now she criticises us for providing these services and creating the demand. The honourable member should put more pressure on her leader at a state, as well as federal, level to be quite specific about what extra funding Labor will provide for the public hospital system. They say it is a new deal: where is the new deal? It is not backed up by one single dollar.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask members on my left to come to order.

Mr Koutsantonis interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! I caution the member for Peake.

Mr Foley interjecting:

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

FRIENDS OF THE PARKS

Mr WILLIAMS (MacKillop): My question is directed to the Minister for Environment and Heritage. Following the annual Friends of the Parks forum last weekend, will the minister update the House on the impact that Friends of the Parks groups have on our national parks and on issues raised at the forum?

The Hon. I.F. EVANS (Minister for Environment and Heritage): I thank the member for MacKillop for his question. It is important that he raises the question because it gives an opportunity for the House to be updated on the very important work Friends of the Parks do in our national parks and reserves. The member for MacKillop was pleased this year to host the annual Friends of the Parks forum in Millicent where some 242 registrants attended to discuss all sorts of issues involving our parks. There is no doubt that the establishment of Friends of the Parks has been one of the great success stories in our national parks. To give credit where credit is due, past ministers have been involved in developing that group and certainly they contributed a lot to the South Australian parks system. There are now something like 106 groups involved in the Friends of the Park group,

contributing something around 48 000 days, worth about \$6.12 million to the park every year. That is worth about 204 extra staff. So they contribute a considerable amount to our parks system. I know that the Labor Party has an interest in national parks. The member for Kaurana was there over part of the weekend. I notice in its platform document being debated at the weekend that its 1997 policy on national parks was:

The Labor Party recognises conservation as the highest priority in the management of the national parks and reserves system.

And, surprise, surprise, when you look at the 1997 policy, you see that it states:

The Labor Party recognises conservation as the highest priority in the management of the national parks and reserves system.

It is a photocopied policy from the 1997 election for the 2000 election.

In his question the member for MacKillop raises some of the topics that were raised at the Friends forum. Some of those include things such as leases in parks, the value of seminars and mountain bikes in parks. In relation to the value in seminars, they were talking about the importance of community consultation in parks over things such as leases. A seminar was held at Belair by the Friends of the Park to address that exact issue. So I went to the Labor Party policy, out of interest, and I note that in the 1997 policy on consultation it states:

Labor will develop a policy and procedure of community consultation to be used for all projects.

Lo and behold, I looked at the 2000 policy and saw that it says:

Labor will develop a policy and procedure of community consultation to be used for all projects.

Again, it is a photocopied policy. We know that the Labor Party has been spending four years developing this policy. The member for Kaurana was quoted in *Hansard* yesterday saying that it has spent four years developing that policy.

But, of course, the Friends of the Park were also talking about the need for consistency—things like consistency of funding and consistency of work projects—because, when you are coordinating volunteers, to have a system that stops and starts is always difficult. So, it is fair to say the Labor Party is consistent, because when you look at the 1997 policy, for instance, you see that it says:

...investigate the status of underground water in the Great Artesian Basin.

You go to the Labor Party's 2000 policy and it is that they will:

...investigate the status of underground water in the Great Artesian Basin.

So, it is three out of three: photocopy, photocopy, photocopy; consistency, consistency, consistency; no idea, no idea, no idea. Gee, it's hurting Annette, is it?

The SPEAKER: Order! There is a point of order.

Ms HURLEY: Sir, I ask whether the minister has responsibility for Labor Party policy.

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister responsible for information technology will remain silent. I do not uphold that point of order. I make the point that traditionally over the years question time has been used by both sides to draw out policy and compare policy, and the chair does not have a problem with comparisons of policy. I want that to be thoroughly understood for any future points of order. Has the minister finished?

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: I have a couple of other points that were discussed at the forum of the Friends of the Park, because one of the great values of this forum is the opportunity to mix with 240 volunteers who are doing all this good work in our parks and they can swap ideas about projects. So, you can speak to the Friends of Belair or to the Friends of Canunda, and they can swap ideas about projects.

I notice that the Labor Party has picked up on this concept of borrowing and swapping, because in their policy that they are taking to the convention on the weekend Labor claims that it will develop a marine and coastal biodiversity strategy. They have borrowed that because, of course, the Liberal Party did it in 1998 in our Season, Coast and Marine Estuarine Strategy. They have borrowed that one. Labor talks about ensuring that marine parks are established. Well, I remind them of the Great Australian Bight Marine Park.

The classic point, I guess, is the discussion we had about recycling with some people over supper on the Friday night at the Friends forum. I make the point that we have announced the CDL changes to increase recycling, and all Labor seems to be doing is recycling their 1997 policy.

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: Over supper? There were plenty of people. All they seem to be doing is recycling their policies. In fairness, they have changed one policy. The Leader of the Opposition was quoted in the *Sunday Mail* in April telling everyone that he wants to have 'all policies signed, sealed and costed for the public to scrutinise'. He ought to tell the member for Kaurana that, because the member for Kaurana in yesterday's *Hansard* said that it will not give all the intricacies and it will not give all the funding details. The current leader is saying that it will have the funding; the next leader is saying that it will not have the funding. However, perhaps this is the doozey of them all: the leader is saying that they will release their policies for public scrutiny. That means, if it is available for public scrutiny, we can get them. What does the good old member for Lee say today? Members can always rely on the member for Lee to come up with a good quote. Today in *Hansard* he says—

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

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: Listen, member for Hart—

The SPEAKER: Order! There is a point of order. The minister will resume his seat.

Mr FOLEY: I refer to the standing order concerning referring to *Hansard* today.

The SPEAKER: I caution the honourable member that he cannot refer to another debate. The honourable member cannot quote directly from what the member for Lee said. The honourable member can refer to it in some other form, but he cannot quote from *Hansard* from another debate.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: I take the opportunity to suggest that, if the government thinks of a platform convention that some people are having this weekend, there are some people who believe that the Labor Party is stupid enough—

The SPEAKER: Order! I would ask the member to bear in mind my ruling.

INFORMATION ECONOMY, MINISTER FOR

Ms HURLEY (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Did the Premier allow cabinet guidelines to be broken in giving approval to the Minister for Information Economy to negotiate an \$18 million contract between the government and Optus for the supply of mobile phones, even though the minister is a shareholder in the Optus company and report-

edly profited from the share increase that occurred following the deal and, if not, what are the rules that allow this to occur?

Mr Scalzi interjecting:

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

Ms HURLEY: The current cabinet handbook in relation to cabinet deliberations states:

The minister will not participate in any deliberations on the matter in respect of which an interest is required to be and has been declared and will withdraw from the cabinet room during those deliberations.

It also states:

A minister will seek to avoid all situations in which his or her private interests, whether pecuniary or otherwise, conflict or have the potential to conflict with his or her public duty.

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN (Premier): I note a report in the *Australian* today which, obviously, is the basis of the deputy leader's question, and I note the minister's response to that query in the *Australian* today. That is, the minister did not profit, or otherwise, any differently from any other shareholder of the organisation; therefore the minister did not have any particular benefit approved to him.

Mr Hanna interjecting:

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

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: I did not hear what the member for Mitchell—

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

The SPEAKER: Order! There being a point of order, the Premier will resume his seat.

Mr SCALZI: The member for Mitchell reflected on all members—

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr SCALZI: They called us 'crooks'!

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. Has the Premier completed his remarks?

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: I simply indicate to the House that it is a subject that cabinet follows most carefully in its—

Members interjecting:

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: I can assure members that it does and there is no doubt that my cabinet colleagues would support me in that contention. It is a matter that we take most seriously and we act most properly.

INTERNATIONAL ROSE FESTIVAL

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON (Heysen): Will the Minister for Tourism outline the preparations that are in place to ensure the success of the Inaugural 2000 International Rose Festival which is being held in Adelaide's Botanic Park next week between the 19th and the 22nd?

The Hon. J. HALL (Minister for Tourism): I thank the member for Heysen for his question because, over many years, as we know, he has been particularly interested in gardens and the state of his beloved Adelaide Hills. The International Rose Festival will be launched by the Premier on 19 October and will extend over three days. It is the first festival of its kind in the southern hemisphere. Certainly the interest thus far, both interstate and internationally, has been very pleasing. As members may know, the rose industry, at this stage, is worth about \$50 million to our state. South Australia has an extraordinary reputation, well deserved, because it does grow more than half the roses in our country.

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. J. HALL: Yes, well, that is a thought. This festival, I believe, has all the hallmarks of being particularly successful, and I do urge members to take some interest in it because, hopefully, it will develop into a long-term festival for this state. The actual themes of the festival, I am sure, will interest some members. I suppose that when people think about international rose festivals they think about cut flowers. This festival, in the beautiful Botanic Garden, will have a theme bordering on theatrical to historical. The centrepiece of the actual festival will trace the history of the rose, which extends over 4 000 years.

I am sure that one particular theme will interest some members because it features the landscape of a Roman rose garden, complete with Cleopatra's milk bath. This international rose pavilion will truly be a site for enormous media coverage internationally, and garden clubs and rose clubs from around the world will be participating in this amazing event. The festival is being held at the Botanic Gardens and we are expecting approximately 20 000 to 30 000 visitors over the weekend. I hope that many members get the opportunity to visit the festival and participate. We have employed a creative director, Adrian Greenoak, who is internationally acclaimed for his involvement in developing rose festivals.

He is overseeing this particular festival and will be with us until the end of November. The Hon. Legh Davis has been pursuing this particular event for many years, and I thank the Premier for including this initiative in his support some years ago. A number of interstate and international journalists will be travelling to Adelaide to cover not only the rose festival but the opening of the magnificent new international rose garden which, we hope, will encourage rose lovers and garden lovers from around the world to visit our state at some stage in the future.

I am sure that members of this chamber are well aware that gardening is the second most popular leisure pastime in our country. Members may well ask: what is the first one? The most popular leisure pastime is sport and, from that perspective, we can all relate to both, particularly those who have a fondness for gardening. One aspect of this festival that is very important for rural members is the regional tours that have been organised and very well patronised. Regional tours will be travelling into the Coonawarra, through the Adelaide Hills and the Riverland. The bookings have been very strong and, certainly, those regional economies are of the view that festivals such as this not only benefit the City of Adelaide but our substantial regional economies.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is a point of order. The minister will resume her seat. The member for Elder.

