

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday 13 March 2001

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

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I recognise in the gallery this afternoon a delegation of distinguished visitors comprising members of parliament and staff of a special committee on rules and procedures from the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly in Canada. On behalf of all members, I extend to them a warm welcome to South Australia and I trust that they have a most enjoyable and productive time in this state.

NATIVE PARROTS

Petitions signed by 251 residents of South Australia, requesting that the House urge the government to repeal the proclamation permitting the unlimited destruction by commercial horticulturalists of protected native parrots, were presented by Ms Bedford and Mr Brokenshire.

Petitions received.

SCHOOL BUS SERVICE

A petition signed by 608 residents of South Australia, requesting that the House urge the government to continue the school bus service in Trott Park and Sheidow Park, was presented by Mr Hanna.

Petition received.

BARCOO OUTLET

A petition signed by 63 residents of South Australia, requesting that the House ensure that storm water from the Barcoo Outlet is treated to stop polluted water entering Gulf St Vincent, was presented by Ms Key.

Petition received.

EMPLOYEE OMBUDSMAN'S REPORT

The SPEAKER: I lay on the table the report of the Office of the Employee Ombudsman for the year 1999-2000.

ALICE SPRINGS TO DARWIN RAILWAY

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

Leave granted.

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: As members of the House will be aware, I have just returned from a meeting in Hong Kong with the principal of CKI Holdings Limited. The purpose of my visit was to assist in securing private funding to cover the \$79.2 million shortfall in the Adelaide to Darwin rail project. That funding shortfall was caused by the late withdrawal of the John Hancock Group from the consortium appointed to build and operate the line.

CKI has been involved in delicate negotiations with the state government and the Asia Pacific Transport Consortium for some time. In fact, we facilitated negotiations between CKI and the consortium as soon as we could after learning of the Hancock Group's withdrawal. It has always been the view of the South Australian government that private funding

levels, having been established, should, if at all possible, be maintained.

It is no secret that the state government has been under increasing pressure to facilitate the commencement of the project by committing an additional \$26.5 million of taxpayers' funds. The commonwealth and the Northern Territory agreed some time ago to do just that and, to say the least, were eager for us to follow suit. It is also no secret that we elected to stick to our guns in spite of the growing pressure which, as members would be aware, intensified towards the end of last week.

In the latter part of last week, during the most delicate point of the negotiations, the state government learnt that CKI had—as was its right—decided not to take up the opportunity to invest \$79.2 million in the project. At the same time, we learnt that the company may be interested in funding the project to the extent of South Australia's share of the shortfall, that is, \$26.5 million.

Officers of the Department of Industry and Trade were sent to Hong Kong and I was asked to personally attend a meeting in Hong Kong on Monday in order to work through some issues to facilitate signing of a memorandum between CKI and the state. The Asia Pacific Transport Consortium, having secured the CKI funding, together with additional funds from the Northern Territory and commonwealth governments, is now in a position to quickly achieve financial close for the project.

The terms of the loan are in two components—a \$10 million loan and a \$16.5 million loan, and they are for two separate set periods. The South Australian government has agreed to guarantee or underwrite the term of those loans. There are two triggers to that guarantee: one is if the consortium or contractors are placed in receivership, and the other is if the project is abandoned. Given the national significance of this project and the commitment from the three governments, that would be highly unlikely.

I am advised by the Crown Solicitor that it is arguable that these arrangements fall within section 6(c) of the Alice Springs to Darwin Railway Act 1997. On balance, I feel it is preferable and proper, and to be transparent, to put the matter beyond doubt and I will have a bill seeking parliament's authorisation introduced this week in a simple amendment.

It is also important to understand the issue of the loan interest. The government does not pay any interest unless the two events I have mentioned earlier occur—that is, the project falls over. In the event that that were to occur, the government would be required to pay the interest up until the project's collapse, not the entire life of the project, calculated on the average effective interest rate over the life of each loan. I make that point because I understand there has been some confusion today as to who pays the interest on the loan and as to the amount payable by the consortium to CKI. Again, it is important to note that the 12 per cent rate is exactly the same rate as that offered by the consortium to its other investors as set out in its term sheet. The consortium pays the interest to CKI.

Details now need to be finalised between CKI and the consortium in relation to the term sheet loan. Given the timing and circumstances, this is a marvellous result for the state of South Australia and I place on record my sincere appreciation to all of those concerned, particularly officers of the department, for their assistance in reaching the conclusion. I would also like to thank the board of CKI for that company's willingness to assist South Australia and Australia to get this project up and running.

The government was reluctant to come back into this House to seek additional funding. We were reluctant because I gave an undertaking that we would not, and we were reluctant because we are committed to preserving government funds for the provision of additional services and facilities for the people of South Australia.

The withdrawal of the John Hancock Group was totally unexpected. The delay in the financial close and commencement of construction has caused uncertainty not only for government but also for those thousands of South Australians who stand to benefit from the building of this great project. At the end of the day, we have achieved the best result possible.

MOTOROLA

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

Leave granted.

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: I wish to inform the House of two developments as a result of an inquiry I instructed my Chief Executive Officer to undertake following the discovery of files related to the transfer of the Motorola contract between government agencies in December last year.

The House will recall that, on discovering the files had not been forwarded to the 1999 Cramond inquiry, I put two processes in place. First, I asked former Chief Magistrate, Jim Cramond, to review the correspondence to see if they would have altered the outcome of his inquiry. He has since reported back to the government on this matter, and Mr Cramond is quite clear in his view that his findings 'would not have been influenced had I been aware of the documents'. He also stated that he could see no benefit which would accrue from my being a party to the suppression of that material.

The second step I put in place was an immediate inquiry by the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Premier and Cabinet into why the documents were not produced at the time of the original inquiry following their discovery within the Department of Industry and Trade in December 2000. I am now in receipt of advice to me by my Chief Executive Officer, Mr McCann. In his response to me, Mr McCann indicates that he found no evidence that any person deliberately withheld the documents in question from the Cramond inquiry; the documents were not provided because they were, quite properly, placed on a file created to record the transfer of responsibilities for a number of contracts (of which the Motorola contract was one) between agencies; the title of the file did not include the word 'Motorola' and therefore the file search system used to produce files for the inquiry did not discover it; and the documents came to light now because the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Industry and Trade went searching for them when he became aggrieved by a question asked of him during an appearance before the Economic and Finance Committee in December last year.

I am also advised by Mr McCann that, as a result of this investigation, several other working papers and duplicates of documents have been identified. These include—

An honourable member: Will you produce them?

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: Yes—

An honourable member interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr Foley interjecting:

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

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: Yes, like filing cabinets—Marineland; remember it well, Kevin! These include—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: These include: duplicates of documents contained in many files previously submitted to the Cramond inquiry; personal or working papers of individual officers operating in areas other than the Government Radio Network Unit or the State Supply Board; routine reports to the Prudential Management Group; notes on technical issues associated with Motorola arrangements; correspondence on functional transfers between departments; and documentation associated with managing the Motorola industry development agreement and other broadly related matters.

I have not seen these working papers, nor do I intend viewing them. It is my intention to refer them immediately to the new inquiry. Mr McCann advises me that the papers were located within the Department of Administrative Services. In 1998—

Mr Foley interjecting:

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

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: In 1998, I was assured on numerous occasions that departments had handed over all their Motorola files to be examined by Mr Cramond. So it is with a great sense of frustration that I now have to report these facts to the House. I do accept that the documents identified in December last year were created at a time of extensive organisational change in the South Australian Public Service. They were created over the period April to July 1996 and, as part of the restructure, a group of staff responsible for IT industry development was transferred to the Department of Information Industries—

The Hon. M.D. Rann interjecting:

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

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: —in March 1996 from the Economic Development Authority. As Mr McCann advises me, record keeping in the Public Service is a task which requires diligence and attention at the best of times. It is fair to say that the restructure challenged this task. Mr McCann advises me that the purpose of the documents in question was to formally document the transfer of a number of documents from the ministry of small business and regional development to the Department of Information Industries. The document referred to six contracts of which Motorola was but one.

The file copy of this minute was then placed on an official file in the Economic Development Authority titled, 'Records management, files and filing, transfer of files to other agencies'. As Mr McCann points out, this is an important fact to note. Quite simply, the file copy was placed on a file dealing with the transfer of documents to other agencies. It was not placed on a project file, that is, the file or files dealing with the Motorola project—a logical decision, according to Mr McCann, in the process of record keeping.

We now turn our attention to why these documents have surfaced only now. As this House already has been informed, they came to light because the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Industry and Trade believes he has been done an injustice and is seeking redress of that injustice. His motivation for the search for the documents in December last year was prompted by a question asked of him by the Economic and Finance Committee at about the same time.

The CEO of DIT has advised Mr McCann that he was certain that the documents in question had been referred to the appropriate agencies, but at the time of the Cramond inquiry he was asked for proof of this fact and he could only

rely on his memory. I repeat what I said earlier: I have been assured on a number of occasions by the former CEO of the Department of Premier and Cabinet that no documents went missing and a full schedule of files was made and accounted for. In the report itself, Mr Cramond says:

Scrutiny of the dockets does not suggest that any documents are missing. All key documents to which witnesses have been referred have been located. The chronological and logical sequence of the dockets and their counterparts appears to be complete with no obvious gaps.

However, all relevant working papers found over this last week will be referred to the new inquiry.

I also wish to advise the House that in accordance with the resolution we supported last week Dean Clayton QC has been appointed by the Crown Solicitor to undertake an inquiry with Mr Richard Stevens assisting. Mr Clayton QC is a former President of the Law Society of South Australia and was appointed Queen's Counsel in 1993. Mr Stevens is a former Managing Director of Australian Fisheries Management Authority, former Director of Fisheries in South Australia and was Deputy Chief Executive Officer within the Department of Primary Industries and Resources.

The proposed terms of reference are as set out in the motion supported by the government last week.

The Hon. M.D. Rann interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: Let me repeat that for the member for Elder in case he missed it: the proposed terms of reference are as set out in the motion supported by the government. The report will be to the Attorney-General and will be made available at the earliest opportunity upon completion. All members of the government will cooperate with this inquiry, which will begin as soon as possible when we engage Mr Clayton and Mr Stevens. I would hope that this will be at the earliest opportunity. There is no time limitation on the inquiry because I believe it is important that we resolve these issues once and for all. It is anticipated that at a minimum the inquiry will cost South Australian taxpayers up to \$500 000.

PAPERS TABLED

The following papers were laid on the table:

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

Fisheries Act—Regulations—
Management Committees
Various

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

Crown Development Report—Proposal to Construct 1 550
Metre Long Rail Loop,
Melbourne to Adelaide Rail Corridor
Local Government Act—Regulations—Central Market
Leases

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

Remuneration Tribunal—Determinations of—
Ministers of the Crown and Officers and Members of
Parliament—Allowances
Judiciary, Industrial Relations Commission and State
Coroner—Telephone Rental and Calls Allowance
Judges, Statutory Officers and Court Officers—
Travelling and Accommodation Allowances
Regulations under the following Acts—
Construction Industry Long Service Leave—Viability
Dangerous Substances—Compressed Natural Gas

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

Construction Industry Training Fund Act—Regulations—
Amendment Act Regulations

By the Minister for Environment and Heritage (Hon. I.F. Evans)—

Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee—Report, 1999-2000
National Environment Protection Council—Report,
1999-2000
National Crime Authority—Report, 1999-2000
Second-hand Dealers and Pawnbrokers Act—
Regulations—Game Console
Magistrates Court Rules—Magistrates Court Act—
Electronic Records

By the Minister for Police, Correctional Services and Emergency Services (Hon. R.L. Brokenshire)—

Public Works Committee Report—Strathmont Centre
Redevelopment—Aged Care Facility Response by the
Minister for Disability Services.

QUESTION TIME

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order, the member for Bragg!

The Hon. G.A. Ingerson interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Bragg will come to order. The Leader of the Opposition.

ALICE SPRINGS TO DARWIN RAILWAY

The Hon. M.D. RANN (Leader of the Opposition): Given the critical importance of the Darwin to Alice Springs railway to our state, will the Premier request that the Auditor-General analyse, assess and sign off on the Premier's preliminary agreement with CKI, announced formally today, so that members of this House—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

Members interjecting:

The Hon. M.D. RANN: I am waiting, sir. I am happy to go again.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member does not need to go again. Members on my right will remain silent.

The Hon. M.D. RANN:—request that the Auditor-General analyse, assess and sign off on the Premier's preliminary agreement with CKI announced today, so that members of this House can receive the Auditor-General's advice and opinion before a vote is taken on the matter in this parliament, given the Premier's commitment a few moments ago to full and proper transparency?

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN (Premier): I am more than happy to make arrangements for appropriate consortium and rail corporation personnel, as need be, to fully brief the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Treasurer.

The Hon. M.D. Rann interjecting:

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: Let me go on to explain.

The SPEAKER: Order, the leader!

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: I will finish; this is an important issue for our state, so let us work our way through it. I am happy to arrange for briefing and background. This is a very complex deal. There are a range of different parties in the deal, and it is a long yield, long term loan structure. It must be understood that, of course, during the construction phase interest is not paid and there is a ramp-up period in the first three years of the operational phase where I understand that interest is also not paid. So, there is a period of about six

years—not all of which is when the loan is drawn down—upon which no interest is paid. Given that South Australia, the Northern Territory, the commonwealth, the range of contributing partners in the consortium and the Australasian Rail Corporation are involved, it is one of the more complex capital works infrastructure projects to be put together.

As I indicated in my ministerial statement, in offering the Leader of the Opposition a briefing to give background on the steps and commitments that the government has put in place, I do not have difficulty in referring this matter to the Auditor-General. My concern is this: timing. One of the reasons why, at short notice, I went to have discussions, was to try to bring this to a close one way or another, because if we were unable to bring it to a close we would have had to come back to the parliament this week in relation to some legislation seeking further funds.

At the end of the day, I would not have let this project fall over. And, at the end of the day, despite the fact that I had indicated to this parliament that we would not put any additional funds in, when you look at the range of contracts that are pending upon a successful financial close that can be let to South Australian businesses, clearly, you would have to seriously consider it. And we would have done so, in those circumstances. But, as I have said, we sought private sector funding, and I think we have, as I said, a marvellous result: the best of both worlds. They are putting their money in, and the interest is being paid by the consortium, not us. We underwrite it, or provide a guarantee, but it is only triggered in two particular sets of circumstances related to the concession deed. What I have done is introduced CKI to effectively take the place of the taxpayers in discussions with the consortium.

The Hon. M.D. Rann interjecting:

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: Take the place of South Australia in discussions with the consortium. What now has to occur—and this has to occur between the parties, not us—is that the consortium and Australasian Rail Corporation, on behalf of the two governments, negotiates through with CKI an acceptable, and an acceptance of that, proposal. That includes looking at the term sheets, for example—the term sheets are those financial arrangements that underpin this 50 year old project and long-term loans which are also low yield loans.

There has been an erroneous view that these are high yielding and short term. They are not. They are long term and low yield, and have an interest-free repayment component, which is subsequently capitalised after operating successfully over a period of time.

So, in response to the leader's question, I will be more than happy to arrange a briefing. As I said, advice from the Crown is that we could have used section 6C to say, 'Look, it is covered by 6C,' but I do not want to do that. I think this is such an important project that it ought to have, effectively, the authorisation of the parliament. And I want to be absolutely transparent in the process.

The Hon. M.D. Rann interjecting:

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: I have no difficulty with the Auditor-General looking at the agreement. But I want to make sure that we do not impact against the—

The Hon. M.D. Rann interjecting:

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: I do not have a difficulty with that occurring: I do not have a difficulty with that at all. But we have a time constraint. My only point is that I do not want to take any step or commit to a step that, in a time constraint, creates a difficulty with the project.

So, I am happy to respond on two counts. Yes, I will take it up in that context, but I also offer a briefing. However, importantly, it is the time constraints for which I would ask the indulgence of the House.

STATE ECONOMY

Mr SCALZI (Hartley): Will the Premier advise the House of the significance of the latest Bureau of Statistics states' final demand figures?

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN (Premier): I am absolutely delighted to report on this matter today. Last Friday, ABS released statistics which show that we were the fastest growing state in Australia throughout calendar year 2000. And, would you not know, the shadow treasurer, the member for Hart, has to pour cold water on it. He is not content that, for the first time that I can ever remember, we are outperforming every other state in Australia. It was a growth of 3.6 per cent (and I think the next state was about 2.1 per cent, or something like that), which clearly indicates that we are well and truly on track.

State final demand figures show that for the December 2000 quarter South Australia recorded a growth of .7 per cent, second only to Queensland at 1.7 per cent. All other states had a negative growth. So only two states had a positive growth for the quarter. The member for Hart, who goes on about latest figures, should note that the quarter ended in December showed growth for South Australia.

Members interjecting:

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

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: The one thing the member for Hart cannot take away with his interjections is the ABS statistics.

Mr Foley interjecting:

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

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: I reinforce the point. While Victoria and New South Wales were going backwards—

An honourable member: Labor governments—

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: Yes—we were actually moving forward. We have a number of projects, for example, the successful financial close of the Adelaide to Darwin rail link, and I hope that occurs on 23 March. That will see several hundred million dollars invested in South Australia in a range of small and medium businesses. We have been working solidly on one other major infrastructure project for the past 4½ years—working more intensively on it in the past month—and that is the Adelaide Airport terminal. Whilst that has not been concluded successfully to this stage, I hope that is not too far away, and that is another \$200 million project. Those two projects will mean \$400 to \$500 million worth of spending in our economy, underpinning those growth figures we saw last year. We have only recently had Holden's announcement that it will expand its production line, and in about July we will know what the additional numbers are for its production line. As I mentioned to the House the week before last, Access Economics indicated that economically South Australia was an untold success story in Australia. These are clear indicators that this state's financial repair and its attraction of private sector new capital investment have really started to turn the state around.

