

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Wednesday 31 October 2001

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

STATUTES AMENDMENT (EQUAL SUPERANNUATION RIGHTS FOR SAME SEX COUPLES) BILL

A petition signed by 43 residents of South Australia, requesting that the House support the passage of the Statutes Amendment (Equal Superannuation Rights for Same Sex Couples) Bill and any other measures to remove discrimination against same sex relationships, was presented by Ms Bedford.

Petition received.

PAPERS TABLED

The following papers were laid on the table:

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

Construction Industry Long Service Leave Board—
Report, 2000-01
Playford Centre—Report, 2000-01
SA TAB Sale—Probity Auditor's Final Report,
29 October 2001

By the Minister for Water Resources (Hon. M.K. Brindal)—

Director of Public Prosecutions—Report, 2000-01
Select Committee on the Murray River Report—
Government Response

By the Minister for Local Government (Hon D.C. Kotz)—

Corporation By-Laws—Prospect
No. 1—Permits and Penalties
No. 2—Moveable Signs
No. 3—Local Government Land
No. 4—Roads
No. 5—Dogs.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

The Hon. G.M. GUNN (Stuart): I bring up the 36th report of the committee, being the annual report for 2000-01, and move:

That the report be received.

Motion carried.

The Hon. DEAN BROWN (Deputy Premier): I move:

That the report be published.

Motion carried.

LEGISLATIVE REVIEW COMMITTEE

Mr MEIER (Goyder): I bring up the 31st report of the committee and move:

That the report be received and read.

Motion carried.

Mr MEIER: I bring up the 32nd report of the committee and move:

That the report be received.

Motion carried.

QUESTION TIME

MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT

The Hon. M.D. RANN (Leader of the Opposition): Does the Premier support a strengthening of the code of conduct for cabinet ministers and parliamentary secretaries to prevent their having conflicts of interest in their duties by disallowing them from holding and trading in shares which could conflict with their ministerial duties and responsibilities, and will the Premier undertake to make this change before calling an election?

The Hon. R.G. KERIN (Premier): There is a ministerial code of conduct and I think that is adequate. I am willing, at any stage, to look at it, but as far as the current ministerial code of conduct is concerned, I am satisfied at the moment that it is quite appropriate for the position.

RAYTHEON AUSTRALIA PTY LTD

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH (Waite): Will the Premier advise the House of details of a major new defence initiative announced today?

The Hon. R.G. KERIN (Premier): South Australia has fast become the defence state of Australia, which is important for the House to note. I advise the House that leading defence technology developer, Raytheon Australia, is set to consolidate its operations into Adelaide, which will create up to 300 new high-tech jobs within the next five years and which means up to 300 new pay packets being distributed throughout the community, whether that be supermarkets, shops, hotels, restaurants, or whatever, which will then on spin to a lot of other jobs.

The decision involves the establishment of Raytheon in Australia's electronic warfare operational headquarters at Salisbury. South Australia will also become the core site within the Asia-Pacific region for the company's flight and weapons test centre of excellence. Importantly, it also secures the second major tenant of the new defence technology precinct at Edinburgh Park, which opened this month. That will open the opportunity for other companies to move there as well. Last year, world-wide defence manufacturer, BAE Systems, agreed to become the first tenant at the defence park.

Today's announcement has been two years in the making. Importantly, this is about delivering the smart jobs of the future and delivering employment opportunities for high technology professionals. It builds on the government's commitment to target the industry sectors and to develop smart industry precincts, with the greatest potential to be the employment generators of the future for high technology jobs. That is what attracting investment has to be all about for the betterment of the people of South Australia: that we can achieve a higher standard of living, see improvements in our lifestyle and provide some certainty for the future of the children of South Australia that they will have jobs here.

That is why we have targeted the automotive industry, our food and wine sectors, our biotechnology sector and the IT industries as well. That is why, as a government, we have moved to attract other significant defence companies such as BAE Systems, General Motors Defence, SAAB Systems and Tenex, and that is why we have lobbied the commonwealth so strongly for the Australian Submarine Corporation to be

awarded the through-life maintenance and upgrade contract for the Collins class submarines.

The Hon. Dean Brown interjecting:

The Hon. R.G. KERIN: They have, and that is why we have been working so hard to build the Naval Centre of Excellence around the Osborne site. Over the past few years we have clearly identified the defence and electronic industries as a major focus for government, so we are very surprised to see the defence policy launched by the opposition leader this week; it certainly had a familiar ring to it.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! There are too many audible interjections across the chamber.

The Hon. R.G. KERIN: They actually talked about developing a cluster when there are already so many jobs here. This is what Labor says it will do: support an industry cluster around the Australian Submarine Corporation, help develop Woomera as the centre of the state's space industry and a world-class evaluation of field testing facility, and assist in the development of a defence electronic systems cluster to be collocated with the Defence, Science and Technology Organisation.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier has the call.

The Hon. R.G. KERIN: That is what Labor says it will do but, obviously, we are already doing that. We thank the federal Leader of the Opposition for giving us such a ringing endorsement of where we have gone and remind the Leader and his front bench that they have a responsibility to the state to put some alternative policies on the table and not just knock off existing government policies. As I said, defence will remain a key focus, and the government hopes to be in a position to make further—

Members interjecting:

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

The Hon. R.G. KERIN: —announcements towards defence investment in South Australia in the not too distant future.

MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT

The Hon. M.D. RANN (Leader of the Opposition): Will the Premier support not only an enforceable code of conduct for ministers (he says the present code of conduct is apparently adequate, despite the problems that we have seen with trading in shares) but also an enforceable code of conduct for all members of parliament, not just ministers; and, indeed, will he undertake to do that before calling the next election? Currently, as we all know, there is an annual parliamentary register of members' interests which is known as the Pecuniary Interests Register but which does not include descriptions of family trusts. Also, there is no code of conduct for all members of parliament highlighting duties and responsibilities, and also to assist particularly new members of parliament avoiding a conflict of interest question. So, why not agree to help develop a code of conduct for all members of parliament?

The Hon. R.G. KERIN (Premier): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question, which raises a range of issues. There are public expectations of members of parliament (there is no doubt about that), and I think that those expectations in the general community are not just about accountability but are also about behaviour, representation

and what our priorities are, and they should mirror those of the general community.

The Leader of the Opposition raised with me by letter late last week that he is willing to meet on some of these issues. I welcome that opportunity. In the short term, as I said in my answer to the Leader, if the opposition is fair dinkum about lifting the standards in this place, we will allow that to happen. But what we need is a demonstration of their commitment in this House to the orderly running of the House, to focusing on the issues that the general community—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The leader has already been brought to order once. I expect him to set an example.

The Hon. M.D. Rann interjecting:

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

The Hon. R.G. KERIN: The standards are slipping again at the moment. I am quite happy to meet with the Leader of the Opposition to discuss a whole range of issues to do with members of parliament, what their responsibilities are, how we behave in this place and whether it is acceptable in the general community. All I require is a demonstration from opposition members over the next couple of weeks that they are fair dinkum about lifting the standards—

Members interjecting:

The Hon. R.G. KERIN: As demonstrated by the interjections coming at the moment.

Mr Conlon interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order, the member for Elder!

An honourable member interjecting:

Mr Conlon: That's right!

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Elder has been called to order.

Ms HURLEY: I rise on a point of order. I believe that the Premier is accusing members on this side of the House of dishonesty—

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

Ms HURLEY: —since that is the accusation—

The SPEAKER: Order! The deputy leader will resume her seat.

The Hon. M.D. Rann interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! I warn the Leader of the Opposition for the second time for talking over the chair, and I caution the deputy leader against frivolous points of order. The Premier.

The Hon. G.M. Gunn interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order, the member for Stuart!

The Hon. R.G. KERIN: I was talking about the behaviour in the House as I was getting drowned out.

Mr Conlon interjecting:

The Hon. R.G. KERIN: If I could just have a go for half a tick. What I was going to say is that I am quite happy to meet with the Leader of the Opposition about a whole range of issues, but what I require as one of my major requests is members behaving in this House in a way that meets community expectation. Every time I stand up I think that is somewhat breached. Let us have a demonstration from both sides of the House of a willingness to meet those community expectations, then I will be very happy to meet.

EMPLOYMENT

Mr SCALZI (Hartley): Can the Minister for Employment and Training outline to the House the job index results for South Australia of the latest TMP Worldwide survey?

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL (Minister for Employment and Training): I certainly can and I thank the member for Hartley for his question and his continuing interest in ongoing jobs. Notwithstanding the attack on the United States on 11 September, the collapse of Ansett, anthrax scares, the war against terrorism and like problems that are besetting the world, I can report to the House that international and national woes are not dampening the spirit of South Australians. That is not my opinion but the report of TMP Worldwide.

The quarterly TMP Worldwide job index released today indicates that South Australian employers are not as gloomy about the future as their counterparts in other states and, in particular, they are not as gloomy as our dismal opposition. One can see from the attitude of those opposite that, if there is a good news story in this state, all they do is run around, trying to scare up the next scandal in a teacup that they try to brew on a daily basis. One of the most regrettable—

Mr Conlon interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order, the member for Elder!

The Hon. W.A. Matthew interjecting:

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: Yes, I thank the member for his interjection.

Mr Conlon interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Elder for disrupting the House.

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: Spending \$1 000 million on a shopping centre, cardboard cars, God knows what else, investing in earthquakes—we could go on for 50 minutes on what constitutes a serious scandal and most of them originate opposite and not on this side of the House. The maxim holds good that good news in this state is bad news for the Labor Party. This is good news for this state, so I intend to persist. Today's TMP worldwide survey is great news. According to this document, 29.9 per cent of employers in this state have indicated that they will create new jobs in the next quarter. That is a positive effect of 19.5 per cent, which is well above the national average of 12.1 per cent. So, South Australia is outperforming every other state in national average terms by nearly 50 per cent.

Mr Conlon interjecting:

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: Pardon?

The SPEAKER: Order! the minister will ignore interjections.

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: Thank you, Sir, I will. South Australian industries recording high optimistic outlooks for the coming months include: engineering, up 57.9 per cent; utilities and legal, both up 40 per cent; information technology, up 28.6 per cent—I am sure the member for Adelaide will be pleased with that—and government, up 25.4 per cent. South Australia also recorded the highest optimistic outlook in regard to hiring contract and temporary staff with a net effect of +3 per cent compared with New South Wales which recorded a pessimistic—5 per cent.

As members know, TMP is Australia's largest recruitment firm—its analysis involved the survey of 6 397 employers—and it is well regarded for its accuracy. Mr Geoff Qurban, the State Manager of TMP, said today that we are reaping the rewards of South Australia's stable economy. Mr Qurban stated:

Over the last four or five surveys South Australia has remained fairly firm—

The Hon. M.D. Rann interjecting:

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: I will read this again so that the Leader of the Opposition hears. Mr Qurban stated:

Over the last four or five surveys South Australia has remained fairly firm in terms of optimism and, in fact, last survey they had the highest level of optimism in the country. I think what we've seen is, rather than the boom and bust, we've seen a very steady progression of confidence emerging over the last year and a half to two years.

Mr Qurban goes on to say that, despite the international pressures, 'we are seeing fantastic optimism in South Australia in several industry types'. Large organisations in the state with more than 200 staff members are extraordinarily more confident about the economy than those in other Australian states and territories. A net 15.6 per cent of large South Australian organisations have indicated that they will put on staff in the next quarter compared to a net 4.5 per cent of large organisations nationally. Moreover, both small and medium-sized organisations are saying (in greater percentage terms than interstate) that they, too, will be creating jobs over the next three months.

Today's TMP survey is in accord with the most up-to-date September ABS figures. In short, South Australia is outperforming every other state in the country on a number of key economic indicators. Trend building approvals in South Australia increased by 56 per cent through the year to August—the highest growth rate in the nation. Other indicators such as retail trade, motor vehicle registrations and housing finance all showed strong gains in September. South Australia's exports continued to show significant gains, increasing by 33 per cent in the 12 months to August 2001.

Finally, through the year to the June quarter, household consumption expenditure grew by 4.5 per cent in South Australia, higher than the national average of 3.4 per cent and the second highest of all states behind only Queensland. With the September quarter revealing that the Adelaide CPI increased by only .1 per cent (a through-the-year increase figure of only 2.3 per cent), I will conclude with the political maxim: good news for the state is bad news for Labor. If anyone was to doubt that, just look at the torpor and stupor when any member stands up on this side and talks about good news for the state; look at the reaction of the opposition.

GOVERNMENT CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

The Hon. M.D. RANN (Leader of the Opposition): Will the Premier introduce tighter codes of conduct for government chief executive officers before the next election, not only to prevent conflicts of interest but also to prevent CEOs from holding company directorships while they are at the same time the head of a government department?

The Hon. R.G. KERIN (Premier): Look, I am not—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order on my right! The Premier has the call.

The Hon. R.G. KERIN: I agree with the Leader of the Opposition that it is a serious question, but whether or not it needs attention is another thing. I will undertake to look at the issue. It is only appropriate that they be reviewed every now and again.

PUBLIC DENTAL SCHEME

The Hon. G.M. GUNN (Stuart): My question is directed to the Deputy Premier in his capacity—

Mr Atkinson: It is all coming to an end, Gunny!

The SPEAKER: Order, the member for Spence!

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: We know that the honourable member cannot even drive a motor car, so we know how effective he would be.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: Can the Deputy Premier explain to the House the current funding arrangements for the South Australian public dental service, and say whether any suggestion has been put forward during the current federal election campaign which will hinder or help the situation? I also draw the minister's attention to the headline in today's *Business Review Weekly*, 'Do not vote for this man.'

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Human Services.

The Hon. DEAN BROWN (Minister for Human Services): As members know, state governments around Australia fund the public dental scheme. Here in South Australia we put in over \$30 million a year for public dentistry, in other words, dental services for people on low incomes. It amused me that right at the start of this federal election campaign Kim Beazley, as the person who wants to be Prime Minister, was out there selling what he said was a national dental health service.

Ms Stevens interjecting:

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: I am the glad the member for Elizabeth is interjecting, because I will come to her in a moment. Here is the state government currently putting up over \$30 million a year—

Mr Conlon interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Elder for the second time, and I suggest that he not push his luck too much.

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: The state government in South Australia is putting over \$30 million a year into public dental services. I had a look at the detail of this national dental health scheme announced by Kim Beazley, and I found that South Australia in the first year would get less than \$1 million. In other words, it was no more than absolute tokenism of the worst kind because, day after day, they have been advocating their national dental health scheme.

Ms Stevens interjecting:

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: I am glad the member for Elizabeth has interjected, despite standing orders, because I happened to look at *Hansard* and what she said in this parliament when last year I put in over \$3 million on behalf of the government for an additional dental health scheme. She was the one who stood up and criticised that very severely indeed, saying that it was not enough. If she did that over \$3 million, what would she be saying about Kim Beazley's less than \$1 million? In fact, if members look at what Labor said as part of its national scheme, they went on to say that under Labor's scheme—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

Ms Stevens interjecting:

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

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: Under Labor's so-called national dental health scheme, which is handing out just a few dollars for each state around Australia, they claim that Australians with a health care card or pensioner concession card would be offered the following: emergency care funds to assist for the relief of pain, infection and bleeding; regular check-ups and treatment services from public and private dentists; and prompt, low cost dental repairs and new dentures. They will offer all these services under this grand scheme.

However, South Australia will get less than a mere \$1 million in the first year. In the second year, it will get about \$2 million only. That is a hoax, given the services that will be able to be provided from that money. I object to the federal Labor Party's being out there, day after day, selling what it claims is a national scheme, when that scheme will be funded by the South Australian government, with Labor putting something like only 3 per cent of the funding into this so-called scheme. I just hope that South Australians realise the extent to which federal Labor under its national dental health scheme is selling no more than a hoax to the voters of this state.

OLYMPIC DAM

Mr HILL (Kuarna): Is the Premier aware that the kerosene ponds at Olympic Dam that were burnt in the recent fire contain quantities of uranium in solution, and has the Premier ordered an independent inquiry to establish what happened to the radioactive material? The opposition has been informed that the kerosene ponds hold uranium and copper in solution. These kerosene ponds were burnt dry in the fire, creating a huge plume of thick black oily smoke.

The Hon. R.G. KERIN (Premier): Whenever there is an incident such as that which happened at Olympic Dam, through mines and energy, the radiation branch of the Health Commission and workplace services a whole range of automatic investigations are implemented, and this will be no different from any other incident.

WINE INDUSTRY

Mr VENNING (Schubert): Will the Premier outline to the House a new government initiative to assist the state's wine industry?

The Hon. R.G. KERIN (Premier): This morning I met with representatives of the wine industry who raised with me a whole range of issues, including federal taxation issues, and so on. Over the last few months one area of need that has been identified within the wine industry is that we are getting more and more grapes coming through. The increase in crush in South Australia last year was 60 per cent, which is presenting some major marketing challenges. We are a small part of the world market, being only 3.3 per cent, and the amount of growth within the wine industry is a marketing challenge. We are a small producer on the world scale. However, if we are to continue to grow at the rate we are growing, obviously we have to find more and more hopefully high value markets for the increased crush. One of issues has been that a lot of the big companies can manage their own marketing extremely well. It is something they have done extremely successfully. However, we have more and more of the small and medium wineries out there producing a large amount of wine, and those wineries will need some real help,

because the domestic market is not increasing at anywhere near the rate that their production is increasing.

We have identified that there has been somewhat of a gap in helping those people get into the international market and find the export buyers overseas. At present, through primary industries we have committed to \$80 000 this year and \$80 000 next year to be used strategically. It is believed that Austrade is about to put an export facilitation officer into the wine export council. This \$80 000 per year will be used strategically to help small and medium wine producers use that export officer a lot more efficiently and to find niche markets overseas, so that here we are helping with the marketing challenge. It is no good just leaving it to the very big companies. The small and medium companies will grow, but they will need some help to grow, and export is the only way they can do that.

So what we have put in place is a program whereby strategically we will be helping those small and medium wineries finding where their markets are overseas, and that has received very good support from the industry. It is an industry that I think increasingly we can build partnerships with. As that market challenge comes about we need to help them facilitate in the markets, as we have done with the food industry. They will continue to grow. As I said to the industry this morning, the wine industry is not just about statistics, which are very impressive, but what is even more impressive is when you visit the regional areas where the wine industry is booming and see the number of jobs and the prosperity of those communities which is a real measure of what a great industry it is.

OLYMPIC DAM

Mr HILL (Kaurana): My question is again directed to the Premier. Is the Premier satisfied with safety upgrades made at Olympic Dam since the first fire there in 1999? The opposition has been told that a number of key recommendations of the inquiry into the first fire have not been implemented, in particular, plastic piping carrying kerosene was not upgraded with steel piping, as recommended, and the firefighting systems were not upgraded as also recommended.

The Hon. R.G. KERIN (Premier): I will take that question largely on notice. I do not know whether the member realises that the Minister for Mines and Energy is the minister with carriage of this matter, as are probably workplace services with the Minister for Government Enterprises. I will take the question on notice, and if there are any issues at Olympic Dam they will be picked up in the normal course of things. There will obviously be an investigation into what happened at Olympic Dam. It was a very unfortunate incident and, no doubt, investigations will be carried out by the various departments to make sure that all bases are covered.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE MURRAY RIVER

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON (Heysen): Will the Minister for Water Resources provide further information relating to the government's response to the report of the parliamentary Select Committee on the Murray River which was tabled in this House earlier this year?

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL (Minister for Water Resources): I thank the member for Heysen for his question; no-one in this House would detract from the member for Heysen's long-term interest in this area. It is obvious to all South Australians that the River Murray is suffering environ-

mental damage that requires concerted long-term planning, with clear environmental flow goals and strategies to meet their targets. Here the government and the select committee are in complete agreement.

Established on 18 November 1999, the select committee was furnished with a wide brief. It was originally chaired by my colleague the Minister for Local Government. The honourable member for Heysen assumed responsibility as chair in March last year and did a first class job. The chairman was ably supported by a committee which comprised the shadow minister of environment and water resources and the members for Norwood, Mitchell, Hammond, Chaffey as well as myself.

Ms Ciccarello: Who moved the motion?

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: Indeed, I do not know, but I can inform the member for Norwood it is a tradition in this House that when a motion is moved it becomes the property of the House, not the property of the individual member. The select committee tabled its final report on 25 July 2001. On behalf of the government, I would like to congratulate the members of the select committee on its valuable contribution to the understanding of the problems and challenges faced by all Australians, and South Australians in particular, with respect to the River Murray. The report of the select committee makes 97 recommendations.

Mr FOLEY: I rise on a point of order, Mr Speaker. The minister is responding to a select committee report. We have at least an hour allocated following question time, sir, for debate and consideration of committee reports. Would it not be appropriate that it be debated during that time and not during question time?

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. I cannot put words into the minister's mouth; I can only call him up to respond to a question. I ask the minister, though, to stick strictly to the text of the question.