Mr CONLON: Mr Speaker, I recognise your limited powers but this is a blatant abuse of question time and this material should be in a ministerial statement.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The chair is not in a position to uphold that point of order because the minister is confining herself strictly to specific facts and not straying into debate. The standing order allows her to do that. The minister is aware, of course, that she can use a ministerial statement if necessary, but I cannot technically pull her up. The honourable minister.

The Hon. J. HALL: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am surprised that the member for Elder is not particularly interested in this festival because I think that festivals such as this are an extraordinarily important part of the economic growth in tourism in our state. Can I conclude my remarks—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! Has the minister completed her remarks?

The Hon. J. HALL: Yes, Mr Speaker.

INFORMATION ECONOMY, MINISTER FOR

Ms HURLEY (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): What action does the Premier intend to take in relation to the Minister for Information Economy who, it was reported today, has purchased shares in information technology companies since becoming the minister responsible for information technology, given the cabinet handbook rules, which state:

Ministers must divest themselves of shareholdings in any company in respect of which a conflict of interest exists as a result of their portfolio responsibilities or could reasonably be expected to exist.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order, the leader!

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier has the call.

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN (Premier): As I mentioned earlier, I personally take these matters seriously. We act diligently, properly and appropriately, and I will ensure that it is always done.

AMERICAN FOUL BROOD

Mr LEWIS (Hammond): I intended to ask the Premier a question and I offer him my condolences. Instead, I direct my question to the Deputy Premier. Is he concerned about the illegal and grossly irresponsible, growing practice of some apiarists in dosing with antibiotics beehives that are infested with American foul brood? If he is concerned—

The SPEAKER: Order! I rule that question out of order because it anticipates a motion that is already on the *Notice Paper*.

Mr LEWIS: I seek information about the matter, Mr Speaker. It does not anticipate the debate at all. That is outrageous.

The SPEAKER: The chair's ruling is that the member is anticipating a motion that is already on the *Notice Paper*. The member for Elder.

WEB SITES

Mr CONLON (Elder): In the light of the Premier's worried request yesterday in relation to anyone having information about who Rod Ashcroft is and why he has registered the name johnolsen.com, is the Premier aware that the same Rod Ashcroft of Cheltenham, Victoria, has also registered the domain names of other famous Australian artists such as jeffreysmart.com, fredwilliams.com and hansheysen.com? Would the Premier concede that he may have mistaken himself for a famous Australian artist?

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN (Premier): I would be delighted to be replaced by John Olsen the painter and the artist, and I would be interested to see whether the dotcom has had any activity on it related to arts or politics. I simply say to the member for Elder that I am glad he has apprised the House of whom the person was who registered the www.johnolsen.com site. To take that one step further, it really does underscore the importance of the issue. People charge a fee; that is, they register the site and then charge a

fee to pass it back. There will be no such fee for the leader.

GRIEVANCE DEBATE

Ms STEVENS (Elizabeth): On 21 September, the Director of the Emergency Department at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Dr Robert Dunn, issued the following memo, and I would like to read it into *Hansard* in full. It states:

Over the last 18 months, I have been steadily reporting deterioration in Emergency Department performance to executive with requests that this is passed on to the board and a strategy to address this situation is devised.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! There are too many audible conversations over the member for Elizabeth. I ask members to be silent.

Ms STEVENS: It continues:

To date, no strategies have been employed that have reversed the continued trend of deteriorating conditions in the emergency department. In the last 2½ weeks the emergency department has been required to go on bypass on six separate occasions—conditions have been so overcrowded with patients awaiting beds that the safety of additional patients could not be guaranteed. In addition, patients have been herded together in overcrowded cubicles and staff subject to frequent threats and abuse. Patients detained under the Mental Health Act have had to share cubicles with other (non-detained) patients while being guarded, with some staying in the department for two days before a bed is found.

Emergency department overcrowding is endemic, with 143 patients in August waiting greater than 12 hours in the emergency department for admission and the average bed occupancy of the department reaching an unbelievable 107 per cent! Not surprisingly, waiting times have skyrocketed, the patient complaint rate has risen alarmingly and the number of patients who do not wait to be seen now frequently exceeds 10 per cent. Waiting time performance has decreased 22 per cent in one year (80 per cent of all patients seen within time versus 58 per cent of all patients seen within time [one year ago]) and we have recently had one patient who immediately before a period of bypass waited 10 hours before being seen. Waiting times in the QEH in the emergency department for less urgent cases are now amongst the worst in the country.

Staff morale is low and falling fast, rates of sick leave have markedly increased and junior doctors are increasingly reticent to work in the emergency department. The conditions for patients and staff have never been as bad—even in the dark days of 1996.

I cannot put this any more plainly. The emergency department is under extreme pressure and every measurable parameter is deteriorating at an ever increasing rate. Staff are barely managing this degree of stress and I do not believe this level of activity can be maintained without a major adverse effect on them. It is also inevitable that a major adverse patient outcome will occur in the near future—minor incidents are already occurring frequently. In short, this department is heading for a crisis. At this time, I believe it may be avoidable—in another month (when registered medical officer numbers drop by 50 per cent) it may not be.

I also note that, during the month of August, only 50 elective patients (half medical, half surgical) were cancelled at the QEH. Whilst I understand that many elective cases require urgent attention and there are major inefficiencies in their cancellation, the rate appears to be quite low. It is clear that the fundamental issue is lack of funding of the health service. However, it appears the emergency department is bearing a greater burden of the problem than some other areas.

The director goes on but I will not put any more on the record at this time. Let me reiterate: our hospitals are bleeding; our hospitals are in crisis. This is an appalling state of affairs at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. The minister stood here in this House today and, again, did the usual thing: he talked about the federal government and nursing homes but he failed at any stage in his answer to acknowledge the fact that this government cut growth funding to our hospitals to the tune

of \$30 million last year. This year's health budget was a cut in real terms and we are now seeing the result of that. Consequences follow actions and this is what we are seeing in our hospitals; this is what this government will stand accountable for when we go to the election. We are going to ensure that all the community knows just how bad it is.

Mr MEIER (Goyder): As most members would be aware, yesterday, 11 October, heralded the third anniversary of the election of the Olsen Liberal government. While members may expect me to highlight many of the achievements—and there have been many achievements—I will not take that opportunity. I have done that on quite a few occasions, and certainly there are many additional highlights I can mention.

What I do want to bring to the attention of members today is my disappointment that so many members in this House continue to read their speeches. Members would be aware that we have our own standing orders, and that those standing orders cover many different situations but, where the standing orders do not cover a situation, then we refer to Erskine May. In fact, if we look at page 372 of Erskine May, *Parliamentary Practice*, 22nd edition 1997, under the heading 'Reading speeches' we see the following:

A member is not permitted to read his speech, but he may refresh his memory by referring to notes.

It is something that has started to creep in far too much, in my opinion. When I first came in here I was told that I should have my maiden speech written and should not rely on memory and simply use notes but that I needed to make a good job of it. I took that advice and had the whole speech written out and knew exactly how long it would go. Many members here have prepared speeches and refer to a fair amount of the written document, and there is nothing wrong with that. In fact, Erskine May covers that point where he states further that members may use 'copious notes'. Another section from Erskine May states:

Unless appealed to, the chair does not normally intervene to enforce the rule against reading a speech; and, unless there is good ground in the interests of the debate for intervening, the matter is usually passed off with a remark to the effect that the notes used by the honourable member appear to be unusually full, or the honourable member has provided himself with rather copious notes.

That was probably the practice much more a few years ago. I believe that all members have now been in the House for a minimum of three years and therefore have had an opportunity to seek to develop a speaking style without the need to read a speech. There are exceptions when speeches can be read, and again Erskine May covers that, as follows:

The rule against reading speeches is, in any case, relaxed for opening speeches or whenever there is special reason for precision, as in important ministerial statements, notably on foreign affairs, in matters involving agreements with outside bodies or in highly technical bills.

That is certainly the case here in ministerial statements, almost without exception. I was very interested when I visited the British parliament the better part of three years ago now. In fact, it was just at the time when the change of government occurred, because we saw the first question time after Tony Blair had become Prime Minister. The questions at that time were not read: they were all off the cuff. I well recall two occasions when members were reading their questions and the interjection from opposite was of enormous volume, saying, 'You're reading your question!' The member concerned had to forgo reading the question and ask it off the

cuff. It was interesting to see how ministers handled the questions, too; they certainly did not read off their specified answers. It was off the cuff and usually short, sharp and shiny and they certainly hit hard. This parliament has to consider the matters on which we base our traditions and get back to them.

Mrs GERAGHTY (Torrens): We often hear a great deal from this government about the way it supports small business and actually encourages small business to grow. Well, I believe that many existing local businesses are ignored by this government, and the small businesses themselves are saying that. They are very concerned and frustrated, because they are employing our local people. I would like to know how many existing small businesses the government supports and what sort of assistance and encouragement they are getting. Of particular concern to me is that I know of one small business which employs six or seven people, yet it cannot get a look-in when the government is tendering or outsourcing any work. That is the reason why I am asking these questions. I want to know what steps are taken to ensure that South Australian businesses are promoted and supported by our state government.

Certainly a big growth area in South Australia is where companies come here from overseas and either win contracts or establish businesses here, but we do not actually see any government incentives or directives to those overseas companies to either use Australian made products or specifically look at using existing businesses within South Australia. Some of the small businesses themselves are telling me that, once an overseas company is engaged or wins that contract, the government runs out and glorifies itself in the media over the fact that we have another contract in South Australia and another overseas company has come here to set up in our state. Then it rushes off to look for some more headlines to promote itself, but nobody is assisting these small businesses. Numerous state based small businesses employ local people who spend their wage packets in our local communities and send their kids to our local schools, and they contribute not just to the immediate community economy but also more broadly than that.

A particular company that I am concerned about can supply for a major contract that was recently approved by the state government but, instead, this overseas company that has the contract here in South Australia is not using any of the local suppliers that it could use. There is an agent here in South Australia who is the sole agent for this state for an overseas manufacturer. Along with many others, this company does not necessarily manufacture products but has become the sole distributor for overseas manufacturers. The company that has won a contract here is not, as one would think, using the local sole agent distributor: it is using an overseas distributor. I think that is wrong. Certainly, if you come from another country you obviously have allegiances to that country, and obviously you would want that country's economy to grow but, when you win contracts in this state and a lot of money is provided to do those things, you ought to be using as much local product as you possibly can.