We should take into account one other figure, that is, private sector new capital investment. Last year, South Australia had a 39.2 per cent increase in private sector new capital investment. The next closest state was about half that, and that was New South Wales, which had the Olympics.

That just indicates the sort of growth and investment we have experienced. Couple that with the gas pipeline to be funded by the private sector from Melbourne to Adelaide which will bring competitive gas prices in for commercial, industrial and power generating purposes. There has been a constraint on energy sources right through the South-East, the Murray-Mallee and Murray Bridge. By hooking up those areas to a gas pipeline to the north, through the Adelaide Hills, we will bring about new investment, because we will have an additional fuel source to underpin that investment. This is about putting in place the infrastructure and the input cost reduction to ensure competitive pricing so that our products can continue to expand on export markets. The sign posts are looking good.

ALICE SPRINGS TO DARWIN RAILWAY

Mr FOLEY (Hart): Did the Premier make inquiries of other lending institutions besides CKI, including Australian based banks and superannuation funds, to cover the \$26.5 million shortfall in funding for the Alice Springs to Darwin railway? Were they offered a government guarantee, and what interest rates did they quote?

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN (Premier): This matter has been on the market for some time. I note that it had not been taken up by anybody else—

Mr Foley interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Hart has asked his question.

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN: —and some financial institutions are investing. I made it quite clear publicly that CKI was invited by the South Australian government to open up dialogue with the consortium because I wanted to have someone replace our call on taxpayer funds. I know that being successful and achieving might annoy the member for Hart, but the simple fact is that success is important for our state. I ask the member for Hart simply to stop knocking it and look at it for what it is worth and what it will generate for South Australia in terms of jobs not only in this state but also in the member for Hart's electorate.

The member for Hart ought understand and recognise that the rail link and the proposed third river crossing going to the port of Adelaide opens up transport opportunities that hitherto have never been available in this state. I would ask the member for Hart to at least give a little credit—just a little; he does not need to give too much, but a little—where it is due because this government, through its contacts and links, has been successful in bringing about a result that is in the interests of every taxpayer in our state.

WINE INDUSTRY

Mr WILLIAMS (MacKillop): Will the Deputy Premier outline to the House the most recent figures on the export performance of the South Australian wine industry and the flow-on benefits of those to the regional areas of this state?

The Hon. R.G. KERIN (Deputy Premier): I thank the member for MacKillop for the question and, certainly, the Coonawarra in his area has been a major factor in our achievements. Most members would have read last week that South Australia alone cracked \$1 billion in wine exports for the last calendar year. I think that both sides of the House would have to agree that that is an absolutely magnificent achievement and one that should absolutely be acknowledged. It was with some disbelief that, 18 months ago, the

Australian industry reached the \$1 billion mark and, years ago, many people said that the industry could not reach that figure. For South Australia to do it on its own is fantastic.

Despite what the member for Hart said about the economy, this will continue. The plantings are there for this success to continue into the future and the culture of the people is certainly great. A couple of figures need pointing out: first, that last year's exports out of South Australia for the calendar year were up an incredible 23.9 per cent—about 24 per cent in one year following on from many years of growth. The other aspect which needs to be mentioned and which is lost on people a lot of the time is that Britain last year imported more than \$600 million of Australian wine.

Australia is now neck and neck with France compared to the start of the decade when our exports were one-third, one quarter of what France was putting in. It is great news for all South Australians but particularly people in regional South Australia. The wine industry's efforts with respect to employment in country areas absolutely enriches those communities; it introduces many new skills and we see that in the areas where wine has been successful. Following the success of the wine industry, certainly, tourism follows and brings with it a lot of other employment and that is evident in all of our industries.

It is also a great user of services. A lot of equipment, labour and product go into the wine industry, which builds up many other supporting industries in those areas. Transport is not only affected but also the industries which are located in a town and which employ people. It is a great industry with many talented people and they certainly need to be congratulated. When one looks at the fact that we are exporting more than 600 000 bottles a day, and if one looks not only at the bottles but also the labels, boxes and the transport, that shows it to be the enormous industry it is.

We need to concentrate on the fact that the investors are planting the vines. The government's implementation of the strategic investment of the bottling plant at Gawler is an example of what government can do to make this industry truly competitive on an international basis. I think that it is a great example for other industries. Certainly the food industry has adopted many of the wine industry's tactics in achieving success. Food Adelaide and other initiatives see South Australia well and truly outstripping the other states with respect to what we are doing with exports.

Certainly the latest export figures again show quarter after quarter that South Australia is well and truly outstripping the other states. Much of that relates to food and wine, which is terrific, not only for South Australia and for employment but also for regional South Australia. I think that that is absolutely fantastic. It is great news and, despite what the member for Hart said about the economy slowing down, if one looks at our recent harvest and the exports that will occur this year and at what the wine industry will do, and also at what is happening in the food industry, there will be more good news yet. I think that we can really look forward to a very promising future in regional South Australia as a result of the efforts of those industries.

ALICE SPRINGS TO DARWIN RAILWAY

Mr FOLEY (Hart): My question is directed to the Premier, who is a big supporter of the GST, as we all know.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr FOLEY: As I said, my question is directed to the GST Premier. Is CKI being charged an annual fee by the government in return for the government guarantee of its loan to the Asia Pacific Transport Consortium as required under the Public Finance and Audit Act and, if so, at what rate will the fee be charged?

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN (Premier): There is a fee, which is a small fee, that is incorporated in the memorandum of understanding. I will have to obtain the details of the triggers for the fee for the member for Hart.

MURRAY RIVER

Mr VENNING (Schubert): Can the Minister for Water Resources detail the latest initiatives by the state government to make people more aware of the plight of the Murray River?

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL (Minister for Water Resources): I thank the member for Schubert for his question and acknowledge his interest, along with that of many other members of this House. Since last year when the Premier put the issue of the Murray River on the national political agenda, there has been a significant rise in public awareness of the Murray-Darling Basin. First, the *Advertiser*, to its credit, identified the Murray River as a key news issue and has been running a series of articles now for in excess of 12 months, blocked by the logo, 'Saving the Murray'. Late last year ABC Radio began a 20 part series. I do not know how many members opposite have heard it. It is a very good series called 'River Reflections' and traces the history of the Murray River, its trials and tribulations, and the battles that have been fought over it for the last century or so.

More recently (in the last few weeks) *The Australian* has published a three weeks series of articles, having sent a journalist down the length of the river to talk with ordinary Australians who have an interest in the river's future and points to make about some of the river's problems and possible solutions.

It is interesting to notice how interested the member for Hart is in a question in which every other South Australian is interested but, apparently, not him. Even Tammy van Wisse—

Mr Atkinson interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order, the member for Spence!

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: —in her own inimitable way, highlighted to ordinary Australians the problems besetting the river by swimming from its source to its mouth. Last night, indeed, the ABC, through its award winning series *Four Corners*, analysed the whole gamut of issues confronting the Murray River-Darling system, from rising salinity through to massive cotton farms' efforts and their effect on the river. If any member of the House would like a copy of the tape, if they let my office know, I will make sure they get it, because it was a very good program.

The state government has been playing its part in confronting some of the issues that threaten our part of the Murray River through the Premier's successful lobbying to have the Murray put on the agenda at last November's Council of Australian Governments meeting and the release, at Murray Bridge last August, of a draft Murray River salinity strategy. While many members of this House might be quite familiar with issues confronting the future of the river, it is quite apparent that many South Australians are not and, more importantly, are not conscious of the ailments and, in some cases, want to be informed of the problems and, in other cases

where they are aware of the problems, want to know what to do about it.

That is why, yesterday, we launched a new media campaign aimed at saving the Murray, in which we have enlisted a couple of young South Australians. The initial message is quite clear: every drop you save helps save the Murray.

Mr Hill interjecting:

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: The member for Kaurna interjects something about every drip. Let me tell you, if ever I have seen a drip opposite, it is the member for Kaurna. He is a true drip, because the drip opposite was so bipartisan, so wonderful, that he said—

Mr Hill: You are spending a hundred grand to support your—

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: He described it as a miserable waste of taxpayers' money. Let the record show his interjection that we are spending \$100 000 dollars for our own re-election. Let me tell the member for Kaurna that the media are putting in nearly \$1 million, and I do not think it is to help this government or its re-election. The media of this state recognise an issue that is important to this state and they are providing over \$1 million worth of free advertising to the people of South Australia to help this campaign. There sits the member for Kaurna. We have put \$100 million from the sale of the Ports Corporation into the salinity strategy to capture \$700 million from the federal government, and the member for Kaurna sits there bleating like some sort of lamb; does nothing about the problem. I will read the Labor Party's platform on the Murray River—and I will read it in its entirety. It states:

A Labor government will work to continue rehabilitation of the Murray River, including its flow to the sea and appropriate management of all activities that affect the ecosystems associated with the river.

Well, wacky do!

Members interjecting:

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

Mr Venning interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! Has the member for Schubert finished?

MOTOROLA

Mr CONLON (Elder): Given the Premier's indication to the media yesterday that government witnesses to the Clayton inquiry will be assisted by counsel, will the Premier ensure that evidence given by witnesses is given publicly so that the public can judge whether witnesses and their lawyers are cooperating with the inquiry?

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN (Premier): No, it is not proposed to have this in the public glare, but as I indicated in my ministerial statement the report will be tabled and made public.

WORKCOVER

The Hon. G.A. INGERSON (Bragg): My good news question is directed to the Minister for Government Enterprises. Will the minister advise the House of the benefits arising from WorkCover's recently announced levy reduction? In 1993, when this government was elected, the unfunded liability was \$270 million and extending at \$10 to \$12 million a month. Also, at the same time, many injured workers' future payments were at risk. Today the position is this: it is

a fully funded scheme and nearly all the benefits are future guaranteed. I ask the minister in answering this good news question to explain the position in detail to the House.

The Hon. M.H. ARMITAGE (Minister for Government Enterprises): I thank the member for Bragg for his—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! I am sorry to interrupt the minister, but the House will come to order and members will observe the instructions from the chair when I call them to order. If members continue to ignore the chair, they will face the consequences.

Mr Atkinson interjecting:

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

The Hon. M.H. ARMITAGE: I thank the member for Bragg for his good news question about a matter which is of vital importance to South Australia's economy—

Mr Clarke interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Ross Smith.

The Hon. M.H. ARMITAGE:—and to both employees and employers. The reduction in WorkCover's levy announced on Friday by the board and the government represents a really significant boost to our economy, because it means that it is anticipated that there will be an additional \$83 million in the hands of South Australian employers to grow their businesses and to employ more employees, and it is due to a reduction in workers' compensation costs for 2001-2002. The Labor Party deals in very big numbers. We all remember only too well the situation—which the member for Bragg has talked about—for argument sake, the \$276 million unfunded liability. So, recognising that \$83 million is a large number, I point out that the new average levy rate is a 14 per cent reduction in the amount of levy collected by WorkCover from registered employees next financial year.

Very importantly, the 14 per cent reduction comes at a time when the trend for WorkCover costs in other states is upwards. This clearly provides an opportunity for us to have a competitive advantage against the other states. It is a very key component of the South Australian government's desire to improve business opportunities in South Australia. We really want to reduce the cost of doing business, of setting up business in South Australia. The WorkCover cost is an input cost. It is something which businesses look at when they are looking at where they might set up around Australia.

It is important also to identify that this is not just a bonus for the employers. In fact, it is a really great bonus for the employees because it means fewer of them will be injured and that, of course, is a great benefit to them. As the member for Bragg identified, WorkCover is fully funded and it is moving away from an insurance model to a workplace injury prevention model. That is because it does not have to worry about coping with the \$276 million unfunded liability. Under this government it has done that. It can now focus on what it should be doing, that is, diminishing the number of injuries in the workplace.

The way it is doing that is by a very successful and highly prominent campaign, a Work to Live campaign, which I am sure all members in the House would have seen by now. It is an excellent campaign and it is supported by material produced in a range of media including the internet. WorkCover is working to become a much more electronically available company anyway.

The Work to Live campaign is supported by a range of other strategies such as the safer industry strategy, the WorkCover grants scheme—a very popular scheme—the schools awareness scheme, and so on. For the benefit of members, the school awareness scheme is based around the fact that we are trying to inculcate into school children that it is not acceptable to be injured at work. We do not want anyone coming out of school into their first workplace not being aware of workplace safety.

All these campaigns have led us to the position where we are now able to reinvest the \$83 million into the South Australian economy. The reason we are able to do that now is because in the past five years, under the stewardship of the Liberal government, there has been a 20 per cent fall in the number of WorkCover claims. There has been a 20 per cent fall in the number of WorkCover claims while at the same time the work force has grown by 10 per cent. They are two good figures from the government's perspective—not only has the number of people increased by 10 per cent but the number of workplace claims has diminished by 20 per cent.

So, we have completely turned around WorkCover. We now have a fully funded scheme; we have fewer injuries; we have lower costs; and we have more jobs. Everyone wins.

MEDIA FILMING

The SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the next question, I remind the media of the agreement signed by your news editors whereby you will only film members on their feet speaking.

MOTOROLA

Mr CONLON (Elder): Given his public assurance, will the Premier now give his guarantee on *Hansard* that all relevant ministers including the Treasurer, the now Minister for the Environment, the Minister for Human Services and the Minister for Minerals and Energy will waive Crown privilege and appear before the Clayton inquiry to give evidence on oath.

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN (Premier): I would ask the member for Elder to look at my ministerial statement, where I indicated that the government will cooperate with this inquiry.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Colton.

PARKLANDS

Mr CONDOUS (Colton): Will the Minister for Environment and Heritage update the House on the government's latest initiatives to build on the reputation of Adelaide's parklands?

The Hon. I.F. EVANS (Minister for Environment and Heritage): I thank the member for Colton for his question. On the weekend I had the pleasure to announce a 20 year commitment to build a second generation of parklands around Adelaide through the Mount Lofty Ranges, basically running from the Aldinga Scrub Conservation Park in the south right through to the Barossa Valley in the north. We started to plan this in 1997 with a government commitment to form a greater Mount Lofty park strategy. Last year we had a weekend gathering of 70 people at McLarens on the Lake to talk to the stakeholder groups about the issues that would be involved

in developing a second generation parkland that would run through the city.

As the member for Colton rightly points out, Adelaide is badged both nationally and internationally through its parklands, and therefore the concept of developing what I term a 'second generation' parkland, or the greater Mount Lofty parklands through the Mount Lofty Ranges is a very good concept. It is a fabulous gift to future generations that in 100 years they will look back and say that the government put in place a proper process to deliver a second generation parkland.

This involves the initial announcement of some 40 000 hectares of government land; about 30 conservation parks; eight recreation parks; two national parks; the Mount Lofty Botanic Gardens, covering about 11 500 hectares; 16 000 hectares of the Mount Crawford and Kuitpo Forest reserves; a number of SA Water reserves; and land set aside under the Metropolitan and Open Space Scheme.

The vision is that over 20 years this land will be linked together for various reasons. Some of it will be linked together for recreational pursuits, such as walking or cycling; and other areas will be linked together for biodiversity reasons. We are aware that the Mount Lofty Ranges has suffered significant biodiversity loss over the past 100 years. Therefore, being able to link some of these areas together for biodiversity reasons is one of the key elements of this announcement.

This will also provide a great opportunity to link to a number of environmental programs that are already being undertaken within the Mount Lofty Ranges. We look forward to being able to announce some more programs over the next 12 months. We think this quite appropriately builds on the back of Colonel Light's vision for Adelaide and the fact that the parklands play such an essential part of our lifestyle.

For some time a stakeholder management group has been set up so that we can get proper advice from the stakeholders about the issues that will be involved in developing this over the next 20 years. Groups such as the Farmers' Federation; the Conservation Council; recreation groups such as the Walking Federation, Bicycle SA and Horse SA; the Kurna-Meyunna people; the Hills Tourism Committee; Friends of Parks and others have been working diligently at this for a year.

For the Leader of the Democrats to stand up over the weekend and say that this is a political stunt was an insult to all the community groups that have worked on this cooperatively for about nine to 12 months now. The Democrats do not realise the amount of goodwill that has gone into this from the community groups, to build it from the ground up. There is a genuine desire to build a second generation parkland through the Mount Lofty Ranges over the next 20 years. I think that future generations will look back at that announcement as being one of the key announcements during this centenary year of Federation.

MOTOROLA

Mr CONLON (Elder): Will the Premier guarantee to this House that anyone found by the Clayton inquiry to have been involved in any way with deliberately withholding evidence or destroying information material to the Cramond inquiry will be dismissed?

The Hon. J.W. OLSEN (Premier): Within the constraints of the Public Sector Management Act, yes.

EDUCATION CHARGES

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON (Heysen): Will the Minister for Education and Children's Services provide the House with some details of the number of government schools that are charging parents up to the maximum amount allowable for materials and services as prescribed under the Education Act?

The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY (Minister for Education and Children's Services): This government has responded to calls from schools and their communities about what they want. This government fought for legislation to support them when an out of touch opposition, along with its union mates, had forever opposed and delayed any legislation to protect schools and parents. This government, along with two members in the upper house—the Hon. Terry Cameron and the Hon. Nick Xenophon—was successful in legislating for a maximum compulsory charge, thereby protecting both parents and schools. While the opposition remains in a policy vacuum, this government has provided a definite way forward for parents and schools, and the result is resoundingly clear. Under the new legislation, more than three-quarters of all schools charge less than the maximum compulsory charge. This year, four out of every five schools did not ask for a further contribution from parents. Where a voluntary contribution was sought, that voluntary contribution, in only eight schools across the state, was more than \$100. So, we have eight out of some 964 schools (I think the figure is) across South Australia.