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: As I said, the report makes 97 recommendations. The government response addresses the committee's recommendations on issues such as institutional arrangements for the Murray Darling Basin Commission, integrated natural resource management, the Lower Murray, management of the National Action Plan funds and so on. If members read the response (and I will not go into the response because that would surely take more than 28 minutes), they will note that a number of recommendations require support and resources from other governments and other parties in the Murray-Darling Basin. However, I am pleased to inform the House that for many of the recommendations work on their implementation has either started or is well under way.

The first five recommendations, including development of a basin wide program, which will increase the median flow to the Murray mouth by 1 per cent a year over 20 years, are supported. While salinity remains as states' most immediate threat, I am pleased to see that, over the past few weeks, the issue of suitable levels of environmental flows to restore the Murray's health is beginning to receive the national focus that it deserves.

It was also good to see the committee anticipate the implementation of the government's 15 year Murray River strategy salinity plan (which we released in June) and the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council's own strategy, which was released on 17 September. Both these strategies are key priorities for the government in saving the money—in saving the Murray. Finally—

Mr Foley interjecting:

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: The member for Hart laughs, but in relation to the cost, the more money we can save the further we can drive it. It is billions of dollars and it has to be done efficiently. Finally—

Mr Foley interjecting:

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: I only made one slip. You've made many over the years—believe me.

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister will get on with his reply.

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: Finally, with regard to the corporatisation of the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electricity Scheme, the government has worked hard with the commonwealth, New South Wales and Victoria to come to an arrangement which balances the environmental needs of the Snowy with those of the Murray. I am confident that, following the federal election, a positive announcement will be made on this subject. In commending the government's response to this House, I urge all members to unite in action towards saving this most important resource in our state.

Finally, we have left one position open on the River Murray Water Management Catchment Board, and we hope that, following the election and his retirement, the member for Heysen will chair that board because of the great esteem in which he is held on both sides of the House.

RADIOACTIVE WASTE

Mr HILL (Kaurna): My question is again directed to the—

Members interjecting:

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

Mr HILL: My question is again directed to the Premier. Does the Premier stand by the decision by the Howard and South Australian Liberal governments to build Australia's national radioactive waste dump in South Australia? Recently the federal Liberal member for Adelaide, Trish Worth, was on the record as saying, 'Those who argue that radioactive waste should be stored anywhere but South Australia are acting irresponsibly and not in the best interests of the wider community.'

The SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier has the call.

The Hon. R.G. KERIN (Premier): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I think that this whole issue of radioactive waste and its storage has been a real casualty of the truth over quite a period of time. I well remember attending Adelaide university one Sunday afternoon to address a seminar, and some of the misinformation that was being peddled was quite alarming in that—

Mr Williams interjecting:

The Hon. R.G. KERIN: The member for MacKillop mentioned dishonesty. I do not know whether I would use that word. What has happened is that over a period of time a group of people who have their own interests in this have absolutely peddled misinformation in such a way as to alarm some communities in a way that just has not been warranted whatsoever. What I very strongly support is responsibility. I believe that responsibility has gone out the window on this issue, because what we have stored at the moment in our universities, our hospitals and various other places around South Australia is low level radioactive waste. If people think it is responsible to leave that sitting in those types of institutions, rather than the government's making the—

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. R.G. KERIN: Yes, I do.

The Hon. M.D. Rann interjecting:

The Hon. R.G. KERIN:—responsible decision—it is not a dump—to store this in a responsible way, then we are ducking our responsibility. Governments have a responsibility for the future. It is not a matter of our ignoring it and saying, 'This is too hard; we won't make any decision. We'll leave this sitting in our hospitals, in our universities and in our factories', or whatever. We need to get this all in one spot. Because it is low level, it is no great risk to the community, but it should not be left sitting where it is. Some people who are opposed to this say, on the one hand, that we should not have the dump. When I raise the sort of issues that I have just raised, they say, 'If there's no danger from it, leave it where it is.' They cannot have it both ways. The responsible way is to find a group—

The Hon. M.D. Rann interjecting:

The Hon. R.G. KERIN: For low level. The member for Kaurna, in his question, carefully did not get specific about what we are discussing concerning the dump; low level waste has been the term used.

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. R.G. KERIN: Yes, but the low level radioactive waste dump is the correct terminology for what the federal government has proposed for South Australia. Anyone who says it should stay where it is I think is being totally irresponsible. I support it, and we have made our position perfectly clear. The Minister for Environment has been very strong in his point of view that we will take this but we do not want the high level waste; that can go elsewhere.

KOALAS

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): Can the Minister for Environment and Heritage advise the House whether he intends to cull koalas on Kangaroo Island following media reports today?

The Hon. I.F. EVANS (Minister for Environment and Heritage): There has been a fair bit of media comment in relation to the koala issue on Kangaroo Island, and I thank the member for Flinders for the question. I think it is important that not only the parliament but the community enter the debate in relation to this matter. Indeed, the animal welfare issue, in general, I think is a good debate for the community to have because parliaments and governments have to deal with issues involving abundant species, including koalas.

Members may recall that last year when Lake Eyre filled there was an issue involving banded stilts and the government took a decision to cull seagulls to allow the banded stilts to regenerate their population base, and that was generally positively received. The community already accepts, on a regular basis, the control of kangaroo population numbers. I think even the international community has come to realise that Australia has a problem with kangaroo numbers, and that matter is dealt with through a culling program on a regular basis.

The issue of koalas on Kangaroo Island is not new to parliament or, indeed, to various governments. I am sure that members opposite will recognise that it was raised in the 1980s during Labor's administration, which unfortunately did not take a lot of action on the issue. Minister Wotton, at the time, inherited the issue and, quite rightly, put in place a koala management program. Based on the numbers estimated at that time, I think the program was about right. At the end

of the day, that program delivered sterilisation of some 3 396 koalas, with about 1 100 of those being transferred to the South-East of the state. That program cost us about \$1.2 million. It is important to realise that the koalas were introduced to the island in about the 1920s. There is no natural predator of the koala on Kangaroo Island and there are no diseases evident in that regard; so, it is an issue that will have to be managed.

It is clear that both the Labor Party and the government do not support the culling of koalas on Kangaroo Island, and I note the Leader of the Opposition's comments this morning that his party would not support a cull. So, clearly, if people support a cull, they will need to drift to the Democrats. It is clear now that the only party in South Australia that supports the killing of koalas on Kangaroo Island is the Australian Democrats. It will be interesting to see the electorate's reaction once it is more fully understood by the voting public that the Democrats support the killing of koalas.

This is a difficult issue for parliaments and governments and it is important that the community have the debate. It is not as simple as some scientists would have us believe that it is purely an argument that should be debated only on environmental grounds. I am the Minister for the Environment. The former minister, David Wotton, also had a strong interest, as did Minister Kotz when she was Minister for the Environment. We all have an interest in the environment but we also have a collective duty to broader South Australia.

The parliament is aware that 80 per cent of the tourists who come to Australia visit for five icon reasons, and one of those is koalas. We are badged internationally by koalas and, if the parliament and the community want an illustration of the effect this will have on the Australian tourism industry, I advise that the *Advertiser* went out this morning and, by a quarter to two this afternoon, CCN in Hong Kong is chasing us on the story that we are about to cull 20 000 koalas in South Australia. The damage that a cull would do to the South Australian and Australian tourism industry would be significant.

So, we do not undervalue the environmental concerns. We are naturally concerned about the environmental and biodiversity concerns that this issue raises but we must take that into consideration and, quite rightly, balance that against the jobs in this state and in Australia that rely on the tourism industry. The tourism industry already has some problems to deal with following the 11 September incident and following the Ansett collapse. To throw into the melting pot a culling of 20 000 koalas as run by the *Advertiser* this morning would be a pressure that the Australian tourism industry and the South Australian tourism industry would not be able to sustain long term.

The government does not support a cull of koalas on Kangaroo Island and we will be looking at other options available to us to try to manage the issue. It is clear that the outcomes have to try to balance the biodiversity outcomes that people want with the jobs that people need. That will be the focus of the government's direction. The Australian Democrats can go to the Australian tourism industry and explain how they will defend the international outrage that a koala cull on Kangaroo Island would generate for this state and this nation. The media need to go to Natasha and put the policy question to her: why is it that her party seeks to cause the Australian tourism industry so much damage through promoting the concept of a cull of koalas on Kangaroo Island?

FESTIVAL OF ARTS

Mr ATKINSON (Spence): I ask the Premier: on behalf of the government, will he now apologise to South Australians and especially to ex-service personnel and members of the Jewish community who were offended by the Adelaide Festival's plan to advertise the 2002 Festival using images of Adolf Hitler? Will the Premier advise how much money was spent in producing those offensive advertisements?

The Hon. R.G. KERIN (Premier): I thank the member for his question, actually, because he says 'on behalf of the government', but I would say 'on behalf of those who were responsible for the initial production of the ad' I would apologise to those groups. I do not think that anyone in this House would support the ad as produced. It was very unfortunate and it did not go through the correct procedures.

Mr Atkinson: It was offensive.

The Hon. R.G. KERIN: It was offensive and I personally found it offensive, so I can imagine how the RSL and the Jewish community felt.

Mr Foley interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order, the member for Hart!

The Hon. R.G. KERIN: On behalf of everyone, for any hurt to them, I would apologise. I found out about this issue first thing on Saturday morning and things were put in train to fix it. It is important to know that the ad never went to air. On Sunday, a new ad was produced, and that was run through the correct systems on Sunday afternoon and it appeared Sunday night. For those who took offence at the ad, as many did, I apologise for the fact that happened, but it did not go through the correct processes and it has been made absolutely clear to the people involved that, from now on, it is to go through the correct processes. In response to the other question that was asked, I know that the cost was minimal. I do not know whether the company made the advertisement absolutely gratis, but it was very cheap.

TAFE SCHOLARSHIPS

Mr WILLIAMS (MacKillop): Will the Minister for Education and Children's Services advise the House on the establishment of scholarships that will become available for South Australian TAFE students participating in information technology courses delivered by the internationally recognised Carnegie Mellon University?

The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY (Minister for Education and Children's Services): There is no doubt that our TAFE institutes in South Australia are moving from strength to strength. Last week, I indicated to the House the employment record of our TAFE graduates and employer satisfaction with them. Today, I am happy to inform the House that our TAFE institutes have gained yet further recognition—in fact, international recognition—through the establishment of new information technology courses at the Adelaide Institute of TAFE. These courses will be delivered in conjunction with Pennsylvania's world-renowned Carnegie Mellon University, which I am sure the member for Adelaide is extremely happy to support.

The Carnegie Mellon University ranks first—I repeat: first—in the United States in software engineering. So, that university coming to South Australia and delivering a course in both software engineering and computer technology at our Adelaide Institute of TAFE is a huge recognition of the quality of teaching that we provide. Up to 300 students will be targeted to gain dual accreditation from both Carnegie

Mellon and Adelaide TAFE. With such impressive qualifications they will undoubtedly be sought after by employers in the information technology field.

The opposition speaks about 'building a bridge of opportunity'. That bridge has already been built by this government. This is beyond the understanding of the opposition because we are bridging the IT gap, and our TAFE students will be the users and the winners. To ensure that there are no obstacles to this bridge, the government is prepared to commit up to \$1.8 million—I repeat: \$1.8 million—over three years to this scheme. I am sure that, at this point, the whingeing, whining opposition will come in and say that we are going to train these young people and that they will leave our state.

Mr Clarke interjecting:

The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY: On cue, the member for Ross Smith comes in. I assure the member for Ross Smith and the member for Lee that our young graduates will not leave this state because one of the conditions of acceptance of a scholarship is that, once they have completed their qualifications, they are required to work in South Australia for a minimum of 12 months. South Australians will be trained to internationally accredited and recognised skill levels here in South Australia, and they will stay here to use those talents that they have developed.

This ties in with the SSABSA curriculum framework which will become operational in our schools next year. Under this framework, at year 10 level every student will attain a certificate 1 in information and communication technology and, when they go on to years 11 and 12, they will be able to continue on to certificates 2 and 3 and be well prepared to enter the IT field and apply for a TAFE scholarship. It further backs up the fact that this government has spent \$75 million over the past five years on DECStech 2001, and committed in this year's budget a further \$75 million over the next five years for e-education to ensure that our young people are IT smart.

The Hon. R.L. Brokenshire interjecting:

The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY: The member for Mawson has just asked how much the Labor government spent in its last years of government, 1991, 1992 and 1993, and that is a very good question from the member for Mawson. It spent \$300 000 in its last year. Can you believe that? Just \$300 000! Here we have the would be Premier wanting to be the education Premier, yet Labor's last commitment towards education and information technology was just \$300 000. This government has shown that it has the mettle—

The Hon. M.K. Brindal interjecting:

The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY: \$300 000! Can you believe that?

The Hon. M.K. Brindal interjecting:

The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY: I know; the member for Unley needs a glass of water because he just cannot believe that it was \$300 000. This government—

The Hon. M.H. Armitage interjecting:

The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY: Only \$300 000. This government over 10 years will have committed \$150 million on information technology. That is ensuring that our young people are well trained when they go out into the community, because we all know that it does not matter what job you take up in the community these days, whether it be farming or as a shop assistant, engineering, electronics, or in hospitality: just about every job requires information technology knowledge. Those young people who move out will be going into a job that requires a computer at their fingertips. It is

imperative that our young people are well trained in that respect to make them job ready for the future.

This is an excellent policy. It is delivering scholarships to these young people so that they can go out into the work force and be very highly trained software engineers or trained in software development. It is being delivered by a university, in association with Adelaide Institute of TAFE, which is world renowned and recognised in the United States as being the best university for delivering information technology. It is a statement on the quality of Adelaide Institute of TAFE lecturers and the management of Adelaide Institute of TAFE that they have been picked out for this course to be offered. I congratulate those concerned, including the lecturers at Adelaide Institute of TAFE, on what I am sure will be an extremely successful program.

STEGGLES

Ms HURLEY (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): My question is directed to the Premier. Given the claims that the Steggles poultry company intends to close down production of chickens by around May next year at the cost of about 120 jobs, what action has the government taken to keep this operation going and to save these jobs? The opposition understands that the Premier met with representatives of the Steggles company earlier today.

The Hon. R.G. KERIN (Premier): I thank the deputy leader for an important question. There is no doubt that within the Australian chicken market Steggles is a major processor. I did meet with Steggles management this morning. Unfortunately, Steggles is operating in old premises here, and over a period it has kept its operations going, but its viability has been somewhat in question. I understand where the company is coming from. The company is in a position whereby its operation is not profitable here. It is a very competitive industry, and this company has found that even though over the past couple of years it has spent money on the premises, it still cannot get them to a viable level.

At the same time, it has excess capacity in the eastern states with more modern facilities, and the company has made the decision to close the processing part of its premises here in about May next year. Unfortunately, we have talked to the Steggles company. If it is going to upgrade premises, we would like it to do it here, and we have made that absolutely clear to it. It is a credit to the company that at least it is going out and telling the staff today and giving them seven months, or whatever, so they can plan for future. One good thing is that last year in the food industry in South Australia we saw well over 3 000 additional jobs. The wine industry just north of Steggles is growing at an enormous rate. At least Steggles has given its staff a warning of about seven months. Not only will these people receive redundancies but Steggles is willing to assist with Job Search.

From that side of it, Steggles is doing the right thing. It is unfortunate to lose it. Hopefully at some stage we will see it back bigger and better. At present, it is a very competitive industry. Steggles is not viable here. There is excess capacity in the Eastern States and there are far more modern factories. On the other issue of the flow-on effect of that back to contract growers, Steggles assures me that there is capacity for those contract growers to be picked up by the processors, so there should not be a lot of flow back from it. It is unfortunate. I must say that I appreciate the fact that Steggles has been totally up front. It does care about its workers; it has made that absolutely clear. I thank it not only for informing

us but also for the fact that it will give its workers a good length of time and help them to find other jobs. As members would know, that does not always happen when factories close.

OUTBACK AREAS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TRUST

The Hon. G.M. GUNN (Stuart): Will the Minister for Local Government outline to the House what the government is doing to improve services and opportunities in the Outback of South Australia?

The Hon. D.C. KOTZ (Minister for Local Government): I recognise the honourable member's interest in the area of the Outback, as with several of our members in this Assembly. The government recognises the increasing importance of the contribution of the Outback areas to the economic and social development of our state, and we are certainly particularly proud of the work being undertaken by the Outback Areas Community Development Trust in supporting Outback communities in their continual development. Last year the government adopted a new direction for the trust which focuses on adopting a more strategic approach to service provision, together with an enhanced role in the coordination of service delivery by government agencies to Outback communities. Of course, the trust's operations were given a major boost in this year's state budget, when the government committed an additional \$100 000 for the maintenance of facilities in Outback areas, raising the state commitment to some \$130 000 in the 2001-02 year.

The additional funds have enabled the trust to maintain these facilities for tourists and to secure service improvements to Outback communities. Indeed, the trust maintains at present some 18 government owned public facilities in areas such as Andamooka, Blinman, Glendambo and Lyndhurst. The government is also committed to an upgrade of regional visitor information centres across the state in addition to infrastructure projects, which include the Head of the Bight, which is part of the newly proclaimed Great Australian Bight Marine Park on the Eyre Peninsula. The Outback infrastructure project has also been boosted by an amount of some \$6.7 million over three years. Of course, this is in a bid to improve the unique Outback experience that visitors have, and to ensure that regions become a must see destination for international travellers.

In addition, the federal government announced earlier this year that it had accepted our state's submission that would commit some \$4 million over four years in Roads to Recovery funding for South Australia's unincorporated areas. This is a first in the matter of funding being released into these areas, and acknowledging that we do have very large expanses of remote areas that are classed as unincorporated and, therefore, do not have any local government as such. In this instance, of course, the Outback Areas Community Development Trust fills that role, so it was very pleasing to see that area recognised with extra funding for the roads. In fact, funding has already seen roadworks totalling some \$530 000 commence in Oodnadatta, Copley and Andamooka.

Recently, I had the opportunity to attend a trust meeting in Port Augusta. I am also very pleased to be able to provide the House with an update of some of the latest projects that have been implemented by the trust in that area. One of the one major projects undertaken by the trust is the development of community plans for some 17 outback communities. The trust, together with the Northern Regional Development

Board and a private consultant, has been facilitating workshops and planning processes with a number of communities. So far some eight community plans have been completed: four are in progress and five will be commencing shortly. The importance of these plans should not be understated. Developing and understanding planning techniques enables communities to properly and appropriately identify the priority needs for the future improvements of their local communities.

The trust has also advertised for the position of a community development officer who will be based at Port Augusta. The officer will facilitate and assist in the development and the implementation of community plans. He will also look to undertake specific community development programs and develop and implement strategies to improve community infrastructure in outback areas. The trust has also written to all outback communities offering to manage arrangements for insuring community assets, public liability and personal accident insurance. This is a policy that has been negotiated through the Local Government Risk Management Group, and the trust will offer to partly subsidise the insurance premium.

Another initiative of the trust will be to offer all outback communities an accounting computer package free of charge. The benefits of this package will include having communities utilising similar accounting formats and, of course, this will look to reduce the cost of auditors' fees in this area.

Members will also recall that the Pastoral Board will be collocating with the trust and the Arid Areas Water Catchment Management Board in mid November at the trust office in Grenfell Street. This is in addition to planning for an Outback SA office at Port Augusta, and I am advised that this is, in fact, well under way.

The Outback Areas Community Development Trust has certainly earned the confidence and the support of the communities in the outback areas of our state. The government's focus on improving conditions for those communities and for providing greater economic opportunities for employment and growth will continue, as I am sure this House will recognise, and so will the good work of the trust.

GRIEVANCE DEBATE

Ms THOMPSON (Reynell): I want to speak today about the issue of getting our youth into university. I do not mean those youths from the eastern suburbs, because they are quite well at getting into university; I mean those youths from the southern and northern suburbs who are having a lot of difficulty getting into university.

Ms Key interjecting:

Ms THOMPSON: I understand that the western suburbs are doing reasonably okay, member for Hanson and future member for Ashford, from the figures that I have. As the member for Hanson will recognise, I am most expert on the issue of the southern suburbs, and the issue there translates somewhat similarly to the northern suburbs.

The reason I am talking about it today is twofold: I know that applications for admission to university have just closed, but it is now the time when younger students are starting to think about what subjects they will be doing next year and

how their choice of subjects might fit into their career plans. It is really important at this time that there be an initiative through the Education Department to remind all teachers—not just counsellors and career guidance teachers—about the importance of making it easier for all students to get to university.

Another reason for doing it now is as an acknowledgment of the valuable work undertaken by so many parliamentary interns, many of whom would at this very minute be struggling to get their reports together before the end of the year. The work on which I will be basing my comments was undertaken by a parliamentary intern, Eleanor Marsh, two years ago. It is an extraordinarily comprehensive look, from a young person's perspective, of how we can get young people, who have not had much experience of what it means to go to university, into universities. I thoroughly recommend her report entitled 'The value of higher education: risks and opportunities for residents of Reynell', which is available through the library and which provides about 30 recommendations that can help schools to get their young people into university.