If they come here and get benefits from our state, and most of the profits they earn go offshore, they must put something back here. We would like to see the government offer some incentives and direct these businesses to use local components or, where there is a local agent for some component they need, to use that agent. That is very important, and it would certainly send a message out to small businesses that

we do care about them and that we are not just leaving them out there to flounder. We have lost many jobs in South Australia and, even if this created just one more, it would be a good thing.

Mr VENNING (Schubert): This morning I had the honour of opening the 66th Apex national convention at the Chateau Tanunda in the Barossa Valley. It was a great occasion for me, not only to open a national event and pay my tribute to Apex, but also to be present at the first public event held at the historic Chateau Tanunda since its restoration and ownership by Mr John Geber. Restoration is still continuing, and it looks fantastic. Some 160 delegates from all states and overseas assembled on the croquet green. Tom and Wendy Chapman were there. Tom is a life Governor of Apex. I reminded the meeting in my speech that the Hindmarsh Bridge eventually was joined across the Murray yesterday, and it brought great cheers and sighs from the crowd. I also reminded the assembled Apexians from all over of the significance of the Barossa Valley and that of the wine industry to South Australia, particularly now that it has replaced grain growing as our chief export. Certainly, they were very interested in that.

Apex had its origins in Geelong, Victoria, on 10 March 1931, during the depression years, and one of the founders of Apex, Mr Ewen Laird, died only a few months ago. It was obvious that Mr Laird was one of a group of men with true vision to set the wheels in motion to establish an organisation that has seen and continues to see such success. We have seen Apex Australia grow to have approximately 395 chartered clubs, representing 376 men's and/or mixed gender clubs and 19 women's clubs, with some 4 500 members in total. It is pleasing to note that Apex is no longer gender biased, as I do not believe we have enough mixed gender service clubs helping our communities.

I note with interest that the symbol of the Apex badge is an equilateral triangle, with the base representing citizenship, the sides fellowship, rising to the apex, depicting the height of ambition and the rising sun symbolising the rising generations of youth. The mission statement of Apex we all know is to grow, learn, make friends and have fun, which I believe captures true and honest ideals that our society should be pursuing. Apex is aimed at the younger adult members of our community, and I certainly feel very passionate about that. I strongly believe that the future of our state and nation lies in our youth, and without appropriate training and development our youth will be ill-prepared to take on leadership roles when called upon.

Apex Australia truly performs this essential role in our society. In times when younger people are glued to computer screens, playing games or wandering around the internet for whatever reason, many do not know how to communicate or interact with other human beings. Apex is an organisation in which young people can build self-confidence and self-esteem to tackle life's journey. It instils in people a sense of teamwork and cooperation, training in how to solve problems and a sense of community spirit. I have seen examples of Apex working in the community all over—too many to list here. I certainly recognise the cooperation that Apex enjoys with other service clubs such as Rotary, Rotoract, Lions, Rural Youth and many others.

I also commend Apex on the Apex Australia project, which is raising funds for the Kids Helpline, an excellent initiative. Apex Australia, like other service clubs, is a voluntary organisation, and I pay tribute to our government's

recognition of volunteers and their organisations. This state government provides more than \$6 million per annum to support volunteer groups across the state. Government ministers are looking at how they can improve the way in which their portfolios support volunteers, and they can be sure that the money is allocated in the most efficient and appropriate way. The Hon. Iain Evans, himself a past Apex National President, has been appointed the minister with responsibility for the government's activities in this area and welcomes suggestions and input from service clubs to assist in this role.

I note that the Hon. Angus Redford is also a past National President of Apex. It was a pleasure to be there this morning, and I pay the highest tribute to Apex across Australia.

Ms BREUER (Giles): Today I will discuss the education review that is currently being held in Whyalla. This review has been going on for some time, and at the moment it is at a fairly extensive consultation stage with the community. One of the unfortunate consequences of the population decline that is happening in regional communities is that many of our schools are under threat because of the numbers. In Whyalla, this is particularly sad for us because we have had so many events in recent times that have rocked the community, and the prospects of losing one or two schools there is certainly worrying our community.

Today I want to address the situation with the Neta Kranz Kindergarten in Whyalla, and I call on the Minister for Education and Children's Services to give an assurance that it will be retained at its current site and that the department is acting in good faith to ensure that the kindergarten will be retained at its current site. The background to this is that on 23 March this year I wrote to the minister and said that the actions of the departmental officers in relation to the Neta Kranz Kindergarten were reprehensible. This kindergarten is located on land that was owned by the Uniting Church. Prior to the sale of the freehold by the Uniting Church the church offered to roll over the kindergarten's lease for a 25 year period for the peppercorn sum of \$10 per year, which would have been a grand total of \$200. However, without any consultation with the staff, the parent community or the wider community, departmental officers decided not to accept the Uniting Church's offer and, in so doing, attempted to preempt the recommendations of the current education review in Whyalla.

The recommendations of the Whyalla education review contained in the draft discussion paper which is being prepared for community consultation calls for the retention of the Neta Kranz Kindergarten at the current site. That position will be overwhelmingly endorsed by the wider community and has already been endorsed by the Whyalla City Council. Enrolments at the Neta Kranz Kindergarten are higher than those at other Whyalla kindergartens, and it is a high quality facility with dedicated staff and a committed parent body. Whyalla is particularly fortunate in having such an excellent preschool neighbourhood based system, and it has been there for many years.

The concern now is that the department is about to compound it is original reprehensible action by deliberating delaying negotiations with the new owner until Christmas. Under the cover of the Christmas break, while staff and parents are not on the scene, the kindy could be closed.

I hope the information that has been supplied to me by a whistleblower is wrong, but a measure of how badly the department has acted to date in relation to this issue is that we

cannot lightly dismiss that information. The minister has been to Neta Kranz Kindergarten, knows it is an excellent facility and has said that to me. I know that he was reasonably supportive of keeping the kindergarten at its present site, and we are asking that he give staff, parents and the wider community in Whyalla an assurance that the facility will be retained at that site.

Today I also want to quickly mention Operation Flinders, which operates in the north of the state and is a program to rehabilitate young offenders and young people at risk. I was fortunate recently to spend a weekend at Operation Flinders and was most impressed with what I saw there. Young offenders are easily identified, but young people at risk are usually defined as young people who are in danger of offending, not completing school, becoming addicted to drugs or leaving home. As a general rule, they work with young people between the ages of 13 and 18 years, with the average age being around 15 years; and 34 per cent of their participants are female, while 8 per cent are of Aboriginal descent.

In the past 12 months 238 young people have participated in Operation Flinders. They attend an eight day trek in the far northern part of the Flinders Ranges, walk about 120 kilometres, abseil, learn about Aboriginal culture and skills and participate in a number of staged challenges. They carry their personal gear and walk from stand to stand. They are accompanied by a team leader, have two councillors, usually someone who is training to be a team leader, and often a young peer group or mentor—someone who has been through the course before. They are looking at self-esteem and self confidence. The results have been fantastic, but the funding is always under threat. I ask that this government and we as an opposition look at this and continue to maintain funding for this organisation. It is a tough program but it is not cruel. I went there originally thinking it was a boot camp, but it certainly is not at all. Some of the people there are some of the most incredible people I have seen.

Time expired.

Mr SCALZI (Hartley): Today I wish to commend the work of volunteers, particularly at a school council level. A lot has been said recently about volunteers, and I know the member for Schubert spoke about volunteers and in particular the government support of \$6 million a year for volunteers.

I pay particular tribute to Graeme Young, who is presently the vice chair of Newton Primary School, not only for his work on the school council—and he has been on the school council for 29 years—but also his work in coordinating soccer, not only at Newton, but this year he has been the coordinator for Newton-Hectorville Primary School soccer. In other words, there has been a combined team from the two schools before the merge. I think that is commendable.

When I was elected and I first went to a Newton Primary School council meeting, I will never forget the approach that Graeme Young took. He introduced me and said, 'This is Joe Scalzi, our local member, and, in keeping with the tradition of the past, you can ask him any questions about education and schools, but no political questions.' I know that he has the respect of the former member Terry Groom, of whom he speaks highly, and there has never been a problem. Looking back over the 29 years, obviously he must have welcomed Des Corcoran and Len King and, perhaps in the change of boundaries in that 29 years, many other members who have been in this place. I have certainly found his approach to the school council very refreshing. That is what it should be about: concentrate on the importance of the school.

As I said, Graeme Young has also played a very important role in supporting soccer, and the Newton schoolgrounds are the grounds used for eastern district soccer. On Saturday 7 October the end of the season barbecue and trophy presentation was held in the Newton Primary School. Unfortunately, I was not able to attend but Graeme Young, the soccer coordinator, welcomed Ross Joel, who is the Principal of Hectorville Primary School, and Judi Francis, the Principal of Newton Primary School, as well as players, parents and friends. Also present were Mrs Ros Tiller and Greg Dickson, staff members at Hectorville Primary School; and Mrs Rhonda Cheal, Mrs Pauline Osborne and Mr John Iannunzio, staff members at Newton Primary School. Graeme Young thanked them for their assistance over the year. There is no doubt that soccer is a success story at Newton Primary School and I think the work that Graeme Young has put into soccer surely should be acknowledged. The parents were thanked.

I mention the coaches' trophies: under 9 Sophie Cardinale, under 11 Jade Kalweit, and under 13 Alex Kulikovskiy. The under 11 and 13 coach, Mr Michael Prodromou, donated an extra trophy to players from each team for the most improved player: under 11 Adam Pinzone and under 13 Peter Karakasilis. Mr Prodromou said he would coach the next year's team. And that will be the combined school again and that is great to see. Three players from Newton Primary School were selected in the SAPSASA Torrens River District Team. They were Peter Karakasilis, Stefan Welch and Irene Prodromou. Irene also played in the SAPSASA state team. None of this would be possible without the hard work that volunteers put into schools and on school councils, and today I congratulate Graeme Young for all the work he has done.

Time expired.

ASSOCIATIONS INCORPORATION (OPPRESSIVE OR UNREASONABLE ACTS) AMENDMENT BILL

Received from the Legislative Council and read a first time.

EDUCATION (COUNCILS AND CHARGES) AMENDMENT BILL

The Hon. J. HALL (Minister for Tourism) obtained leave and introduced a bill for an act to amend the Education Act 1972 and to make a related amendment to the Children's Services Act 1985. Read a first time.