The government's new legislation is working for both schools and parents in South Australia. But let us contrast that with Victoria and the Labor government there, because there the clarity simply does not exist: it is not clear to schools and it is not clear to parents. Recently, the Director of Schools had to put out a strongly worded memo that insists that parents do not have to pay voluntary fees. That had to go out in a memo to parents.

South Australian Labor, unfortunately, does not understand what has happened in this state either. Labor conveniently forgets that, when it was in government prior to 1993, parents always made a voluntary contribution towards their children's schooling—and they did that willingly. This government has acted. It is clear now for all parents what they can do to assist in their child's future education.

ENTERTAINMENT CENTRE

Ms THOMPSON (Reynell): My question is directed to the Minister for Tourism. Given the Premier's statement that it was a choice between the Le Mans and 200 nurses, is the minister confident that the government will agree with her plan to spend \$40 million on upgrading the Entertainment Centre? In a submission to the Treasurer, the minister says that plans to relocate the Investigator Science Centre and upgrade the Entertainment Centre will cost \$40 million over two years—the equivalent of 1 000 nurses.

The Hon. J. HALL (Minister for Tourism): I wonder whether the member for Reynell has had a discussion with the Leader of the Opposition, because I understand that he is on record as saying that he supports the upgrade and establishment of the Investigator Science Centre. So, maybe they just have not had a discussion about that. There have been plans to upgrade the Investigator Science Centre for some time. A number of sites are being discussed, as I am sure the member for Reynell would be well aware, and I am sure that this

parliament will be involved with the debate when a decision is finally made.

ABORIGINES, FAMILY VIOLENCE

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): My question—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mrs PENFOLD: —is directed to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. Can the minister outline to the House the latest initiatives implemented in the state to combat family violence in Aboriginal communities?

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Hart, have you finished interrupting the House? Thank you.

The Hon. D.C. KOTZ (Minister for Local Government): I thank the member for her question—although the House may not have heard it. The question was intended for the ministry of Aboriginal affairs, and I believe the question related to family violence in Aboriginal communities. We are again dealing with another sensitive and difficult subject, and I think we all recognise that family violence involves tragic circumstances that reach far and wide across all our communities. In respect of the specific question relating to Aboriginal communities, I can tell the House that last year federal and state ministers for Aboriginal affairs endorsed a resolution at the Ministerial Council of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (MCATSIA) meeting, recognising the severity of the problem of violence in indigenous communities and agreeing to a concerted national effort to address this issue. This resolution established a working group of officials to develop and implement a strategy to combat domestic violence in Aboriginal communities through what is known as the Partnerships Against Domestic Violence program.

Of the two communities that will initially receive commonwealth funding under this partnership grants program, one is in South Australia, involving the Point Pearce community. This project was developed by the Goretta Aboriginal community at Point Pearce, which aims to develop culturally appropriate support services through community consultation, and partnership and service providers. Of course, it takes the support of Aboriginal communities to be able to develop a program like this, because without that support, through consultation, these programs would have no benefit whatsoever. The project itself will involve educational workshops about family violence. This provides not only an information centre and an advocacy area but also referral services. Indeed, I am aware that through the workshops and other consultations the community will develop an early intervention and prevention policy.

The national strategy that is behind this program focuses on a range of areas, including alcohol misuse in indigenous communities. However, of course the better targeting of existing resources to support these community driven initiatives will also be investigated. Indeed, this national strategy will lead to the development of support services for victims of family violence, preventative programs for children and young people, as well as looking at treatment programs for offenders. It will also examine ways of better regulating the supply and distribution of alcohol.

Indigenous family violence has been a major focus for work under the Prime Minister's Partnerships Against Domestic Violence initiative, at all levels of government.

This includes a national targeted community education program, as well as projects that are aimed at strengthening family relationships and promoting better responses from across all areas of government, particularly through our mainstream agencies. The grant that was received by Point Pearce will provide practical and flexible support for grassroots projects, and it certainly will test new approaches to addressing violence in indigenous communities.

As I said earlier, we all know that violence in any community is a cause for concern. However, for too long domestic violence has been ignored, particularly in Aboriginal communities. Now, thanks to the efforts of Aboriginal people themselves, and the support of the federal and state governments, action is being taken to address these very sensitive and tragic issues, and the behaviours that exist behind violent behaviour. In doing so, I would suggest that we are all looking to provide and to support what will be a safer and stronger community, and certainly a healthier one.

In January this year, I wrote a letter to the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and sought to have the issue of petrol sniffing abuse put on the national agenda of the MCATSIA meeting. That meeting is due mid year. I think that all members in this House are well aware that substance abuse of any kind is a tragedy, but the horrendous and debilitating effects of petrol sniffing have caused immense damage and harm within communities. This is an area that will be resource intensive; it is not an area in which state governments can totally find and fund the necessary resources. It is an issue that crosses borders and, because it does, I believe it rightly belongs on the national agenda. I trust that we can have a combined and concerted effort in putting together a strategy and a program for that particular issue also.

TULKA FIRE

Ms BEDFORD (Florey): Will the Minister for Emergency Services tell the House why part-time staff handling two MFS pumps were told that they were not required and could leave Tulka before the recent disastrous fire went through that town?

The Hon. R.L. BROKENSHIRE (Minister for Police, Correctional Services and Emergency Services): I could not quite hear the honourable member but I think that she asked why MFS pumpers were not required at a fire at Tulka on Eyre Peninsula. I will seek some information on that matter and get back to the honourable member in due course.

GEOHERMAL ENERGY

The Hon. G.M. GUNN (Stuart): I direct my question to the Minister—

Mr Atkinson interjecting:

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: Don't judge others by yourself. If that is the standard you set, we cannot help that.

Mr Atkinson: Whatever that means.

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: You wouldn't know what time of day it was, so—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Stuart.

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: Will the Minister for Minerals and Energy advise the House of the outcome of the licence scheme for the state's new green energy source (geothermal energy) and the benefits that these licences will bring to South Australia? Perhaps the minister would particularly like to expand in relation to the energy policy which ensures that South Australia has sufficient energy to meet its needs.

The Hon. W.A. MATTHEW (Minister for Minerals and Energy): I thank the honourable member for his question, and I particularly commend the honourable member for his long-term interest in the energy needs for South Australia. The member for Stuart is well aware of the importance of this issue because he was a strong participant in the framing of and, finally, the debate on legislation that came before this parliament last year.

Mr Atkinson: What, the member for Stuart? Don't make me laugh.

The Hon. W.A. MATTHEW: The member for Spence disappoints me because I should have thought that he and his constituents would be interested in this issue. It is not an issue to be made light of. Geothermal energy will, indeed, be an energy type that is used extensively by this state in the future. During debate on the Petroleum Act last year, the parliament in its wisdom passed in that legislation the enabler to award licences for geothermal energy production in our state. That enabled the government to call for applications for geothermal energy opportunities in three areas of our state—areas well known to the member for Stuart.

They are areas approximately 500 kilometres in size and cover the important sections of our state in the north-east, in the Nappamerri Trough and in the Moomba regions in the Cooper Basin. In October last year we called for applications for the area. Those applications closed on 1 February. I am pleased to advise the House of details of the three successful applicants.

The applicants for the state's first geothermal licences are Scopenergy Limited (in association with the University of New South Wales), South Australian Geothermal Energy Pty Ltd (that is in joint venture with the CSIRO and Beach Petroleum), and Geodynamics Limited. These three companies or consortiums will be the first to explore this energy and have the opportunity to harness it for the benefit of our state.

Members would be aware that geothermal energy harnesses the earth's heat for the provision of electricity, thereby reducing the need for the burning of fossil fuels. I should have thought that the member for Spence would welcome such an initiative instead of making light of it and making light of the contribution of the member for Stuart. The member for Spence and his colleagues would be well aware of the need to find good, clean, green energy sources in our state and of Australia's commitment that it seeks to deliver in accord with the kind of protocol to which this country is in agreement and to which it is a co-signatory.

It is certainly an agreement that this state is keen to see upheld. There is no doubting that geothermal energy does provide us with such a clean, green fuel source. In drilling in search for petroleum in the Nappamerri Trough and Moomba regions in the north-east of the state, companies have over the years identified several areas over the years that have high geothermal temperatures. These elevated temperatures are often in the vicinity of 200 degrees celsius at depths of around 3 500 metres below the earth's surface. They are commonly associated with granitic rocks, which are interpreted to extend over several thousand square kilometres in the northern and north-eastern regions of our state.

In fact, the area is considered to be the country's foremost hot dry rock province. As a government, we look enthusiastically forward in terms of seeing what this province yields for those who have been successful in winning these exploration licences. The successful development of the resource will lead to a significant contribution being made toward clean

green electricity for our state, and I believe that has the potential to benefit not only our state's industries but also, ultimately, domestic households. The successful applicants will expend up to \$135 million over the next five years, and that is a significant investment in this energy exploration in our state—\$135 million and a first for the state. That money includes proposals to construct and operate a number of electricity generating plants driven by tapping the high levels of subsurface heat in the region.

As members would expect, special conditions will be attached to the new geothermal exploration licences—

Mr Atkinson: Tell us all.

The Hon. W.A. MATTHEW:—including a requirement for appropriate insurance coverage and a ban on any operations that would pose a significant risk of loss or reduced recovery of petroleum from the area. We are mindful of the mild concern that might be held by a number of petroleum exploration companies, either exploring in the area or shortly due to explore in the area, so we have ensured that their existing rights are also preserved through this activity. Importantly, environmental, social and economic issues will be addressed in a statement of environmental objectives and that, as members would expect, will be the subject of a consultation approval process prior to any of the exploration actually occurring in the area. I look forward to reporting back to the parliament the progress of this exciting new initiative.

TAFE COURSES

Mr De LAINE (Price): How does the Minister for Education and Children's Services expect people, especially unemployed people, to undertake courses at TAFE colleges because of the outrageously high fees applying to many TAFE courses? A constituent has told me that a call centre training course at Adelaide TAFE consists of one night per week for nine weeks and costs \$999 in fees, with one-third of this amount being an up-front payment.

The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY (Minister for Education and Children's Services): I will undertake to look into that fee, but much depends on what the fee is made up of: what material is required for that course, and so on. One certainty is the excellent delivery of our TAFE systems and the excellent results that students are achieving. South Australia's TAFE system is delivering results over and above any other state in Australia in terms of job outcomes for people undertaking TAFE studies. I stand to be corrected, but I think that more than 80 per cent of people who undertake and complete their courses at TAFE are gaining employment as a result of that study. In addition, I know from talking to my local TAFE institute that the number of students accessing TAFE is increasing. I went into our local TAFE only three or four weeks ago and said—

The Hon. M.K. Brindal interjecting:

The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY: I had to pay my wife's fees for a course that she is undertaking. They told me that they are overwhelmed by the number of people currently undertaking study at TAFE. The Murray Institute of TAFE, for example, whose service delivery some two years ago totalled just on 600 000 hours, has now topped over a million hours, and that is increasing.

Certainly, TAFE is a success story in South Australia. I remember—I think at the start of last year—when TAFE fees were restructured, and I think I am right in saying that about 14 per cent went up and about 86 per cent either stayed the

same or were reduced. So our TAFE system is delivering an excellent quality of service. It does not matter whether it is in the international area—where Sir Douglas Mawson TAFE offers an excellent diploma program in information technology studies in Vietnam, Hanoi and Saigon—or whether it is at the Regency Institute, which has an excellent program involving the International College of Hotel Management as well as tourism courses that are available. Only the other day, a parent came up to me and said that her daughter has just returned from Banff in Canada where she was working in a hotel as part of this course, and she has come back to complete her last six months of study. This is the sort of work that is going on in our TAFEs. It is excellent, and it is giving our young people excellent experience and equipping them for the workplace in a very fine fashion.

GRIEVANCE DEBATE

Mr HANNA (Mitchell): Today I bring to the House the issue of fireworks. Over Christmas and New Year, and then right through January, this was a major problem in the suburbs which I look after in the south-western suburbs of Adelaide. I know that it has been a problem throughout the metropolitan area and, from what I have heard, in a lot of country towns as well.

At the outset, I pay tribute to the work done on this issue by Robyn Geraghty, the member for Torrens. I have worked with her to put out into the community a petition which has been brought to parliament already. Nearly 7 000 signatures have been collected over just January and February. Most of the collection of signatures has been done by community members who have taken up this petition with great earnestness and satisfaction that something is being done.

Of course, the community can speak—we on the opposition side of parliament can give them a voice—but, ultimately, it is going to be for the government to do something about this problem. The problem, of course, is not just a matter of nuisance and not just a loss of amenity for residents: real safety issues are involved. In a lot of suburbs in my constituency, residents tend to be elderly and they have been particularly disturbed by the random use of fireworks late at night. I am not talking about the little squibs that we played with around the bonfire when current members of parliament were children: I am talking about significant rockets. If these rockets hit you, you would probably be dead. We are talking about explosives which need professional care and attention.

It is not just about the effect on human beings, but a very significant factor is the effect on pets. Both Robyn Geraghty and I have heard a number of stories about dogs which have literally gone mad, driven into a frenzy by the use of fireworks, for whatever reason. Because of their particular hearing facilities, or for whatever reason, they tend to go mad. We have heard of cases of dogs running across roads regardless of the traffic; and we have heard of dogs tearing their paws into bloody messes trying to escape from a backyard. There was a case in Oaklands Park where a dog had to be taken to a vet and given sedatives to calm it down because it was going berserk because of fireworks. It is an issue of cruelty to animals.

Fireworks have gone way beyond recreational use in parks or in the backyard under family supervision. They are now

a mechanism that a lot of people, particularly young people, I am sorry to say, are using to harass neighbours and disturb the neighbourhood generally. Throughout all of January—and it is still going on—young people have been tearing around the neighbourhood throwing fire crackers, setting off rockets out of car windows and creating a real danger. There is a fire hazard, of course, so it is not just a matter of a risk to human and pet life: it is also a threat to property.

The latest craze that I have picked up on is that people—vandals, really—are using fire crackers as explosives to wreck letterboxes, to completely demolish the place where letters are put in. So, in a range of ways, it is a really serious issue for the community. It is a quality of life issue. It is very important for the government to take action on this in this election year, otherwise people like Robyn Geraghty and myself are going to keep up the pressure. I am talking to my opposition colleagues and I am prepared to talk to any government members about what we can do to solve this problem. I believe that it has come to the point where we have to ban the sale of fireworks except where their use is supervised—for example, the Sky Show and Chinese New Year. There are certain events where it is really good for the community to enjoy the spectacle and the excitement. However, in those cases licensed pyrotechnicians should be the persons conducting the show, especially when it involves rockets of the sort I have described.

Time expired.

Mr VENNING (Schubert): I am very concerned about the recent articles in both the *Advertiser* and the Riverland newspapers saying that growers in that region have voted against a proposal to lease 10 000 megalitres of water over a five year period to the Barossa Infrastructure Ltd project. On many occasions I have spoken here about the BIL project, which is a \$34 million project funded by Barossa growers to pump water from the Murray into the valley via the Warren Reservoir using their own infrastructure. It was a privilege for me to launch the start of the construction of the pipeline for this project a couple of weeks ago. However, now we have this negative attitude and I am amazed at the decision that the Riverland growers have made. This is unused water and it is not a full utilisation of our valuable water resources.

Let us look at some facts. The BIL water lease would provide the Riverland's Central Irrigation Trust with about \$100 000 each year for the next five years. I am talking about a lease arrangement, not a sale. I understand that the Central Irrigation Trust had planned to use the money for asset replacement without the need to raise water rates, but it does not look as if that will happen now. I will give members an idea of what the BIL was asking for under the proposal. It proposed to lease 656 megalitres from the Berri Irrigation Trust, or about only 2 per cent of its total 40 646 megalitre allocation. The remaining water needed would come from other districts, both inside and outside the Riverland region. The Berri Irrigation Trust has stated that currently about 23 per cent of its water allocation is not used. Therefore, the BIL is not asking for much—only 2 per cent of its 23 per cent unused allocation. Riverland irrigators must realise that they have made a mistake here. They grow a medium to high quality wine grape. A lot of that product goes to the Barossa for wine blending and bottling. The Barossa grows a super premium product and without that the Riverland quality grapes would not be marketed as readily as they are currently. It really is a situation where one product complements the other.

So, why are the Riverland growers taking this stance? I believe they are really hurting themselves in the long run and I know many people agree with me. Certainly, we do see water allocations being traded, irrespective of the decision made by the trust. So, it is good to see that people do think of the bigger picture and are thinking of our state. It is basic economics that the top end of the market helps to bring the rest of the market along with it. Do not be mistaken, the Barossa growers will get their water even if the Riverland growers say 'No' to theirs. I am assured by the manager, Mr Mark Whitmore, that water allocation is being transferred—much of it from the Riverland—in spite of this publicity.

Plenty of hurdles bigger than this have been put in the way of the BIL project. Make no mistake, this will not stop the project: we have come too far to let this get in the way. I inspected the operations over the weekend and the Barossa is abuzz with all the activity: new pipes are both lying alongside the roads and being dug in. Some of these pipes are huge. Certainly it is a very positive feeling and they are working like beavers. I would like to share some statistics that highlight the value in dollar terms per megalitre of water that is returned from the vineyard. At the bottom end of the ledger is rice, the return for every megalitre of water poured onto that crop is \$100; cotton returns \$250 per megalitre; and the middle of the range crops, including crops such as potatoes, return about \$600 for every megalitre of water compared with vineyards which return an amazing \$1 500 plus.

It is very clear that we must not only sustain our premium wine growing regions such as the Barossa but also have enough scope for it to expand to meet consumer demands. The one resource that is paramount to all is water. Let us not have parochial minded people hinder one of the great success stories this state has ever seen. Let us think as South Australians and not with regional self-interest. People in South Australia will be amazed at the difference this scheme will make. A whole new area in the Gomersal region will be opened up. The soil in that area is as good as the Barossa floor—red loam over limestone—and all it lacked was water. Well, now it has it, and we will all reap the rewards.