There are many reasons why I am passionate about this topic: one is that I have had the benefit of escaping poverty through studying at university, and I want others to be able to do the same thing. I have figures which show that the labour force participation rate in the south is very much lower than in all other areas of Adelaide: it is only 58.4 per cent. I contrast this with information about the high rates of participation of people who have gone to university.

A Department of Employment, Training and Youth Affairs study shows that those who have gone to university have fewer periods of unemployment, higher wages, more stable jobs, and generally more satisfying life opportunity. They have those as a benefit over studying at TAFE. While in my area there are only about one-third as many university qualified people as in the Adelaide statistical area, there are many TAFE qualified people. We certainly need people with TAFE qualifications, but we also need all people to have the opportunity to get university qualifications, if they have the abilities. This will give them a chance of about 10 per cent higher earnings than if they study at TAFE. So, they need to be supported to make those choices.

The sorts of strategies suggested, as a result of Eleanor's study, are very practical and involve parents as well as students. Teachers, who have been to university and see it as part of a quite normal lifestyle, have to recognise that so many people in the community do not actually understand what going to university means. They see it as an awful lot of hard work and very expensive, and they do not really know what happens at the end. When you do not have some understanding of the benefits of undertaking hard work and high expenditure, it is very easy to be put off by some of the negative stories. Eleanor found that the feeling of 'I know someone who went to university and still hasn't got a job' is something that engenders great fear in people who do not have that confidence in what it means to go to university.

Time expired.

The Hon. G.M. GUNN (Stuart): The matters which I have raised over the last few weeks in this House and on which I have sought some clarification—

Ms Key interjecting:

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: Well, the honourable member should be patient. I sought clarification from the shadow treasurer and the leader in relation to their priorities if they

were ever fortunate enough to be elected to government. I think it is important that we have a debate on priorities, because the member for Hart, as the shadow treasurer, put down a position in this House and agreed that this government had the total budget take about right, as well as the forward estimates. However, he said that the opposition will change the priorities. I want to know where they stand—and so do the people in regional and rural South Australia who, for once in their lives, have been given a fair and reasonable allocation of funds. It is not as much as they need or deserve but it is a fair and reasonable allocation, particularly when one considers that we have the Year of the Outback, when a massive number of overseas tourists will bring benefits to South Australia. I want to know where the opposition stands in relation to the current program to improve public infrastructure to assist private enterprise to provide very important facilities for the greatly expanding tourist industry. These questions need to be answered.

Where do they stand on all those other issues, including the improvement in rural arterial road funding and other road funding projects which have drastically improved the road system in rural South Australia? Are they the areas that will be cut back? Yesterday they admitted the government was right in relation to ensuring adequate emergency services across South Australia. After all their Fred Astaire activity, they admitted that we have got it right. I want to know clearly, because the people of South Australia, if they are to make an informed decision on these important matters, are entitled to know.

There has never been more money spent on improving public health infrastructure in generations. Will they cut back on that? What will they do in relation to assisting people to remain in rural areas, for example, assistance by way of stamp duty concessions? These are important issues on which we want answers, and we will pursue such issues across the length and breadth of this state until we get those answers. Opposition members will not be able to hide or pretend they do not know. It is no good their going around talking nonsense as they do. There are a range of issues, including the positive initiatives of this government with the freeholding of shacks, the freeholding of land and lower WorkCover premiums for employees. Where do they stand on lower WorkCover premiums?

Ms Rankine interjecting:

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: We hear the honourable member bleating along. They did nothing, absolutely nothing. We recall the years of inaction of the Bannon government, the inaction of ministers who never overruled a public servant in their life. They did whatever was suggested to them. They filled up the departments and boards with anti-farmers and with the radical elements of the conservation movement who today are sitting in Labor Party offices getting ready to try to inflict upon the people of this state all sorts of irrational policies. I say to the honourable member—

Ms Rankine interjecting:

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: At the time of the last federal election, Mr Beazley wanted to put taxes on four-wheel drive vehicles and a capital gains tax on homes. We have not heard anything about that recently. Does he still have that policy in his back pocket? Is he looking over the shoulder of those people with four-wheel drive vehicles who spend their money in rural and regional Australia? Does he still want to tax them? He has not said so. I would suggest to the member who interjected that she read this week's *Business Review Weekly*, which I recommend to her—

Ms Rankine interjecting:

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: Whether or not the honourable member understands it is another matter, but I suggest she read it and she might have some hope—

Time expired.

Ms RANKINE (Wright): The minister may have missed page 2 of today's *Advertiser*, but I would suggest that it is absolutely riveting reading, and I would also refer the member for Stuart to page 2 and the comments of Mr Scott, who says very clearly that people in this state get a better deal under Labor. It is time you lot went. He also mentioned the Independents and gave them a bit of a serve. He said that they should have shown some courage and got rid of this government, which cannot govern the state.

The Hon. M.K. Brindal interjecting:

Ms RANKINE: We did not have to promise him anything. He is right in the thick of the Liberal Party. He knows how you operate and even he has had enough. I hate to think what the poor old constituent is feeling—totally disenfranchised, well and truly ready for an election. The *Leader Messenger* is out today. As members would know, I have addressed this House on a number of occasions about the Tea Tree Gully council's decision not to proceed with the district sports field at Golden Grove.

I refer to the front page of today's *Leader Messenger* and the headline 'Sport clubs' bitter loss'. Further on in the paper is another article entitled 'Uncertainty over footy club's future'. Page 1 is about Golden Grove Little Athletics Club and its disgust at learning of the huge profits that the Tea Tree Gully council made in a deal with a joint venture to develop some land. The council received over \$2 million, which was supposed to be earmarked for the development of the district sports field. Of course, we know the council claims that it is too costly and that it does not have the money—

The Hon. R.L. Brokenshire: Are you attacking your council?

Ms RANKINE: Absolutely.

The Hon. R.L. Brokenshire: You are upset with your council.

Ms RANKINE: Absolutely, and so are the residents. The residents are upset; the sports clubs are upset. We are angry—and I think your minister is a touch cranky as well—because this council consistently fails to honour its obligations to that community. The article concerning Golden Grove Little Athletics and also the Golden Grove Bowling Club states:

A chorus of sports clubs is feeling 'let down, betrayed and, most of all, forgotten by the Gully Council.

The Secretary of the Golden Grove Bowling Club is reported as saying:

Many older people have found that after being encouraged to retire in the area there are no active sporting facilities catering for the older residents—

The Hon. R.L. BROKENSHERE: Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I could not quite hear whether the honourable member said that she wanted the Tea Tree Gully council sacked.

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

Ms RANKINE: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. I have no intention of responding to interjections, because clearly that is against the standing orders of this House, and I am surprised the minister does not know that.

The Hon. M.K. Brindal interjecting:

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order!

Ms RANKINE: Your candidate for Wright is on the Tea Tree Gully council and he is one of the people who failed to turn up when the council voted on the district sports field. Let me just say—

The Hon. M.K. Brindal interjecting:

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order!

Ms RANKINE: I read a very good comment in the *Australian* today stating, 'This country is governed by those people who turn up.' I am prepared to turn up and stand up for my community—

The Hon. M.K. Brindal interjecting:

Ms RANKINE: I am; I am totally out of order—and isn't the honourable member sorry that he asked? Anger is building in the community because the message is getting out. Information has come from the joint venture and certainly from the Minister for Administrative Services that they are not happy with the actions of this council and with the fact that it is letting down this community and not honouring its obligations. In fact, the Chairperson of the SA Amateur Football League said:

For people that play football in that area you'd think they'd have a ground similar to what the environment is around their homes—they've virtually got nothing.

That is an absolute disgrace. What we get is a deafening silence from the council. The only person who responded is the City Future Manager, Mr Chandler. He expresses some surprise that suddenly the sporting clubs are finding out what this council has been up to and they are getting very angry about it. How has the council responded? It has commissioned a survey of 400 residents out of all Golden Grove. It is claiming that 51 per cent preferred a recreation park as opposed to 46 per cent preferring a sports field development. The council is claiming that this justifies its actions when 46 per cent of 400 residents are saying, 'We want a district sports field.'

Time expired.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON (Heysen): Just over 12 months ago in this House I raised my concern about what was happening with some legitimate burial sites in South Australia. I raise this issue again, and I do so because it is a matter which has been brought to my attention by constituents and which, I believe, is felt very keenly in the community. Last year in a grievance debate, I asked the then minister what safeguards were currently in place and what plans the minister had to ensure that legitimate burial sites in South Australia are preserved.

I pointed out at that stage, as I do now, that this is an important issue. It has certainly come to my notice that this matter is becoming more and more a matter of concern in the community. Again I make that point because of the response I have received from the electorate and also as a result of the number of media reports that we have seen on this issue in recent times.

Most of those media reports refer to what people see as vandalism occurring following the so-called remodelling of cemeteries and the upgrading of leases which, in the opinion of many people—and, certainly, in my opinion—result in valuable records and historical icons being destroyed, not to mention the significant emotional concerns which are felt by family and friends of the deceased. I realise that this is a concern more for metropolitan constituents, because it does not happen so much in country areas because there is room

out there for more burials to occur. But, more and more, in the metropolitan area, we see the so-called remodelling of cemeteries where, under certain circumstances, bodies are buried on top of previous burials and, in some cases, as a result of the remodelling of the cemeteries, human remains have been brought to the surface.

As I said when I spoke on this matter before, we are all aware of the importance that the Aboriginal community places on its sacred sites and on its burial grounds. I believe that the same thing should apply to other Australians. I note that the Aboriginal sites are valuable as important historical records and they are important for future generations. That is also the case for Europeans who are buried in cemeteries. Of course, emotional concerns are involved. I could refer, as I said earlier, to a number of media reports, but I want to refer to only one, which was in the *Advertiser* some time ago now, which referred to human remains finishing up in a dump. That article referred to human remains, including several skulls and a bag of bones, that had been dug up at the Payneham cemetery being discarded at Wingfield Dump.

As a result of my raising the matter earlier, the previous minister for local government and the current minister have come back to me and they indicate that there are differing views in the community on the question of reuse. Some people consider that, once buried, the mortal remains of a person should be allowed to rest in peace forever. I happen to be one of those people. I think it is something that we need to look at very carefully. I urge the minister to give this matter further consideration. It may even be a matter of encouraging cremation more than has been the case in the past, to ensure that cemeteries remain intact, because I believe it is an important issue as far as the community is concerned.

Time expired.

Mr CLARKE (Ross Smith): The issue I want to speak about briefly this afternoon is my concern and disappointment at the response I recently obtained from the Minister for Education in response to a letter that I had forwarded to him. The issue that I originally raised with the minister dealt with the department's decision—and his decision, in particular—to have certain state schools cancel their proposed visits to Europe not long after the terrible events in New York which occurred on 11 September. A number of students at schools controlled by the Catholic Education Office, such as Mary MacKillop, similarly had visits to Italy cancelled, with the school in that particular instance acting on advice received from the Minister for Education.

The Minister for Education is accurate in his reply to me that he has no jurisdiction over the Catholic Education Office but, nonetheless, what is not disputed is that the Catholic Education Office acted following discussions that they had with his office regarding the justifications for his cancelling visits by state schools to Europe at that uncertain time. I appreciate that the minister was acting in the best interests of the students and staff when he gave that directive. Unfortunately, of course, it is not as simple as that, and many people face tremendous financial losses in terms of cancellations of their airfares, accommodation and the like.

In terms of my constituent who was involved and the Mary MacKillop school, a grandmother, a daughter and a granddaughter were going to Italy at a cost of nearly \$12 000. I was not being critical of what the minister did, but I wanted his department to work with the state schools, the private schools, the insurance companies concerned and the airlines

concerned to see whether or not the financial damage done to those parents and students could be minimised, if not avoided totally. The cancellations with respect to Mary MacKillop took place at roughly 5 o'clock on the Saturday afternoon and they were due to leave Adelaide Airport at 11 a.m. the next day, the Sunday. The constituent I refer to lived in Blair Athol and finally undertook that visit, in any event, at a significant cost. While they did not lose the airfare, because they went on a different date, they lost their accommodation in Italy.

I want the government and the minister to sit down with the parents and the schools to see whether or not, by using the good offices of the Minister for Education, we might be able to work our way through with respect to travel insurance, because it is by no means clear that the insurance company covering travel insurance is legally liable. I do not pretend to say whether it is or not. There are general exclusions under the policy of acts of war and things of that nature, but whether that includes fear of possible terrorist attacks is unclear. It relates mainly to whether you are forced to cancel certain travel arrangements, such as because the flight does not take off.

The plane was ready and able to fly to its destination at the appointed time—and, I might say, following a route that would have avoided the Middle East by flying over Thailand, Kazakhstan, Russia and parts of China into Europe to avoid any possibility of flying over potentially hostile air space. I do not think it is good enough for the minister, having initiated this cancellation—for the best of reasons, as I have acknowledged—to simply walk away from his responsibility to those parents and students, many of whom worked very hard over the previous 12 twelve months and scrimped and saved to raise the \$4 000. I want to revisit that issue with the minister.

Time expired.

Mr MEIER (Goyder): Yesterday, I highlighted how the federal government has turned around Australia's economy in the way that the South Australian government has changed this state's economy. Today I want to proceed further along the line relating to Australia's economy and take members back to 1996 and some of the achievements that have occurred since then as a result of the Howard government. Members might recall that back in 1996 was the first round of interest rate cuts, and they might be aware that we now have some of the lowest interest rates that this country has experienced. In 1996 an extra \$81 million was provided for drought relief to extend support for another twelve months. In addition, \$150 million was provided for the reinstated Black Spots Road Program. Also, a new \$87 million Roads of National Importance Program was introduced, so roads were already becoming a key priority of the federal government when it took office in 1996.

In 1997, the first of \$14 billion was paid off Labor's \$96 billion debt. Work for the dole was introduced. Further, \$250 million over five years for telecommunications in regional and remote Australia was provided, and I think it is well worth remembering that that \$250 million would not have been provided if things had not changed in the telecommunications industry.

We had further interest rate cuts in 1997. Pensions were linked to 25 per cent of male total weekly earnings rather than the CPI, which had always been the case under Labor governments, and I find it incredible that Labor has the audacity to occasionally imply that senior people are not

getting a fair deal under this government. That is totally wrong.

The Hon. R.L. Brokenshire: Hypocrites.

Mr MEIER: Hypocrites, as my colleague said. In 1997, the Natural Heritage Trust commenced with \$1.25 billion for local environmental projects, and I would say that everyone, whether a person has traditionally been a Democrat voter, a Greens voter or a conservationist, would acknowledge that more has been done for our environment under the Howard Liberal government than ever before, and will continue to be done, and I think all young people would recognise that. Perhaps 20 years ago the Liberal Party was not recognised as being a leader in environmental projects, but today it is, and the record shows it.

In 1997, the Prime Minister committed \$87.5 million to the first instalment of the Tough on Drugs strategy, and that program has continued. Again, the family tax initiative lifted the tax free threshold to assist up to 2 million families with children. Lower taxes have always been part of Liberal philosophy. In 1998, the budget returned to surplus, a turnaround of over \$13 billion. Just imagine what we could have done with that.

The Hon. R.L. Brokenshire: A great Prime Minister.

Mr MEIER: Indeed, a great Prime Minister. In 1998, there was funding for an additional 200 Medicare Easy Claim outlets, and I was present when one or two of them were opened in my electorate. An additional 50 000 veterans received Gold Card benefits in 1998 and Australia survived the Asian economic crisis, recording growth of over 5 per cent—truly a remarkable effort.

In 1999, a 30 per cent rebate on private health insurance was introduced. Thank goodness that was brought in. In addition, \$221 million was provided to expand the Tough on Drugs strategy, providing a greater emphasis on being tough on drugs. In 1999, the first rural transaction centre was opened in New South Wales, and we have since seen many of those open throughout the country. Australia's unemployment rate fell below 7 per cent for the first time in 10 years—again, great credit to the federal government.

In 2000, a cut of \$12 billion in personal income tax occurred, and that was the largest income tax cut in Australia's history. A sum of \$562 million was put into a regional health strategy for more doctors and better services. The company tax rate was reduced to 34 per cent and capital gains tax was halved. I should mention that the company tax rate has now gone down to 30 per cent in 2001. A \$7 000 first home owner grant was introduced and there was funding to support more than 14 000 new aged care places. There was an extra \$353 million for the Agriculture, Advancing Australia package. Further, \$1.2 billion was provided to local councils under the Roads to Recovery Program. It has been one success after another. No wonder Australia is envied by the rest of the world.

Time expired.

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE: PORT PIRIE WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT

Mr WILLIAMS (MacKillop): I bring up the 160th report of the committee, on the Port Pirie Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade—Final Report, and move:

That the report be received.

Motion carried.

The Hon. R.L. BROKENSHIRE (Minister for Police, Correctional Services and Emergency Services): I move:

That the report be published.

Motion carried.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON GROUNDWATER RESOURCES IN THE SOUTH-EAST

The Hon. R.L. BROKENSHIRE (Minister for Police, Correctional Services and Emergency Services): I move:

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

Motion carried.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCE COMMITTEE: SOUTH AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT OVERSEAS OFFICES

The Hon. G.M. GUNN (Stuart): I move:

That the 35th report of the committee, on South Australian Government Overseas Offices, be noted.

Mr Clarke: Only 35 reports in four years.

THE ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Venning): Order! The member for Ross Smith is out of order and is interjecting out of his seat, as well.

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: You get quality, not quantity, in relation to the Economic and Finance Committee.

Mr Hanna: It is the other way around with your grievances.

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: The honourable member should never look in a mirror.

Mr Hanna: It is bad enough looking straight across at you.

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: The honourable member, as usual, has distinguished himself, but he wants to enjoy himself because he will not be here much longer. After those distractions, I will proceed in a responsible manner.

South Australia is a vibrant state with a great deal to offer the rest of the world in terms of lifestyle, business climate and environment. However, South Australia faces unique challenges when competing in world markets. The primary challenge for a state such as ours is how we alert the rest of the world to the benefits that our state has to offer. The economic objectives of the state—growth and prosperity—are realised at the highest level in the form of higher incomes and the creation of jobs.

The state is pursuing every opportunity for growth, and one element of the strategy is the state's network of overseas offices. There are 25 overseas offices operated by six different South Australian government agencies, namely, the Department of Industry and Trade, SA Tourism Commission, Education Adelaide, Department of Primary Industries and Resources SA in association with Food Adelaide, the Department of Premier and Cabinet, and SA Water.

The offices represent a substantial investment of financial resources and are a key element of the state's economic strategy. Given this, the committee of its own volition examined the operations of these offices to try to ascertain what kind of value for money they represented. The committee sought submissions from a broad range of interested parties in order to understand the operations of overseas offices. The committee also sought information from interstate jurisdictions regarding their overseas representation.

In general, the committee was satisfied that our overseas offices were broadly meeting the objectives and, therefore, the economic needs of the state. However, there were several aspects of their operations that the committee felt warranted comment. The committee noted that overseas offices have generally been established by individual agencies to meet a specific need. There is no overarching whole-of-government policy framework to govern their operations. The result is that six separate bureaucracies operate 25 offices, and coordination between departments occurs on an ad hoc or as needs basis only. While the committee has made recommendations that would address this problem, it is loath to see another layer of bureaucracy on top of existing structures and is strongly of the view that efficiencies should be made in this area.

There is some difficulty measuring the effectiveness of overseas office operations. Benchmarking performance is difficult because outcomes generated are often outside the direct control of the offices. The committee recommended that performance measures be amended to place more emphasis on the activities of the offices rather than their direct outcomes.

The committee also considered overseas activities of SA Water Corporation. There was concern that ventures in West Java and other parts of Asia did not have adequate guarantees of a commercial return for a government entity. On the basis of the evidence received, the committee concluded that more stringent controls should be placed on overseas investment decisions taken by the corporation.

This report, the committee's 35th, concludes a detailed inquiry spanning more than 12 months. On behalf of the committee I thank all those who have participated in the inquiry—in particular, the witnesses and the people who provided submissions and other information. I also thank the members of the committee for their contributions and particularly the staff of the committee for all their hard work, investigations and organisation. I believe that this is a constructive document, and I recommend it for the perusal of all members of parliament.

In conclusion, I say that, on a number of occasions, I have had the pleasure of being involved with the Agent-General's Office in London. In my view, this office provides outstanding service to South Australians. It is vitally important to the operations of the South Australian government and the people of South Australia.

The Hon. R.L. Brokenshire interjecting:

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: I certainly have. It has a strong historic link, and you, Mr Acting Speaker, have also benefited from the services of this excellent organisation. I believe that the people of South Australia are being well served by the Agent-General's Office and its staff, and I particularly want to thank the current Agent-General for the work that he does on behalf of the people of South Australia.