The Hon. J. HALL: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

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

Leave granted.

The purpose of this Bill is to amend the *Education Act 1972* to establish a system of governance and management of government schools and to allow a range of compulsory and voluntary charges.

For governance and management of government schools, the intent of the amendment is to establish, in the Act:

- a system of governance based upon school councils and governing councils as incorporated bodies operating under a constitution approved by the Minister;
- the flexibility and risk management required to implement governance and local management of schools;
- provisions for affiliated committees to operate under a constitution, approved by the Minister.

This amendment provides that every school council is a body corporate that operates under a constitution approved by the Minister, and is not an agency or instrumentality of the Crown. The requirement for approval of the constitution will allow schools the

flexibility, not currently available to them through legislation, to reflect local considerations in their governance regime.

The constitution adopted by a council will distinguish between a governing council and a school council. It will specify the membership and the wide-ranging functions of a council, including accounting and auditing procedures and practices.

Provision is made for the establishment and dissolution of school councils and governing councils in a range of situations to accommodate new and existing individual schools, amalgamation, clustering and closure of schools. It is proposed that future councils will determine whether they are to be established as governing councils, or not.

The functions and responsibilities of head teachers who work with a governing council will change, commensurate with the strengthened role and functions of the governing council from an advisory to a decision-making body. The roles of both will be articulated, they will jointly exercise authority and control, and will therefore have responsibility for the successful integration of leadership, governance and management.

The head teacher will continue to be the educational leader, and will be accountable both to the governing council and the Chief Executive for the management of the site, with responsibility for the supervision of all staff.

Council accountability will be strengthened to reflect its greater powers. It will be accountable to the Minister for Education and Children's Services and responsible to the whole community for the strategic objectives and policies of the school or preschool.

All government schools will have either a school council or a governing council. Government schools will teach programs consistent with the department's broad curriculum goals as defined by the Curriculum Standards and Accountability Framework, and the department will remain the employing authority for teachers.

Students will continue to have right of access to their local school or preschool. The increased staffing flexibility afforded by local management will respect the industrial rights of employees, and staffing entitlements for schools and preschools will be based on current industrial agreements and will be the same for all departmental schools and preschools.

Under proposed arrangements, it will be possible for a governing council to operate as the Management Committee for a children's services centre within the meaning of the *Children's Services Act 1985*.

The amendment ensures that protection is given to council members in the proper discharge of their duties, but also gives power to the Minister to remove council members should certain specific circumstances arise, and, in writing, to suspend powers or functions of councils in urgent circumstances.

The status of affiliated committees will be enhanced through provision for them to also operate under a constitution approved by the Minister. The constitution is to contain provisions regarding its membership, functions, meetings, accounting and auditing practices and conduct.

For compulsory materials and services charges, the intent of the amendment is to establish in the Act:

- a compulsory materials and services charge in respect of students who reside in South Australia and who are eligible for permanent residency in Australia;
- authority for the Director-General to establish charges for tuition, materials and services in respect of full-fee-paying non-residents, and in certain other circumstances;
- provision for charges in respect of elective curricular activities undertaken by students;
- provision for voluntary contributions to be made to schools by parents of students.

The materials and services charge will be limited to course materials such as stationery, books, apparatus, equipment, organised activities or other materials and services, the lease or hire of curriculum-related goods and the costs directly related to an education course, and other activities provided in accordance with the curriculum determined by the Director-General.

The maximum compulsory charge will be prescribed in the Act, applying respectively to secondary and primary courses of instruction across the government school system (excluding preschool, which is exempt from compulsory charges in accordance with Government policy). The head teacher is responsible for fixing the materials and services charge which must be approved by the school council. Any amount up to the maximum amount will be subject to legal recovery in a court by a school council. In the event that legal

recovery of a debt is required, the school council is the legal entity who must take action through the court.

In order to ensure transparency to parents in the matter of charges, the payment advice issued by schools to parents must be in accordance with the instructions of the Director-General. The written notification to parents will clearly specify that the materials and services charge is a compulsory, legally-enforceable payment. If a voluntary contribution is also requested of parents, the discretionary nature of this component will be disclosed. It is intended that the Director-General's guidelines issued to all schools will require that all components must be itemised on the payment advice issued to parents.

The head teacher has the capacity to enable payment by instalments over the school year, with full payment being met, however, by the end of the third school term.

Charges can be waived or refunded where appropriate. Parents who qualify for School Card arrangements are not at present legally obliged to pay any portion of the materials and services charge, and this practice will continue. If there is a gap between the amount of the School Card and the amount of the compulsory charge, the gap payment may be requested as a voluntary contribution only, it will not be legally recoverable from the parent.

The Act will provide that a student must not be refused materials or services for non-payment of the materials and services charge by his or her parents, as responsibility for non-payment lies with the parent, not the student.

Activities made available to students on an elective basis will be subject to the payment of a fee, as is current practice and payment for these activities would be legally recoverable.

The Amendment Bill expands the powers of the Minister to include the provision of preschool, primary and secondary education or other educational services to students who do not reside in this State. This enables Australian students in other States seeking educational programs through on-line or correspondence courses in conjunction with studies in their home State to be enrolled in South Australian schools, and to be charged tuition and other fees.

In some circumstances, students of registered non-government schools participate in subjects delivered through the Open Access College. The amendment will regularise this arrangement, and enable the College, and other government schools, to fix fees and charges to the non-government school, and to exempt as appropriate. Similarly, schools will be able to apply fees and charges in respect of adults undertaking, on an elective basis, courses and training programs provided by government schools. However, such fees will not be applied to adults who re-enter government schools to complete their post-compulsory secondary education.

Relevant fees will be published by the Director-General in the *Government Gazette*.

I commend this bill to honourable members.

Explanation of Clauses

Clause 1: Short title

Clause 2: Commencement

These clauses are formal.

Clause 3: Amendment of s. 5—Interpretation

This clause inserts definitions necessary for the amendments contained in this measure.

In particular, it inserts a definition of a governing council—a school council for a Partnerships 21 site. The distinguishing feature is that the council is jointly responsible with the head teacher of the school for the governance of the school.

The definition of head teacher is substituted so that it results in a designation of a particular person as the head teacher of a school, rather than a description of the duties of a head teacher. In the case of governing councils, the responsibility of the head teacher for the governance of the school will be a joint responsibility with the governing council.

Clause 4: Amendment of s. 9—General powers of Minister

A new subsection is added to make it clear that the Minister may provide correspondence courses to students who reside interstate or overseas.

Clause 5: Substitution of Part 8

The Part dealing with school councils is substituted.

PART 8

SCHOOL COUNCILS

83. *School councils*

This section reflects the current situation that all Government primary and secondary schools have school councils.

As in the current Act, the section contemplates that there may be one school council for a group of schools and a school council is given the status of a body corporate.

The requirement for a school council to operate under a constitution is new. Currently, the Act and the regulations govern various aspects of the operation of school councils.

The new section includes express recognition that school councils are not agencies or instrumentalities of the Crown.

84. *Constitution of school council*

This section sets out various matters that must be included in the constitution of a school council.

In the case of a governing council, the council is to be given a role (specified in the constitution) in respect of—

- strategic planning for the school;
- determining policies for the school;
- determining the application of the total financial resources available to the school;
- presenting operational plans and reports on its operations to the school community and the Minister.

The members of a governing council are to comply with a code of practice approved by the Minister and the council is required to participate in a scheme for the resolution of disputes between the council and the head teacher.

The section contemplates a governing council also constituting the management committee of a registered children's services centre.

The section also contemplates the functions of school councils extending to pre-school education and the education, care, recreation, health or welfare of students outside of school hours.

Allowance is made for a constitution to provide for the establishment of committees which may comprise members, non-members or both members and non-members and for delegations to committees or to other school councils.

85. *Establishment and dissolution of school councils*

This section provides for the establishment of school councils for Government or proposed Government schools and the restructuring of school councils where schools are amalgamated or councils are to be amalgamated or split.

The Minister is to determine the constitution under which a newly established school council is to operate. However, a governing council constitution cannot be chosen unless the council is replacing one or more existing governing councils.

Where restructuring occurs, provision is made for the distribution of assets and liabilities of a dissolved school council by order of the Minister without payment of stamp duty.

86. *Affiliated committees (eg Parents & Friends)*

This section is similar to the existing provision for the establishment of affiliated committees.

As with school councils, the requirement for an affiliated committee to operate under a constitution approved by the Minister is new.

87. *Constitution of affiliated committee*

This section sets out the types of provisions to be included in the constitution.

88. *Amendment of constitution of school council or affiliated committee*

Under this section an amendment to a constitution proposed by a school council or affiliated committee is of no effect until approved by the Minister. A school council may only submit an amendment to the constitution of the council that would result in the council becoming a governing council to the Minister for approval if the council, the head teacher of the school and the Director-General are signatories to an agreement that contemplates that result.

The Minister is given power to direct a school council or affiliated committee to amend its constitution, but only after having given 3 months notice to the council or committee and given proper consideration to any representations.

The Minister cannot give a direction under this section that would result in the school council becoming a governing council. That can only be achieved through approval of an amendment to the constitution submitted to the Minister by the council.

89. *Model constitutions*

The Minister may publish model constitutions. Any alterations to the model must be noted and the Minister is given absolute discretion to approve or refuse to approve a constitution that contains such an alteration.

90. *Copies of constitutions and codes of practice to be available for inspection*

Under this section the Minister is required to keep copies of constitutions and codes of practice available for public inspection.

91. *Limitation on power to deal with real property*

This limitation is the same as that under the current Act—the Minister's consent is required to any acquisition or disposal of real property by a school council.

92. *Limitation on power to borrow money*

This limitation is the same as that under the current Act—the Minister's consent is required before a school council may borrow money. Provision is made for a Treasurer's guarantee.

Details of the School Loans Advisory Committee are no longer set out in the Act but provision is still made for such a committee to be established to provide advice to the Minister on proposals of school councils to borrow money.

93. *General limitation in respect of curriculum, discipline and staff*

Subsection (1) makes it clear that a school council (including a governing council) is not to interfere in—

- the provision of instruction in accordance with the curriculum;
- the day to day management of the provision of that instruction;
- the administration of discipline within the school.