Ms BEDFORD (Florey): I along with many hundreds of thousands of other people really welcomed the announcement of the first home owners grant over the last few days: the fact that you can have \$14 000 for a new home or \$7 000 for an existing home. While I was out and about in the electorate last weekend speaking to people a couple of points were raised with me which I want to raise in the House today. The first was a regret that there ever needed to be such a stimulation to the home building industry in the first place, which the GST appears to have catastrophically catapulted into a nose dive. I believe that other countries such as New Zealand and the United Kingdom do not charge GST on new homes that are lived in by the owner, regardless of whether or not it is their first home. I am also told that Australia is the only country that offers GST compensation for people buying existing or second-hand homes, while ignoring the need for people who already own homes and who may want to renovate or extend.

To put things into context, as I understand it, first home buyers make up 30 per cent of the home buying market and, of that 30 per cent, 7 per cent of them end up qualifying and buying a home under such a scheme. It is a little discriminatory to introduce this new grant—amid great fanfare, too—as

it will not stop increased costs in the industry making houses unaffordable for the great majority of people wanting to buy a home. The question posed to me was: could this money have been used to stimulate the building industry in much the same way by commencing a public infrastructure program of building public housing?

As was highlighted by the member for Ross Smith some weeks ago, in South Australia we have seen and we face a terrible decline in affordable rental market properties. Not everyone is in the position to finance a home loan. Home ownership, which has long been the Australian dream, may fast be becoming just that. Workers these days continue to live and face the complex problems of unemployment, under employment, casual or part-time jobs and all on contracts. I am aware, as are many other members, of cases where young couples will never be able to raise a deposit or qualify for this grant, let alone pay off a mortgage.

While exploring the discriminatory nature of the grant, why could we not see such a funding boon extended to include people doing renovations or extensions? This question was raised continually at the barbie I was at on the weekend. In this particular section of Modbury Heights nearly every house has added on a room, either at ground level or as a second storey. Many home owners would take the step, if such funding was available to them, to kickstart their projects. Those projects could be subject to criteria with respect to environmentally sensitive materials and designs and energy components. This seems to be a golden opportunity that we have lost.

Recently I have also noticed a large increase in expenditure by the federal government on TV commercials and ads in newspapers talking about greenhouse initiatives. These are obviously much needed but these new home grants could have been tied in in much the same way as we tie mutual obligation when we grant benefits to people to promote the use of initiatives for sustainable energy and the environmentally sensitive designs and materials which I mentioned earlier. In a country where we are struggling to meet international standards on greenhouse, we could have taken a step towards an investment in a better future.

The use of photovoltaic technology, wind power and solar power, is to be commended and encouraged wherever possible. It is heartening to see in this state that a project in the South-East, will use wind power in a large way. I am looking forward to visiting that site when I go to the South-East in May to attend the Generations in Jazz concert with the Modbury High School band. I have also heard news of an exciting new project in the north where a solar farm will be established and the by-product will be distilled water. In a state such as South Australia where water is always a key problem to sustaining any settlement something such as that would be welcome.

In concluding, while I think that the first home owners scheme will be welcomed by those in the position to use it, it would have been much better to have tied in sustainable energy issues and allowed people needing to do renovations and extensions access to that money. I know a lot of families in Modbury Heights and the Florey area would have been very pleased to have been able to use that money. And, as I said earlier, not everyone qualifies for that home grant in the first place.

Mr LEWIS (Hammond): This afternoon I am not quite sure where to start on this topic, but it is clearly one which should be of grave concern to all members. I will take as the

point of departure the experience of the United Kingdom at the present time in trying to come to grips with the outbreak of foot and mouth disease which has spread across that country like wildfire and which has caused enormous damage and loss to that country's economy, the shock waves of which will not be understood for two to three years yet. No question about the fact that it will bring that economy down into negative growth for more than two quarters, which means the United Kingdom economy will go into depression.

I now draw attention to an even equally, if not more, serious problem on the same sort of scale in South Australia. However, before I do so, not everyone in the United Kingdom, Europe or anywhere else that has had foot and mouth disease in the past agreed that the way to deal with the problem, and the only bloody way to deal with the problem, was to destroy the stock and burn them, and that is because you cannot eradicate the disease by treating it with antibiotics, chemicals or any other form of medication. The same thing then as has now befallen the animal industries of the United Kingdom, meaning they cannot sell their product anywhere because it is not safe to ship it or consume it, will happen to South Australia. That will happen not because we have got foot and mouth disease, but because we continue to sit on our hands and do nothing about the unlawful, that is illegal—I repeat unlawful—use of antibiotics by beekeepers.

We export most of our honey and we get around \$1.70 a kilogram for it. America cannot export its honey because it is known around the world to be incapable of providing quality assurance statements that it is free of antibiotics. Only recently I read of some research that has been done: the antibiotics, particularly tetracyclines, in infants cause a constriction of the mucous membranes, especially in the respiratory organs, and that is to express more mucous into those passageways in the chest, the throat and the lungs. It is the precursor of asthma. There is an alarming rise in the incidence of asthma in the age group cohorts nought to five, as over five to 10, as above 10 to 15, and so on, into the age group around the mid 30s. It is fairly flat thereafter. That is exactly the time that beekeepers, that is, people of 35 years of age, 35 years ago, when they were very small infants were being dosed innocently with honey that had antibiotics.

The effect of those antibiotics, I believe, has been for some people with some genetic predisposition to it—some affected more adversely than others—contracting asthma. The quantity of antibiotics that have been used has been increasing as the extent of the diseases that have caused the problem, on which it has been used to treat the problem, has increased. American foul brood is the worst, and that has now been an epidemic in some beekeepers' hives for well over a decade. It is therefore tragic that we have a Minister for Primary Industries who says he is doing everything he can, but he cannot get unanimity in the industry as to what he ought to do to fix the problem.

Well, damn it. You do not ask burglars what they want as a penalty when you catch them. You have already defined that in law. We have done the same with the misuse of antibiotics in food. Babies that are given a small dose of honey on their dummy to make it acceptable to them and to then go to sleep and are increasing in the number of adults who get asthma to my mind is a bad enough problem. It is time the government did something to stop it before we cannot sell our food because we cannot give guarantees. We are giving guarantees and certificates now that it is pure, that it is free of disease and that it is free of contaminants, including antibiotics—and it is not.

Why would our importers believe us? If we do that to honey and lie about it, why would they believe us in relation to our wine, our vegetables, our milk products or any other thing. We will sign away our integrity for the sake of, it seems to me, political expedience. They say that it is not a significant industry. Well, it might be worth only a few million dollars, but we are putting \$4 billion worth of primary industries exports on the line through this stupid policy.

Ms RANKINE (Wright): If history tells us anything, it is that people living in the metropolitan area should be very aware of the dangers of bushfires. Just because we live in metropolitan Adelaide does not mean we are protected. I lived in the country regions of South Australia for 13½ years, and people in those regions are very aware of the dangers of bushfires. Certainly, the tragedy in Tulka and around the Port Lincoln region just recently highlighted what a wildfire can do when it gets out of control.

I have also worked for many years, as this House knows, with the Leader of the Opposition and had a great deal of contact with Salisbury CFS. I am a member of the Salisbury CFS, as is the Leader of the Opposition—and, in fact, recently he was awarded life membership. I want to tell the House about a fire safety initiative I have taken in my area in recent times. Salisbury East and Golden Grove are unique and beautiful areas. They have fabulous areas of open space and open bushland, right in the heart of the developments.

With this natural bushland, however, comes some real dangers and some real risks. Salisbury CFS, for example, is consistently in one of the top five CFS units for call-outs in South Australia. The Cobbler Creek area, including the recreation park, has on average 12 fires a year, and indeed in the Tea Tree Gully MFS area they attend something like 94 brush fence fires a year. These dangers can, however, be reduced with some simple and sensible initiatives. If we are aware of the risks and how to manage them, we can be better prepared both mentally and physically.

That is why this week I have distributed throughout the fire prone areas of my electorate a safety handbook for residents. This booklet contains some useful, cost effective, sensible tips in the event of fire. I am extremely grateful for the contribution and hard work that was put into producing this leaflet by the CFS, MFS and National Parks and Wildlife. They all had input into it and agreed in the end that it was the most appropriate way to get this information out to people.

In January, I joined the Salisbury CFS on a burn-off. I have to say that the theory of fire is much different in reality. I did not excel myself in any way at that burn-off and appreciated the help that was provided by the Salisbury officers. The next day I conducted a community awareness day. All the appropriate agencies attended and provided some valuable advice to local residents.

Every time we experience a fire we have CFS volunteers—thousands of them—and MFS officers putting their lives on the line. I believe each of us has a responsibility to help reduce the risks they face, and we have a responsibility to ensure that we are prepared. We have a responsibility to take sensible precautions for ourselves—and that is what this booklet is about. I am sure it will be well received and well utilised by my residents. I thank the CFS, MFS and National Parks and Wildlife officers but, in particular, I register my thanks to Julie Drury, who is a community fire safe facilitator with the Country Fire Service, and Andrew Oakley, who is the emergency services coordinator fire prevention officer from the Tea Tree Gully council.

At our community fire safe meeting on the Sunday morning, it was interesting to hear these people tell us about the hazards that they actually face. The CFS officers said the biggest hazards they face in the event of a fire are young children and residents spectating. They have problems with vehicles parked across access points—people going to watch the fire. They said that residents can help most by protecting their homes, by ensuring they have the right measures in place, keeping a watchful eye on the firefighting track and advising of any damage to the tracks that may occur during the winter.

The MFS officers were talking mainly about the brush fence fires which have been a nightmare in my area.

Time expired.

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): It is a recorded fact that rural people do much more voluntary work than their metropolitan counterparts, yet recognition of their efforts is rare. It was a proud moment therefore when Wendy Holman was announced as South Australian Citizen of the Year in this year—the centenary of Federation.

Cummins is a service town for the surrounding agricultural districts. Societal changes have been well documented over the past decade or so, and have hit rural regions particularly hard. Rather than complaining and lamenting the change, the response from some in this district was to sit down and work out what could be done. An enterprise committee was formed in Cummins to research and initiate ventures that would benefit the town and the district. Wendy was a foundation member of the committee when it was formed in 1995 and has served as chairperson for three of the five years of the committee's existence.

One of the first projects was to set up the Cummins Kalamazoo Classic—a festival based around the railway that has been a significant factor in the history and development of the town and the district. The principal event is the kalamazoo race. Teams handpump the rail vehicle (the kalamazoo) over a set stretch of track, the winner being the team that covers the distance in the shortest time. The event is unique and demonstrates the innovation and enterprise for which the rural communities are noted.

The Cummins Kalamazoo Classic was judged the 1999 state event of the year and has attracted wide positive publicity to our region. Its success highlighted another need for the town—a caravan park to cater for the visitors. The enterprise committee and the Lower Eyre Peninsula District Council are working together on this project. I am sure that the result will be equally successful as the kalamazoo classic.

One by one, the major banks have withdrawn their branches from Cummins. This was a particular blow to the business people who, as a consequence, had to drive a round trip of 150 kilometres to bank money or obtain cash in Port Lincoln. But, again, the people did not sit on their collective hands and bewail their loss: they looked around for alternatives. Wendy Holman, along with Leo Haarsma, Jeff Pearson and many others, started negotiations with Bendigo Bank to open a branch in Cummins. The Cummins Community Bank opened for business late last year.

Wendy's service to the district began 28 years ago, when she was sent to the town as a school teacher at the Cummins Area School. She also became one of the bus drivers who each day travel long distances picking up and setting down students. She has edited a book produced by Cummins writers and has worked closely with the Eyre Regional Development Board. Her immediate future will be taken up

with developing and implementing a youth plan. Country youth do not have the amenities and entertainments that are laid on for metropolitan youth. I must pay tribute here to the state government's active club grants scheme that allocates gaming revenue to recreational facilities that benefit rural communities so much.

The *Advertiser* printed an excellent front page article on Wendy's award on 27 January 2001. The story was uplifting and inspirational—just the kind of thing to present our country regions and their particularly special people in a good light to those who never venture far from the city limits. Unfortunately, there is a down side to all this good news. This wonderful story was printed on the front page, only in the rural edition of the *Advertiser*. City editions had a much smaller article buried on an inside page, while the front page article was yet another sad report—this one of three deaths on the Murray River. If it is a choice between a good news story that might lift people's spirits and a sad and depressing one, why does it always have to be the latter? The *Advertiser* had an opportunity to present to the people of this state a positive and successful approach to dealing with problems in rural areas. Metropolitan communities too are not immune from downturns in their regions and would have benefited from a greater exposure to Wendy Holman's award and the achievements of the Cummins community.

My blood boils every time the country is relegated to the position of also-ran, to a situation where the country is grudgingly acknowledged as being there but unimportant and unworthy of positive recognition. We in the country are fortunate that our citizens work voluntarily for their communities without seeking public acclaim, yet the country and metropolitan Adelaide together make up the state of South Australia. I congratulate all the wonderful people who gained recognition in the awards, and particularly Wendy Holman, Lower Eyre Peninsula District Council under the chairmanship of Bill Watkins and the many people whom Wendy has acknowledged as having played a part in her award as the Citizen of the Year for the whole of South Australia.

Time expired.

SEAFORD CFS

Mr HILL (Kaurna): I seek leave to make a personal explanation.

Leave granted.

Mr Venning interjecting:

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr HILL: On Wednesday 28 February during question time, in answering a question on the Country Fire Service, the Minister for Police, Correctional Services and Emergency Services asked, 'Is the fix that the member for Kaurna is talking about getting rid of the Seaford CFS?' He then asked whether I wanted to get rid of the volunteers from the Seaford CFS. These statements were made in response to my interjection that the minister should fix it. I want to make absolutely clear to the House and CFS volunteers everywhere—at Seaford in particular—that I do not support getting rid of the Seaford CFS or its volunteers. I strongly support the fantastic job done by the Seaford CFS in the southern suburbs. My interjection related to a communication problem existing between the CFS and MFS at, I think, the Happy Valley station.

I am disappointed that a copy of the minister's comments was faxed to the Seaford CFS late last week, in a pathetic attempt to damage my reputation among Seaford CFS

members. Fortunately, a senior officer from the CFS had the common courtesy to alert me to this, which has allowed me to set the record straight today.

SITTINGS AND BUSINESS

The Hon. J. HALL (Minister for Tourism): I move:

That the Select Committees on DETE Funded Schools and the Murray River have leave to sit during the sitting of the House today.

Motion carried.

The Hon. J. HALL: I move:

That the Select Committee on Parliamentary Procedures and Practices have leave to sit during the sittings of the House this session.

Motion carried.

The Hon. J. HALL: I move:

That the time for the bringing up the report of the Select Committee on the Murray River be extended to Wednesday 6 June.

Motion carried.

LAKE EYRE BASIN (INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT) BILL

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 29 November. Page 712.)

Mr HILL (Kaurna): The opposition supports this legislation, which has been a long time coming. Prior to the last state election, on 3 May you, Sir, as the then Minister for the Environment—

Mr Clarke interjecting:

Mr HILL:—and a good minister, as my colleague says; the last good minister for this area. On 3 May 1997 you said that this piece of legislation would be introduced for debate during the parliamentary session of 1998. I am sure, sir, that if you had still been the minister that would have happened. In May 1998 the next minister—minister Kotz—said, ‘It is not expected to be introduced until the end of this year’; that is, 1998. It is now 2001 and the bill has finally been introduced in this place. No doubt a series of elections in Queensland has caused part of the problem, but I also suspect that the rearrangement of the department, the changes of ministers and the shuffling of priorities have put this on the back burner for some time. In his second reading speech the minister stated:

The Lake Eyre Basin Agreement is a major achievement for the South Australian government. . .

As usual, this is an overblown claim by the minister, and it is worth examining this point. Is this in fact a major achievement of the South Australian government? If it is a major achievement, it just shows how minor is everything else they do. What does this legislation do? It does two main things.

The Hon. G.M. Gunn: Who wrote this nonsense?

Mr HILL: It is self authored. First, it is a formal agreement between South Australia, Queensland—

Members interjecting:

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Kaurna.

Mr HILL: Thank you, sir; I appreciate your protection. It is a formal agreement between South Australia, Queensland and the commonwealth. In some ways it is similar to the Murray Darling Basin Commission (MDBC), but only in some ways; it does not have the power that that commission

has, and I will get to that later. It is a good thing—I am not criticising it—but it is hardly a major achievement.

Secondly, it is basically an agreement to work together (to quote the minister’s second reading speech) ‘to jointly address issues of water management and related natural resources associated with cross border river systems in the basin’. In other words, it is an agreement to agree; it is about good intentions.

An honourable member interjecting:

Mr HILL: I hope they are honourable intentions; I guess it is up to the members of the forum. Why is it so important to have agreement about this area? There are two major rivers in the basin: the Cooper in South Australia and the Diamantina in Queensland. They are important to us for economic reasons, particularly for the pastoral industry, and they are also especially important for environmental reasons. As members would no doubt know, the two rivers are largely unaltered or unregulated rivers, which during flood periods sustain vast wetlands, which are the breeding grounds for many native birds. The Coongee Lakes wetlands, which are in that area, are classified under the RAMSAR convention. That is a particularly important area and supports 73 species of water birds and 13 wetland dependent species, so it is important that this area be protected.

The impetus for the agreement comes from proposals from Queensland in the mid 1990s, when there was a proposal to grow irrigated cotton at Cooper Creek. While it is true that South Australia will be the main beneficiary of any agreements made—given that changes to the system in Queensland affect us, whereas changes we might make in South Australia will have no impact at all in Queensland—it is overstating the case to say that this is a major achievement. It is a good start, but nothing more.