The Hon. R.B. SUCH (Fisher): I would like to endorse the remarks of the member for Stuart, the Presiding Member of the Economic and Finance Committee. This report, along with other reports produced by the committee, demonstrates the value of the Economic and Finance Committee. It is often referred to in the media as a powerful committee. Whether or not that is correct, the reality is that it does act as a watchdog to ensure that there is proper accountability for expenditure by government agencies.

As the member for Stuart pointed out, the state government currently spends about \$17 million per annum on

overseas offices—a significant amount of money. Unfortunately, the committee (under self-imposed discipline) was not able to visit our overseas offices. So, obviously, our comments are qualified in the sense that we could not visit these offices at first hand, and therefore—

An honourable member: Shame!

The Hon. R.B. SUCH: Yes, it was shameful—we had to rely on evidence from others. Nevertheless, the committee came to the conclusion that the money expended by the state government seems to be worth while. We were unable to make any judgment in relation to the activities of Education Adelaide, but the committee will look at that particular organisation in the very near future.

The member for Stuart mentioned some of the recommendations, which can be found on page 59 of the report. The first recommendation is that there be an overarching policy framework relating to all overseas operations. I think this makes a lot of sense. If you have overseas offices, there needs to be some overall policy framework so that they do not do their own thing independently of a wider and consistent strategy.

The second recommendation relates to having clearly defined targets and identified inputs and outputs. There is always a danger that, unless you do that and have some sort of a measure, you do not know whether you are getting value for money. The third recommendation is that the responsible minister look at the possibility of creating an office of overseas representation to manage all overseas offices—although the committee was concerned that this not lead to unnecessary bureaucratic overlap—as part of the coordination of overseas offices operated and funded by the state government.

Another recommendation is that, where possible, we should look at collocation with Austrade or similar bodies in the interests of South Australia, not just for the sake of it but if it is advantageous for South Australia to participate. It is further recommended that there be a central database providing information about the various projects and opportunities, monitoring office performance, maintaining a corporate knowledge base, and so on. I think that is very sensible and sound.

The committee also recommends that all costs of overseas operations be specifically disclosed and take into account costs incurred by Adelaide-based operations. Once again, if that information is not disclosed, it is impossible to make a judgment about whether or not you are getting value for money or the needs of the state are being served by not only overseas offices but any agency of government. The committee also recommends that agencies acknowledge in their annual report all staffing details and employment arrangements. This will enable bodies such as the committee and the government itself to be well aware of the detailed activities of these various offices, something which I strongly support.

The final recommendations relate to SA Water. The committee recommended that SA Water cease operations in the Indonesian province of West Java. The government has already acted on that recommendation. The final recommendation (a related recommendation) is that SA Water's charter be amended to preclude it from overseas operations unless it is on a fee-for-service or cost recovery basis carried out with the explicit approval and full knowledge of the responsible minister. I think those are appropriate safeguards. The committee does not want to see government agencies undertake risky entrepreneurial activities. Nevertheless, if the minister has been fully briefed on the activities and they are

set out clearly on a fee-for-service or cost recovery basis, the committee feels that there is a place for overseas activities by South Australian government agencies.

I commend the 35th report of the Economic and Finance Committee to the House. I believe that, as have other reports of the committee, it will help to improve government processes and operations both inside and outside South Australia.

Mr CLARKE (Ross Smith): I want to comment briefly with respect to these overseas offices. I have had some involvement with them, but not with the London office of the Agent-General. Just over 12 months ago, when I visited Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam and Hong Kong, I had some first-hand dealings with our trade and commercial offices. I used the Department of Industry and Trade's office here to arrange a number of appointments that I required in the commercial and particularly the educational area of those countries that I visited. I relied very much on the work done by the South Australian officers in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, in particular, for those arrangements to be made. I found that the work they did was very efficient. I did not give them much time to plan my itinerary, but they carried out my requests very well. I wrote to the CEO after my return to compliment his trade officers for the work that they did in the offices concerned.

I see that there is value—I am not saying that every office everywhere must stay immutable because circumstances will change over time—particularly in our trade offices in our near Asian neighbour countries. I think they will continue to perform a valuable role over a long period because, unfortunately, whether or not we like it, sometimes our state gets a bit lost in thinking that the world generally knows where we are when, of course, it does not. It is hard enough for it to find Australia on the radar let alone South Australia.

We still have a real problem amongst business people in Australia (South Australian business people included) who believe that they can trade and sign up deals with their counterparts in Asian nations simply by making one flying visit with perhaps an overnight stay to outline their plan of action and expect a deal to be signed, sealed and delivered then and there without having the patience, over time, to build up personal relationships so that not only will those contracts be entered into but they will be of longlasting benefit to both parties.

I think that we suffer somewhat in this state from a very poor media, particularly the *Adelaide Advertiser*. Of course, they are always wanting to jump and talk about squandering of money or junkets, or whatever else, whether with respect to politicians or business people, or whomever, when they travel overseas.

I am confining my comments to Asia because that is where I have visited over the past two years, and I am very much reminded of the comments by the former deputy prime minister of Australia, Tim Fischer, who when he became deputy prime minister and minister for trade said something along the lines that, when he was the opposition spokesperson for trade, he spent much of his time in Asia developing contacts, at both the political and business level. He said that he needed to do it on a personal basis, and he was quite critical of Australian businessmen who would not spend time building up those contacts into long-lasting relationships because they thought they could do it on the cheap by putting the contract in front of someone and expecting them to sign

on the dotted line without going through all the necessary preliminaries and ignoring the Asian values and cultures.

In part, we suffer in this state from having a myopic newspaper, a print media that feeds on that type of knee-jerk, crass type of behaviour because they believe it makes good copy and sells a few extra newspapers. Nothing I say here today will change their behaviour so long as it is owned by the Murdoch press and continues on its tabloid way. I think they do this state and all South Australians a disservice in being so myopic and blinkered in terms of the benefits that some of these trade visits can have. One of the things that struck me was how hard these officers have to work to bring Adelaide and South Australia to the attention of our potential trading partners in that part of the world. One has to be present there all the time, constantly reminding those business people and government officers in those countries that Adelaide and South Australia exist at all.

Those officers do a good job with very limited budgets, particularly when compared with some other states and the amount of money that is spent in some areas, and competing with us, for example, in terms of the number of overseas students to study as full fee paying students here in South Australia. We do very well in Malaysia, where something like 20 per cent of the Malaysian overseas students who come to Australia come to South Australia, for very good reasons, but we get a very poor number of Singaporean students—around 4 per cent when our average should be at least 8 per cent. Yet there are many good stories to be told here in South Australia in terms of safety of students, cheaper housing and cheaper cost of living overall for the overseas students who come here to study in Adelaide. Sometimes that story is not told, and it is not helped by some universities here in South Australia that do not take into account some of the needs of the overseas students and the way in which the education system works in that part of the world.

That is why we need trade offices in those places keeping us in South Australia regularly alert to what is going on in those countries, and at the same time to keep hammering home South Australia to these people. It is a long, drawn-out process. There is no miraculous discovery; there is no sudden cry of 'Eureka' so the whole world will know we exist. It is just one hard, constant grind. I think these offices perform a valuable function, but obviously they will be need to be kept always under regular review, and the needs and numbers of those offices will change from time to time depending on the markets we are chasing as opportunities emerge. I commend the report to the House.

Motion carried.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE: INQUIRY INTO BIOTECHNOLOGY

Mr SCALZI (Hartley): I move:

That the 14th report of the committee, on an inquiry into biotechnology—part 1—health, be noted.

The terms of reference for this inquiry, that the Social Development Committee 'investigate and make recommendations to the parliament in relation to the rapidly expanding area of biotechnology in the context of its likely social impact on South Australia', were referred to the committee on a motion of this House on 6 April 2000. The report being noted is the first of two reports that the committee will table for this inquiry.

There were many issues that the committee could have chosen to investigate for this inquiry. Recent advances made

possible by biotechnology touch each and every one of us. The biotechnology referred to in the terms of reference is that which is referred to as 'modern biotechnology,' that is, research-based activities and developments made possible since the structure of DNA was identified and, most particularly, gene technology.

Industry sectors using biotechnology include health, agriculture, forestry, mining, manufacturing and the chemical sector. During initial discussions with experts in the field, members of the committee agreed that focusing its investigation on the areas of health and food production would allow the committee to produce a report of immediate interest to South Australians as they touched their everyday lives. The report provides an overview of the current and potential applications of biotechnology in the area of health, regulatory processes in place to oversee research, ethical issues raised, the role of government in both monitoring and promoting biotechnology, and the market potential of biotechnology research.

The major focus of the committee was to provide members of parliament and the public with an overview of the most recent advances in the area and the major issues raised, and to arm them with some of the basic information needed to promote reasonable discussion and development of individual views. The committee made seven recommendations, as follows:

- The state government increase awareness about biotechnology via public education programs that provide concise, accurate, accessible and comprehensible information about the benefits and risks of biotechnology and its impact on the community.
- The state and federal governments continue to foster local biotechnology ventures by facilitating the establishment of start-up companies and creating an environment where such ventures can develop and progress.
- The state and federal governments provide seed funding for biotechnology research programs unlikely to attract commercial support in the first instance.
- The state and federal governments continue to support research programs in Public Service departments such as health, agriculture and fisheries to retain systematic and enduring expertise in science in general and biotechnology in particular.
- The state and federal governments give greater priority to promoting excellence in biotechnological research and teaching within the public health system.
- The state government consider the need to introduce legislation covering the use of embryos, stem cell research and reproductive technology and therapeutics in the context of biotechnology and genetic engineering.
- The state and federal government continue to ensure that appropriate risk management strategies be undertaken in regard to the application and potential consequences of gene technology.

Some of the issues raised included the need for the public to be provided accurate, unbiased information about what is and is not currently possible. This issue was raised by almost every witness to the inquiry, whether they supported or opposed biotechnology development. It was also put forward that public debate and consultation was essential. Lack of information was not an issue; indeed, it was considered that there was almost too much information. It was stated that there was a lack of general science education in schools which had contributed to the ease with which scare campaigns could be conducted; for example, fear of 'franken-

foods', and salmon genes in tomatoes which has not been done. That is the common misconception—that we will have fishy tomatoes. It was further held that there was a lack of tertiary-based education, particularly with regard to commercialisation of biotechnology research.

Intellectual property is an important issue as intellectual property is the end result of biotechnological research, and the arguments for and against were equally compelling. Intellectual property is viewed by biotechnology companies in a fashion similar to how they view all their other assets such as plant and equipment, and the issue raised in particular was patenting. In the health area much research surrounds genes and their functions. This has increased since the release of the 'book of life' first draft of the human genome. Once a gene and its function is discovered, the information derived from the gene is patented.

Many companies invest heavily in research and being able to patent the result is seen as the reward for taking a risk. Strictly speaking, it is the information and not the gene itself that is patented. However, it is viewed by many as the patenting of human life. It is also seen by some as restricting access to information and some treatments to those who can afford to pay. It is also viewed as inhibiting some research. It was also queried whether Australian compliance with international trade agreements in relation to patents is in Australia's financial interest.

What is the role of the government? Many witnesses stressed that there was an important role for the government to play in fostering biotechnological research. In particular, it was stated that governments needed to continue to fund excellence in research in public institutions, including public hospitals, education institutions and the public sector. Often the public institutions are where some of the innovative but not immediately commercially viable research is done. Governments foster the links between public research institutions and private enterprise in biotechnological companies.

Governments have an important role to play in overseeing the transfer of knowledge and ensuring that the financial rewards are shared equitably. Governments can also assist in ensuring that both the financial and social incentives are offered to attract the best minds from overseas and retain the best of Australia in our research institutions. We would all agree with that, if we are to be part of future industries.

There is evidence that South Australia is the world leader in some areas of research, but the challenge is to continue. The South Australian government established BioInnovation SA in early 2000. It also released a strategic plan for biotechnology development 'bright is the future' in June 2001, with \$12.5 million being provided over four years for the creation of a bioscience business incubator and commercialisation and pre-seed support initiatives. Members would agree that that is an important strategy, as many inventions of the past—although not in this area—have not been commercialised by Australians, even though it was Australians, and in particular South Australians, who were the initial inventors of such products; for example, the photocopying machine.

Ethical issues have been raised, particularly those associated with stem cell research and genetic testing. Stem cells research involves the use of human embryos in research. It is currently not allowed in South Australia's legislation, and frozen embryos are discarded after 10 years. Much cancer research is based on stem cell research. These moral issues are important to all of us, and I am sure that all members have

a view on these important life issues; for example, what do we do with the human embryos that are not used in research? Should we discard them or should they be used? It is a matter of dignity. I have difficulty with the use of human embryos for research. It is a vexing issue, and the committee did not attempt to answer this question but provided arguments on both sides. That is something with which parliament and governments have to come to terms. It should be considered carefully, because the ramifications could be great. We cannot deal with these issues as we would with other areas of research, because they involve life itself. These moral and ethical questions require more than just the normal depth of thinking that one would apply to other forms of research.

With regard to genetic testing, genetics determines our personal make-up—our height, build, skin colour and intelligence. It is permanent and can help tell what is likely to happen to us and, in some cases, what will happen to us. Predictive genetic testing can already tell us our likelihood of suffering certain diseases and with complete accuracy that we will suffer others; for example, Huntington's disease for which there is no cure and which is always fatal.

In some cases, genetic testing may allow lifestyle decisions to be made that may delay or reduce the severity of a disease. In others such as the Huntington's example it will simply tell that the disease will happen but not when. Genetic testing raises issues of privacy, confidentiality and consent. Some fear that such tests could become mandatory. Some fear a positive result that we may develop a disease or condition, or that we will, and that this could lead to discrimination in employment and an access to finance. No evidence has been received that this is the case, but it is an area for vigilance and monitoring of legislation to ensure that individual rights are protected. There is no use making advances if an individual's autonomy is threatened.

In conclusion, I will make some statements about positives of biotechnology in the health area. I refer to all the good that can come out of it for our health and economy; for example, in the future, therapeutics will be able to be more individually targeted. There is hope for a cure for Parkinson's disease in the near future, and there is the potential for a gene-related cure for breast cancer. There is the potential for South Australia to carve out and maintain lucrative niche markets that will be financially rewarding. That is the exciting area but some issues—particularly ethical issues—need to be monitored. While some witnesses thought that it was all moving too fast and not enough monitoring of testing for potential problems was being conducted, they almost all agreed that there was an enormous potential for good.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the witnesses, the Hansard reporters, the staff and the other members of the committee who contributed to making this such an important reference. This parliament needs to consider this matter and provide us with basic information about genetic modification. Everybody talks about this matter, but not everybody is informed to the level that they should be in order to make the appropriate decisions. There is potential for a lot of good to be derived from this research, and we will have to balance the future developments carefully. In the end, I believe much good could come out of the developments in this area.

The Hon. R.B. SUCH (Fisher): Members may recall that I moved the original reference to the Social Development Committee on 6 April last year. I have also had the privilege of serving on the committee as part of this inquiry into

biotechnology. As the member for Hartley pointed out, the committee split the reference into two aspects: the first one dealing with health, and the second dealing with food production. In this instance, we are focusing on the health report, otherwise known as part 1.

The timeliness of this report is evidenced in the fact that, before this House today, we have a significant bill relating to regulating activities involving gene technology, of which members would be well aware. This report and part 2, which is also to be noted shortly, are both very timely reports. I will outline some of the significant historical points in relation to biotechnology. I am not in any way suggesting that they are totally comprehensive; one could argue that, in effect, there have been elements of biotechnology from the time when humans were capable of making judgments and intervening in respect of nature, whether that be practices breeding animals or plants.

As a quick overview, if we go back to 7000 BC, when the Agrarian society developed, the Mesopotamians developed what has become today what we would call wheat and barley. It is interesting that you hear a lot of people saying that they are going to have a breakfast cereal of wheat. There is no naturally occurring grain that is wheat, yet we hear people talking about the merits or otherwise of organically grown wheat. Wheat is an artificial construct of humans.

In 4000 BC, there was a wonderful development in biotechnology. The Egyptians used yeast to make bread and wine. Anyone who is critical of biotechnology might bear in mind that innovation. In 1750 BC, the Sumerians brewed beer—another wonderful development—as a result of biotechnology. We can go on to 250 BC when the Greeks used crop rotation in terms of crop fertility. In 1500 AD, the Aztecs made cakes from a particular algae. In 1663, cells were first described by the scientist Hooke, and in 1910 AD (and this indicates how rapidly biotechnology has moved in the last century or so) genes were discovered on chromosomes.

In 1941, the term 'genetic engineering' was first used; in England in 1953, Watson and Crick identified the double helix structure of DNA. In 1969, which is not all that long ago, the first gene was isolated. In 1981, the gene synthesising machine was developed, and that has been accelerated now with advanced computerisation, which is making possible modern research. In 1983—and this is how recent a development this is—the first transgenic plant—a petunia resistant to a particular antibiotic—was created. In 1985, the first field tests took place of genetically engineered tobacco plants. In 1990, Chymosin, a cheese-making yeast, was the first genetically engineered product in the food category. In 1994, the first commercial approval occurred of a transgenic plant called Flavr-Savr tomato. In 1996 we had Dolly the Sheep cloned from an adult somatic cell, and we had Matilda in 2000. In 2001, the human genome was sequenced.

So, members can appreciate how recent and how rapidly developments have occurred in genetic technology, which was made possible, to a large extent, by computerisation, which has increased and accelerated the process.

The committee, with its limited resources, cannot look at every aspect of health. The member for Hartley touched on many of the key points. Technology—whether it be biotechnology or any other kind—has the potential to be used for good or not so good purposes; some might say bad or evil purposes. That stands as a general statement; so the challenge is to use the technology in ways that enhance and promote human welfare—enhance and strengthen the dignity of

humans, and not the contrary. It means that we as a society, and governments, need to focus on responsibility and accountability. Through biotechnology in the health area, we can get rid of some of the dreadful diseases that currently afflict humanity. The member for Hartley mentioned breast cancer.

A couple of years ago, I had the privilege of visiting many of the significant biotechnology research centres in the United States, where I was struck by the fact that in one centre women actually chained themselves to the steel posts in a car park. They were so desperate to get a new pharmaceutical product developed in order to save their lives that they were chaining themselves to the car park of the research laboratory. People will be increasingly dependent on biotechnology and the products it creates in order to save as well as enhance the quality of their lives.

Some cynics say, 'This is just a way of making money for pharmaceutical companies'—that they are interested in cure and treatment rather than prevention. I guess there may be an element in truth in that statement but, nevertheless, there is a great role for pharmaceuticals as part of this biotech revolution. I am sure, Mr Speaker, because of your professional background, that you would be well aware of the significance of and great advances in pharmaceuticals.

The member for Hartley mentioned the possibility of genetic discrimination. It is now technically possible, and will become increasingly so, to determine who will manifest various symptoms. I think the member for Hartley mentioned Huntington's disease, but it will be possible to predict quite accurately who will suffer from a whole range of diseases during their life. However, it is more important that measures are put in place to actually eradicate and deal with those diseases. We need to be aware that there is a potential for discrimination in areas such as life assurance and also insurance.

I do not have enough time to canvass the recommendations of the committee but, to my mind, they all make commonsense and encourage greater public education and awareness. Many of the debates that we hear are argued on the basis of ignorance and dwelling on fear of the unknown. It is important that people in our community have the information and knowledge to make rational and reasonable judgments based on fact and not on fear and fiction.

The issues relating to the use of stem cell research embryos are fundamental in terms of ensuring that we maintain the dignity of life. Governments and government agencies, in conjunction with universities and other research establishments in hospitals, will have the challenge in the very near future to make sure that we maintain and respect the dignity of human beings at all times. The committee looked at and suggested encouraging government support for local biotechnology ventures. We have some great biotech companies in South Australia, but we could do a lot more. For example, we could do a lot in relation to developing super computers—that is a very important area—and, likewise, expanding laser technology, which is playing a very significant role in biotech research, especially in the United States.

I commend this report to the House. We are at the beginning of a journey that I believe will bring great benefits to humanity if we use this technology in a sound and human-focused way.

Mrs GERAGHTY secured the adjournment of the debate.

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE: AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS SCHOOL

Adjourned debate on motion of Mr Lewis:

That the 158th report of the committee, on the Australian Science and Mathematics School—Final Report, be noted.

(Continued from 24 October. Page 2487.)

Mr WILLIAMS (MacKillop): I am pleased to support the report of the Public Works Committee into the proposed Australian Science and Mathematics School to be constructed on the campus of Flinders University in South Australia. In speaking briefly to this report, I put on the record some thoughts I have about education, and particularly education in maths and science, in our state. One of the problems that we have long had in South Australia, and indeed in the western world, is that our brightest young students as they go through their secondary schooling and look at career paths often are persuaded to take up a career option based on either its potential glamour or potential remuneration.