Subsections (2) and (3) largely reflect provisions currently in the regulations. Under these subsections, a school council is prevented from interfering in how staff members go about the performance of their duties.

94. *Conflict of interest*

This section elevates the conflict of interest provision from the regulations to the Act. A member of a school council must not take part in deliberations in relation to a contract or proposed contract in which the member has a direct or indirect pecuniary interest.

95. *Accounts*

The Director-General or Auditor-General is given power to inspect and audit the accounts of a school council or affiliated committee.

96. *Administrative instructions*

Under the current Act the Minister may issue binding administrative instructions relating to borrowing by school councils. Under the current regulations other administrative instructions may be issued.

This section generalises the power of the Minister to issue binding administrative instructions to school councils and affiliated committees.

97. *Minister's power to remove members*

This section gives the Minister power to remove a member of a school council or affiliated committee from office—

- for misconduct;
- for failure or incapacity to carry out the duties of office satisfactorily;
- if of the opinion that the membership should be reconstituted for various stipulated reasons;
- for any other reasonable cause.

98. *Minister's power to suspend powers or functions in urgent circumstances*

This section gives the Minister power to prohibit or restrict the exercise of a power or the performance of a function of a school council or affiliated committee if the Minister considers that necessary or desirable as a matter of urgency.

99. *Validity of acts*

This is a standard provision providing for the validity of acts of a council or committee despite a vacancy in membership or a defect in the election or appointment of a member. The current regulations only partially cover this matter.

100. *Immunity*

This provision provides immunity to members or former members of school councils, committees established by school councils and affiliated committees.

Clause 6: Insertion of ss. 106A to 106C

This clause inserts sections 106A to 106C which deal with charges.

106A. *Materials and services charge*

This section gives the head teacher of a Government school power to fix a materials and services charge for students enrolled at the school.

The section imposes certain restrictions on the setting of the charge namely that the charge is not to exceed a specified amount (subject to CPI increases), that in setting the charge, certain factors may and may not be taken into account and that the basis for the charge must be disclosed to the school council and the proposed charge approved by the council.

The section contemplates the setting of differential charges according to year level or any other factor.

Liability for the charge is provided for as follows:

- for a child student, the parents are liable;
- for a dependent adult student, the parents and the student are liable;
- for a non-dependent adult student, the student is liable.

The section provides that written notice must be given of the amount of the charge and that payment may not be required before 14 days from the date of the notice.

The section gives the head teacher of a Government school power, in a particular case or class of cases, to allow for payment of the charge by instalments, to waive or reduce the charge or to refund the charge in whole or in part. However, this power is subject to any directions of the Director. The section makes the charge recoverable as a debt due to the school council.

The section further provides that in any legal proceedings an apparently genuine certificate signed by the head teacher stating certain specified matters relating to an outstanding charge is, in the absence of proof to the contrary, proof of the matters so specified. This standard evidentiary provision essentially means that the onus would be on the person specified in the certificate as liable for the debt to disprove the matters specified.

A significant safeguard is afforded to students by the inclusion of a provision that prohibits the withholding of materials or services from a student by reason of non-payment of the charge.

106B. *Charges for certain overseas and non-resident students*

This section gives the Director-General power to fix charges for certain overseas students of Government schools and students of Government schools who reside outside the State.

The section contemplates the setting of differential charges according to year level, subject or any other factor.

Liability for the charge is set out as follows:

- for a child student, the parents are liable;
- for a dependent adult student, the parents and the student are liable;
- for a non-dependent adult student, the student is liable.

The section also gives the Director-General power, in a particular case or class of cases, to allow for payment of the charges by instalments, to waive or reduce the charges, to refund the charges in whole or in part or to require a person to give security (eg. a bond) for payment of the charges. The section makes the charge recoverable as a debt due to the Minister.

The section provides that in any legal proceedings an apparently genuine certificate signed by the head teacher stating certain specified matters relating to an outstanding charge is, in the absence of proof to the contrary, proof of the matters so specified. This standard evidentiary provision essentially means that the onus would be on the person specified in the certificate as liable for the debt to disprove the matters specified.

The section defines a 'student' as including a prospective student, so that application fees may be fixed pursuant to this section for prospective students.

106C. *Certain other payments unaffected*

This section provides that nothing in the Act prevents—

- charges being made for—
- instruction other than for that provided in accordance with the curriculum;
- extra-curricular activities;
- curricular activities not forming part of the core of compulsory activities (eg. excursions, performances at the school etc.);
- charges being made for instruction or activities for adults not enrolled in secondary education;
- charges being made to the governing authority of a non-Government school for a student of that school undertaking a course of instruction provided by a Government school;
- certain invitations being made to parents, students or others to make, or the receipt from such persons of, voluntary payments (eg. fund-raising payments) for the purposes of the school.

Clause 7: Amendment of s. 107—Regulations

This clause amends section 107 of the principal Act by removing references to certain matters to do with school councils, now covered by new Part 8. The clause also substitutes for subsection (2)(sa) a broad regulation-making power in respect of any matter pertaining to school councils, affiliated committees or their operation.

SCHEDULE 1

Transitional Provisions

Clause 1: Head teachers

This clause ensures that current head teachers remain designated as head teachers for the purposes of the Act.

Clause 2: School councils

This clause ensures that current school councils continue to operate. Each school council is given the opportunity to adopt a constitution and seek the Minister's approval of that constitution. The Minister may determine the constitution under which a council is to operate if no action is taken by the council within 6 months of commencement or if the Minister rejects the council's proposal. However, the Minister cannot determine that the constitution is to be that appropriate to a governing council unless the school is a Partnerships 21 site.

Clause 3: Affiliated committees

This clause ensures that current affiliated committees continue to operate. As with councils, affiliated committees are given an opportunity to adopt a constitution but may have one determined for them by the Minister if they do not do so within 6 months of commencement or if the Minister rejects the committee's proposal.

SCHEDULE 2

Amendment of Children's Services Act

This amendment complements proposed new section 84(3) by expressly contemplating that the management committee of a registered children's services centre may constitute a school council.

The Hon. M.D. RANN secured the adjournment of the debate.

ADDRESS IN REPLY

Adjourned debate on motion for adoption (resumed on motion). (Continued from page 167.)

Ms CICCARELLO (Norwood): I will be very brief with regard to my contribution to the Address in Reply and I do not want to prolong the agony that we have been subjected to in the last two weeks. Mr Deputy Speaker, you and I have had many discussions about the running of parliament and how it could become much more efficient. I feel very strongly about the address in reply and the amount of time that we devote to it. We are now in our second week of sitting and we have done nothing in terms of legislation which is of benefit to the state. Yes, members have been able to speak about various issues that I have no doubt are important to members of their community, but I feel that in this chamber we should be debating legislation. It is only through introducing bills and passing acts that we are going to improve the lot of people within our community.

However, there are various issues which are of importance to my community and I do not intend to debate them at length today. As I have said on many occasions, people feel that the community of Norwood is a very affluent community with very few problems, but I can say that we have particular issues in Norwood and one of them is the issue of aged care and nursing homes. I have had personal experience with a family member, my mother, in trying to get appropriate care and attention in nursing home accommodation for her. There are many people in the community who are currently suffering. We are told by the commonwealth government that in South Australia we have the highest percentage number of nursing beds per capita. However, I can cite instances in my community where, within the space of a month, two nursing homes closed down which meant that 50 extra places were

needed to be found for people within the community and it was very difficult.

People can understand that members of the family like to keep their aged within their own community rather than having them in nursing homes which might be a long way away and which causes problems for people who do not have access to transport if they want to see their aged relatives.

The other issue relates particularly to aged care for people of non-English speaking background and the lack of services available for these people. Within the Italian community we have two Italian nursing homes on the eastern and the western side of the city that do an excellent job. However, the number of beds available certainly are nowhere near enough to cover the needs of the Italian community. I have had experience in dealing with this problem. When we placed my mother in a nursing home we were assured that there were Italian speaking staff who would be able to address her needs. When it came to seeing what services were available, the matron's knowledge of Italian was having studied Italian for one year in primary school, and so she was not able to provide any extra assistance to my mother. I think that example is indicative of many other places.

Mental health is also a very serious issue within my community. As we have seen the deinstitutionalisation of people suffering from mental illness who now live in the many boarding houses we have in Norwood, we are now seeing people, particularly men, walking up and down the street with nothing to do with their time. They have no-one to look after them, assess their needs and ensure that they are taking the medication they need in order to be able to live a fruitful life. If people were to visit the boarding houses, they would discover that most of them are fairly unattractive, there are several beds to a room and there is no common area where people can spend some time recreating, watching television or whatever. There is nowhere for them to go, so they spend their time on the street, which leads to behaviour which many people in the community find offensive. But, again, where should the blame lie: with the people who do not have the means to look after themselves or the health system which is not looking after them?

We have heard from the Minister for Human Services over a considerable period about reports and recommendations on mental health within our state and what should be done; and recently there was an announcement that some millions of dollars would be put into mental health, but have we seen anything happen? No. I despair for those members of my community who have a real need.

I will not prolong my comments, because, as I have indicated, I feel that, if we have things to say in our Address in Reply contribution, we could insert that in *Hansard* and save the parliament an enormous amount of time. We are being roundly criticised by the community and the media for the fact that we do not spend much time in this parliament and the time that we do spend in here is not very productive. I certainly do not want to contribute to being unproductive and I do wish that we could do something about improving the conduct of this parliament.

Mr LEWIS (Hammond): The first thing I want to do is offer my condolences to the Premier on his recent bereavement. The next thing I want to do is congratulate His Excellency, Sir Eric, and Lady Neal on the job which they do. Referring to His Excellency, I relate my remarks not just to his bringing before us the address to the parliament outlining the government's plan of business as is the purpose of this

debate but also to his role in seeing that the public of South Australia are reassured that the role of the head of state is separate from and independent of government when it comes to the constitutional function of that office. Because it is there, it naturally has to give the imprimatur to the will of parliament as expressed in the acts which parliament deigns to pass. They do not become law without that imprimatur, but they are advised, the heads of state in our constitution, that the government of the day through the form of Executive Council wishes assent to be given so that such acts become law.