This would have been a major achievement for the government if the agreement had contained a number of objectives. First, the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) has stated that as a primary objective the agreement should maintain the natural flow regime of the Lake Eyre Basin rivers. That is a very sensible point. If the agreement had that in it, we would have confidence that the agreement would make some sense. I can understand that it may have been difficult for the minister, or any of the ministers from South Australia, to get that promise up. But if it did have that, that would have been a major achievement.

Secondly, with respect to the body itself, there has been some criticism that the ministerial forum (as it has been called) does not have the same strength or the same power that the Murray-Darling Council would have. It has taken us almost a century to get to the stage where the Murray-Darling Basin has a well thought through, well resourced and reasonably powerful body. I guess the question needs to be asked: how long will it take for this forum to be turned into something which has similar kinds of powers? The other thing which would make it a major achievement is if the Northern Territory and New South Wales also were included in the agreement. As it is, only two of the players, that is, Queensland and South Australia, as well as the commonwealth, are involved in it. Two other bodies, the Northern Territory and New South Wales, are not.

What would also have given it major achievement status would be if the Coongee Lakes wetlands was given some greater protection by this agreement. As members would know, this is a unique part of South Australia. It is a Ramsar listed site, but, despite years of work, there is no Ramsar plan yet in place. Wilderness nomination for the site has not been

progressed, and it is still exposed to mining exploration and pastoral activities. So, if Coongie Lakes had been protected by this agreement, it would have been a major achievement. The next item that would have given it that sort of status would be if it had achieved what Robert Hill, the current Minister for Water Resources—great friend, colleague and ally over River Murray issues, at least—said when he—

The Hon. G.M. Gunn interjecting:

Mr HILL: Robert Hill supported the member for Stuart for preselection. He has probably lived to regret that ever since.

An honourable member interjecting:

Mr HILL: I will not put that on the record. I will leave that up to you. Back in April 1998, Robert Hill, the federal Minister for the Environment, said that he refused to nominate the area for world heritage listing, saying that it was believed that the community-based efforts were the best way to protect the area. I must say, that is a whole lot of nonsense. But if this agreement that we are passing in this House today provided that level of protection, it would have been a major achievement. Time will tell how effective this agreement will be. It is a good start, no more than this. The opposition certainly supports the legislation, but we will wait and see before commending it as a major achievement.

The Hon. G.M. GUNN (Stuart): I am pleased to participate in this debate. It is interesting, we have 25 pages here. I have been reading through it again, and I really wonder what benefit this will be to my long suffering constituents. We have just heard from the honourable shadow minister: he is obviously supporting world heritage listing for this area.

Mr Hill interjecting:

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: That is what he is going on about. I will be very pleased to tell all those people up there—world heritage listing; get rid of the people and have no activity. For the benefit of the member for Kaurna, thousands of tourists are travelling through that part of South Australia at the present time, and have done so throughout this year. What we need there is more facilities, encouragement for people to invest, more accommodation and better roads, so that the people of South Australia can enjoy this unique part of the state.

I note that three ministers have placed their name on this august and distinguished document—obviously with great fanfare and chest beating of all concerned, who would go up there and enjoy themselves. I am not sure whether my constituents enjoyed their presence, but at least they would know where the place is on the map now, and that would be of considerable benefit. However, let us have a look—

Mr Clarke interjecting:

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: No, I am coming to the minister, because he is trying very hard to protect the interests of my constituents. I am looking at page 16 of this august and distinguished document, which obviously has been cobbled together by a number of Sir Humphreys over a long period of time. The document states that there will be appropriate representation. I know what 'appropriate' means. Is it one? Because if you are one person on a 15 person committee, you might as well not be there. The document states that there will be appropriate representation '(a) for Aboriginal interests'. Who will that be? Will it be the traditional Aboriginal people, or will it be their white advisers, that group of people who so manipulate and rot the Aboriginal people? Will we have more of them on it? I want to know, because the taxpayers are

sick of funding those people and their games. Then you have the pastoralists who have been there who have made the investment and are getting an income out of it and employing people. They certainly want to have a proper interest, an agricultural interest—

Mr Clarke: What do they pay for their leases?

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: Well, if it were not for the pastoralists, there would not be any infrastructure up there. It is the pastoralists who put the airstrips in so that the Flying Doctor can go up there. They have provided the facilities and they are doing good things for the people of South Australia, and they will do more. Then we have mining and petroleum interests. They certainly made a huge investment there. The member for Kaurna wants to get rid of them. He does not want the exploration up there. I am sure that SANTOS and all those other companies which have just applied for and been granted licences will be interested to know that, because they will certainly make a considerable contribution. Then we have conservation interests—who is he talking about? Then we have tourist interests, then matters of interest affecting the Cooper Creek river system, and matters of interest affecting the Diamantina River system, as referred to in clause 1.1 of this agreement.

That is a mixed and diverse group, but I would put it to the House and the minister that the appropriate representation is that there should be a majority of local people who live in that area on any board or committee—

Mr Clarke interjecting:

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: If he wants to, I would be very happy to supply him with a list of most suitable and distinguished people. I will have no trouble at all in doing that.

Mr Clarke: A chainsaw in one hand and a pick in the other.

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: That's all right. Well, you know—

The Hon. M.K. Brindal interjecting:

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: If we want to see the people of South Australia have any future we have to be able to produce something that we can sell—whether it is your tourist industry, beef or mining. You talk about electricity problems: if it were not for the Moomba operation that is taking place throughout Gidgealpa, Moomba up into Jackson there would be some electricity problems in South Australia if we did not have the pipeline coming down to Adelaide and going to Stony Point. That is all part of this. Let me say also that it is very important because tourism is a very significant activity in that part of the state. My constituents—

Mr Clarke: Perhaps we can put Le Mans up there.

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: Well, I have not been to the Le Mans. It is really not on my visiting list. The interest of my constituent who takes the people down the creek on the punt ought to be taken care of, because already he has been penalised. They want to charge him per head, instead of paying a licence fee. He has been victimised by groups that have no understanding of commercial reality—and we are having a bit to say about that. But I want an assurance from the minister that this sort of grandiose agreement which three ministers have entered into—

Mr Clarke: It means nothing.

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: One could be unkind and say it is probably as useful as what Paddy shot at, but I will not say that. Perhaps that would be unkind of me. But I want the Minister—because I know that he has the interests of the people of South Australia at heart and will vigorously defend their rights—to give an assurance that views of the people

who live in these areas will be taken into consideration and that they will not be overridden or ignored by bureaucracy or by executive decision-making, because if that is the case—

Mr Clarke: He can only speak for about the next six months. After that—

The Hon. M.K. Brindal: Well, if you get control of this place God help all of us.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Can the discussion across the floor cease.

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: I was going to respond to the interjection but that would be out of order, wouldn't it?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: It would be.

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: I wouldn't do that. But I want to make sure that their interests are taken into account, because they are the people who have to live by these decisions. It is all very well for people to fly in, to be instant experts and to then leave, to make ill-informed decisions and impose them on the long suffering communities there.

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: Well, it is; then they have to wear it. I will give the House an example of how these ill-informed people—

Members interjecting:

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: It would do the honourable member good to listen; he might learn a little. Some years ago, I arrived at Innamincka in the company of the then Leader of the Opposition. We were confronted with a group of most angry and annoyed locals who told us that the National Parks ranger in a fit of petulance had locked the town water supply so that they could not get any water. I phoned the then Director-General and asked him whether he would be on the 7.30 Report that night. When I explained the situation to him in precise Australian terms, he got the tenor of what we were going to do. He said, 'Take the bolt cutters and cut off the lock. I can assure you that the gentleman in question will be outside my office at 9 o'clock in the morning.' Fortunately, he was never seen there again. That is the sort of activity I am talking about.

Everyone understands and recognises that the unique character of places such as Innamincka and others needs to be preserved. They have a great deal to offer to the tourist and other industries. We must make sure that we give careful consideration to the views of the people who live there, in the pastoral bodies and the mining and exploration industries; otherwise, we will affect the welfare of the people of this state and interfere with the ability of that area to support communities that have been there for a long time. My concern is the welfare, interests and needs of communities in that area. Those communities will be affected first. We must be careful when we sign agreements of this nature, because the people of Australia are getting sick and tired of people in Canberra drawing up these national agreements—whether they be on transport or whatever. They are ill-informed. Most of them could not drive a nail into a bit of softwood, let alone drive a vehicle of any description, yet some of them have become instant experts in Australia.

Radio talkback hosts always amaze me when they talk about having only one government in Canberra, because most of them are saying that they do not think people in the smaller states can look after their own affairs. That is what they are advocating. I always view any of these national agreements with a great deal of suspicion, because I have seen them come out of the woodwork and impose their ill gotten ways on unsuspecting and hard working decent South Australians. That affects them greatly, and they should not have to put up

with it. I want the minister to assure me that their views will be protected and taken into account and, further, to make sure that this is not just the first step down a deliberate road of getting rid of these people from this part of the area. Rather, we should ensure that the pastoralists, miners and people in the tourist industry can stay forever. These things have a habit of growing like topsy. Before you know it, they will have added clauses to it, and by regulation and other devious means brought other provisions into effect, and people do not realise this until it has happened.

I am pleased to be able to participate in this debate today. I have been waiting for a fair while, because I have been aware of this document. I am also aware that all sorts of people are commenting about this part of the state, but not too many are actually paying anything towards it. The member for Ross Smith talked about the pastoralists. They are some of the few people who are making a contribution to live there. They are providing their own power, water and services to the travelling public. They have done a lot of good for the country. It is the same at Innamincka: you have the storekeeper and the hotel, and I am pleased to say that in the near future there will be some further good development in that part of the state that will provide extra benefits for the people of South Australia such as more employment. We have to encourage those sorts of activities. We do not want to allow those sorts of agreements to be used as a vehicle to stop development.

I am aware that certain groups want to live in tents and have candles. Most of us do not want that; most of us want to see a bit of progress. The House should be aware that, when some of these people get their own way, when they declared the area a regional reserve, the local community at Innamincka came to me and said, 'This is a nonsense.' So I led a deputation to the then Minister for the Environment and Natural Resources. They explained in great detail to that minister the foolishness of this escapade. The minister ignored them and took the advice of the Sir Humphreys. Now there are no freehold blocks there for people who want to buy them. They cancelled the freehold titles on a lot of unallocated blocks in which people may have wanted to invest. Up until a short time ago, they were offering an annual licence to invest large amounts of money in the freehold blocks. The freehold blocks did no harm, but Sir Humphrey Appleby and his cohorts knew best. They took no notice of the local people and, as sure as what they said 10 years ago, all the roosters have come home to roost. The minister must make sure that does not happen again. I will be keeping a close watch on what takes place in relation to this agreement, because we should be careful before it is extended any further.

Mr VENNING (Schubert): I rise to support this bill and compliment the minister on all the work he has done in relation to this issue, which has been before this parliament for many years. At long last we have an agreement with Queensland. It is the persuasive powers of our minister that has enabled this to happen. I know he has made a visit there, and I hope that I am able to go there myself with the minister to meet the stakeholders and marvel at what has been achieved.

The Lake Eyre Basin agreement is a major achievement for the South Australian government, and it represents the start of a new era in the management of the basin. Both South Australia's great river basins—the Murray Darling Basin and the Lake Eyre Basin—have their origins in other states. Our

geographic position at the receiving end of these great river systems makes it imperative that we establish formal cooperative agreements with our upstream neighbours. That has been a matter of much political rhetoric in recent months.

The Lake Eyre Basin agreement establishes a formal and effective way for the South Australian government to engage strategically and constructively with the Queensland and commonwealth governments for the management of the basin. Lake Eyre Basin rivers have not been substantially altered by major regulation and extraction. They are amongst the few remaining major rivers with near natural flows and have some of the most variable flow regimes in the world. We have an opportunity to get it right, because we have been slow to recognise the mistakes we have made in other river systems, and we are now struggling to correct them. Thank goodness we can do that.

The signing in May 1997 of the heads of agreement for the Lake Eyre Basin by the South Australian, Queensland and commonwealth governments make this important document the basis for developing the Lake Eyre Basin agreement. The passage of this bill is, therefore, vital to give effect to this agreement.

A comprehensive community consultation process was undertaken, and the Birdsville community has demonstrated its support for that agreement. Only a few weeks ago I visited the area myself. I spoke to them on this very matter, and certainly that is correct. The community has also made great strides towards an integrated approach to the management of the Lake Eyre Basin. The basin community has made linkages across state borders and has undertaken a range of activities over the past three years. The agreement provides an excellent opportunity for the further development of partnerships between government, the local community and, indeed, all the stakeholders involved.

The State Water Plan recognises the Lake Eyre Basin as one of South Australia's key water resources and acknowledges the importance of the agreement to protect South Australia's interests in the basin. The water resources of the Lake Eyre Basin in South Australia are valued for their conservation of wetlands and aquatic ecosystems; in particular, South Australia's Coongie Lakes wetlands are classified as wetlands of international importance.

These 19 800 square kilometres of wetlands support 73 species of waterbirds and 13 wetland dependent species. The Cooper and Diamantina provide water for stock, and flooding is beneficial for the flood plain grazing in the pastoral industry. As I said, the basin's two main rivers, the Diamantina and the Cooper Creek, flow through semi-arid and arid regions of Australia. Paradoxically, some of the most significant wetlands coincide with some of the most arid areas of our state. Certainly, I was amazed to discover that the Cooper Creek also supports a very active fishery. When one visits the area, it is sometimes just a dry creek bed, but when the water flows—and it certainly flows—it is a very active fishery, indeed. A very successful business in the area has certainly done very well.

Mr Clarke interjecting:

Mr VENNING: The member for Ross Smith interjects; he wants me to retire up there. When I do eventually retire from this place, Lake Eyre will certainly be one of those destinations where I hope to spend much of my time, because it is a beautiful part of Australia. I certainly appreciate the area, as do thousands of Australians. It is truly one of the secrets of Australian tourism. Certainly the ERD Committee, as many members would know, is currently studying

ecotourism and the committee hopes to visit the area in a few weeks' time.

When I visited the area I saw some problems in relation to the overtaxing of the facilities which tourism is bringing to this region. The facilities at William Creek, one of the favourite take-off points for scenic flights over Lake Eyre, are heavily taxed. The hotel itself is a tourism icon. It is a great little pub with names displayed all over the ceiling. However, with the number of people visiting the area, the toilet facilities and everything else are totally overloaded. Eight aeroplanes can be parked on the road taking hourly flights over Lake Eyre. There is a queue. We had to book a month in advance to get a seat on one of those aeroplanes.

A new shop is located opposite the hotel and business is booming, so we must ensure that we at least keep up with this success and not only provide the tourists with suitable accommodation and comforts but also, and most importantly, protect the asset they have come to see, that is, a very fragile environmental region that is our Lake Eyre. To some extent I agree with the member for Stuart: management must be with those who know the area and all stakeholders need to be part of the process. We want to make sure that the people involved feel that they own this process. We are not trying to shove it down their throat. I am sure that most of them do not need to be a victim of the heavy sell because they understand the fragility of their region and they understand that protection is most important.

The interests of pastoralists are very important to the economy of our state. They have lived through very difficult times. How some of these people have survived the past 15 or 20 years is beyond me. With sheep and wool prices being extremely depressed, I am amazed that these people have been able to eke out a living but they have done so. Thank goodness for beef!

The Hon. M.K. Brindal interjecting:

Mr VENNING: These people have existed even with depressed wool prices. Beef is the only thing that kept a lot of them there but they have existed and they are part of the tourist attraction. People come to see the people who exist out there. They are certainly part of the tourism icon that is our Outback. We now see a return to better and more buoyant times with sheep and wool prices increasing. Lambs are now selling in excess of \$100 per head, which will mean a tremendous uplift for the economies of these people who have lived in these areas for so long.

Certainly, it will give relief not only to them but also to their bankers, I would think. We should be very pleased that these people are custodians of our valuable arid lands. They have lived out there and maintained stock and certainly it has been very difficult to manage the land. One of the most important aspects that we need to discuss in relation to the arid lands is the control of rabbits. The calicivirus has meant so much to the region in terms of the eradication of this feral pest. We are now seeing much of the natural—

Members interjecting:

Mr VENNING: I am looking opposite, and those members want to beware of the calicivirus. We are now seeing the revegetation of so many of these areas previously destroyed by rabbits. It is hard to believe and realise that areas that were dry, barren and bare for so long are now coming alive with revegetation. I see it in our own creeks along the Rocky River at Crystal Brook. We thought that it was because we had not had cattle for a couple of years but, no, it was the rabbits. Because these young gum trees are progressing we are locking out the cattle. By eradicating the

rabbits the trees are growing and now the land owners (me included) are saying, 'I will protect and give the trees a go by not putting my cattle in or fencing this area off.'

We are seeing the first revegetation of some areas that we have not seen for many generations. Never let us underestimate what the calicivirus and the control of feral rabbits has done. Rabbits were very destructive. I am very pleased to see that we have made great progress. This is a unique area of Australia, our state and, indeed, the world. My wife and I visited the region, as I said, only a few months ago, and the ERD Committee will also visit shortly to look at these problems I have highlighted. I am most impressed with the way that Australians value and appreciate our Outback regions.

Environmental protection measures do not need to be enforced: we all do it naturally. We all keep to the track and the path that is set out and we are all very conscious of how fragile it is. I want to pay tribute, again, to the minister. For many years we have talked about how to negotiate with other states, particularly when the water falls in those states and flows down the river to South Australia. At the moment it is a very difficult issue. I notice that the shadow minister smiles. It is a very difficult issue. If the shadow minister has answers to these complex questions I want to hear; I have an open mind.