This is a fantastic initiative that has been taken by the government of South Australia through the Department for Education, Training and Employment and the Flinders University to provide a specialist school at the secondary level to promote the learning of maths and science, and, hopefully, to encourage our brightest young students to take on careers in maths and science. One of the things that militates against students in taking on careers in science, and indeed engineering, is the problem of getting through their matriculation year and obtaining a relatively high score which will allow them to go to university.

I will relate an incident which happened to one of my own children a few years ago when he was in year 12. At the beginning of the year, the school counsellor was discussing his choice of subjects and he was being dissuaded from studying Maths II at the year 12 level. The school counsellor's argument was that Maths II is a very difficult subject and it is very difficult to get a high score in Maths II which would militate against his getting a high entrance score for university. The problem facing my son at the time was that he wanted to do (and is currently doing) mining engineering at the University of South Australia, but Maths II was not a prerequisite to his university course.

However, the engineering course that he was intending to do assumed that first year students had a knowledge of Maths II at high school level. The school counsellor was advising him against it because it was not a prerequisite and he would have a better chance of achieving a higher score doing some other subject. Maths II was not a prerequisite, but the university in accepting students expected that they had a knowledge of the course content of Maths II, which, at the time, I found a very strange concept, and I would question the way in which tertiary entrance scores are rated between the various subjects, because it militates against students wanting to do maths and science courses.

In recent years, the South Australian government has changed the economy in South Australia dramatically by investing taxpayers' dollars and encouraging private industry to invest substantial dollars in high-tech industries. I will run through a few of them. Of course, we have a fantastic opportunity for young graduates in the defence industries which have been set up in the northern suburbs of Adelaide, a cluster arrangement. Young graduates are able to go into industries displaying the need for the latest knowledge and

utilising the latest technologies in a whole range of engineering, mathematics and computer IT technologies.

Of course, Motorola has now been attracted to Adelaide. It has a software development centre which has created the spin-offs and, consequently, a lot of other companies are entering the software development industry, thus creating opportunities for young students. In fact, I have a friend who has a son who literally is a rocket scientist and who works in the north of Adelaide—

Mr Hamilton-Smith interjecting:

Mr WILLIAMS: He literally is a rocket scientist, which gives us occasion to be quite mirthful from time to time—

Mr Hamilton-Smith: Gives you a bit of a lift!

Mr WILLIAMS: Yes. In more recent times, the government has been very active in promoting the biotech industries and we now have a biotech precinct in the Hindmarsh area where we have quite a few biotech companies. Basically they are start-up companies which have been built as a result of technology and information that has grown out of research undertaken by both our hospitals and universities. Those technologies are being commercialised through these biotech companies. There are huge opportunities for scientists, technologists and engineers in Adelaide and South Australia.

In the past, our education system has recognised the need to have specialist schools in a lot of areas, but, to some extent, it has failed young South Australians because there has been a lack of recognition of the need not only to train maths and science students to a very high level at the secondary level but also to give them the opportunity to be involved at the next level; that is, for students to be involved with university students and university graduates and to be involved in the research programs being undertaken at our universities. This would give these young students an insight into what a life as a scientist, an engineer, a biotechnologist, a software developer, or any other career in the technological field might be like.

Suddenly we will find that our brightest young students, rather than being lawyers and doctors (which is where most of them have been channelled historically) might end up being scientists developing new benefits for mankind and, indeed, finding new ways of attracting even more industries to South Australia and helping to build new opportunities in South Australia. That is the most exciting aspect of this project, as far as I am concerned. I sincerely hope that, as the maths and science school is developed, processes are put into practice which enable students to partake of this education experience from right across the state.

Having the school situated at Flinders University or on a university campus is absolutely essential, but I think it is essential that we enable students from both the metropolitan area and our regional and rural areas access to this school, because it is—

The Hon. R.B. Such: We need boarding schools.

Mr WILLIAMS: The member for Fisher says that we need boarding facilities, and I guess that is what I am hinting at. We do need boarding facilities not just for people who live outside the metropolitan area but also for people who live on the other side of the metropolitan area to save them, say, travelling from Gawler or Elizabeth, on a daily basis. So, I sincerely hope that is something that the governing council of this new school will take on board. There is at least one school in my electorate—an isolated rural school—which runs a specialist agricultural science course and which has boarding facilities and draws students from a wide area right across my electorate. Indeed, some students come from

across the border in Victoria, particularly to study and undertake the agricultural course at that school. That is the sort of thing that the maths and science school based at Flinders University should be able to do for students right across the state. I commend the report to parliament.

The Hon. R.B. Such (Fisher): I would like to make some brief comments in offering qualified support for this proposal. I say 'qualified' because it is important the way in which this centre will operate, and I think that is the key factor. We need to remember that this centre should not be seen as a place taking gifted students from other high schools. I am not familiar with the detail of how it is going to operate, but I trust that will not siphon off the gifted students in science and maths from the secondary area, because I think that would be a mistake. There is certainly an argument for having those students exposed to university lecturers, professors, and so on, but I think that is best done on a short-term basis rather than on a long-term basis. It does not matter what career people pursue: in my view, they still need a small 'l' liberal education. They need to be exposed to the humanities, to history and to languages and, whilst science and maths are very important and need to be elevated for all students, they in themselves do not constitute what I would call a comprehensive or adequate education.

We need to ensure that in our whole secondary, primary and junior primary, and preschool areas that we elevate the status and significance of science and maths. Sadly, those two areas have been subjected to bad publicity in recent decades. Unfortunately, I think science is blamed for a lot of the ills of the world and, as I have said on previous occasions in this place, it is like blaming the carpenter's tools—it is a stupid approach—because what is important is how you use science and how you use technology. It is not the fault of science or technology if they are misused: it is the fault of people who use them. So, in education we need to elevate the importance of science and maths and look at how we teach and what we teach so that young people see science and maths as something worth doing and that they will be adequately rewarded for undertaking those studies in their schooling.

I trust that this centre at Flinders University will complement what is happening in the wider school community, that it will be a centre of excellence and a place that will stimulate and encourage students to do more in the area of science and maths, but that it does not become like the library allocations and the science laboratory allocations of years ago whereby people think if you give a big injection of a laboratory or a library or, in this case, a science or maths centre, that you have somehow fixed the deficiencies in relation to science and maths education. The proof, I guess, will be in how the centre operates over time. I wish it well. I think it is an initiative which will have the support of the wider community. However, I mention those words of caution: it should not become something that is not in the best interests of this state and not in the best interests of students, but that it complements the existing system, enhances it and elevates the importance of science and maths throughout the whole system. It should not be seen as some place where a select few are taken out of high schools and secondary colleges and are excluded from participating in a well-rounded and comprehensive education.

Motion carried.

CORONERS BILL

Received from the Legislative Council and read a first time.

STATUTES AMENDMENT AND REPEAL (STARR-BOWKETT SOCIETIES) BILL

Received from the Legislative Council and read a first time.

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

That this bill be now read a second time.

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

Leave granted.

The purpose of the Bill is to repeal the *Starr-Bowkett Societies Act 1975*, and to amend the *Fair Trading Act 1987*.

A Starr-Bowkett society is a type of building society that causes or permits applicants for loans to ballot for precedence, or in any way makes the granting of a loan dependent upon any chance or lot. The *Starr-Bowkett Societies Act 1975* currently prohibits this activity except in relation to a Starr-Bowkett society that was registered under the previous Act. The Act also prohibits trading or carrying on business as a society unless the person or body is registered under the Act.

Following the deregistration of the last Starr-Bowkett society, no further regulation is necessary except in respect of any possible offences and to prohibit trading or carrying on business as a Starr-Bowkett society. For this reason, it is proposed to repeal the *Starr-Bowkett Societies Act 1975* and amend the *Fair Trading Act 1987*.

The amendment to the *Fair Trading Act 1987* will prohibit anyone trading or carrying on business as a Starr-Bowkett society in South Australia, including balloting for loans. The maximum penalty for contravention of the prohibition is \$5 000.

New South Wales is the only jurisdiction that provides for the regulation of Starr-Bowkett societies with no prohibition on balloting for loans. The proposed Bill provides that an interstate Starr-Bowkett society will not contravene this prohibition if it conducts business with a member of the society in South Australia, provided the person became a member of the society before the member commenced to reside in South Australia.

Provisions that permit investigations and proceedings for any offences under the repealed Act are saved by the operation of section 16 of the *Acts Interpretation Act 1915*. The time limit will be two years, as applies under the Act being repealed.

The provisions of the *Fair Trading Act 1987* will permit investigations and proceedings for any offences of the prohibition to be inserted into that Act.

The provisions of the Bill will provide certainty for the protection of consumers even though the risks are considered to be slight.

Explanation of Clauses

PART 1—PRELIMINARY

Clause 1: Short title

This clause is formal.

Clause 2: Interpretation

This clause provides that a reference to the principal Act means the Act referred to in the heading of the relevant Part.

PART 2—AMENDMENT OF FAIR TRADING ACT 1987

Clause 3: Insertion of Part 8A

This clause inserts a new Part in the *Fair Trading Act 1987* that relates to Starr-Bowkett Societies and the activity of balloting for loans. The new provisions prohibit the trading or the carrying on of a business as a Starr-Bowkett society or using the name 'Starr-Bowkett' (that is, a person or body that causes loan applicants to ballot for a loan, or makes the granting of a loan dependent on chance). There is an exception for an interstate Starr-Bowkett society, which may continue to do business with a member in South Australia if the member joined the society before moving to live in this State.

PART 3—REPEAL OF STARR-BOWKETT SOCIETIES ACT 1975

Clause 4: Repeal

This clause repeals the *Starr-Bowkett Societies Act 1975*.

Mrs GERAGHTY secured the adjournment of the debate.

UNCLAIMED SUPERANNUATION BENEFITS (MISCELLANEOUS) AMENDMENT BILL

The Legislative Council agreed to the amendment made by the House of Assembly without any amendment.

GENE TECHNOLOGY BILL

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 26 September. Page 2268.)

Ms STEVENS (Elizabeth): The significant advances in the science of gene technology have revolutionised thinking about the potential to expand horizons in relation to improvements in medicine, agriculture, food production and environmental management. Gene technology promises much in the field of medicine—new improved vaccines and the ability to tailor drug therapy to the individual, leading to a reduction in a major cause of adverse events and better patient outcomes; work to identify genes that cause diseases; tests to identify these diseases at an early stage; and, finally, to produce drugs to treat those diseases.

In agriculture, the ability to significantly reduce the time taken to develop new plant cultivators, by introducing specific genes, the ability to confer a single desired trait, for example, disease resistance or pest resistance, is faster, cheaper and more exact than in conventional breeding methodologies. Although these agricultural developments to date mostly benefit the producer, other agricultural developments—for example, that of golden rice, which has been enriched with vitamin A—will also provide a public health benefit to populations unable to get access in more traditional ways. However, despite these potential benefits, the Australian public and people in other countries, as well, remain wary of this new technology, and with good reason. The Senate Community Affairs References Committee report on the Gene Technology Bill 2000 begins by saying:

There is widespread and growing community debate about gene technology and increasing concern about health and environmental issues. The community has learned to be cautious about claims by governments, corporations and scientists that things are safe for them. The benefit of DDT and, more recently, the safety of British beef during the mad cow disease episode are just two claims that have engendered considerable scepticism.

People have been let down in the most extreme way by highly qualified, so-called scientific experts and institutions with statutory obligations to protect the health and safety of the community. In the UK, the BSE disaster has undermined both the credibility of science and the trust and confidence of the community in government regulation. There are now at least 69 people in Britain with CJD and, as symptoms of the disease often do not show for 20 years, there may be many more people living with this death sentence. Although not related to gene technology, this episode has impacted on the willingness of the public to engage in and accept gene technology and its potential benefits.

To make matters worse, the links of gene technology with multinational pharmaceutical and agribusinesses have done nothing to assure the ordinary person that the claims of potential benefits can be believed. Recent actions in the South-East of our own state by multinational agribusiness company Aventis, when investigations by the Interim Office of the Gene Technology Regulator indicated five breaches in

relation to GMAC recommendations, did nothing to engender confidence here in South Australia.

The attitudes of consumers in many countries about gene technology and GM food have been extensively surveyed. In general, consumers approve of the use of gene technology to advance medicine and better treatments. In relation to GM food and gene technology, Australian consumers, in a survey undertaken by the commonwealth government in 2000 and referred to in the Department of Human Services' discussion paper entitled, 'Preserving the Identity of non-GM Crops in South Australia', indicated the following responses from those consumers surveyed:

- 90% supported labelling of GM foods so consumers could make informed choices;
- 65% would eat GM foods if there was a benefit;
- 46% would not choose to buy GM foods;
- 37% would not change the type of food they buy because of labels on GM foods;
- 32% would eat GM foods; and
- 9% would actively buy GM foods.

The SPEAKER: Order! I advise the people in the gallery that photography is not allowed. I am not sure what is happening up there—

Mr Foley: They are binoculars.

The SPEAKER: If they are binoculars, there is no problem.

Ms STEVENS: The survey indicated a strong desire for information and indication of benefit. I quote from page 24 of that report, which is after the survey results, as follows:

A real measure of Australian consumer acceptance of GM food will not be available until the mandatory labelling requirements for food produced using gene technology start in December 2001.

The survey is interesting in relation to the views of consumers, their strong desire for information to be able to make informed choices about their food and the interesting point that they would eat GM foods if there was a benefit.

Agricultural approaches to gene technology are affected by the needs of current and future markets, as well as benefits to producers. Attitudes of the farming sector in relation to gene technology differ, and I would just like to put on the record a quote from a policy paper from the South Australian Farmers Federation, under the heading, 'Biotechnology', which states:

The federation has, through its various commodity groups, supported developments in biotechnology, for example, in improving yields and quality and through introducing new products. However, in relation to gene technology, primary producers have differing views. The federation's membership unanimously adopted a position paper at our state convention held in March this year. In essence, the position paper outlines a number of issues that need to be addressed by the state government, including:

- introducing complementary state legislation that provides confidence to all stakeholders;
- a broad education campaign for both primary producers and consumers to ensure that the risks of gene technology are fully understood by the wider community;
- adequate scientific research on the effects that gene technology has upon the environment and human health;
- the state government respecting that it is each individual primary producer's decision as to whether they choose to utilise gene technology; and
- both state and local governments allowing the primary producer to have the right to farm, whether they choose to use gene technology or not.

That is an interesting selection of views and that is the position paper that the South Australian Farmers Federation has adopted on this matter.

From another part of the agricultural sector, there are fears that the introduction of genetically modified organisms in

South Australia could devastate so-called heirloom varieties of plants. The seed-saving group, Heritage Seed Curators Australia, has been part of the call for a moratorium on the introduction of genetically altered crops and plants, and it has specific concerns, and I quote from the group's President, Bill Hankin, as follows:

Someone that's growing a GMO tomato—and there are those varieties overseas—the pollen from that tomato will wind up in the neighbour's pollen, the neighbour's tomato crop. If that crop is a heritage variety, it will be destroyed. It's effectively been altered forever.

That is another view from the agricultural sector.

In terms of medicine, agriculture and the environment, we have opportunities for great potential benefit and we have levels of risk and legitimate concerns that need to be addressed and managed for these benefits to be realised. This requires a cautious and careful multi-faceted approach which acknowledges public concern for health and safety, environmental concerns, the need for public education about complex scientific matters, and the need for an evidence based approach. That last point is extremely important when you look at the range of media reporting, misinformation, scaremongering and hysteria which often comes through and which is far different from the facts.

The bill before us is the South Australian complementary legislation to the national Co-operative Regulatory Scheme for Genetically Modified Organisms. The national scheme includes: the Gene Technology Act 2000 of the Commonwealth (which commenced on 21 June this year) together with the Commonwealth Gene Technology Regulations; nationally consistent complementary state and territory legislation—this bill is our part of that; the Gene Technology Intergovernmental Agreement; and a ministerial council. As the minister said in his second reading explanation, corresponding legislation has been passed in Tasmania and bills such as the one that we are considering are currently before the Western Australian, Victorian and Queensland parliaments. These bills mirror the commonwealth legislation, as does the one before this parliament.

The process that we are going through today in our parliament is similar to that which we went through in relation to the Food Act where, again, we had national legislation with complementary legislation being introduced in all jurisdictions. So, in many ways, what we are doing is enacting legislation in this state simply to make sure that there is legal coverage of all the aspects that have already been passed and supported in a bipartisan way in the national parliament. I understand that the intergovernmental agreement has been signed by all states and territories other than New South Wales, Tasmania and the Northern Territory, but I also understand that each of those jurisdictions has agreed to sign it and that it is just a matter of getting the processes completed in each jurisdiction.

Item 9 of the intergovernmental agreement requires each state and territory to submit to its parliament as soon as possible a bill or bills to form part of the scheme for the purpose of ensuring that the scheme applies consistently to all persons, things and activities within Australia. Each state and territory will use its best endeavours to secure passage of the bill or bills submitted to its parliament as introduced, with commencement to be by 31 December 2001. I am not sure whether we will keep exactly to that time frame. I will be interested to hear the minister's comments on just how we will come in in terms of that date. As I said before, we are

ensuring that the coverage of the commonwealth bill fits within the state of South Australia.

The objects of the bill are the same as those contained in the national legislation: to protect the health and safety of people and the environment by identifying risks posed by, or as a result of, gene technology and by managing those risks through the regulation of certain dealings with genetically modified organisms. The bill sets out the regulatory framework for a nationally consistent scheme. As the minister pointed out in his second reading explanation, the bill before us establishes the Gene Technology Regulator in the same terms as those which exist in the commonwealth act. That person and their office have responsibility for regulating dealings with GMOs in South Australia through a national licensing system.

If they read the act, members will see that the term 'deal with' is defined widely. It includes 'developing a GMO and conducting experiments with breeding, growing, propagating and importing a GMO. Consequently, it covers contained research, field trials and commercial release. The intentional release of a GMO into the environment in South Australia (such as a field trial with a GM crop or the commercial growth of a GM crop) is prohibited unless licensed by the Regulator.

As reported by the minister in deciding whether to approve a licence authorising the release of a GMO into the environment in South Australia (such as growing a GM plant in a field trial or a general release) the Regulator must consider the potential impact of the GMO on the environment and public health. In doing so, the Regulator requires comprehensive information from an applicant on the impact of the GMO on animals, plants, waters, soils and biodiversity. The Regulator independently assesses the information provided and also seeks additional information from a variety of sources including the states. The Regulator must be satisfied that any risks identified to the environment or public health can be managed before an application seeking authorisation of the release of a GMO into the environment can be approved. If the Regulator determines that the risk cannot be managed, the application will be rejected.

All applications for licences involving the release of GMOs into the environment are available to anyone who wishes to see them. Such applications are automatically provided to the states because, as I mentioned before, the Regulator must seek the advice of the states regarding matters relevant to the development of the risk assessment and risk management plan.

The bill also establishes a number of advisory committees: the Gene Technology Technical Advisory Committee; the Gene Technology Community Consultative Committee; and the Gene Technology Ethics Committee, which are there to provide advice to both the Regulator and the ministerial council. The ministerial council is covered in the bill in the same way as it is in the commonwealth act, enabling it to issue policy principles on social, cultural, ethical and other non-scientific matters, and the Regulator must act consistently with those principles. The council can also issue policy guidelines and codes of practice which may be applied by the Regulator as a condition of licence.

The bill contains sections dealing with monitoring, enforcement and penalties in relation to the process of getting a licence and adhering to its conditions. It also contains clauses that deal with penalties, extensive processes for risk identification and management, monitoring, powers of inspection, powers of search and seizure, and an important

clause on confidential commercial information. At the same time as this bill was tabled in parliament, the minister released a discussion paper for consultation titled 'Preserving the identity of non-GM crops in South Australia'. I have read that document. It is comprehensive and was interesting to read, and I hope that a lot of feedback is received as a result of that discussion paper. I would be keen to know who received copies of this document and how far it has been circulated. It certainly canvasses—

The Hon. Dean Brown interjecting:

Ms STEVENS: I am wondering whether the minister would put on the record who has been invited to take part in this discussion. The minister has made the point that issues in relation to preserving the identity of non-GM crops are complex. Indeed they are. The discussion paper outlines them in a fair amount of detail, and this particularly comes into play because under the bill the ministerial council has the opportunity to issue policy principles requiring the Regulator to recognise areas designated under state law that would separate GM and non-GM crops for marketing purposes. This would enable, but not require, states and territories to enact legislation to designate such areas. There could be certain areas that could be GM free for marketing purposes. As I said, the issues are complex, and it is worth members' reading that report.

The minister makes the point, and it is well taken, that he intends to proceed with having the council establish this policy principle. I am certain we will not be the only state which wants that to occur. Tasmania intends to declare itself GM free, but once this policy principle has been established by the ministerial council each jurisdiction that so chooses can introduce legislation to declare specific areas.