The most important function of all then is that direct and immediate exercisable responsibility of dismissing a government which is acting unconstitutionally—acting outside the law—and leaving it to the people to decide who their individual representatives should be electorate by electorate; and, once the House is reconstituted following the return of the writs, it is known whether or not any one member of the parliament has a sufficient number of supporters to form a government. That is the difference between ourselves and the Slobodan Milosevic problem where you get a fool, a naive and an evil man who is all but a dictator, and nonetheless compelled to go to an election, and in the belief that they might win they go to that election, but once the election result is known they will not cede power. In the instance of Milosevic in Yugoslavia he did not do so, because there was no-one superior and senior to himself. That is the danger, I say, in having a constitution structured in that fashion: you end up with despots doing things that are illegal.

Since the last time that we had the privilege of the parliament being opened by our Governor, Sir Eric Neal, we have seen other things happen in a similarly constituted democracy in Fiji where one person, with a bunch of supporters, simply defeated the intention of the electorate and the result of an election, and forced the issue back to the point where the constitution is to be rewritten in Fiji. That is sad, but I want to make the point that it is interesting to note that all the indigenous people of Fiji are trying to do is what I hear so many other people in Australian parliaments and public life telling us we should do; that is, give land rights and control of certain elements of the constitutional function of parliament and government to the hands of the so-called indigenous people.

To my mind then, on the one hand, members of parliament in the states and in Canberra prate about George Speight acting illegally and seeking and obtaining through those actions, be they illegal, the result for the indigenous Fijians that he and they wanted as being bad; and, on the other hand here, they support and encourage similar misconduct among people who claim to be descended at least in part from the inhabitants of this continent prior to the arrival of other folk from elsewhere in the world such as Europe and other places more recently, and that is hypocritical—and I will leave that matter at that point.

The next point I draw attention to is the general construct of what the government has said it wants to do in this coming session. It did not address the great issues of concern in the electorate abroad at this stage and it touted its own view of its actions as being great and for the benefit of the public and the state. One of the things that has been touted as being great is the sale of the electricity assets—broken up and sold. As I said whilst I was still a member of the government party—and I will continue to say—I agree with that in broad principle, but I disagree utterly with the model that was chosen and now we can see the botch that is coming out.

My preferred model was for the consumers to be given a chance, at the domestic level in the first instance, to take shares, at least in the retailing business of electricity, if not in the whole lot, and make it a public company that was substantially owned by its consumers. Many of the problems now confronting us would not have arisen, and I draw members' attention to one of them. One after another I will go. The first is this: you now have Australian Gaslight, which owns the retailing business, pursuing people for debts that were incurred to ETSA before it was even touted as being appropriate for privatisation.

Going back years it is chasing up people who have owed ETSA money. Those people should have paid their debts—let me make that plain—but the fact is that they did not and ETSA, in its own time and under its management, accountable to the government of the day, whether that was Labor or Liberal, chose not to pursue those people. The retailing arm has now been sold and some smart Alec senior middle manager has decided to make a name for himself as a debt collector and get a lot of money quickly through using tactics that no government would dare use—fear, coercion and threatening in all sorts of ways that are not documented—on people who owe money from years ago: if they do not pay things will go wrong for them.

I do not sympathise with anyone who does not pay their bills, but I do sympathise that if they have not paid their bill, and the instrumentality to which they owed the money decided to forgo it, it is not the prerogative of someone who then buys that instrumentality to go out and pursue those customers who were there before for the funds that were owed by them to the former business. If that continues it will just not be a major white-out for the Liberal Party in terms of the numbers being slashed at the next election: there will hardly be a Liberal member left in this place.

Mr Foley: Really?

Mr LEWIS: That is the way I see it—the backlash that will come from ordinary people who see it as grossly unfair and improper for Australian Gaslight's debt collection agency to go out now and attempt to collect those bills and enforce its will. That is quite wrong.

The other thing that I see as having gone wrong was the choice of technology for the Pelican Point power station, and that cost me a friendship of more than 20 years with the current Treasurer—but the way that the Treasurer is behaving I am well rid of him. I will have something more to say about that in a minute, but the technology that was chosen is wrong, and every month that goes by more and more power utilities around the world are choosing the cooling tower technology which has modules in it.

You add the number of modules required for the site and you adjust the number you use according to the amount of electricity that you are generating at the moment and expect to be generating within the next short time frame, of an hour or so.

Mr Foley interjecting:

Mr LEWIS: It does indeed and, quite properly, the member for that district (now known as Hart, formerly Semaphore) points out that Boral has a power plant there that uses cooling tower technology. The big picture looks about the same but the bottom line is very different because if one goes for direct heat discharge, as the Treasurer has and the fools that he had advising him in ERSU (direct heat discharge for the Port River), one will find that, on the hottest of days, and if there happens to be a dodge tide, it will cut the capacity of that power station to the point where we will not be able

to cope with the demands being placed on our total generating capacity.

And we do not have the means by which we can import that power through the inadequate interconnector that we have at the Victorian border and the other interconnectors which we might otherwise have had with New South Wales but which are not there because of the policy of the government in deciding that it would not allow an interconnection between New South Wales and South Australia to compete. It wanted to maximise the amount of money that it would get for the licence for the Pelican Point power station. Foolishly, in my judgment, it has granted that licence to National Power, which will use it in a bargaining toggle, knowing that it can always supply notionally—it is the virtual pond of electricity—from its Moe-based power station of some 1 700 to 1 800 megawatts. It will use Pelican Point to stoke up a higher price level where it bids into that pool when it expects weather conditions to enable it to get higher prices, and we will suffer.

I also criticise then the structure of the market, which is now being interpreted to mean something different to what was explained to me by the Treasurer and the fools who have been advising him over this deal, and they are fools.

Mr Foley: Who?

Mr LEWIS: The people in ERSU.

Mr Foley interjecting:

Mr LEWIS: Totally incompetent. They do not deserve a cent. They should pay us to enable them to publicise the fact that they got a job here. They do not even deserve to be indentured as apprentices in anything, leave alone paid the millions. It was not just a couple of hundred thousand dollars or a couple of million dollars: it is in excess of \$30 million.

Mr Foley: What are the backgrounds of some of these people?

Mr LEWIS: Yes, they are terrible. I wish I had time to explain that, and I am sure that the member for Hart knows very well what their backgrounds are. A mistake has been made there now. We were supposed to get a deregulated market for our consumers in which it would be possible for them to shop around for the cheapest power. That was supposed to begin in the next few months but it cannot do so because there is not adequate power available this coming summer in the pool of real deliveries that must be made in South Australia to enable those power demands to be met. So, the market is constrained by that amount.

I think that has very serious implications for South Australia's smaller businesses and domestic consumers, who will suffer brownouts and blackouts, I will wager, if there is to be anything like normal heatwaves this coming summer. I could go on about that. I mention it only because my credibility as a member in this place depends on my being able to demonstrate to my electors that I am aware and alert to these things based, at least, on the factual information I am given.

My policy position has always been, as you know, sir, that good policy cannot be at odds with good science. The science must be there; the facts must be established; and, once that is done, you have the framework within which it is possible to develop policy options—and the policy that comes out of that is more likely than not to be successful. However, if your policy option is at odds with good science to start with and ignores facts in the second level, then the decision tree you use from which to select the policy option will always be more likely than not to fail. That is the kind of truth that I am sure that members of ERSU have never understood. They were certainly not trained in logic.

Let me now turn to the effects of government policy on regional development boards. As I see it, the government is simply taking money out of one hand that it was giving to regional development boards, rebadging it and giving it back in another and claiming publicly that it has handed out another couple of million dollars, or thereabouts. I have said previously that is really terrible politics, and I could use expressions in shorter form than—

Mr Foley: Don't hold back.

Mr LEWIS: Hot, steamy, green, soft, sloppy—

Mr Foley: No, hold back, hold back.

Mr LEWIS: Yes, we know where we are going and we do not want the rounds of the cattle pen again; okay? The government says that it is going to reform the parliament. The government had said that when I was a member of it, and I was keen to see that happen, yet time has passed and it has not happened. It is still not too late. We ought to do to that. We ought to reduce the size of the House of Assembly by 16—from 47 to 31, at least. I would not mind if it were 35, but 31 will do; that is about a third. That would mean that our electorates in the House of Assembly would increase by about 50 per cent and that government would be determined by the return of 16 members in here.

Mr Foley: I don't think that your seat would survive.

Mr LEWIS: It most certainly would. The seat of Mount Gambier would expand by 50 per cent and take all of the South-East, as it ought to; that is the seat of Gordon of which I speak. The next seat to be formed would have in it the Upper South-East, the Mallee and the Lower Murray. All of that area I have represented before, and I get just as much correspondence now from that area as I do from within my own constituency, be it the mallee itself, the northern mallee, the area around the Angas-Bremer plains or the Lower Murray. People come to see me and I tell them that, if they have a matter of substance of concern about a department, they must go and see their own member, the member for Mackillop. However, if they want to discuss policy options, I am willing to listen.

If we did that, we would then, through economies of scale, enable ourselves to reduce the size of the ministry to something that is more realistic. At present it is really just the means by which the Premier hangs on to power. He has increased it to 15 so he has enough people beholden to him to ensure that he can retain the numbers. I have explained before publicly, and I want to explain here, that reform in the Legislative Council could be and should be undertaken immediately by reducing the size of that chamber from 22 to 17. That would mean that there would always be one person who could be elected as President and the others could get on with the job of forming committees to review all of government's functions.

In my judgment, all legislative councillors should be paid at the same rate as junior ministers are at present and they should sit pretty well in continuous session. That is where the public accounts ought to be scrutinised through the Economic and Finance Committee. We would not need committees in the reduced House of Assembly because its primary purpose would be arguing the toss over policy as to who ought to govern come the next election and from election to election.

In the upper house, though, no political party that has a presence in the lower house and is registered for handing out how-to-vote cards ought to be allowed to exist. It ought to comprise people who represent the regions of this state, be they in the metropolitan area or elsewhere. The manner in which I suggest that we can make up 17 members simply is

to take five seats in one part and elect them at large and then form six regional seats by combining two federal electorates, such as Grey and Wakefield, to form a region, and that would become a regional seat in the Legislative Council.

Such a seat would have two members, one elected at each alternate election. Six members would have an eight-year term, elected this time, and another six would be elected next time, having an eight-year term. The five at large would be elected every time the House of Assembly goes out. On the one hand there would be continuity of thought from the regions, because they would have members with an eight-year term, and, on the other hand, there would be people responsive to the immediate needs of the electorate, election by election, all five seats being vacated and up for re-election every time the House of Assembly election is held.