When the water falls on the land in another state and then flows into our state what are our rights and what are the rights of the other states? It is a very difficult issue. How do we protect the ecosystem that is that river? Certainly, it is difficult; and the same theory applies to the Snowy River with the Snowy River Scheme and also the water coming to South Australia, from other states is a very complex issue and I am very pleased that this minister is in charge. I know that it has been a challenge to him. I know that his hair has considerably thinned since he took on the role. I look forward to accepting a ministerial invitation to join him on a visit to the region in the next few weeks.

Mr Clarke interjecting:

The Hon. M.K. Brindal: I will take you up and leave you there any day.

Mr VENNING: The minister will bring me back, I hope. Certainly, I appreciate what the minister has done. As a parliament we are now very aware of the issue, and I am sure that this whole matter has bipartisan support. All credit to the government, and particularly the minister, and I certainly support this bill.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for MacKillop. *An honourable member interjecting:*

Mr WILLIAMS (MacKillop): I might address that interjection shortly.

Mr Koutsantonis interjecting:

Mr WILLIAMS: In my good time, Tom. I support this measure and I support the minister in what he has achieved so far. I certainly predict that much more will be achieved for the benefit of this state through this measure, particularly in some of the very delicate and fragile areas in the northern parts of our state. I did not intend to contribute to this debate but I was sitting in my office upstairs listening to the opposition spokesman, the member for Kaurua, speaking to this bill and I was somewhat disappointed that he was belittling the efforts of the government and the minister and the measures that have been taken.

My disappointment about that belittling stems from the fact that we have sought to manage our natural resources in

other areas of the state, and I will come back to those in a moment. I believe that in other areas of the state we have got it wrong. In a lot of instances we tried to regulate far too late after too much damage had been done. Often, in those situations, we have regulated without full consultation or, in cases where we have supposedly had full consultation, without taking on board the wants, aspirations and needs of communities in many instances.

So in this particular case, although we have had occupancy of that land for many years and some people would suggest that we have already created some environmental degradation in those areas, I believe that it is gratifying to note that it is not too late to bring in regulations to have binding agreements on the governments involved to see that the future is assured for this, as I say, delicate and fragile part of our state.

It is also gratifying that we have in place now an agreement between the three governments involved in the Lake Eyre Basin—the Queensland government, the South Australian government and the federal government. One of the things that we have often seen, particularly in regard to environmental matters, in our form of federalism is that the federal government has stepped in and taken over management of the environment in quite a few instances. As a firm believer in the sovereignty of the states, I believe that this is a much sounder way to go about it to protect the interests not only of the states but of individuals. People who are working and making a living in those areas will be much better off under this agreement than if they sat back and waited for intervention in the future by some federal government which is hell-bent on appeasing people in capital cities on the eastern seaboard rather than taking measures which are in the best interests of the people concerned. I believe that has happened in the past in quite a few instances.

So, I commend the minister for what he has done. I note that the member for Stuart has a great interest in this area, as has the member for Schubert, who was talking just a few moments ago about pastoralists in that area. It is worth noting, and it has been stated in the House before but I will repeat it, that pastoralists in the South Australian sector of the Lake Eyre Basin contribute something like \$50 million per year to the economy of this state. The tourism industry contributes something like another \$10 million and I believe that that contribution will grow steadily. So it is economically an important part of the state: ecologically and environmentally it is a hugely important part of the state.

I believe the impetus behind this agreement was the move a few years ago by certain landowners in Queensland to extract large volumes of water to produce cotton using some of the ephemeral rivers which flow through the Lake Eyre Basin. That is the sort of practice, through negotiated agreement, that we must be aware of and ensure that, if it is done, it is done in an environmentally sensitive way. I suggest that is probably not possible, so I am delighted to know that we are not fighting that bushfire at the moment in this instance. I am delighted that we have an agreement in place, albeit that there are plenty of questions and answers to be asked and answered and plenty of negotiations to be gone through. I think that, rather than belittle the efforts of the minister and the government in getting as far as they have already, they should be applauded, and I am sure that this bill will be supported by the whole House and I hope and sincerely believe that the minister will be able to do great things for people in the area involved.

Getting back to the interjection by the member for Hammond about who owns the rain, I read with interest the

member for Hammond's newsletter that he published recently and the article that he wrote about the rain. Who owns the rain and who owns the water in our water resources at various points—whether it be above the ground, on the ground, within what is known as the unsaturated zone, or in the aquifer—is an interesting question. The debate has certainly involved people in my electorate in the South-East of the state where there is a lot of people who think they own various things such as the rain or the water at various places. I think it is worth noting that the Water Resources Act does not confer ownership of water in the whole cycle on anyone, least of all the crown. It is not who owns the rain—

The Hon. M.K. Brindal interjecting:

Mr WILLIAMS: Ownership of the water is not conferred on anyone. The rights to actually utilise the water at various stages are implied by various acts of this state. There are rights under the Water Resources Act to extract water and I understand that, legally, after water is extracted, someone could assume that they had ownership of it and can do what they like with it once they have extracted it. But that right to extract does not give ownership of the water in the aquifer. I think this is one of the problems with the ongoing debate in the South-East.

Another thing I think is that it is implied in, say, a freehold title, that somebody should have the right to grow a crop on his land, irrespective of how much rainfall that crop used. As far as the right to harvest water and put it into a dam, which is what I think the interjection from the member for Kaurna was referring to—

Mr Hill interjecting:

Mr WILLIAMS: I overheard you mumbling about harvesting water a few moments ago when the member for Schubert was speaking, and harvesting water is a different matter altogether. Once you harvest water, if you are given a right to harvest water and you put it in your dam or your receptacle, it could be implied that you have ownership of that water. There are some very complicated legal issues there. Just one of the problems that we are encountering in the South-East at the moment is that some people are confusing their rights to do certain things with a right of ownership, and I think that is something which the minister would do well to spell out. But that is digressing. I commend this bill to the House and I am certain that the whole of the House will support it.

Mr LEWIS (Hammond): I am always fearful when I attempt to set down some views which might be at odds with those who are expressing opinions that seem to be popular on the day. However—

Mr Clarke: Don't hold back.

Mr LEWIS: Thank you, pineapple. I invite the honourable member to do likewise. He should not feel constrained. There is nothing worse than political constipation. You should relieve the tension.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Can members get back to the bill?

Mr LEWIS: I will try to do that. There is some tension here. It is not really as Freud put it. I am not an anal retentive. I never have been. In this respect, then, I commend the minister for what he has done so far as it has gone, and perhaps I ought to have started by saying it is barely 200-odd years since people, capable of navigating by reliance upon the rigour of applied mathematics to astronomy, arrived on this continent. Since their arrival, with that and many other sciences, they—that is you and me and other members in this

place and, indeed, all the people in Australia—have learned that it is possible for us to support a population many times larger than the number of human beings that were living here prior to the arrival and settlement of those folk in our language, commonly referred to as the European settlers. But there have been other settlers that have arrived since that short while ago, 200-odd years.

We or our forebears—and I say 'we', because I, too, enjoy participating in the personal discovery of the different corners of this continent, their differing geomorphology, topography and ecology—have learnt a great deal about the fabric of life and what makes it so in the interaction between the natural circumstances, including those variable elements such as climate and the topography on this continent, as distinct from others on earth. So the minister, along with the other ministers with whom he met, has done a great deal, as it were, to secure the survival of the ecosystems in Lake Eyre Basin as they are now; and in no small measure they have not suffered any adverse consequence, in most instances, as a result of the impact of European man's arrival on the continent.

Indirectly and inadvertently, there has been the impact of feral insects and animals. The two worst insects of all, the Australian plague locust and the Australian plague grasshopper, are not feral insects, and they have been a real problem in the basin for a long time—a problem, as we would define it, but not anyone else, least of all the locusts and grasshoppers. They simply respond to the effect of climatic factors over which they have no control nor, one presumes, any understanding. I mention it because, in many instances, so-called modern man has been pretty much like locusts on the landscape: they have simply bred up in numbers way beyond the capacity of the landscape to sustain them in perpetuity and, when they have devastated it, they have died out and/or moved on to other places where, in reduced numbers, they can continue to live.

In this instance, with this legislation we provide the means by which we will not cause such devastation to the fabric of life as we know it and the ecosystems of Lake Eyre without careful consideration. Indeed, we set out and we say that we will not allow that to happen; that is, what is there and the way it will remain there, subject to the natural forces of evolution (whatever they may be), we will seek to preserve. That is good, but I am a bit disturbed to note that might prevent us from mining the basin for valuable minerals and other resources.

I note that in clause 5(11) the mining and petroleum interests will be included in the ministerial forum, but there are other things besides the minerals which, to date, have been taken and in future can be taken without detrimental consequence to the ecosystems in the basin but which, to date, it has not been possible to take because the cost of getting them out literally (in transport cost terms) has been too great. It will not always be so. It is not now so.

Such is the case, for instance, with salt. I do not think anyone would argue that, if we can find a means of utilising the salt, it would not hurt to take a few hundred million tonnes of salt out of the Lake Eyre Basin and put it on other places on this planet where it might be useful because the chemical compounds of which the salt—and 'salt' is a generic term—is comprised are very diverse and when segregated are very useful for us. We have come up with the wit to do what one Dr Aro Arakel in GeoProcessors has done not far from Kerang and Swan Hill at a place called Lake Tutcheewop; that is, as it were, without much cost, interfere

in the normal processes of crystallisation from the liquor so that we get out compounds that are more valuable to us early on in the process and segregate them from the other things which are there and which would contaminate them and make them worth much less, indeed probably nothing; it would make them worthless.

That is what happens in Lake Eyre right now. When it floods, it is pretty briny—much more so than the sea, if it has been wet for any length of time. That water evaporates and leaves behind a mixture of all these salts with the first stuff crystalizing out being predominantly sodium chloride in crystalline form when it becomes sufficiently concentrated. We cannot use it for anything else than just a mixture of all those salts. The magnesium calcium and other materials of which we might make some use are bound up in that crystalline structure, and the only way in which to segregate them is it do so while they are dissolved. Using the processes which have been devised by this firm called GeoProcessors, based upon the work that Dr Aro Arakel has done, a multibillion dollar industry is available to us.

I hope that illustrates to the House that we ought not simply ban such activities as the one to which I have referred from ever being established in the Lake Eyre Basin simply because it is in the Lake Eyre Basin; and, for as much as there is merit in removing some of the salt, if it is proved to be profitable to do so (and I am sure it will be, especially with the railway line that will be passing through the centre of the Australia in the very near future), it is equally relevant for us to treat any and all such substances, indeed resources of the basin, in the same way, knowing and being careful before we set out to do so, Mr Deputy Speaker—and I am sure you would agree with this point, sir—to ensure that we do not have an adverse impact on any one of the ecosystems to an extent that you put any species at risk.

I do not want to hear from all the mad green greens that you cannot touch anything for fear that something might ultimately occur that will result in a chain reaction of one kind or another in the ecosystem that will leave us without the certainty that all species will survive. They will not. Don Hopgood (a former member of this place) to his credit recognised that point: evolution is a continuing process. However, we have lost from this continent and its ecosystems a number of species as a consequence of the impact of ignorance (we did not know what was going on at the time) by doing things that clearly were detrimental to the survival of those species. They died out very quickly. The introduction of feral predators was probably the worst of them.

I am not an advocate of the policy of being a locust as a human being on the ecosystems or the geomorphology, but I am an advocate of sensible, responsible exploitation wherever it can be shown that we will not endanger the survival of any species, to any marked degree. After all, nothing in this world is certain. I make that last statement, I guess, almost as a throwaway line, but I remind the minister and all members that we have been told about the greenhouse effect and, if it is true and if the kind of precipitation that we have had in the north-east of the state, indeed in the Lake Eyre Basin itself, during the last 16 months (since November 1999), is a part of the consequence of greenhouse, then, hell, the Lake Eyre Basin contains one of the most fragile ecosystems in the world. In the last 16 months we had record rainfall during the summer 1999-2000, followed by near record rainfall or record rainfall last winter 2000, and that has been followed again by well above average rainfall

in the South Australian part of the basin during this last summer.

Many plants and animals are in very fine fettle. There is poultry running everywhere. Across many of the pastoral leases there are clutches of emus, the like of which I have not seen any time since I started to venture into the inland—what most people colloquially refer to as the Outback. There is lunch in all directions if you are an emu eater. They do not seem to bother too much. The eagles are fat and they have two or three chicks in their nests, and the emus are running in all directions. A good deal of the life that is normally fairly sparse out there is back in abundance.

If we have that kind of rainfall, or anything near it, over the next 10 years, we will see an amazing change beginning to occur in those ecosystems. We will see that not only in the vegetation in the first instance but also in the insects and other things that reproduce more quickly, as well as in the animals. If greenhouse is here and that is an effect of it, nothing is permanent and the kind of things we have expected from that part of the continent over the past 200 years—the way Sturt and other early explorers described it—will not be the way in which future generations will find it when they go to look. It will have altered.

Having said all that, I want to make a particular plea for what I note is an oversight in clause 5.11 of Part V-Institutional Structure referred to in the intergovernmental agreement which is part of the bill. There is no provision for the development of communities that could live at what you and I would call a much higher standard of living in permanent residence than the indigenous inhabitants—at least, those inhabitants prior to the arrival of Europeans. If you went there to live in permanent dwellings, a great deal more could be made of the land and a far greater number of people could live on the land than have done so to date.

What we have done prior to this point in time is take livestock out there and let them graze the natural bush. Dingoes ate the sheep—not the dirt, by the way—even though we taxed the people who owned the land and who killed the dogs that got inside the fence. I am pleased to say that we have abolished that. That is an aside: I will come back to the main substance of my remarks.

I point out that sheep were not an option. We still have cattle out there, but the big problem which we have and which continues to plague the area is wild camels—and their numbers are exploding. The ABC produced a program on camels and Camelot and the two European researchers (German, I think) who are world experts on feral camels in Australia, no less. If members have seen that program, they will have seen the seriousness of the problem.

It proves that a wider range of species can be successfully grazed. There are some species of sheep, not the European or British breeds, but, rather, the damara—the fat-tailed sheep in Africa which will fight dogs and successfully defend their lambs and their whole flock from predation by the wild dogs and other big cats of Africa. Also, more particularly, we could be growing horticultural crops in some abundance without having a significant amount of the landscape alienated to that purpose. One could grow 10 000 hectares of say, date palms. It is an enormous area, much larger than Victoria and Tasmania put together. Why one could not grow 10 000 hectares of date palms in the Lake Eyre Basin where there is freshwater available is beyond me.

We heard the Minister for Minerals and Energy say earlier today that underlying the area—and this is the burden of my

remarks to the House—is the cheapest perpetual source of energy available to human beings anywhere on earth. You do not have to go down several kilometres to get rocks hot enough to obtain very cheap electrical energy—so cheap, in fact, that you could be using it to desalinate the water. Indeed, the way in which you would desalinate the water (if you have half a wit) is to pump the saline water down the hole and let the steam come out; and, after it has driven your turbine and generated the electricity, you condense it and use it. It does not cost anything, other than the capital cost of drilling the hole and the infrastructure cost of capping the bore and getting the water down there and the steam back out.

Altogether then, I am making the plea that in the future the parliament ought not to overlook the fact that we could easily settle a million or more people in the Lake Eyre Basin without having adverse impacts on the survival of—

Mr Hill: How many?

Mr LEWIS: A million or more, easily. In India there would probably be 40 million people living there. There is no reason, with the technology available to us now and the cheap energy which is there and which is very environmentally friendly, not to do that. A million or more people could easily live there. Earth birmed housing would be ideal. There is no provision in the bill for horticulture or aquaculture, yet they would be the two industries on which the communities could live, quite apart from mining and whatever else there may be. Horticulture and aquaculture would be essential, not only to feed the folk who live there—and that would be very easy—but also to export the products from there. Date palms would grow exceptionally well indeed. I do not see any reason at all why we should not do that.

I do not see any greater merit or destructive influence in having a date palm 300 kilometres north of Oodnadatta than an apple tree 30 kilometres out of Hobart where there used to be mountain ash and huon pine, in the case of the Huon Valley. In the case of the site north of Oodnadatta there were probably saltbush and bluebush, or may be even some coolabah or something like that. It does not matter: the fact remains that we ought not to simply leave it be just because it is there in the present form because we could not occupy it at an earlier point in our history. We ought to use it sensibly.

Time expired.

Ms BREUER (Giles): I have listened with interest to a lot of the comments made this afternoon, and I certainly agree with and support this bill. It is very important that we protect our environment in those areas. I will speak only briefly, but I specifically want to talk about one aspect that has been mentioned, that is, tourism when we are promoting these areas. Certainly, there has been an increase in the number of tourists who visit outback Australia, the far north of the state and areas such as Lake Eyre. It is good to see that people are going there to look at the environment and to look at what the outback has to offer.

But there are some problems associated with this, particularly for the people who are living there and who are coping with the influx of tourists in their area. It certainly has a major effect on them. Shortly before Christmas I had the pleasure of spending time with some station owners, including the Bell and Oldfield families around Marree, and they pointed out to me that there are major problems for them as a result of the number of people travelling to the area. This is common across the state where tourists are on the increase.

The sorts of problems they are experiencing are the sorts of problems we would experience if someone was to come into our backyard and park their caravan and then ask to use our toilet and bathroom, our water and any other facilities that we might have. It is a similar situation for these station owners. People are coming onto their properties and asking—and expecting—to use their facilities.

They also have problems with people who get into trouble when travelling north in those areas. They are looking for assistance with breakdowns and expecting station owners, pastoralists, farm owners and people in small communities to provide spare parts, spare wheels, and so on, for their vehicles when they break down. Often people travel to the area in vehicles which are not roadworthy for the roads on which they must travel during these long-distance trips. They also get asked for assistance when people hit kangaroos and when they get caught up with bad weather. Some tourists just do not take account of weather forecasts; they believe that they will still get through on some of the roads in those areas and that there will be no problems. Then they get stuck when there has been a major rain. If you have been on those Outback roads you know the sorts of conditions that can occur after a rain; it is difficult to get through. Often tourists do not take this into account. They think they are fine. They read something in a manual, head off and get themselves in all sorts of trouble.