All the correspondence I have received in relation to this bill indicates that there is quite a lot of confusion about the bill. Many people think this bill is dealing with GM free zones. Certain members of the public are confused between the bill we are now dealing with, which is establishing the regulatory framework, and the private member's bill which looks at a moratorium and GM free areas. Perhaps that is something that needs to be cleared up, and I certainly will be clearing it up with people who have corresponded with me. Certainly, that confusion exists in the community.

Labor supports the bill. Members on this side consider it a useful basis for regulation of GMOs. It is just the beginning, and it will need to be closely monitored as the system gears up and starts to run. At the ALP's last national conference, the party committed itself to a wide-ranging public consultation into the health, safety, ethical, environmental, legal and employment implications of new genetic technologies in the research, medical and agricultural sectors. This is fundamental, as we need to move forward in partnership with the community to address all these issues. There is a considerable need for the community to understand what this means and to have some understanding of the science behind it; and there is a responsibility for government, and I think scientists themselves, to be part of that debate and educative process that needs to happen so that all sections of the community can understand or gain a clearer understanding of the issues. Perhaps this would lead to less hysteria and more fact in the media.

We need the confidence of all sections of the community in the regulatory framework we are about to set up so that the potential benefits of gene technology can be realised and concerns and risks can be dealt with carefully and comprehensively for the benefit of us all and for future generations.

The opposition supports the bill. I will be keen to ask questions of the minister in the committee stage as we proceed through the 194 clauses.

Mr VENNING (Schubert): This bill is this state's component of the national cooperative regulatory scheme for genetically modified organisms (currently known as GMOs). The national scheme includes the commonwealth's Gene Technology Act 2000 which commenced on 21 June 2001. The Tasmanian government has already passed its gene technology bill; and the Western Australian, Victorian and Queensland governments have introduced gene technology bills into their parliaments as well.

The application of gene technology in the areas of agriculture, food production, medicine and environmental management is providing, and has the potential to provide, benefits to all South Australians. We have been carrying out plant breeding programs for decades and, as a farmer, I am very much aware of that. Many varieties of wheat, barley and canola were not around when I started farming in the late 1950s, but we now have varieties that produce stronger, better performing crops that are more suited to South Australia's relatively dry climate. In South Australia, we are probably experiencing one of our best harvests ever, and much of this is to do with the plant breeding that has been occurring for many years to enable plants to tolerate our dry conditions and harsh environment.

It is most important to realise that we grow the best wheat in the cleanest environment because we do not need to continually spray our crops with pesticides. We do spray them, but nowhere near the extent that they do so in Europe and the United States. So, we need to get a few priorities right.

My understanding is that gene technology speeds up the breeding processes. Instead of waiting years for a viable new strain to be developed, we are able to do it much quicker with gene technology. Everything in life has its benefits and risks. Gene technology is no exception and much has been said about the possible risks, particularly in the United Kingdom and Europe where a lot of this hype is coming from, but there is little actual evidence so far from scientific studies to support the 'risk' argument. It is no different from the modern motor car which 'kills'. Motor cars kill, but members in this House own a car and use it. We make the decision to accept the risk and drive the motor car knowing that it kills. The same thing could be said of genetically modified foods; abuse could have some very bad results. However, without any doubt at all, I believe that the good from GMOs far outweighs the bad.

I would like to give an example of all the benefits of GMOs. Cotton—and this is an example well known by most—is one of the many crops to be genetically modified or made transgenic to make it insect resistant, so reducing the need to spread large amounts of insecticide. This has resulted in Australian cotton growers being able to reduce their use of pesticides by up to 50 per cent, which is half what we previously used. The people involved in growing cotton previously used some dangerous pesticides, and we know where they went—onto the ground, from where it was washed into the Murray and ended up here. Many of the problems with the Murray are caused by what is done in the upper rivers of New South Wales in Narramine and the cotton growing areas.

So, a reduction of 50 per cent is a big advantage and will have a positive environmental impact. This natural insecti-

cide, which has been placed genetically into the cotton plant, is not produced in the cotton seeds, so it cannot enter the food chain, nor can it be washed out of the plants' leaves into our soil or our waterways. I hope the same technology can be used in our legume crops—that is, our peas and beans that we grow here (and now to a lesser degree lentils in the future)—and also in our grain crops, allowing our farmers to use fewer chemicals, particularly pesticides, a considerable amount of which we use to control the aphids, and so on, in our legumes.

Any environmentally safe measures to enable farmers to reduce their input costs would be most welcome by the industry, as well as creating a cleaner environment. We do not hear the full argument. We hear the argument about GM but we do not often hear the advantages. There are many medical benefits in the field of gene technology. Scientists can now locate and study genes that cause genetic diseases, or those making some individuals prone to cardiovascular disease and degenerative brain disorders such as Alzheimer's and motor neurone disease, certain forms of cancer, diabetes and other auto-immune disorders such as rheumatoid arthritis.

Human society is wrestling today with the huge challenges of the 21st century. We must meet the demands of a much larger, much more affluent human population without sacrificing native flora and fauna sanctuaries on a world-wide basis. It has been reported that a shortage of land available for cultivation would make it impossible to feed a global population expected to peak at 9 billion people without recourse to genetically engineered plants. This whole agenda is being taken over in a totally unbalanced fashion by the radical element—by the conservationists and the environmentalists. I will quote from an address given by Mr Dennis T. Avery, Director of Global Food Issues, Hudson Institute of the United States of America, at the United Farmers Forum of the Australian National Farmers Federation, held in Canberra on 17 September this year. This speech was titled, 'The future of Australian farming in the environmental age.'

Mr Avery stated that the key question in the environmental age is not whether we save the environment but how best we save it. Two radically different models are being presented for achieving the goals of sustainable economic development and benign agricultural expansion. Which model is chosen will dramatically affect the way we farm in Australia and right around the world. One of these models is based on humanity's increasing ability to produce abundance through technology. We could call it the palace model which wants to create new resources, clean the air through lower emission cars and power plants, and give every child on the planet access to a computer. It wants to use plantation grown forest to provide more wood products while protecting natural forests and grow more food on less land through high tech systems such as conservation tillage and gene technology.

The other model that could be applied might be called the mud hut model, for dramatic contrast. This strategy is based on getting humans to want less, either through lowering our lifestyles or through having fewer humans on the earth. The mud-hutters would have people eating vegetarian diets, growing their food organically and driving fewer cars fewer miles. They think that most of the world's population should live in cramped apartments and sleep out on porches so that they do not need air-conditioning, or take up space with private yards. They think that we should leave the coal and oil in the ground rather than deplete those resources and leave the trees unharvested and leave them to rot and burn. That is quite a contrast, Madam Acting Speaker, and I noted your

encouragement during my last comment. I know that you ride a pushbike but if we all had to ride pushbikes it would be difficult for us country members to get back to our electorates. The member for MacKillop would need to leave now to get home by Thursday night. I can understand that as you, Madam Acting Speaker, live in Norwood, you have certain advantages.

There is quite a contrast in these two models. For agriculture, the second model would mean a radical reduction in farm sales, because local production and local consumption is promoted. You do not export your produce; you live only on what you produce locally. I am sorry to say it, but that thinking went out centuries ago—especially given that Australia has been a net exporter of food produce for decades. In other words, we export far more than we would ever import, particularly in relation to food. So, it would be a very bad policy for us. The world population will increase, and it has to be fed adequately. If we do not want to encroach on land that is not currently used as farming land, we need to improve our methods of production, and GMOs are the way to go. That is the challenge. If we do not want to have GMOs, we will need more land to feed our people, and that means less rainforest and more cultivation.

Gene technology now has the ability to create plant species that are salt tolerant; for example, they can produce salt tolerant canola where the plants take up the salt in the soil and the water, and store it in the leaves and not in the grain that is harvested. That has obvious benefits for that once unproductive land, particularly in the poorer countries of the world—most of them Muslim and Third World countries. I am also very interested in the electronic irradiation of food which could kill the bacteria that sickens and kills hundreds of thousands of people each year.

It is encouraging that legislation such as this is introduced into this parliament because it marks our recognition of the beginning of the next era of agriculture. GMOs are the way forward to feed the globe's burgeoning population, while ensuring that our agricultural practices are sustainable. I have a book written by Mr Dennis T. Avery (and the deputy leader said she knows about this; she heard the speaker as well), entitled 'Saving the planet with pesticides and plastic', and this is the second edition. It is a rather dramatic title, and it is an extremely interesting book. It is very thought provoking and enlightening, challenging much of the hype we hear today on subjects such global warming and zero population growth. It mentions that rich people eat less and usually have only one child. Of course, they have pets to make up for their lack of children, and pets eat protein. We can see that, as society's standard of living rises, so do their eating habits and those of their pets. These are the sorts of things we have not discussed.

However, when we read it in a book such as this, we realise that we need to get a lot of things in perspective. It is an extremely interesting read and, if anybody wants to borrow this book, they can certainly do so. It cost \$US40, but it is worth every cent. The book talks at length about the Muslim countries, which populate very strongly, because in those countries women are supposed to exist only to have children, which is horrific to Australians.

Mr Hanna: Just be careful, mate!

Mr VENNING: This is quite clearly the Muslim way of life. They usually eat more food than we eat, but they are basic protein foods. Also the book speaks about things going in cycles. It talks about global warming, and maybe this is not such a worry after all. He talks about such things as that

salmon are now being found in the rivers in Oregon where previously they have not been for 25 years. There is no reason: it is purely because of the cycles of the world ocean currents. Many natural products that we take for granted and use, such as pyrethroid which is used on crops and has now been found to be very carcinogenic.

There are a lot of myths out there, but I hope that by looking at all the issues, mechanically and methodically, and with an open and cool mind, we can work our way through it. I am very pleased that people such as Mr Avery are out there because, whether or not he is 100 per cent correct, it is at least putting a counter point of view so that we can make that decision. With this bill before the House, it is a very timely and interesting debate that we are having. As long as the debate is constructive and we consider everything, particularly Australia's clean and green image as a major world food producer with some of the best food and wine (which I cannot resist) in the world. I support the bill.

Mr WILLIAMS (MacKillop): As a practising farmer, I have a great deal of interest in this bill and the GMO debate per se. The Australian farming community, by dint of technological advancement over the last 20 or 30 years (and I guess it probably goes much further than that, but my intimate knowledge extends only to that sort of period) has improved the productivity of what would, I guess, otherwise be regarded, on a world scale, as a relatively inhospitable landscape. Technological innovation has dramatically improved productivity across the broad spectrum of farming enterprises, such as the growing of traditional cereal crops where it has brought about new varieties of those species of crops, as well as the realms of animal husbandry. A lot of technological changes have been based on the use of chemicals such as pesticides, herbicides and animal health products.

By and large, there has been little or, indeed, no resistance to these changes over that period, even though some of the changes have been dramatic and posed risk—even considerable risk—to both the human population and the environment. Suddenly, with the next giant step in technological change in agriculture, we find, right across the world, huge resistance to these latest changes. I would argue that this resistance has more to do with the world we live in today than the changes being mooted and researched. It has more to do with the lifestyles that Western technology has afforded the populations of our major cities and, I guess, countryside that have allowed people plenty of free time and opportunity to look at what is going on in the world around them, and plenty of opportunity to object.

I think the GMO debate that has raged right across the Western world in the last few years has been dominated by fear, largely borne out of ignorance and emotion. Having an interest in the subject, I have collected magazine and newspaper articles and read whatever I can get my hands on about this debate. It fascinates me that it seems the common thread that flows through all those who oppose GM technology is that they are opposed to the profits being made by some multinational companies. For the life of me, I cannot understand what the bottom line of a multinational company has to do with the risk that might be posed to mankind and/or the environment by some new technology, but it certainly has captured the imagination of those who oppose this sort of technology. They cannot help but bring in arguments about some of the big companies involved, particularly Monsanto and Aventis Crop Science, talking down those companies and

referring to them as 'multinational giants with no social conscience' and the huge profits they stand to make.

They also refer to the ridiculous notion that GM technology will lead to farmers, particularly in poorer parts of the world, not being able to keep seed to grow the next year's crop and those sorts of things. They make a whole host of outlandish and outrageous claims about the technology. From time to time, there are some reasoned arguments, such as the risks associated with both the environment and future world food production, and the sort of effect some GM produced foodstuffs might—and I emphasise the word 'might'—have on the people who consume them.

If the world was ruled the way it is today several hundreds ago, particularly when Columbus sailed across the Atlantic Ocean and brought back to Europe many new plant species, a lot of the foods we take for granted today and, in some way, have probably been responsible for the population explosion—certainly in the Western world over the last 200 years—would never have been introduced into those countries. I am talking principally about the potato, but there are other foods, including tomatoes, pineapples and a whole host of foodstuffs which originated in the Americas and were brought back to Europe during and just after the time of Columbus and, in many cases, became and remain the staple diet in many countries. So, the argument that humans or animals cannot live or survive by eating foodstuff it is not used to eating as proteins is, in my opinion, completely fallacious.

Mr Venning: That is a big word.

Mr WILLIAMS: Yes, it is a big word; I was damn lucky to get it out. I think a lot of the arguments put against GM technologies are fallacious (there is that word again), but I equally believe it is just as important for us to introduce this sort of legislation, and I will indicate my reasons for that in a moment. I certainly support the legislation, and I think it is ideal that we have regulations governing the use of GM technology for a whole lot of reasons, not the least being to overcome the ignorance that pervades the community at the moment.

The member for Schubert talked about other technologies that endanger human life, such as the speed, accident rate and deaths caused by the motor car. To use another analogy with regard to the motor car, I well remember reading stories about people in the days when the motor car was first invented and used. It was accepted by a lot of people in the world that the human body or animal could not survive travelling at high speeds. It was assumed that the human body would not be able to travel at a speed faster than, say, you could travel on a galloping horse without causing some sort of damage. Of course, at the time it was virtually impossible to prove otherwise that travelling at speed was not deleterious to the physiology of the human body.

We are in just the same position now, that is, that it is almost impossible to prove that there is no risk associated with GM technology. However, in saying that it is pretty well impossible to prove that there is no risk is no reason to suggest that there is a huge risk or that we should walk away from it and that we should embrace this nonsense of a five year moratorium which would do absolutely nothing. It would merely mean that in five years we would be in exactly the same position as we are today and everyone would be calling for another five year moratorium. Unless we embrace this technology, and embrace it sensibly, and move forward with both laboratory and field testing, we will never know the answers. I say that we have to move forward with caution,

and this legislation will allow us to do that in an orderly fashion.

A moment ago I mentioned the lack of resistance to new technologies. In Australia, we have already widely used technologies which allow us to spray crops for weeds and not harm a particular crop. I refer specifically to atrazine resistant canola. As a practising farmer and one who grows canola from time to time, my personal preference would be to use a Roundup ready canola rather than an atrazine resistant canola. The people who would stop us from using this technology have never tried to stop us from using atrazine resistant canola, but they do try to stop us from using Roundup ready canola. Roundup is a very extensively used chemical and it is one of things to which I was referring a moment ago when I mentioned new technologies. It is a very widely used chemical and, to my knowledge, there has never been any argument that it posed dangers either to mankind or the environment. I would put atrazine in a completely different basket. We allow its use and we do not even question it.

We talk about the potential problems associated with GM foods. I am sure most members are following this debate much more closely than is the general public, but, to my knowledge, you cannot buy a cheese in Australia that is not a product of GM technology. To my knowledge, in Australia, all the rennet used in cheese production comes from a genetically modified base. We do eat a lot of GM foodstuffs right now and, by and large, people have no problems with it. It is interesting also to note that, in general, the population has no problem with GM technology being used in the medical field—and insulin comes to mind. Insulin is produced today through using GM technology.

People are quite accepting of GM technology when it comes to medicine to help preserve their life and their health. By and large, I believe that people do not have overly serious concerns about GM technology being used to modify some of our food producing plants, but most people seem to have a great resistance to using the technology when it comes to animals, which would cause spin-off problems for the livestock industry. To be quite honest, I cannot understand the rationale of the different attitude that the population in general has to the use of this technology in those three different fields, but that seems to be the reality of what happens in the big wide world.

If you can use the technology carefully and properly to produce a medicine which saves lives or benefits mankind, I cannot see why, with the same care, the same technology cannot be used to produce animals which give us greater productivity on our farms. I believe that it will not be very long before that is an acceptable practice, and I say that as a person who has been involved in animal production virtually all my life. We use now technologies which were unheard of a few years ago and, as I say, they have not been questioned. To take that extra step in a careful and managed way is something that is not too far away.

I have spoken for longer than I intended, but I will briefly touch on a couple of points relating to the bill. I need a little more clarification on the definition of gene technology. In the bill it is defined as meaning:

- ... any technique for the modification of genes or other genetic material, but does not include—
- (a) sexual reproduction; or
 - (b) homologous recombination; or
 - (c) any other technique specified in the regulations for the purposes of this paragraph;

It is pretty open-ended. There is one part of gene technology which I think has great potential, that is, not to change the genes of plants but to modify the triggers which operate those genes. I have argued quite a few times, and particularly with regard to water use, that I believe that, in the not too distant future, we will be drought proofing our crops to help South Australian farmers who are cropping in the dryland situation. We will produce plants which basically are the same as, say, the wheat plant or canola plant that we have now, but the triggers operating the genes which produce the roots and the leaves will be modified to give a longer root run so that the plant can access water deeper into the soil profile. The plant will produce larger leaves which will capture more energy from the sun and, consequently, with those two added inputs, the plants will give a much higher yield.

I am not sure whether that sort of technology will be picked up by this bill, but that is probably the way in which our farmers will benefit more rather than trying to introduce genes from foreign plants and/or animals into some of our food crops. As I said, I support the legislation. One of the things I really like about the bill is contained in clause 27, which refers to the functions of the Regulator. In part, clause 27 provides:

- (h) to undertake or commission research in relation to risk assessment and the biosafety of GMOs;
- (i) to promote the harmonisation of risk assessments relating to GMOs and GM products by regulatory agencies;
- (j) to monitor international practice in relation to the regulation of GMOs;
- (k) to maintain links with international organisations;

and so on. I think that is very important and I hope it is something which the Regulator will take on with a great deal of zest, because that is one way of overcoming the ignorance that pervades the debate at the moment. To have that sort of information disseminated by the Regulator will help take the debate a great leap forward.

Another matter I point out—and I know the member for Schubert touched on this—relates to clauses 50 and 51 which provide that the Regulator must prepare risk assessment, risk management plans and so on. It is all very well having this mindset that we must assess and document the risks associated with this technology in any way we use it, but the one thing which we have never done is document or discuss the risk of current and contemporary technologies.

The member for Schubert spoke about the savings. As farmers, we are sometimes guilty of pouring literally thousands of litres of chemicals across our landscape and no-one seems to bat an eyelid, yet they would complain if we used a genetically modified cotton, canola, or whatever, to do the same thing. It intrigues me that the Regulator will undertake risk assessments on this particular technology, yet we have no risk assessment on contemporary technologies. I believe it is very important and that we should be looking at it, because a slight risk or a low risk of this technology might be a damn site better than the risk that we take with contemporary technologies.

I look forward to the third reading debate but, unfortunately, as I am involved in a select committee meeting this evening, I might not be able to ask questions; if not, I will certainly be interested to read the *Hansard* report of the third reading debate.

Ms HURLEY (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): I agree with the spirit of caution that seems to pervade this bill with regard to genetically modified organisms. I think that it

is a direction that we seem to be taking. Certainly, Australia and South Australia have always tended to adopt new technologies fairly enthusiastically and used them well with the appropriate local research and development, and I do not see that genetically modified organisms will be any different.

However, given the debate in different parts of the world and the caution of consumers towards this sort of technology, I think it is very important that we approach the commercialisation of the technology very slowly and that we keep adequate records of where genetically modified organisms are grown and how they are used. I am pleased to see that this approach, indeed, forms part of this bill, and I take on board the member for MacKillop's remark about not having similar safeguards for chemicals. However, I believe that has grown up in a de facto way in a lot of the treatment of food products and there is an increasing tendency, particularly in Europe, to monitor food through the cycles and to keep good records of which chemicals are used in their production. I think that this is one thing that is happening with chemicals, fertilisers and pesticides and that it is useful, since we are at the beginning of the commercialisation of genetically modified foods, that we do this right from the start, and I think that this sort of legislation is a good step in that direction.

I also think that it is essential that we have a national position on genetically modified foods, for fairly obvious reasons, because it is almost impossible to separate state positions when you have farms perhaps side by side in separate states, and it is very valuable to have a uniform position across Australia so that countries to which we export understand clearly Australia's position.

I think South Australia has, indeed, been a bit lax in this regard in what appears to me to be too careless an approval of field trial crops in the past. I note from information that has been recently made available at a national level that genetically modified field trials are widely scattered throughout South Australia. Indeed, one of the features of this bill that I think is very useful is that controlled areas where perhaps genetically modified crops might be excluded are allowed for, and I know, after having spoken to the Labor Party candidate in Flinders (John Lovegrove), and having had several meetings with him, that a number of farmers in the Eyre Peninsula area are very much in favour of having a genetically modified crop free area in that part of the world. Indeed, if that comes to fruition I think that should be allowed for and, for that reason, the Labor Party in another place introduced an amendment to a Democrats bill to allow the minister to declare a controlled area a genetically modified crop free area. So, I am pleased that this bill allows for that, even if it may prove too difficult in the future.