That system would enable the upper house to properly become the house of review, not only reviewing government legislation. We would not need any ministers in that chamber. Any bill that passed the lower house would be referred automatically to the *Notice Paper* of the upper house and, unless any member of the upper house in one week (remember that they are sitting in continuous session either as committee in various forms or to consider the legislation that has come from the lower house) notified the clerk of the upper house of their intention to speak on the matter that was on the *Notice Paper*, it would automatically be deemed to have passed that chamber and go on to Executive Council. The constitution could also provide for the means by which emergency legislation could be put through both houses of parliament in the event that the need arose in a shorter period than that—24 hours. There is no reason that could not happen.

The other benefit of having a house as I have proposed is that we would get the so-called elder statesmen of the South Australian community, already widely known, placing their names on the ballot paper for that house and being elected to it. They would not come necessarily from politics. Indeed, anything but. It should be a requirement that anyone seeking nomination to the ballot paper, when they first apply, has to swear and state that they are not a member of any political party, and their seat becomes vacant if they join one any time that they are a member. The six seats would each have two members, which makes 12, and the five elected at large make it 17.

As I have said, the committees in the upper house would be the Economic and Finance Committee, the Public Works Committee, the Social Development Committee in toto, and even the Occupational Health and Safety Committee ought to be based in that chamber, where there are no political parties and the duty of its members is to constantly scrutinise whether or not the government is being even-handed right across the board in the state in geographical terms—

Ms Key: Hear, hear!

Mr LEWIS: I am grateful to the honourable member for bothering to understand what I am explaining. Whether she ultimately agrees with or supports it is a matter for her. I would welcome her support because it is the only way that parliamentary democracy will survive, given the level of cynicism we now have as a consequence of the mess that this government has made of the administration of public affairs following immediately on the heels of the great mess that was made by the previous government.

Mr Foley: Tell us what you really think about the government.

Mr LEWIS: I think about as much of this government as I did of the Bannon Government at the time that it refused to see the signs. It was atrocious and regrettable that there was a continuing attempt to shore up the grossly irresponsible mismanagement of the state's bank and finance house and the ultimate cost that had for our taxpayers.

Let me return to the upper house as I see it better comprised than it is at the moment and the functions it would have. Those members would have electorate offices where they represent the regional seats in the regions, as do members of the House of Assembly now. They would be paid for from the savings that have been made by the reduction in the size of the House of Assembly and the reduction in the size of the Legislative Council. It would prevent South Australia's ever again having an upper house that is merely a sinecure for party hacks, where it is extremely difficult for anybody of independent mind to do their bit for the state.

As the member for Hart has invited me to, I want to move on and draw attention to some of the other debacles that are of particular concern to me. I see now that the Holdfast Shores proposal does not fix the Patawalonga. It is still a bloody mess and will continue to be. The Barcoo Outlet will not address it in an effective way and it seems from the most recent disclosure about shifting sand that it will cost well over 10 times what the Public Works Committee was assured would be the cost annually of moving the sand along the beach artificially so that it did not choke up access to the Patawalonga boat haven. It has cut off the view—the vista to the sea—as you drive down Anzac Highway. You cannot see the sea, you just think that you are driving to another part of the city, and that is sad. Whilst I regretted that, I was prepared to accept it originally on the basis that the development would solve the water quality problems in the Patawalonga area.

I see the National Wine Centre as still being a good deal for South Australia but just being allowed to blow out on whimsy in terms of total cost, and that is something that I do not feel any pride in and I do not think Mr Rick Allert ought to take any comfort from it. I also see that the Auditor-General drew attention to the deceitful device used by the Premier and others to pay money to the South Australian National Football League to erect a stand that could easily have been financed by the South Australian National Football League from private sources, such as the banks and finance houses, and paid off immediately because it is already oversubscribed, and that is sad.

The Governor's speech could have addressed other developments which might have been undertaken and which might be worth hundreds of millions of dollars to South Australia. They could have been in my own electorate, for instance—but that is not happening. I note that the minister at the table does understand the great benefits that would come from better use of the water that presently evaporates from Lake Albert and Lake Alexandrina as part of what South Australia gets in its entitlement flow. While I hear him quote some 500 gegalitres a year lost to evaporation, that is, 500 000 megalitres, that figure has otherwise been assessed as being 700 000 plus. It depends on the particular season. In a year when the continent is dry and the winds from the north are dry, we would have our greatest evaporation losses, and they would be the years in which we have greatest need. We would be losing, most certainly, in such years well over 700 million megalitres of water, foolishly, I am sure. We could do so many good things with that water, so say for the benefit of the environment.

Let me turn to another matter that has dismayed and appalled me, that is, the cheapness with which members of the government in the upper house chose to attack me to cover up their defamation of me at the time that I was expelled from the Parliamentary Liberal Party; when the Hon. Legh Davis and the Hon. Angus Redford had some sport at my expense by asking a specious and hypothetical question of the Hon. Rob Lucas, who completely misrepresented the position, as I understand it. I have never known what happened at the time, but it relates also to the fact that I was attacked here in South Australia and nationally for eight consecutive days back in April 1997 by elements from within this parliament; many of the elements were members of the Liberal Party releasing information. I know there were members of the Labor Party involved in the conspiracy as well.

They attacked me, for instance, over a \$3 000 fax bill. In the limited time left to me, can I point out that the Korean Chamber of Commerce, which I was negotiating to establish at that time, and the connections which we were making in Korea, helped South Australian firms with no benefit to me, my family or my wife, thank you, Mr Redford—none! That was worth in the order of \$27 million in the year ended 1999. In the reporting year just ended (2000) the Korean Chamber of Commerce, of which I am President this year, has facilitated business worth \$179 million.

I do not think an investment of \$3 000 on my fax machine is a bad investment in the interests of developing that kind of export revenue and the jobs which directly flow as a consequence. If that business had not been done, the jobs would not have been there and, no doubt, because it has been done, there are hundreds more jobs. It is no accident that South Australia alone has a Council for International Trade and Commerce and has a most outstanding export performance compared with all other states in recent years.

Motion carried.

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY TRAINING FUND (MISCELLANEOUS) AMENDMENT BILL

Adjourned debate on second reading.
(Continued from 5 October. Page 49.)

The Hon. M.D. RANN (Leader of the Opposition): As has already been said publicly by the shadow minister, the opposition supports this bill, as it does the Construction Industry Training Fund. Indeed, I was somewhat bemused in May this year when the Minister for Employment and Training worked himself into a lather to say that, as a former Minister for Employment, I had rejected the Construction Industry Training Fund initiative out of hand. That is totally untrue; absolutely untrue. In fact, I think the minister was making it up as he went along.

I was the minister who did all the preparatory work for the legislation. I well remember my visit to Western Australia where I visited Greg Black (who is now a senior South Australian public servant) and many other officials involved in the construction industry in Western Australia. I actually went to look at how the construction industry training initiative in Western Australia had worked. I remember having meetings with various officials and people from the industry. So, following that visit and meetings with the Construction Industry Training Advisory Board here in South Australia, I pushed ahead with the proposal to establish a Construction Industry Training Fund here in South Australia.

I told them at the time that we would be happy to support the initiative as a government if consensus could be reached—and consensus was reached. In fact, support from both the Master Builders Association and the Housing Industry Association, as well as the relevant unions, was obtained and I decided to push ahead.

Unfortunately, during that time there was a reshuffle and, following the ascension of Lynn Arnold to the premiership, there was a resulting change in ministerial portfolios. I was able to pass the files onto the new Minister for Further Education, Employment and Training, Susan Lenehan—

The Hon. M.K. Brindal interjecting:

The Hon. M.D. RANN: Yes—and she finished off the work I had begun and had adopted appropriate legislation. I was delighted that was to be done. There had been quite a bit of negotiation and we had signed off on the strategy to introduce here in South Australia a fund similar to the Western Australia initiative. I am sure that the minister would be the first to acknowledge his mistake.

As the minister well knows, there was opposition to my initiative but that opposition came, funnily enough, from conservative elements within the Liberal Party and some of their financial supporters with vested interests. I do certainly support the bill before us. It contains sensible housekeeping amendments and minor adjustments to my original bill which the passage of time has made necessary. I strongly support what the minister is doing, just as I know he would be the first to acknowledge my pioneering work in this area.

The minister would also be aware that 850 young South Australian apprentices and trainees have received assistance in terms of funding from the CITB, and that the 15 000 persons employed in the industry have attended CITB funded training activities since the legislation was established by the former Labor government. It is interesting, too, that there have been new initiatives including the Doorways Construction Program introduced this year to secondary schools to encourage young people to pursue careers in the building and construction industry. Of course, the building and construction industry is of vital importance to this state and its future. Indeed, I agree with the statement made by the minister in June this year when he said that ‘construction is an industry that takes care of its own people and looks after its own needs’. That does not mean to say we cannot be supportive, minister. It is vitally important that we use the processes of government and the parliament to give support to industries rather than leave them to tackle things in an area where there might be impediments to growth in employment and activity.

Indeed, I note from the minister’s own material that the building and construction industry at present is the seventh largest industry in the state, employing over 44 000 people of whom about 15 per cent are female. We would obviously like to see an increase in the participation rate of women in the construction industry. Some 32 per cent are aged 45 and over; 26 per cent are employed in rural areas; and a typical \$100 million project involves 100 000 different documents, according to the minister’s department.

It costs about \$420 per square metre to build a house. The building and engineering professionals are the third highest income earners in South Australia, and that is why it is very important that our universities are also in tune with the industry.

In 1999-2000, building capital work in South Australia totalled \$4 billion. So, the CITB has done particularly well in funding many training places for thousands of people in

this state who want to be involved as apprentices or trainees in the construction industry. While awaiting a more detailed and substantive contribution from the shadow minister at a later stage, on behalf of the Opposition I have very great pleasure in supporting the bill and having it adjourned for further deliberations.

Ms KEY secured the adjournment of the debate.

MEMBER'S COMMENTS

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL (Minister for Water Resources): I seek leave to make a personal explanation.

Leave granted.

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: I always try to be accurate in my comments to the House. If, as the leader seems to have indicated, I have mistaken the historic sequence of events and they are indeed as the leader purports them to be, he has my unreserved apology.

The Hon. M.D. RANN (Leader of the Opposition): I accept that apology which was made with such graciousness.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL (Minister for Water Resources): I move:

That the House do now adjourn.