The pastoralists, farmers and people in those small communities must often provide emergency services to cater for this. They have to go out and pick up vehicles some distances from their town. People in those communities do not begrudge this, because they are happy to share their environment with tourists. They are very happy that people are coming to their areas, and some of the small communities are surviving on the tourist trade that is coming through. However, they do ask that their rights be taken into consideration. As I pointed out in my first example, if someone parked on our back lawn and wanted to use our toilet we might be feeling a bit hesitant about this as well.

There is also the security issue for people in those areas. Often the male partner in the relationship is away from the homestead for some time, and the female partner may be there with small children, and this creates all sorts of difficulties. There is a security issue, and they get frightened by some of the people who go through, because the female partner may not be able to cope well if an emergency occurs with some of the tourists that go through. This issue is not common, but it does concern some people.

They are very happy to encourage tourists to come through their regions, but they believe that they need more assistance in coping with these numbers of tourists. We really need to look at better signposting in those areas and make tourists understand that often they are going through or passing by private property, the owners of which have rights; and they cannot expect these station owners and small communities to support them if they have not provided for themselves adequately in the first instance. A lot of people go out there and think that there is plenty of water in town, so there is plenty of water everywhere they go. They do not realise that often that water is rationed and obtained at great expense to the person using the water. They expect to be given barrels and buckets of water without realising the cost of that water.

Better signposting in those areas could let people realise that it is not as straightforward as driving down North Terrace, and that they need to take into account the needs of

the local community. We also need to look at better backup facilities for many of those tourists. This is certainly being worked on, and the police, SES, CFS and other emergency services cope very well, but the need for backup facilities in those areas must be kept constantly at the forefront.

The most important thing is some sort of education program for tourists which could be provided in capital cities, educating people about the dangers in the Outback. We have had some very unfortunate accidents in recent years, when tourists have been stranded and have died in the Outback. It is an issue that needs to be kept ongoing. Not only the dangers in the Outback need to be highlighted but also the fact that people out there cannot be expected to provide everything if you are going through.

Another area that needs to be highlighted to people travelling in those Outback areas is the issue of kangaroos. When we start talking about kangaroos it can be a very emotional issue. It certainly was a very emotional issue for me shortly after Christmas, when I hit a kangaroo on my way from the Far West and spent the next four weeks in that dreadful hot weather without an airconditioner in my car. The kangaroo did not fare too well either; he left bits on my bumper bar. That certainly was a very emotional issue for me. We really need to look at managing the numbers of kangaroos, because they certainly are a major problem in the north of the state.

An honourable member interjecting:

Ms BREUER: I am not saying 'Shoot 'em all' at all. If you talk to anyone in Outback South Australia you will realise that they are a major problem and a danger to cars out there. I am concerned about tourists who are going through the area and who do not understand the dangers of kangaroos or the damage that they can do to your car. They also do not understand that, if you are bowling along at 110 or 120 and see a kangaroo you do not try to dodge it quickly; you are likely to roll your car and cause yourself a major injury. It is better to hit the kangaroo. For example, one night coming back from Port Lincoln in a 50 kilometre stretch between Cowell and Whyalla I counted 169 kangaroos. That is just the ones I saw; for every one that I saw there were probably seven or eight that I did not see. So, there need to be some serious discussions about the management of kangaroo numbers; we must take emotion out of it and get serious about this. Tourists need to be warned about kangaroos.

Another issue that occurs as a result of the kangaroos out there is that so many of them get killed as vehicles are going through that we now have a problem with eagles. The member for Hammond touched on this. We have a problem with eagles out there. If you are driving along the highway and see in the distance a couple of eagles picking off the remains of a dead kangaroo or a dead emu, the smartest thing you can do is slow down and make lots of noise as you approach. The eagles are so big and heavy that they take ages to get off the ground and are likely still to be trying to get up and fly when you come past.

I do not fancy the idea of having a kangaroo on the front seat with me if it comes through the windscreen—and I am not too keen on an emu either, which causes more damage to the car—but the thought of an eagle coming through my front window terrifies me, so I am extremely careful with eagles. Many people get excited when they see them and drive up so they can see them quickly and cause themselves all sorts of problems. That is another area where there needs to be education for tourists. They need to be very careful when they are travelling on those highways and back roads.

In short, tourism is important in those areas and communities. It is important that people be able to see the beauties of our Outback and our environment out there, but for the farmers, pastoralists, small land owners and smaller communities some issues need to be taken into account. We need to be looking at caring for those people as well.

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL (Minister for Water Resources): I thank all members for their contribution. I was disappointed that the member for Kaurna did not see this as the quantum step forward for humanity as the government sees it, but nevertheless I will attempt to answer a couple of his points and those made by some other members, by way of concluding remarks to this phase of this debate. The member for Kaurna commented that it would have been better if, for instance, the governments of the Northern Territory and New South Wales had been involved. I refer the member for Kaurna to the intergovernmental agreement in the schedule for the bill, which appears on page 25.

The member for Kaurna will note that very little of the geographical area of what is described as the basin, and certainly no water run-off areas, exist in New South Wales. Therefore, to include New South Wales would be a bit without meaning. Secondly, the only tributaries affecting the Lake Eyre Basin that run into the Northern Territory are the Georgina and a very small area of the Finke. So, while the geographical area described as the Lake Eyre Basin exists in the Northern Territory and to lesser extent in New South Wales, there was no real reason for including them in the basin agreement. I, as I am sure is the shadow minister, am a great believer that, if you can have two or three governments involved and they all have an interest in the project, that is fine; why would you have five involved when you need only three? In reference to one of the honourable member's comments about the waters, I think that perhaps he has not read, or has not read in depth, or at least interprets differently from me, guiding principle 3, part 1, that consideration of all the issues and the making of all decisions under this agreement will be guided by the following principles: namely, that it be acknowledged.

The document then goes on to state that the naturally variable flow regimes and the maintenance of water quality are fundamental to the aquatic ecosystems of the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement and that the water requirements for the ecological processes, biodiversity and ecologically significant areas within the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement should be maintained, especially by means of flow variability and seasonality: indeed, that flooding throughout the catchments within the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement is beneficial in that it makes a significant contribution to pastoral activities as well as flood plain ecosystem processes.

In answer to the point that I think the shadow minister was making in his debate about water and the needs of the water cycle within the basin, these issues are, in fact, covered in the guiding principles of the agreement and, I assure this House, will be attended to in the ministerial council.

With respect to the contribution by the member for Stuart, I would hope that all parliaments and all governments in this nation are getting past the fact that they believe they are the repository of all knowledge. I think it is tending to be a guiding principle for governments throughout the nation that, where they pass legislation such as this, it has to be in concert with and in a constructive partnership with all the relevant players, be they the community, local government, state government or national government; these agreements cannot

and will not work until there is ownership of the programs and of the guiding principles of every part of the agreement at the very basic level.

The member for Stuart, I think, is aware that the local community was one of the driving forces behind the advent of this agreement. It was a request for irrigation in Queensland using some of these ephemeral waters that very much focused much of the basin community on what the likely impacts would be of massive development, and this agreement comes not only because government willed it to come but also because the communities themselves have a very profound interest in this. I would like it recorded that, by whichever means access to community advice for the ministerial forum occurs, local interests can, and will, be paramount in my mind and, I am sure, in the minds of my colleagues from Queensland and the commonwealth.

I particularly wish to pay a tribute to Minister Welford, who was, until recently, the minister responsible for this area in Queensland. He has recently been promoted—or demoted, I should say, to become Attorney-General, I believe: I cannot see that that would be an escalation in the scale of things, as I see them. But I wish him luck. Minister Welford was indeed a very constructive minister with respect to both this agreement and the Murray-Darling Ministerial Council in relation to the needs of the basin rather than the parochial needs even of his own state. I know that Queensland has come in for criticism in not signing off the cap in the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement, and so they should. But I believe that we are much further advanced because we had Minister Welford at the helm in Queensland than we would have been in many other contingencies. I would like to place on the record my thanks to him for his government's cooperation in formulating this agreement, along with the commonwealth and, indeed, for his constructive work in other projects in which we have been jointly involved.

I thank again all those members who contributed. I acknowledge that I am somewhat surprised that the debate has taken this long but I am most pleased, because it shows that many members of this House, whether they come from the more remote areas—such as the members for Giles and Stuart—do have an interest in some of our more ephemeral areas and some of the areas which can at least be described as national icons and part of the national estate. I thank all members for their contribution and I look forward to their supporting this bill through its committee stage.

Bill read a second time.

In committee.

Clause 1.

Mr HILL: There are five clauses, and I have about four or five questions. I am not sure that they tie in with any particular clause, so I will just ask them and the Acting Chairman may have to rule me out of order. My first question relates to the forum, as the body that is being established is called. Can the minister explain what powers and authorities it has compared to the ministerial council that looks after the Murray-Darling—because there has been a criticism that this is a weaker body and that a ministerial council would be stronger, have more authority and be able to achieve more things.

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: Mainly it will prepare policies and strategies based on the guidelines outlined and prepare a state of the rivers report. It would, I think, depend on your point of view. You could argue, and I think argue quite convincingly, in terms of the ministerial council for the Murray-Darling Basin, that this is in fact a fish of a different

species. The shadow minister knows that the Murray-Darling Basin is absolutely critical in social and economic terms. It occupies one-seventh of the land mass of the nation, and so on—and I will not go into all the arguments. This is a different system: it is an ephemeral system. It is, I think, no less important as part of the fabric of this nation. It is no less important to those who live up there, but it has a whole set of different requirements and will require different management techniques.

It is certainly thought at present that the Murray-Darling Basin Commission and the ministerial council have different powers, and powers that are exercised much more stringently and regularly, in that you have all the weirs there, you have all the irrigators and you have all the population, so there is a whole set of complexities that go with that. We meet, I think, two or three times a year, for instance. I know that my head of department is a commissioner of the River Murray (he is away today), and they have 20 papers to consider. The complexity of that system gives rise to one regime; this gives rise to another.

This is, I think, the crux of the question: we believe that this forum, as it is so far proposed, will be no less effective in protecting the ecological interests and the environmental interests and all the interests and water in the area. We believe that it will be just as effective. But it is not as complex or as administratively heavy as the Murray-Darling Basin Commission—different systems, different requirements.

Mr HILL: The minister explained that in some detail, but what I guess I am really looking at is the powers that the forum will have. For example, when it makes a decision, what force does that decision have? Does it have legal force in the way in which some decisions of the Murray-Darling Council, for example, have legal force and are then binding on the states? Does it make recommendations which are then taken back to the individual constituencies, or can it make decisions which are then binding on all the players?

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: There is no doubt that this agreement relies on the goodwill of the three governments involved. Indeed, if there was not an inherent level of goodwill, they would never have signed the agreement. I refer to what I said about Queensland, which is to be commended in this matter. Nevertheless, the agreement binds them to do as we are doing and put this before a parliament and to then act in accordance within the principles laid out in the agreement. So, if one of the signatories to the agreement was to simply vary from the undertakings they made in the agreement, there would be a legal recourse through the courts to enforcing the agreement, because they are signatories to it. We have all bound ourselves to those principles.

For the benefit of the shadow minister, it is probably in a similar type of regime in which the commonwealth insists that we fulfil the conditions of various treaties made with overseas powers—especially environmental treaties with regard to wetlands, and things such as that. The force is that, if the commonwealth as a signatory breaks the agreement, it can be held to answer for the agreement it has broken in the same way we could hold a signatory government that was not being accountable under the agreement to answer in the courts. However, that is not what we are aiming for: we are aiming for consensus and working together. In the agreement we are not really trying to premise this on, 'We will all do the wrong thing so let's try to catch each other out.' We are trying to say, 'Let's work cooperatively forward.' In answer to the honourable member's question as to whether there are

any hooks to keep us together, the answer is 'Yes, there is a legal hook.'

Mr HILL: That was an interesting answer. I take the general point that this will hopefully be a cooperative arrangement and we will all get on swimmingly. However, it is our job to question the nature of the agreement so that we truly understand it. I will reflect on what the minister said then by way of explanation. He was saying that this acts as a kind of contractual arrangement between the various parties that have signed it and that, if one of the parties does not perform according to the contract, there is legal recourse. My reading of the agreement is that all we have agreed to today is to keep talking with each other and to cooperate: We have not agreed to do anything beyond that. Is the minister saying that, when the three parties to the agreement make a decision or reach agreement about a particular thing, say, water flow or water extraction, and the three of them together make that decision, that decision is then subject to legal recourse?

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: Yes, because in here we agree to pursue policies and strategies so that we are bound in this agreement to pursue policies and strategies. It is a construct that we have to take forward, and that construct has to be guided by the guiding principles. So, it is not just a matter of talking. As a result of this agreement, we have to do something. We have to produce policies and strategies on the catchment, and we also have to report on the state of the rivers. All that has to be done in the light of the guiding principles. It is not just a matter of our saying, 'Let's agree to talk', and signing a fancy bit of paper and saying, 'Let's keep talking.' It is more a matter of our having started talking. The next phase in the talking which we are bound to by this agreement is to form policies and strategies, and report on the state of the river. They are concrete actions that will come from this. In response to the shadow minister's last question, the other sanction that exists if one of the signatories to this agreement did not behave as they should is that the commonwealth EPBC Act could be triggered, and the shadow minister will know that many jurisdictions are worried about the power and extent of that act.

The ACTING CHAIRPERSON (Mrs Geraghty): I have allowed some latitude on the questioning. Members will have to relate any further questions to the clause itself.

Clause passed.

Clause 2.

Mr HILL: In terms of the operation of the agreement, will the minister say whether he will be bringing to this parliament an annual report detailing the decisions and processes of the agreement?

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: The review has to be undertaken every five years and the report presented to the parliament. So it is not an annual report. Again, given the nature of the area up there, that is not unreasonable. I will personally give an undertaking that I will be most pleased in five years' time to stand in this place and as minister present the report to the shadow minister.

Clause passed.

Clause 3.

The ACTING CHAIRPERSON: I remind the member for Ross Smith that his question must relate to the clause.

Mr CLARKE: Yes, and it will. Madam Acting Chair, I seek your guidance in the sense that the agreement, which is the guts of this bill, runs from pages 6 to 25. Ordinarily, under standing orders you are allowed to ask only three questions per clause. However, as the guts of the legislation is in this agreement, can some flexibility be shown in the

number of questions permitted? I do not anticipate too many, knowing that the minister will answer in a forthright manner, at length and accurately. I may need to go over the quota of three, if he disappoints me.

The ACTING CHAIRPERSON: I am not able to allow any more than the three questions to be asked on each clause. However, you can ask questions on the agreement under clauses 3, 4 and 5. That should provide the honourable member with ample opportunity to ask his questions.

Mr CLARKE: I want to take up the point raised by the member for Kaurua. If breaches of any section of this measure occur, no sanctions or penalties would apply. In relation to the member for Kaurua's contribution, as the minister says, through this agreement the three governments are bound by this legislation to discuss issues around the Lake Eyre Basin, and are bound to look at and draw up policies in accordance with the different principles and guidelines set out in this agreement. Once a decision has been agreed to by those three governments following those first two steps, are all three governments then legally bound by those outcomes? If one or more of those three governments break those outcomes that have been agreed to, are they enforceable in a court of law?

As an example, the minister in his second reading explanation refers to the catalyst for this legislation over the original proposal by the Queensland government to irrigate cotton on the Cooper Creek. If, following these steps, the outcome was that there was to be no irrigation of cotton and then the Queensland government went ahead and did it in any event, is the South Australian government or the commonwealth government under this legislation able to go to the Supreme Court in Queensland and get a writ forbidding Queensland irrigating cotton contrary to an agreed outcome?

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: The first comment I would make to the member for Ross Smith is that, at present, it is very difficult to get into the Supreme Court: the honourable member has so many actions in the Supreme Court no-one else can get in the door.

Mr Clarke: No, this is Queensland.

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: Sorry. Having said that, this agreement, it is true, and I started to say this to the shadow minister, basically is based on goodwill and cooperation: it is not a highly prescriptive agreement. In answer to the member for Ross Smith, and I listened carefully to what he said, if three governments agree to do something and there are three signatories to this, why would one government not then do it? In fact, if three governments agree to do it, three governments will do it because—

Mr Clarke: If Rob Borbidge comes back as Premier of Queensland in three years—

Mr Hanna: I will give you 100/1 on that.

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: So will I. I will actually take your bet. As he has resigned, it is a bit impossible for him to come back.

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: No, I was just thinking of a good retort.

Mr Hill interjecting:

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: Never from the dead. The interesting thing is that (and we are making this comparison reasonably correctly), despite the fact that, in a sense, the Murray Darling Basin Commission is a different instrument that, too, is not weighed down by a lot of sanctions. In fact, one of the pluses and, I suppose, minuses of the Murray Darling Basin Ministerial Council is that every state must

agree on every decision before anything can happen. Basically, there must be unanimous agreement between the states and territories before the commission can make a decision.

Mr Hill: It binds its successors in law.

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: Yes, so will this. Sorry, I missed that point. So will this. I return to the point made by the member for Ross Smith. Much of this, as is a lot of the Murray Darling Basin Ministerial Council/Ministerial Commission agreement, is based on goodwill between the participating parties, but I do not think that is unreasonable. I know that the member for Ross Smith might have difficulty understanding because, quite seriously, he comes from a highly prescriptive side of politics. I do not think that it is unfair to say that, perhaps, members opposite are more inclined to a stronger regulatory regime than we are on this side of the House.

Mr Hanna: We take that as a compliment.