I suppose one area of concern to me about the bill is that, whereas it talks about inspection and certainly gives wide-ranging powers to inspectors to enforce and monitor genetically modified crops, it does not make clear how many inspectors there will be and in which departments those inspectors will reside. The Minister for Human Services has control of the bill and I see that as a reasonable proposition since a lot of genetically modified work goes on in the health area but, in terms of inspection, for genetically modified crops I think it is really the primary industries people who are on the ground and who would be in the best position to constantly monitor such crops and to be in a position to ensure that the conditions of culture are being observed.

So, I have some concern about that, especially having had experience in an unrelated matter of trying to get health inspectors to take some action in a non-health related area—

and it was, indeed, in pest control where it was alleged that one company was spraying water instead of termite protection chemicals. The health authorities had control of that particular area and refused to do anything because it was more a consumer protection issue than a health issue, and I am a bit worried that, unless it is a health related issue to do with genetically modified crops, they might not be as keen as perhaps primary industries inspectors would be to ensure that the conditions are fulfilled.

There are a couple of other areas of concern. After a briefing by the minister's office, I have no particular quarrel with this bill as such but I think some of those concerns will be key issues to be monitored in future in terms of the way the bill works. I refer to Part 5, Division 1, 'Licensing', where certain dealings are exempt from licensing, that is, they are not required to be licensed. This is where there are negligible buyer safety risks. It does, indeed, seem that adequate controls and adequate monitoring powers are available to deal with that.

The second matter I mention here involves Part 6, Division 2, 'Notifiable Low Risk Dealings': again, this is where certain organisms are regarded as low risk and, therefore, not treated as strictly as other genetically modified organisms. Again, I think it seems to be dealt with reasonably in the bill and I have no particular quarrel, but it will be interesting to see how that goes. Of particular importance, I note that there is provision in the bill that this be carefully recorded, and I think that data will be very useful.

The third area of slight concern is Part 12, Division 3, 'Confidential Commercial Information', whereby a company can say that the information is commercial and confidential and they need not be required to disclose it publicly. Of course, the reasons for that are obvious but I think that particular area will be monitored quite closely by concerned people as well.

In conclusion, I think that the bill steers a very good middle ground and achieves a good compromise between the concerns of those who are unsure about the dangers of genetically modified material and those who are keen to go ahead and take advantage of the benefits that genetically modified organisms might bring. I am, of course, speaking particularly about the agricultural area as shadow minister for primary industries, but I think that the benefits in the health and medical science area have revealed themselves very clearly already. I know that there still needs to be caution in that area, but I think that the benefits in curing diseases or ameliorating the effects of the symptoms of diseases have become very obvious, and we have several very good and thriving companies operating in South Australia that seem to be not only doing valuable work but also achieving profits, which is very useful for our state.

I am sure that this will be the case in agriculture in the future but I think caution from farmers has come from concern about whether their crops might be acceptable on the broader international markets, and that is something, indeed, on which we will have to make a commercial decision and concerning which we will have to keep a constant eye on the market sentiment, particularly in Europe and Japan. Farmers have weathered these challenges before and I am sure that they will do it again and that we will have benefits from genetically modified crops.

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

Mr HANNA (Mitchell): I will speak briefly in support of the bill, but that is not to say I am endorsing open slather in respect of experimentation with gene technology. On the contrary, the bill provides a regulatory framework, and it is part of a national scheme. Of course, it should be supported, and the mechanisms set up under the act can then take account of the debates which must be had in the future as we come across some of the ethical problems related to GM technology.

I have had a number of telephone inquiries from constituents expressing concern about gene technology. To some extent, those concerns were based on a lack of information about the current practice of genetically modified organisms. Most people understand that it has something to do with genetically modified foodstuffs, and the concerns are sometimes rationally based, and sometimes they are based on false assumptions; for example, that it has something to do with irradiation, etc.

I will say nothing more than that. It is good to see that the bill provides for the setting up of various regulatory bodies and an ethics committee, which is important. This is one of those measures debated in parliament where there is bipartisan support and constructive debate to be had. I look forward to seeing the bill pass so that we can get on with experimenting and promoting food productivity in an ethical and safe manner.

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): I support the passage of this bill as a necessary component of the legislation that will put in place the national cooperative regulatory scheme for genetically modified organisms (GMOs). It is absolutely essential that standard legislation for GMOs applies across Australia. Gene technology is a science that is breaking new ground, with many outcomes still unknown and untried. Gene technology combines a minefield with a rose garden. There are so many possibilities that have to be explored for us to be confident that we are deactivating the mines and leaving only the roses.

Some of the dangers in an emerging science such as this come from the increasing speed of change and the pace with which that change is adopted. In past history, change took years, sometimes centuries, to become commonplace, so disadvantages and problems could be effectively dealt with along the way. Appropriate legislation now becomes the protection to the community and the environment that time afforded in past ages.

Over many years, changes in plants have been considerable, but they have occurred by natural selection and selective breeding. With genetic modification, it is now possible to change plants quickly with potentially unknown consequences. For example, non-GMO plants can be contaminated by GMO genes or crops could be invaded by GMO plants. New plants produced can be patented and owned by one entity, and those who own the patents could hold buyers to ransom by making it non viable not to have their seed but expensive to have it. It will be up to the Gene Technology Regulator to decide on potential risks to public health.

However, from a purely marketing point of view, there are obvious risks that must be taken into account by those people intending to grow these products. Optimising the price received for the products from Eyre Peninsula is particularly important because of our added fixed costs. Freight is high to and from the area and, in addition, very little of the value

adding is done locally, even though 65 per cent of the state's fishing income and around 40 per cent of the state's grain income comes from there. Premium prices may be available for GMO-free products, and discounted prices could be the result of having GMOs and losing our clean green image.

I commend the minister for signalling his intention to ask the Gene Technology Ministerial Council to establish the policy principle that recognises GM crop restricted areas. While delving into the uncharted waters surrounding gene technology, it is absolutely essential that GMO-free areas are not only able to be established but also can be established with integrity. It is for this reason that I support a five-year moratorium on the introduction of GMO crops on Eyre Peninsula. Eyre Peninsula is well sited for such action. We are virtually a triangular island, bounded on two sides by sea and on the third side by station country which supports almost no horticultural activity. Crops and stock can therefore be isolated from the accidental or deliberate contamination by genetically modified species of living organisms.

A great deal of opposition to genetic modification exists among our major world markets. Because this state, and Eyre Peninsula in particular, are prolific exporters into these world markets, we must heed this opposition to ensure the successful continued marketing of our produce. This alone makes the provision of GM crop restricted areas an imperative. Those who are not closely involved in primary industry may be unaware of the overlapping effects of what at first appear unrelated industries. For example, a field crop in Central Eyre Peninsula appears to bear no relation to the farmed tuna, yellow tail kingfish and black bream, yet the link is definite and short.

Tuna farming was pioneered by Port Lincoln fishermen. Now that it has been shown that wild fish can be farmed to grow into a bigger and more marketable product, and bring better returns, attention has turned to the feeding of the tuna and other species. The research to develop an artificial feed has been going on now for a few years, with success on a broad scale being tantalisingly close to reality. A variety of feeds has been trialled, some using grain as a component.

The majority of the local blue fin tuna is marketed in Japan, where strong opposition to GMOs has been expressed. It is important to use only non-GMO products in the development of artificial feeds if the Japanese market is to be retained. There may be no risk to humans at all; however, in marketing perception is everything, and to lose our current clean green image could lose not only the tuna market.

Farmed abalone is another industry pioneered by Port Lincoln fishermen. Again, artificial feeds, in which grain is a component, are being used. Some of these feeds are already being produced at Cummins on Central Eyre Peninsula. The same points about market desirability mentioned for the tuna industry also apply to the abalone industry.

Port Lincoln is fortunate to have the last tuna cannery in Australia: John West products are canned there and sold around the world. On a recent visit, Gary West advised that they will not be using any GMO canola oil in any of their products. Again, we could lose a major market this time for the canola that we are producing so well on Eyre Peninsula. A crushing plant on Eyre Peninsula for this niche market could provide premium prices for our farmers and justify the purchase of the plant itself. Such niche markets will be available in other products that we can exploit by being GMO free.

This bill is a necessary step in putting in place appropriate legislation across Australia in the realm of gene technology.

It will also provide for Eyre Peninsula people the opportunity to have a moratorium for five years should they wish to do so. This will give time for them to assess the potential, advantages and disadvantages of GMO products being grown on Eyre Peninsula. I support the bill.

The Hon. R.B. SUCH (Fisher): This is a very timely measure and, as has been pointed out already, it is legislation, complementary to that introduced by the federal government, which is being introduced by state and territory governments throughout Australia. The bill, as has been outlined, is intended to regulate activities involving gene technology, and I remind members that the term 'gene technology' was created in 1941, 60 years ago, so we are talking about something that has had a name for only a very short period. It is often suggested that with gene technology people are playing God and interfering with nature, and it raises the question of what is natural. As I pointed out previously in this House, wheat is not a natural seed: it is a result of human intervention, as indeed are many breeds of animals—and I instance the variations in breeds of dog and in other creatures. The critics will say that it is not simply more of the same, and I acknowledge that with the speed and the scope of new technology and new techniques it is possible to bring about more rapid change through gene manipulation than was possible through breeding and interbreeding of species in the past.

This legislation reflects the fact that gene technology is here, it is here to stay and it will continue to develop. I urge members, if they have not done so already, to read the two parts of the report by the Social Development Committee on biotechnology, because that committee canvassed much of the material that this bill touches on. Countries such as China are going flat out developing gene technology, and the idea that we can somehow sit by and allow other countries to develop this technology is, I think, fanciful. It is unfortunate that in our community we do not have a level of awareness and understanding of the science involved, and I do not pretend to have any great knowledge, but you cannot really have a sensible and informed debate unless you understand the science involved in gene technology and gene manipulation.

Like all technologies, gene technology can be used for good or evil, positive or negative, but, on balance, it offers enormous benefits for humanity. It will reduce, or can reduce, the need for pesticides and increase production in ways that have not been thought possible in the past. Is there a risk? Well, there is, but, like everything else in life, it is a question of managing risk. There is no, and cannot be any, absolute guarantee of safety with genetic technology and genetic modification, and people who seek an absolute guarantee are, once again, being unrealistic, because in life there are not many areas—I do not know of any—in which you can provide an absolute guarantee of no risk. So, it is a question of managing risk, and that is what this bill seeks to do.

I accept that in some ways we are charting new waters, but humans have always been able to accept and deal with challenge, and that is what confronts us now. The essence of gene technology and gene manipulation should be about enhancing the quality of life for all people—not simply making money for a few people, but improving the quality and quantity of food production, and also making improvements in areas of health.

There are many aspects that other members have touched on in terms of increased production and spray resistant

crops—canola is one that readily comes to mind—but there are a lot of other potential benefits of genetic modification, including areas such as eradication or control of some of the persistent weeds that, sadly, we have in our community—soursobs, bridal creeper, boneseed, and so the list goes on. I cannot see those ever being dealt with by handpulling or by spray or similar mechanisms. So, genetic modification offers real hope in that respect.

In relation to GM free zones, I do not consider that it is feasible, because you would have to allow people in an area who want to use genetically modified crops to do so. So how can you have the two exist in a geographical region? I do not believe it is feasible, and the expert advice given to the Social Development Committee was along those lines. I have considered that point and thought initially that there would be a marketing advantage if we could do it in certain areas but, on balance, after listening to the experts in the field on the pros and cons, I do not believe it is possible; but, if someone can tell me how it is possible, legally and otherwise, I would be more than interested to listen.

The member for Elizabeth linked mad cow disease (BSE) with genetic modification. I do not know whether she was just reporting how people link the two—I am not suggesting that she is saying they are linked—

Ms Stevens interjecting:

The Hon. R.B. SUCH: I accept the member for Elizabeth's statement that she was not linking them in any causal relationship; she was just stating public concern. We know that CJD (Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease) exists in New Guinea, because cannibals in the past—I do not know whether there are any still in existence—used to eat, by definition, fellow human beings, and the women, in particular, who were given the pleasure of eating the brains, were those who were most susceptible to that disease. So, what happened in the United Kingdom had nothing to do with genetic modification: it was the fact that someone or some group fed inappropriate feed to cattle, including the brains and spinal cords of other creatures, and that is where it has come from. We often hear people say that this is the result of genetic modification, but it has nothing whatsoever to do with genetic modification. It is a falsehood and it needs to be corrected and made quite clear that it has no connection whatsoever with genetic modification.

In essence, this is a necessary measure and, as I have said earlier, it is not without some risk. It is a question of managing the risk and, in respect of GM free zones, if people can indicate to me how it is possible and feasible, I would personally have no objection to that, because I believe strongly in freedom of choice. However, I reiterate that the expert opinion is that it is not feasible to do it on either Eyre Peninsula or Kangaroo Island or anywhere else in Australia. I wait with interest to hear anything further from members on this matter; I understand that the member for Gordon may have a view different from mine. However, I commend the bill to the House and look forward to its speedy passage.

Mr McEWEN (Gordon): Briefly, I support the legislation. It is important that we have a framework in place. Once we have a framework in place, though, it is also important to make decisions about what rights we wish to exercise. So, this is no more than a framework within which we can choose to operate if we so wish, and we are not locking ourselves into any particular position by supporting this bill at this time.

Briefly, in terms of GMOs, I have no major concerns about the technology, although some people are alarmed at

the concept of taking a gene from one species and implanting it in another species. That is what is different about this technology from all earlier technology. I happen to be a qualified geneticist and plant breeder, and in another life I happen to have actually manipulated genes. But, worse than that, we used to set about to destroy genes and create mutants and select from those mutants ones that might have been beneficial. That was a far more dangerous technology than the technology we are talking about here. At least with this technology we are taking a known gene—we are taking a known chain of amino acids—and using gene shears to cut them out and implant them into another species. The moral question, though, is who are we to take genes that have evolved in one species and implant them into another.

Ms Stevens: Who are we to make wheat?

Mr McEWEN: The question is not so much whether the technology is dangerous but to ask ourselves a more fundamental question as to whether we are abusing a fundamental right by taking genes and moving them across species, something that would never have occurred in nature. What we did earlier on in terms of irradiating gene plasm and creating mutants would not have occurred normally in nature. But most of what we have is an accident of nature, and wheat is an example. It was an accident, it was a mutant that was beneficial, but it occurred naturally.

Ms Breuer: Like Peter Lewis.

Mr McEWEN: It is not my place to reflect on another member. The only other thing I need to say is that, once this framework is in place, we have another issue, and that is whether or not there is a marketing advantage in being able to say that we are not involved. That is not a question about technology and it is not a question about ethics. It is a question about creating a niche market because we have something unique to offer. That is the subject of a bill that we will debate at another time. I am going to sponsor the Democrats' bill into this House to allow us to have a debate at another time as to whether or not we can create niche markets and quarantine them, and whether or not there is an advantage in a global marketplace in creating those niche markets. As much as we need to have that debate, this is not the appropriate place to do it. I commend the bill and I offer my support for it.

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH (Waite): I commend the minister for introducing this bill. It is a matter that requires the most intense government attention, and this bill is a step in that direction. As members know, it introduces a range of measures. It defines the issue; it lays down policy principles, guidelines and codes of practice; it introduces regulatory measures; it deals with the issue of licences within the context of those regulatory measures; and it deals with a whole range of issues presented to the community as a consequence of the advances in technology that have enabled the genetic manipulation of or genetic interference with nature. I am confident that the bill addresses the key issues that need to be addressed by government and that it provides a framework for us to proceed that is fair both to farmers and to consumers.

It has been my pleasure to be on the minister's back bench committee on this matter, and the consultation has been most effective. I would like to draw to the attention of the House one particular aspect of this bill and South Australia's approach, which requires commendation, and that is our approach to labelling of genetically modified foods. People in my electorate of Waite want to know when they go to the

supermarket what it is they are actually purchasing. If it is genetically modified, they really want to know that that is the case. They want to know what is in the can, the jar or the bottle. In that respect, the minister would agree with me that South Australia and the ACT have very much led the way in regard to labelling of genetically modified foods, and we South Australians should give ourselves a pat on the back for taking the lead in that respect.

More broadly speaking, I have to say that, as a community, we must accept the inevitability of genetic modification and gene technology. We have to accept that this is going to take place, that we are going to find ways to develop drought resistant crops and disease resistant crops, that we are going to find ways of getting better yields per acre, and that we are going to find ways of producing bigger, better and safer crops for consumers using this gene technology.

There are in the community people who see gene technology as some sort of an evil and who would oppose it almost on philosophical grounds on the basis that to interfere with nature is something that would somehow make the world a far worse place and would somehow endanger people's health and wellbeing. Of course, the logic of that would be to argue that we should not have modern medicines. The logic of that would be to argue that we should not conduct operations to save people's lives, that we should not take an aspirin and that we should not in any way interfere with nature.

Of course, we interfere with nature every day in order to prolong life, in order to make the world a better place. The world we live in faces many challenges, not the least of which is feeding the many, and if we rule out this sort of technology, if we become Luddites, and if we close our eyes and our ears to the opportunities with which science presents us, we run the risk of turning our back on humanity, on progress and on our very future. It is my view that we cannot avoid facing up to the issue of gene technology, and I believe that the government and the minister have taken up the cudgels here and have introduced a bill that gets us off to a very good start. I also commend opposition members for their support for the bill and note that they agree that the only way to go with this is forward.

There are dangers. There are all sorts of dangers once you start to interfere in any way with the natural way of things. Some of those dangers have been alluded to already in the debate and I am sure they will be mentioned subsequently. One of my great concerns, not only in respect of this bill but more generally, is the danger of humanity creating at some point in the future some sort of a super bug or super weed—accidentally creating some sort of a monster that we do not want to live with. Those sorts of dangers have to be faced and faced head on. There will be risks, but there have always been risks as science has enabled us to broach new frontiers.

We developed an atomic bomb and we have developed atomic energy to be used for enormous good or enormous evil, but the way to go with this venture of gene technology is not to close our eyes to the technology but to open our eyes to the moral guidance and the moral standing with which we guide it, and to ensure that governments here in Australia ensure that this technology is used for good and that the people of Australia are protected from any evils or any dangers that may be encompassed in it. I am confident that the good people of Australia and governments, both state and federal, in this country will do that. I am sure that we will work most effectively with our friends in other countries and

around the world to advance with this technology in a most constructive way.

Therefore, I am confident in the bill and confident that we as a government must go forward to the community and say, 'Let us not close our eyes to this.' To those who would run and hide from it, I say that they may in the long term be doing themselves a disservice, as indeed they would be run away from medical science and the many benefits that it can bring to humanity.

I support the bill. I put to those who may oppose it the question: what future may there be for us if we turn our back on this bill and on this technology? Where are we going? Are we going forwards or backwards? I think the latter would be the case. It is an excellent bill and I commend it to the House. The minister and the government have done a good job in bringing it here and I congratulate opposition members on giving it their full support.

Mr LEWIS (Hammond): I believe that the proposition before the chamber is sound and that the bill that we will contemplate in committee shortly is worthy of our unanimous support at this time. That is probably about as far as we can go without causing anxiety to too many people in the wider community. This is one of the abilities which the Deputy Premier seems to have: knowing where to draw the line in political terms and how far policy can go which complies with the facts as they are known—and, therefore, good science—without it causing too much anxiety in the wider community and doing it within the resources at our disposal. In effect, those resources are revenue money because anything that we seek will have to be paid for.

Knowledge is power. So many people have said that for so long that I wonder whether all members have understood how elegant that statement is. In this case, its relevance in the context of the debate is that it is not knowledge about what has been written as science fiction in terms of the horror consequences to which I wish to draw attention—that is more entertainment if you like horror movies and so on—rather, it is about the need to base our opinions soundly on knowledge and to pursue our inquiries and research to expand the horizons of our knowledge of the minutiae of organic chemistry in the structure of life. It is from that that we will get our power.

As it stands at present, to use the term 'genetically modified organisms' in the company of some people is to evoke an entirely unrealistic and fearful response on their part that such things are evil. What I need to tell those people through my remarks in the House tonight is that they are mistaken. Modifications of organisms have been occurring at random quite naturally ever since life began on this planet. We would not be here were that not so. I see it all as part of the grand plan of Divine Providence.

Our knowledge, understanding and certainty about the structure of the DNA molecule and the proteins in the genes comprised of the DNA is what we now need to further consider in all or as many life forms as possible—and the sooner the better. To say that that is hideous and must not be examined and understood is stupid in the extreme, because it means that we will be able to effect the manner in which we produce for ourselves as human beings the means by which we can provide prosperity for the increasing numbers of people who are born anywhere on earth at any time in the future. Unless we can provide for them what we in Australia enjoy and do with a better knowledge of what makes that possible in biochemical terms—more explicitly in genetic

terms—we will always be confronted with jealousies between different ethnic groups from different parts of the globe which will result in conflict called war.