Mr LEWIS (Hammond): I will continue where I left off my remarks in the Address in Reply debate by drawing attention to the role of the Council for International Trade and Commerce here in South Australia. After some discussion amongst members of the Liberal Party initiated by me back in the early 1990s, this organ became part of our policy at the 1993 election and was immediately established by Dean Brown when he became Premier.

After some teething problems, it has become a very effective powerhouse in getting the willing assistance of volunteers who have migrated to our country and state in recent times to help South Australian businesses find markets in the countries from which they come. This is something that ought to be praised to the skies, because it is worth an enormous amount to this state's economy now and is a very successful strategy by which the state's economy can make great use of and from which it can derive great benefit from those otherwise wasted talents and skills. I guess it is not only talents and skills but also the networks which many of those people have in the countries, societies and regions of the world from which they came.

I do not know what the total value of business has been during the reporting period that ended a couple of months ago, but I do know that in the previous year it was in the vicinity of \$40 million altogether for CITCSA. A big slab of that—about \$27 million—was business that was facilitated by one of the smaller although very active chambers—the Korean Chamber of Commerce. Not many Koreans have migrated to South Australia—there are only a few hundred—but nonetheless their economy is vibrant and now growing more rapidly than any in East Asia, with 9 to 10 per cent growth over the past three quarters. It is now ahead of where it was prior to the meltdown in October 1997, when the International Monetary Fund stepped in to bail it out. It will always need the kind of things which South Australia can supply to it.

The other chambers do an outstanding job too, and every million dollars of extra exports which are facilitated by these groups of volunteers—called business councils or chambers of commerce for the specific countries or regions—generates at least 30 jobs, because they represent an increase in production within existing firms. To get that increase in production, you have to put on some additional people. This produces greater profits for our firms in South Australia and also, by expanding the size of their markets, it enables them to compete with their interstate competitors and overseas imports, if those too are a problem for them.

Let me then talk about the Korean Chamber of Commerce during the past 12 months. The highlight of the year, of course, was the facilitating of the final signing of the sister state relationship between South Australia and Chung Chong Nam Do, which focuses upon business benefits to both communities, and the fact that during that same reporting period the Korean Chamber of Commerce facilitated business for South Australian interests that was worth over \$179 million, which business would otherwise not have been done. That included extensively manufactured goods and slightly manufactured goods—not food but other hard goods of one kind or another. I am talking there about the automobile industry or even, for that matter, crafts and the like. The skills, packages and kits to engage in those crafts and the patterns that will be used, for instance, in needlework and embroidery, were exported and they are worth several hundred thousand dollars into the Korean market.

We also managed to find a market for our second-hand marine motors which is more lucrative than would otherwise be found for them here. After the motors are marinised they are sent off to Korea for people to use, whereas at present not many Koreans use boats for leisure purposes. In foodstuffs, we have facilitated the sale of more than \$400 000 worth of meat, \$600 000 worth of carrots, a few million dollars worth of deer horn and well over \$20 million worth of potatoes from South Australia. That was to supply contracts not only for fresh vegetable consumption but also for conversion to snack foods—crisps and those kinds of things.

Almost \$600 000 of education was sold from South Australia to Korean students. That means that, where Koreans go overseas to do their secondary or tertiary study or training, or to study English as a second language, it costs much more to go to Canada, the United States or England, and even more to go to New South Wales or Victoria than it does to come to South Australia. So, we aggressively marketed the benefits of coming to South Australia, and that became part of the almost \$600 000 worth of additional funds that came into our educational institutions.

Tourism was worth over \$1 million during that reporting year, and the amount of investment that arose out of joint ventures and other licensed manufacturing arrangements that came in for firms based here in South Australia was over \$100 million. Altogether, I think that is very useful and important, but it is not done in isolation from other things. Other things which the chamber has done and which other chambers do is help South Australian people understand Korea, its history, what it has done in the world and what it can continue to do for us as South Australians, and understand the people who live there. What is more, we have sought aggressively to provide packages to school students who contact us, be they primary or secondary school students, on the net or by post and give them information about South Australia. They are Korean school students and volunteers from our committee have gone out to address community

groups, be they church groups, other service clubs and special interest groups in the community here in South Australia. Indeed last year we accepted and attended 29 separate meetings to talk about South Korea and help the people belonging to those organisations to understand it, whether it be women's agricultural bureaus, regional development boards, CWA clubs, service clubs, church groups, district councils and the like.

In addition, we still focus our attention in a balanced way on yet other things, like helping people who want to transact business with Korea to understand comprehensive trade information. The advisory services we provide include information about exchange rates, banking facilities, freight services, translation services, a market analysis by industry groups or product type and the like and investment opportunities in both directions. We have sought to hold information seminars to which members of the general public can come on a topic by topic basis where they are interested to learn about that topic and that too has been successful. All in all the Korean Chamber of Commerce, like so many other chambers of commerce, is doing a great deal under the banner of the Council for International Trade and Commerce to expand the number of jobs in South Australia by expanding understanding and by expanding export knowledge in the firms that decide to have a go, and making sure that they are not caught short in ignorance of what is really happening. I think that CITCSA deserves all the praise we can give it and its General Manager, Trish Semple.

Time expired.

Mr CLARKE (Ross Smith): I want to raise two things in this afternoon's grievance, one particularly concerning my own electorate. The first issue relates to housing and the Housing Trust, which affects a number of electorates. My own electorate has a heavy concentration of people in Housing Trust homes and South Australia has had a proud tradition from Sir Thomas Playford's day of providing well above the national average in terms of public housing for people on low incomes and on government benefits. Today more than 80 per cent of people living in Housing Trust homes are on rent concessions, compared to a dramatically different figure only 25 years ago, which is a reflection of the problems we have in this country and not just in this state of a downturn in economic prosperity, greater unemployment and social dislocation.

This has become even more acute over the past five years, particularly since the election of the Howard government in Canberra and its renegotiation of the commonwealth-state housing agreement. It is appalling that the Housing Trust in this state now no longer builds any new houses. Yes, they build new houses, but in terms of maintaining the percentage of public housing that it used to have only five or six years ago of about 12 per cent of the housing stock in this state, it is being reduced as Housing Trust homes are being sold for private purchase. That has always been the case, but in Labor government years, in addition to the sale of housing stock homes for private purposes for reinvestment, there was also a programmed increase in Housing Trust homes. From memory, in our last year in government (1993-94) at least 1 200 new homes were built. Today there is but a mere handful. I am finding—as I am sure many other members of parliament with a significant Housing Trust population in their electorate are finding—people in desperate straits coming to one's office looking for Housing Trust homes. They simply are not available. Notwithstanding how despe-

rate their circumstances, the fact is that there are few houses left for priority housing.

Time after time I have had representations in my office from constituents asking for support or supporting letters to the Housing Trust, with very strong cases for priority housing. It is almost now a dread of mine getting those requests because you know when you contact the Housing Trust office and put in the documentation that they will just join the long list of other people equally deserving of houses, equally in priority circumstances, but there are just not the homes available. In large part it is due not only to the state government but more particularly to the commonwealth government, which under the Liberal Party puts so much emphasis on private housing. Its policy is to supply a rent concession to people who cannot afford to pay full private rent themselves and to pay a subsidy to look into private rental. That is not an option. The private market is unplanned, unlike public housing. Secondly, those who own those properties sometimes discriminate as to the type of clients they will allow into their properties and generally speaking do not provide the more holistic approach as does the Housing Trust.

One of the fundamental points about eliminating or eradicating poverty in any society is to be able to provide good quality affordable housing. This state government has changed the priorities with respect to housing so that now only those on government benefits can look forward to a Housing Trust home, even if they have to wait 10 years for it. I have had constituents on low incomes, in work but earning only \$20 000 to \$22 000 a year gross. I know of one circumstance where that person pays maintenance, wants to look after his children and cannot afford to stay in the flat he has now, but he is prevented by the changing guidelines governing applicants who are eligible to seek public housing from even applying for it, even though his own gross salary is less than \$22 000 a year. That is not a very great sum of money at all and he is compelled to live in private housing and does not attract any commonwealth government subsidy. The state Liberal Government eliminated the Housing Trust subsidy that was available in the private rental market from the budget this year. Housing is in crisis for people on low incomes, those in work and those on benefits. It is urgent for any reformist government that comes into office, both at a state and federal level, to consider increasing resources in the public housing sector.

The other point I wanted to raise quickly is the way this state government has behaved with respect to its long-standing policy on disposing of surplus land. The policy has been not only with this government but also with previous governments that if government land was to be disposed of it was offered to other government agencies first and, if they did not want it, to offer it to local government authorities at the Valuer-General's rate and, if they did not want it, it went on the open market.

The former secondary language school site in Angwin Avenue, Blair Athol, is one such case. I was given a letter by the then Minister for Education (the Hon. Rob Lucas) in January 1997 stating that that three-stage policy was in place. That was the policy that the City of Port Adelaide Enfield understood would apply. It had indicated to the department that it wanted a chance to buy that land for open space. There is very little open space in the inner northern suburbs. This is an opportunity to create some open space in an area that is heavily urbanised because of the policies of the pre and post Second World War years which did not take into account

young families and the need for those young families to have space to grow in an urban green environment.

The Land Management Corporation has said that it, in fact, has offered the land to the Port Adelaide Enfield council and it did not want it: that is why it went on the open market. That is not the case. The Port Adelaide Enfield council cannot find any record of the Land Management Corporation, or its predecessors, offering that land to the City of Port Adelaide Enfield. The Land Management Corporation cannot produce that documentation, either.

I have appealed to the minister responsible for the Land Management Corporation, Minister Armitage—who, I might add, wants to represent the seat of Adelaide, which abuts that property, and in which Jane Lomax-Smith has shown a considerable interest, as have I, to make sure that that land is

retained as open space. The Minister for Education has the power, as I understand it, to sell the land in accordance with government policy to the City of Port Adelaide Enfield if only he would get over this hesitancy, this reluctance, to own up to the fact that the government basically stuffed it up on this occasion. It did not follow its own policy.

I will not rest: I want that land as open space. The local residents, both in the City of Prospect area and the City of Port Adelaide Enfield, are fed up with the fact that this is the last chance to get a decent bit of urban open space in inner northern Adelaide.

Motion carried.

At 4.45 p.m. the House adjourned until Tuesday 24 October at 2 p.m.