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: I am sure that you do. It is just a different way of looking at the world. On this side of the House we are, at least in theory (because sometimes I think we are inclined to over-regulate, too; I am not saying that we are without fault), perhaps less inclined to regulate than members opposite. But I think that all members would agree that the trend in Australian politics of late seems to be to go more for a cooperative approach; to try to get people to work together; to have, as often as we can, carrots and, where necessary, still sticks. I am not pretending that an Australia exists where you do not need sticks on occasions, but this is more carrot than stick legislation.

I acknowledge that, but given that at the time it was formulated by two Liberal and one Labor Government, I think that it has the elements of the bipartisan approach that will work.

Mr CLARKE: The minister has just confirmed my initial views of this legislation, which is that it is a load of bumph.

The Hon. M.K. Brindal: It is what?

Mr CLARKE: It is a load of bumph. It is not worth the paper it is written on at the end of the day. I do not know why we must pass a piece of legislation that is non-enforceable. If it is just an agreement between the states and the commonwealth we will sign an agreement. If it is based on goodwill, wonderful. But in terms of legislative protection, there does not seem to be any. I take the minister to page 13 of the agreement under 'Responsibilities and Interests of the States'. I will deal with the states first before I come to the commonwealth. At 4.9, the agreement states:

Each state will continue to have responsibility for its policy formulation and the administration of its legislation relevant to water and related natural resource management within the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement area, but in so doing will to the fullest extent that it is able comply with this agreement and any applicable policies and strategies developed or adopted under it. Further, to the extent that may be necessary, each state will use its best endeavours to secure the passage through its respective parliament of legislation for the purpose of conforming with and implementing this agreement and any such policies and strategies.

In reality, if that third step of the agreement, as we have discussed in terms of developing outcomes, is to become legally binding it must pass through the respective legislation, and may well have to pass through the parliament of one or other of the state jurisdictions to give effect to something that has already been agreed to by this ministerial council after doing all of this consultation. It can still fall because a state parliament refuses to give effect to those agreed outcomes. Although it is not a problem in Queensland, in one sense: it

has a single House and, at the moment, a government with a very commanding majority, that is not an issue.

South Australia, of course, with two houses of parliament and neither major party likely to control the upper house, will involve difficulties. Of course, as the member for Kaurna pointed out either in a contribution or by way of interjection, governments come and governments go, irrespective of the size of their majorities at any particular time, just through the normal electoral cycle.

If one looks at the responsibilities and interests of the commonwealth under Part IV, one sees that all the commonwealth has agreed to is monitor the activities of the states in the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement, and to ensure that Australia meets its international obligations in accordance with the intergovernmental agreement on the environment.

The commonwealth is required to ensure that matters of national interest relating to environmental protection, sustainable agricultural water and related natural resources management in the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement are appropriately addressed in consultation with the states. It is waffle; it does not make it legally enforceable and it does not allow a citizen of the state (or an interest group within a particular state) who sees that agreements are, in effect, being torn up by inaction on the part of a state government or the commonwealth to go to the courts to enforce such agreed outcomes—if indeed there are any to enforce. I cannot get over the fact that members opposite and the minister talk about this being a giant stride forward. It is simply a nonsense.

I think we do ourselves an injury by simply talking up this type of legislation as if we are taking major steps forward when it is no more than the three governments signing a memorandum of understanding to try to work in harmony on certain things, but with a let-out clause basically for any of the three governments to do whatever they like, anyway, with the other two governments being absolutely impotent to ensure compliance with the notionally agreed outcomes after all this palaver has been gone through.

There are no monetary penalties or anything of this nature for any breaches of this agreement. So here we have a piece of legislation which has been much trumpeted by the minister and on which this House has spent much of the last two hours. However, in reality, it is no more than a wish list and a hope that three governments will get along and, with goodwill, will do the right thing. We do not need an act of parliament for that, so I do not know why we have this bill before us in the first place, if it has—I will not even say little teeth—as it would appear to me to have no teeth or validity whatsoever in terms of enforcement. It is a statement of general principles. Well, do not waste our time on that: just have an MOU signed by the three governments.

I again ask the question: how is this agreement, once it is enacted into law, actually enforceable? Where are the teeth, either for the individual governments concerned, to ensure observance of outcomes, or for interested parties—the community generally—to take the respective governments to court if necessary to ensure that they do what they are supposed to be doing, indeed, making sure that they draw up the policies and strategies? Where are the teeth in the legislation?

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: It has certainly taken two hours, and perhaps we can see why in the light of the last contribution. If I were a nasty and vindictive person, which the member for Ross Smith knows I am not, I would actually have barked back that perhaps I am surprised that such a

small brain resides in such a large man. But I will content myself with musing only that indeed he must have been doorknocking too much in Kilburn lately—

Members interjecting:

The ACTING CHAIRPERSON (Mrs Geraghty): Order!

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL:—because the member for Ross Smith obviously does not understand the nature of this bill. It is this: when the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement was first signed all those years ago, it had about as much in it as this has in it. Look at how that relationship, how that governance body, has matured over time. It started from a similar genesis: a small step forward.

I would like to know how the member for Ross Smith believes that this jurisdiction, the commonwealth or the Queensland jurisdiction, each sovereign jurisdiction in its own right with a parliament that claims its ancient rights and privileges, can actually bind other sovereign jurisdictions. It is impossible. No state—indeed, no country, principality or power in the history of the world—has been able to pass laws that bound another sovereign territory. What we do is enter into agreements, and those agreements can be given legal effect.

Why do we bring them into parliament? The member for Ross Smith has been here long enough to know the answer to that. It is because this parliament can bind successive governments in this state. If it were not to be ratified by this parliament, it is merely a document signed by me as the current minister which could be repudiated later, not just by any Liberal minister but by any other future minister. What this does is bring this agreement which I signed into this House and say to the 47 members of this House who are not the executive government, ‘Will you ratify this?’, so that every future government, every future minister, Labor and Liberal in this State, is bound to this agreement until the 69 members of these two Houses decide that it is no longer binding on the state of South Australia.

I can see no better reason for bringing an agreement into this House than to ask the people of South Australia, through their parliament, whether I have or have not done the right thing, and whether this thing which I have done should be binding not only on me but also on all of my successors until this parliament deems otherwise. I am surprised that I have to give the member for Ross Smith an object lesson in parliamentary process, because he was a very good deputy leader of the opposition, the best they have had for a long, long while, and he should know some of the fundamental practices of this House. Let me quote to him clause 5, as follows:

Facilitation of the Agreement. The minister and other instrumentalities and agencies of the state are authorised and required to do anything reasonably necessary to ensure the performance and observance of this agreement.

So, this requires me as minister in the state of South Australia to do anything reasonably necessary to ensure the performance and observance of this agreement. So, in passing this bill, this House is making a requirement of me and of the executive government of this parliament to fulfil the aspects of the agreement as set out, as will the commonwealth, and as will the state of Queensland.

We are not trying to pass a law to bind the state of Queensland or the Commonwealth of Australia—we simply cannot do that—but we have agreed in this agreement to pass a law in our sovereign jurisdictions to bind us to the will of our parliaments and, in binding us to the will of our parlia-

ments, so bind us in a joint enterprise so that we can move forward. I would have thought that was a very good democratic process, one which would be applauded by the member for Ross Smith. I weep because he has to spend so much time on doorknocking that his mind has become addled in the process.

Mr HILL: Will the minister explain the budgetary process relating to this, how much funding the government will commit to it and where we will find that funding allocated?

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: These decisions will be made at the ministerial forum. The level of service that is required and the works that may be required, if any, have yet to be determined. I give the committee an undertaking that, through the budget bilaterals and signing this agreement, this House will commit as much as is necessary for the proper fulfilment of these functions under this agreement. I hope that I have the committee’s absolute understanding that, if we can get the commonwealth to contribute slightly more than either the state of Queensland or the state of South Australia, that would have the complete backing of every member of this House. The commonwealth has a much larger purse and much deeper pockets than we have and, if we could get them into a two-for-one arrangement or something like that, I would expect the backing of this House to do so.

I am not being evasive; I cannot give you an answer, because we have not determined what resources are required. However, I can give you an absolute undertaking that we will adequately resource the project. There is simply no point in this parliament going through this. If the member for Ross Smith described it as a charade, I think that is unkind, but it would be a charade if we bring it in here and I am not prepared to resource it adequately. The shadow minister, the member for Ross Smith and every other member of this House would have the absolute right to come back and say that I misled the House, that I promised something that we did not deliver.

Mr HILL: I take it from what the minister said that there is no agreement yet on the balance between the states either? There are three parties to this agreement. Will the parties take turns in chairing the commission or will it always be chaired by the commonwealth and, if it is always to be chaired by the commonwealth, will it be chaired by the environment minister? My concern is that the commonwealth might appoint a primary industries minister to chair it and he may not necessarily be sympathetic to the environmental purposes behind the agreement.

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: The shadow minister might, in 10 or 20 years, when he becomes a minister learn that the commonwealth when it is involved in anything considers that it has a bigger chair than anyone else and tends to take the chairmanship of these committees. The commonwealth will chair this committee. The Minister for the Environment has been identified as the appropriate minister to be the lead minister, and I believe he will continue to be so as long as there is a Liberal government in Canberra. However, a future Liberal government (not one led by the current Prime Minister) or, indeed, a future Labor government, I think has the right to determine who the lead minister will be.

However, can I just say this, and I say it absolutely honestly: perhaps the shadow minister might be able to come to a Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council meeting as an observer. The Hon. Warren Truss, the Minister for Agriculture in the commonwealth, actually chairs the council and does an exceptionally fine job. I do not think that I have ever

heard anyone say that, despite the fact that he is the Minister for Agriculture, he tries to chair that body or steer it in any way that reflects other than the best balanced interests for the basin (both ecologically and in terms of sustainable use of the resource).

I say to the shadow minister absolutely directly that my total understanding under this government is that it will be Senator Robert Hill, Minister for the Environment, but if in any conceivable event in the future it would be this Minister for Agriculture, we would be just as ably led. That is as much as I can say. If Kim Beazley were ever to be Prime Minister, I do not know whom he would elect as his lead minister. He has every right to determine those matters, and, indeed, a future Liberal government might reconfigure this matter.

Mr CLARKE: Without wanting to be too harsh on the minister, as he tried not to be too harsh on me, I must say that, when the honourable minister rises to his feet in this House, he subtracts from the sum knowledge of this House on each occasion. In the minister's contribution to my last question he referred to the early beginnings of the Murray Darling Basin Commission, which led to the much stronger legislation that we now have in place. I simply draw to the Minister's attention that it was because of those feeble states' rights-type arguments that originally gave birth to such a pathetic, weak instrument all those years ago that we have the sorts of problems that we have today with respect to the quality of the River Murray, and because it lacked teeth and enforceable rights.

The clean-up of the River Murray and the Murray Darling Basin generally could have been tackled many decades ago except for the fact that states argued over this claptrap of sovereign rights, states' rights, in this area. I have often maintained and continue to maintain the belief that issues of the Murray Darling and issues such as this with Lake Eyre, which go beyond the borders of one state, should rightly be in the hands of the national government, with full sovereign powers in that area and the right to do whatever it needs to do to ensure the cleanup of our Murray Darling Basin and to protect the Lake Eyre Basin.

I do not think that we want to perpetuate that same mistake by bringing in such pathetically weak legislation as this and saying, 'This is a first step: if we wait another 50 years we will have stronger legislation.' By then we may well have destroyed the Lake Eyre Basin as we have destroyed, in large measure, the Murray Darling Basin, because we did not have tough, enforceable legislation in place at the beginning.

Was the position of this government to seek stronger legislation with greater and more enforceable rights for states such as South Australia to ensure that agreements, once entered into, can and must be carried out by all the participating governments?

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: Somebody behind me whispered that if we added my IQ to that of the member for Ross Smith and then subtracted mine, the answer would be zero, but I will not repeat that! We consider that this is the right legislation for the right time. We believe that this is of its time and of its place, so we are happy with the legislation. It is as we would seek it to be.

Hindsight is always 100 per cent. It is easy for us to sit in this place and criticise the Murray Darling Basin Commission, but it was formed in a different time for a different purpose. Until about 20 years ago, no one actually realised that there was a problem.

Mr Clarke: Yes, they did. Ralph Jacobi, 30-odd years ago, an eminent scientist, spoke in the House about it.

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: I apologise: I stand corrected. Fewer people, and those we would now acknowledge to have been very far-sighted and visionary, saw the problem: the general population did not. Certainly, governments did not, no matter whether they were Liberal or Labor. I can remember a Premier of this state of very famous memory who promised to build Chowilla Dam within 100 days of his election. Thank God it was a commitment that he never managed to fulfil, because that would have been the biggest environmental disaster in the whole river system. We are talking about a South Australian Premier and about 20 years ago. None of us is blameless in the way the Murray-Darling has evolved. Does the shadow minister remember the Premier, or should I say who it was?

Mr Clarke: We won Chaffey.

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: Yes, I know, and that gentleman was not right in why he threw away the government of the day, either. Since we have realised that we have many more responsibilities than we first thought under the Murray-Darling Basin Commission, we have assumed those responsibilities and are now taking steps to correct measures that need to be corrected. However, the mistakes were not made in negligence, and they were not made because of a weak agreement. They were made because at that time people did not understand the scientific consequences of what was happening.

In answer to the member for Ross Smith's question, I say that this is the right legislation at the right time and we think it will take us into the future. I refute that it is namby-pamby, weak or any of the other adjectives the honourable member used. I am quite sure that this legislation will outlast both the member for Ross Smith and me in this place.

Clause passed.

Remaining clauses (4 and 5), schedule and title passed.

Bill read a third time and passed.

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

That the sitting of the House be extended beyond 6 p.m.

Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

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

That the House do now adjourn.

Ms STEVENS (Elizabeth): Last week I received a copy of the South Australian Liberal government's disabilities services planning and funding framework 2000-03, which was launched on 27 February after it was commissioned in August 1999 by the present minister. It has taken 18 months to complete this document. In other words, this government now has a framework report building on the Disability Services Act 1993. What a revealing statement that is, that at last we have a framework report that builds upon an act of parliament passed in 1993. It has taken over seven years and six other reports on disability services in this state for this government, since gaining office just after the Disability Services Act was passed, to come up with a service framework. It really indicates where disability services sits in terms of government priority.

Members might be forgiven for thinking that the framework details the policy and financial commitment by the state government to at last take a lead for families and their children with a disability on waiting lists for accommodation, respite care, post school activities, and so on. One could especially be forgiven for thinking that to be the case when one bears in mind the length of time it has taken. On the very day this framework report, which has taken 18 months to complete since it was announced in August 1999, was released, the Minister for Disability Services announced that a further report is to be commissioned, this time an action plan based on the framework report.

The minister also told the 300 people present at the launch that even the framework report could be changed if required. So after seven years we have the first report, but it could be changed and we are still waiting on a further action report to be produced. When work commences on an action plan, please forgive my cynicism if I take a reasonable guess that it will not be completed in time for the next South Australian election. I can see the minister on the pre-election beat, promising families nothing in time for the election but telling all who listen that their concerns are addressed in the yet to be completed action plan.

That will be report No. 8 in eight years, and still no sign of a practical policy and funding plan to address unmet need and thus alleviate the stress on families and individuals who have been eight-year victims of insidious inaction, timed solely to escape consumer wrath. I have no doubt that this government hopes to repeat the same strategy it thinks it got away with in 1993 and 1996: lots of reports with each yet to be published at election time. The so-called action plan will be no different. Families know it and they will not forgive you a third time because they will punish you for deliberately and callously misleading them.

I turn now to the framework itself, much of which has been copied from Labor's disability policies but without specific detail or our commitment. I would like to make a few comments. In the report, the South Australian government has at last acknowledged that institutions are no longer an acceptable service model for the future, even though the present minister referred to them after the last state election as reminding him 'of residential university colleges'. Nevertheless, the framework for community accommodation as the preferred future housing option has been lifted from Labor's policies.

Secondly, the framework document describes a single system of options coordination being established and managed within the Department of Human Services but still

retaining the five separate structures based upon diagnostic rather than service needs. The Liberals have lifted the single system from Labor, but they have not had the courage to implement the single options access point that we proposed at the last election and still have in our policy.

Thirdly, the use of mainstream aged care facilities for older people with a disability has been lifted from a speech I made two years ago. Fourthly, Mr Olsen touted integrated service delivery models between mainstream and specialist agencies for disadvantaged people soon after he was installed as Premier in the present Liberal government. Five years later, it is worked up again for the framework document but, like all other so-called framework outcomes, there is no mention of how, when or whether funding will have to be redistributed to make it happen. Yet again the concept has been lifted from Labor and speeches made by Labor and commitments made by Labor in the past.

The framework document, which is essentially a load of pre-election waffle, deliberately avoids addressing many critical issues that Labor has already confronted in the two previous election periods and has already addressed in its developing policy agenda in time for the next election.

This framework document only reinforces the widely held community view that this government has never cared about social justice or been active in any pursuit of citizenship for people with disabilities. The fine sounding goals that this government espouses on paper for its Disability Services Office should be prefaced or concluded with the words, 'unless a state election is imminent'. The government has again avoided the hard questions, let alone the hard decisions. This is a framework with absolutely no mention of how this government intends to fund the half dozen most obvious issues for disability services, let alone the many other difficult policy issues needing urgent attention.

Of course, nor does it address any of the policy and funding questions surrounding how its limited range of published statements might be implemented or a time frame for implementation. In essence, this framework is a glossy document that raises only a few issues that this government may or may not address at some time in the future. This is coupled with a yet to be written action plan, which will remain unfinished prior to the next state election, so that there is yet again no major Liberal government commitment to meeting unmet service need. As families and individuals will say, and hopefully in no uncertain terms, 'Thanks for nothing!'

Motion carried.

At 6.07 p.m. the House adjourned until Wednesday 14 March at 2 p.m.