Just because most people thought the earth to be flat—and the church taught it in every lesson that it gave during the dark ages and even into the beginning of the Renaissance which, by definition, was the commencement of better understanding—and they found evidence to support that assertion, that did not make it so. The evidence to which they referred, of course, was what they said was fact: that water or any other liquid finds its own level and that the surface of liquid responding to gravity is flat—‘flat’ meaning a straight line in a horizontal plane—and that, therefore, the earth, covered by the sea in those parts where dry land was not raised above the level of that water, must be flat. By extrapolation, there had to be an edge somewhere, an end to the earth, and they said it would be dangerous to go too far lest you fall off the edge of the earth. We now know that to be a ridiculous proposition.

Likewise, for us to say that an organism which has been modified in consequence of scientific endeavour to produce a particular result is a dangerous organism and unfit to eat—Frankenstein food, as the story goes—is equally ridiculous. It could be so but, if its genes have been properly manipulated with certain knowledge as to the kind of protein which will be produced in that organism in consequence of our better understanding of the structure of DNA, we will not need to fear that we are creating a prospective monster or life form that will take over the planet. Even if it does not cause us any immediate discomfort, such an organism (so science fiction would have us believe whether in the written word or the audio-visual production of the idea for the sake of entertainment) is said to be likely to produce devastating consequences.

Whilst it would be possible to breed such an organism, the chances of our succeeding in doing so before we know more than we currently know about the structure of DNA are fairly low. What is more, it is not the purpose of those people who are geneticists or microbiologists or biophysicists or biochemists (either alone or collaboratively) to do such things. After all, they are human beings too, and they want a better life not only for themselves and their families but for the world. They do not set about to be destructive of the society that feeds them. They may of course—in the James Bond type scenario (or more likely, these days, Osama bin Laden)—be manipulated into doing something that is reprehensible in that regard.

I have no problem with people contemplating such consequences. However, I do have a problem with all of us getting uptight just because we are engaging in the genetic manipulation of the animals that we farm for our food and fibre, shelter and sustenance, and of the plants that we grow to improve the yield we get from those plants, incorporating the desirable components of human nutrition and, for that matter, animal nutrition. The more effective and successful we are at doing that, the less space we will have to take from the total ecosystem to have it explicitly dedicated to the purpose of providing food and fibre, shelter and sustenance for human beings.

So it is in our interests—if we are to be sensitively green—to pursue that research to the very best of our ability as a society and to encourage scientists to do it, to encourage a greater number of people to do it, and to do it with greater rigour. Let me make it plain that if it is possible for us to procure what we need from a wider range of ecosystems, but

a smaller proportion of the total ecosystems on the planet to sustain human society in a civilised state, we will be idiotic if we do not. This bill enables us to make the next step in that direction through a framework where conduct is codified in law, and the public is therefore reassured by that codification of the conduct. But it must never go down the pathway of saying that, because we have set out to modify the genes of which the organism is structured, it therefore must not be pursued. The contrary is the case if we are to pursue, as I said, the truth. We will derive benefit from our greater knowledge of the truth about the structure of the DNA molecule and the genes that are produced and the proteins that result, and the kind of life forms that can therefore enhance the capacity of the total fabric of life to be sustained on this planet. The wider range of ecosystems, currently under threat in many instances, is thereby better protected. We need to minimise the amount of space we occupy in getting what we need. That is the way to reduce the impact of our presence.

We all know that corn, that is the *zea* species, whether sweetcorn or maize, has a number of lethal genes and if you self-pollinate pure strains of *zea* species you will decrease their vigour so substantially, by virtue of the fact that these lethal recessive genes will become more concentrated, that productivity will drop to a fraction—not just a quarter but less than a decimal fraction of what it could otherwise be. If you breed those pure strains in isolation from each other and then cross them, the amount of productivity—the seed that is generated from that cross—is enormously greater, and that is what is called hybrid vigour; hybrid sweetcorn, for instance, over the native sweetcorn; hybrid popcorn over the native popcorn; and hybrid maize for stock fodder over the native pure form found in some isolated circumstances increases yield as much as 50-fold or more for the same space, the same sunlight, water and the same soil nutrients. That is what is possible.

These are phenomena of nature having been observed. If it can be done in one species in nature, then why do we not look at doing it in others? Indeed, there are other benefits, too, in medical science. We need to examine the structure of the DNA of the things that go to make up the antibiotics upon which we rely and, in the process of so doing, determine the reactive fractions that are produced by those biochemical structures which were first found in the penicillin fungi and which were turned into an antibiotic by one of our own brilliant South Australians, Florey. If we can do that artificially, more effectively and more efficiently to combat the consequence of disease, and the discomfort suffered by people when they are infected, then we are the wiser and the better for it.

God speed to anyone who is engaging in that kind of research, and I use that as an analogy. It is not just about food: it is about the manipulation of the adverse elements in our environment by use of other life forms to do it that we also need to get smarter. I am saying it is not about hands-off: it is about more hands-on and better understanding, and I commend the minister for the way in which this bill provides the public at large with that kind of certainty.

I also want to say that it is wrong to allow plant patents to be applied by corporate interests, or, for that matter, animal patents or patents on any life form where that life form, having been created, prevents anyone else from being able to derive a second generation benefit from it. In other words, I am saying that no large chemical company, for instance, ought to be allowed to register a patent for resistance to a particular herbicide as a characteristic in the genetic structure of a plant so that that plant, once established as a crop, can be sprayed with that herbicide to kill all competing plants and

produce what we require as a society; having so patented that, include in it, without disclosing the fact, that there is a lethal gene that prevents it from being reproduced by other than that corporate interest and not disclose the fact.

Indeed, we need to have, as this bill begins to provide, a better disclosure of the description of the modifications of the geno type in any patented life form used for commercial interest in all its detail. I say that because we already do that where we use preservatives in food. We have learnt in recent decades of the necessity to disclose those preservatives used in food, because one or two in 10 000, a significant but small per capita number of human beings are allergic to some of those things, and they have rights and need to be protected from exposure to them. That is why the labelling of those foods enables us to identify the presence of something that could cause great discomfort, if not be life threatening, to someone who consumed it. Likewise, we need to require persons who in law have the right to patent a plant they have bred to state exactly what gene it is, the form that gene takes and its structure, that is, the amino acids within the protein of the structure of the gene in so far as it is possible to determine it.

My eyes were opened in the early 1970s, almost 30 years ago, when my eldest foster son, who now has a PhD, indeed, I believe, was the first to use electrophoresis for amino acid, that is fingerprinting the structure of genes on chromosomes in plants, to identify which genes were present in which plants and in what forms they were there without having to grow the next generation or subsequent generations to determine it. It was for that work that he was ultimately awarded his PhD. It enabled me to come to a better understanding of the rate at which we would speed up benefits to be derived from improving productive output of the varieties of plants upon which we relied in one form or another and thereby increase the yield from the available land mass.

If you can do it on dry land, you can do it in wetland too, and much of our food in the future will come from that environment; many of the things we need will come from there. It means that we will be better able to cope with the demands of humanity. But we should not deliver into the hands of corporate interests, who seek to make nothing but profit, the power to do injury to society and, ultimately, themselves and the people who work for them without requiring the disclosures which we begin to require through this law.

I commend the minister for his understanding of good science and the means by which this legislation has been structured to enable the public to obtain security and certainty about the direction in which we are going. I therefore thank the House for its attention and commend the bill to the House.

Mrs MAYWALD (Chaffey): I rise briefly to support this legislation, recognising that it is the South Australian component of the national approach towards a cautious regulatory regime of GMOs. Gene technology is not without controversy, and I understand that there are genuine fears within the community as to just where it might all lead. However, this bill is not the place for that debate. This bill provides a framework, at this stage, for protecting the community and the environment. It gives us the opportunity to look at gene technology as we should; that is, cautiously and with the understanding that there are some good genes and maybe some bad genes.

We need to recognise that we have been dabbling in gene technology for many years. Man has been very diligent in his approach to enhancing opportunities to promote gene

selection within the species. We have done that through production of mutants in various plants: to actually select the best possible mutant and use that for positive benefits for productivity for the farming community. We have used it in various areas also to enhance a better product for medicine and, in the end, provide a benefit for the community. We also need to recognise that the old methods of gene technology through the production of mutants produce not only the good genes but also the bad genes. With recent technology we have the opportunity to concentrate the effort more so on the good genes.

We also need to look at other areas and not just focus on the fish and the tomato story about which we hear so much. We need to look at other examples such as the hybrid green box tree which has been popping up around the Riverland in very high salt affected areas. The green box tree has proven that it is genetically more capable to deal with high salinity than its relative, the grey box tree, and if we are able to tap into what that gene is within those trees we will be able to manage salinity better in this state. That is also all part of gene technology. We should be promoting it cautiously, looking at the bad effects as well as the good effects, and recognising that gene technology is with us and that we need to deal with it and to move cautiously forward with it.

I commend the minister for his efforts in respect of putting this bill together at this stage and playing the role that he has played in the ministerial council in respect of gene technology and management.

The Hon. DEAN BROWN (Minister for Human Services): I thank all members for their significant contribution during this debate. This is one of those pieces of legislation that is landmark legislation. I have been interested in the fact that so many members of the House have spoken, and I appreciate the very positive way in which they have spoken about the legislation. Gene technology, as members have said, has potentially enormous benefits for our community. At the same time, obviously there is a grave concern within the community. It is interesting to see the reaction of the public to the issue, for instance, of genetically modified foods.

The South Australian government was the first government in Australia to carry out a detailed survey of consumers on what they wanted in terms of labelling of genetically modified foods. As minister I asked that some work be undertaken, because we were relying largely on overseas research and somewhat outdated and less than satisfactory consumer surveys carried out elsewhere. It was rather interesting, and I was almost overwhelmed with the results: over 90 per cent of the public wanted very clear and detailed labelling of the food they were eating.

It was interesting to see that there was a relatively open mind from the public in terms of eating genetically modified food if they thought there were benefits. It was interesting to see whether they saw potential cost benefits or maybe nutritional benefits. I think we are still to see what will be a huge benefit in terms of the type of food we eat, simply because we will find through genetic selection and genetic modification—and, to a certain extent, the two go hand in hand—that we are able to produce foods which are particularly high in certain alkaloids and sterols, and things such as that. For instance, we now have popular brands on the market high in plant sterols and those plant sterols are now known to be significant factors in reducing the blood cholesterol levels in the body.

I think that we are about to see huge nutritional gains in terms of the impact on humans and their health by the modification of food. The important point is that consumers have the right to know what they are eating. I might add that this is a subject very dear to my heart. For 2½ years the Minister for Health from the ACT and I took on, if you like, the ANZFA ministerial food council, and we fought very strongly indeed for the principle that consumers have a right to know. We ended up convincing the other states and territories of Australia, and we ended up eventually convincing the federal government. I was delighted to see that when, ultimately, it happened.

We had some real battles along the way. We won some votes by only one vote. Each time we had a meeting of ANZFA we thought we had come to a conclusion, but at the next meeting we would invariably find out that the whole thing was recommitted again. Unsatisfactory consultant reports tried to blow it out of the water simply by overstating the cost impact of labelling genetically modified foods. We had a whole raft of other things such as that as well. However, we persisted, and I am delighted to say that after 2½ years we succeeded in Australia's having what is probably the most advanced legislation in the world in terms of the labelling of genetically modified foods.

I am particularly pleased that the new legislation comes into effect in about a month's time. There will be a time zone for a few months during which the stuff that is on the shelf can remain on the shelf, but certainly after December this year any new foods produced must comply with the new requirements. And so, from the beginning of next year, we will find that Australia does have appropriate labelling of any genetically modified food, or any ingredient within that food that has been genetically modified. I do not mind admitting that, in working through that issue, I changed my views in terms of which labelling requirements should be set for various ingredients, micro ingredients and things such as that. However, I think that the standard that we set for Australia will eventually become the standard that is applied by the rest of the world, but only time will tell.

We are further advanced than Europe. It creates potentially an enormous advantage for Australia because Australian food exporters will be able to export to any other country in the world that has a specific requirement and know that they will be able to meet the requirement without having to carry out further testing, or even to change the labelling that might be required in terms of any genetic modification that has taken place. We have already taken one huge step in that regard.

I will comment on a couple of points raised by various members. The member for Elizabeth stated that mainly multinationals are involved in genetically modified plants. I do point out that the CSIRO is the largest organisation in Australia undertaking genetic modification of plants, and it is a government organisation. So, not just private overseas organisations but large government organisations are involved as well.

The honourable member pointed out that Adventis at Mount Gambier had breached certain requirements. The interim office of the Gene Technology Regulator investigated those breaches and found that they did not pose any significant risk, either to public health or to the environment. There were breaches; there is no doubt about that. However, they did not pose any risk.

The Australian/New Zealand Food Standards Council, which is the body that replaces ANZFA, did respond to consumer wishes in terms of what the consumers wanted and

their right to know what they were eating. As I have just said, mandatory labelling requirements now come into effect on 7 December this year.

A South Australian Federated Farmers' paper put up a series of issues that needed to be addressed, and it included complementary state legislation and an education campaign, and research efforts on gene technology and certainly on identifying what the impact may be on both the environment and human health. It also looked at the right to farm and what rights may exist around whether or not one is allowed to use genetically modified plants.

I want to pick up the issue of the education campaign. I have very strong views, and I know the Premier has also, on the fact that inadequate work has been done by the federal government in carrying out that education campaign. The majority of people within the community do not have any significant knowledge of genetic modification, what the benefits might be, why genetic modification takes place and what the risks might be. I have heard the Premier talk on this subject, and I certainly endorse his sentiments very strongly indeed.

Ms Stevens interjecting:

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: The present Premier when he spoke. He came along to a meeting of the Australian/New Zealand Food Standards Council. Although I met the Prime Minister on behalf of South Australia, the present Premier came along and expressed a number of views. I appreciated his support very much in terms of the need to make sure that there is a better education program. I still highlight that, despite the request made in July by the Premier, the federal government still has not done enough in terms of an education program. Health ministers have been asking for an education program to be conducted. We asked for it about two years ago. Resources have been allocated, but still it is very slow.

Information also needs to be available at the point of sale so that, when people go into supermarkets that stock genetically modified foods, they are able to understand the modifications of those foods, which ingredients are involved, what the benefits might be, and what testing may have been carried out on those foods.

The member for Elizabeth highlighted that we need to take a cautious and an evidence-based approach. I highlight the fact that the framework put down in this legislation takes it in that way. It provides that the level of regulation will be commensurate with the risk involved. Therefore, the higher the risk, the higher the level of regulation that will take place.

Members need to appreciate that this bill is complementary to legislation being passed in other states and territories of Australia, and by the federal government. Gene technology bills have already passed through Victoria and Queensland, and bills have been introduced into New South Wales and Western Australia. There is an obligation under the inter-government agreement that this legislation should be through by 31 December this year. So I appreciate that we need to get this legislation through this parliament in the current sittings in the next couple of weeks. I ask all members of this House who have shown a great deal of cooperation and members of another place to show the same level of cooperation in getting this legislation through.

The member for Elizabeth asked which organisations have been sent the discussion paper. I was pleased to be able to release that discussion paper at the same time as introducing the bill in the House. We worked hard to coincide the two. I am able to indicate those organisations. There were 57 rural

and semi-rural local government bodies or councils; the Local Government Association; 13 regional development boards; the South Australian Federated Farmers; Avcare; the Australian Oil Seed Federation; the Grains Council of Australia; AusBulk; the Australian Wheat Board; the Australian Barley Board; the Australian Dairy Farmers Association; the industry development boards in meat, horticulture, field crops and dairy; the Eyre Peninsula Farmers Group; the South Australian Apiarists Association; the office of local government; the CRC for Weed Management Systems; the Advisory Board of Agriculture; about 80 branches of the agricultural bureau throughout the state; and appropriate government departments. It is available on the Department of Human Services web site, and members of the public who have written in and asked for a copy have also been sent a copy. We have also pointed out to those people that they can obtain it off the web site if they wish to do so. I sent out copies to the media, as well. So, members can see that it has been widely distributed.

Ms Stevens interjecting:

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: A number of those groups certainly have been made aware of its existence. A number of them have asked for copies, and we have sent them out. In terms of other points made, the member for Flinders and a couple of other members raised the matter of specific zones within the state ending up being GM free zones. I can understand the argument put forward by the member for Flinders, who represents the bulk of Eyre Peninsula, and I can understand the fact that Eyre Peninsula in many ways forms an ideal geographic zone in that it has a desert to the north and a desert to the west. It has a very small area where crops are not grown near Port Augusta and Whyalla, yet we have this vast area which could be a significant area for the production of GM free crops. That sort of issue needs to be looked at seriously. I stress that this framework does not do that. The Gene Technology Council will establish the procedure by which that is done.

As the member representing Kangaroo Island, I believe that there is another zone of the state that ought seriously to go through the debate of whether it should have a genetically modified organism free zone. It has a uniqueness there, and it is at least 15 kilometres from the mainland. It is highly unlikely that any cross-pollination or contamination would occur. These are the decisions that the local communities need to go through when they better understand what it is all about. Certainly, there will need to be leadership. A classic example of the benefit of the isolation of something like Kangaroo Island is the fact that it already has the unique ligurian bee. No honey product is allowed onto the island, firstly, because the island is free from foul brood on the island, so the hives are not contaminated. Also, we would be able to maintain the pure strain of the ligurian bee there. I understand we have the last pure strain of ligurian bee anywhere in the world because it is in a quarantine zone and that no honey product and no bees are allowed to be transported across to the island.

Another example of Kangaroo Island doing this in a similar area is that it is now designated a seed potato zone and no-one is allowed to plant potatoes for commercial production or, in fact, grow potatoes on the island. There are restrictions on how potatoes can be used on the island simply so that they can maintain the disease-free status of the island seed stock.

Other points raised by members will be covered in committee. Again, I want to thank everyone involved for their

contribution to the debate. I urge members to support the bill through the committee stage, thus enabling the measure to pass as quickly as possible.

Bill read a second time.

In committee.

Clauses 1 to 9 passed.

Clause 10.

Ms STEVENS: Will the minister explain the meaning of 'homogenous recombination'?

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: 'Homogenous recombination' is the natural process of crossing over, that is, breakage and reunion, between two DNA strands with identical or near identical sequences which results in the formation of new sequences and the formation of a new DNA molecule, with its sequence derived partly from one DNA and partly from the other. That is a natural process that occurs, but I stress that it is not gene technology.

The other thing that I should indicate generally on this clause is that some members have asked if this bill controls cloning. The answer is no, but I have been asked that question by a number of people. I stress that in South Australia cloning is regulated by the Reproductive Technology Act 1988, the regulations of 1995, and subsequent modifications to those regulations which I think were made last year.

Clause passed.

Clauses 11 to 13 passed.

Clause 14.

The CHAIRMAN: I am sure the committee is aware that clause 14 is, in fact, not recognised as a clause: it is a note relating to the commonwealth legislation, but the member for Elizabeth is entitled to ask questions and seek information from the minister.

Ms STEVENS: Will the minister explain what this provision means, in specifics?

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: This is a somewhat unusual clause; I think it is the first time that I have seen it in a piece of legislation. The provision means that, until the South Australian Gene Technology Act is in place, the commonwealth Gene Technology Act 2000 operates to the full extent of its constitutional power in South Australia. Once the South Australian act is in place and is declared to be a corresponding law, the coverage of the commonwealth act will wind back so that it does not cover in South Australia things done, or omitted to be done, by a person that may cause the spread of disease or pests, or a dealing with a GMO undertaken by a higher education institution or a state agency; in other words, those areas that come under the state powers under the commonwealth constitution. These activities will be regulated by the Gene Technology Regulator under the South Australian act. You need to appreciate that, at the present time and until this bill is enacted, the federal act (the Commonwealth Gene Technology Act 2000) will operate, and will continue to operate, in those areas that this bill will eventually take over.

Clause passed.

Clause 15 to 20 passed.

Clause 21.

Ms STEVENS: I refer to page 32 of your green discussion paper, point 5.4.2, which states:

SA may not be able to declare effective GM crop restricted areas unless the Gene Technology Ministerial Council makes a policy principle. . . If a policy principle is made, then SA could declare GM crop restricted areas under a South Australian act, but only for the purposes of preserving the identity of GM or non-GM crops for marketing purposes.

Having read the discussion paper, I would say that that will be quite a complex process. If it is for marketing purposes for a whole region—and you have talked about Eyre Peninsula and perhaps Kangaroo Island—you would have to be quite clear that every product produced would obviously be included. It would not allow any flexibility for a single class of products to be included or not included. It seems to be a very complex decision and will obviously require a careful process to ensure that everyone understands the implications of what they are doing. I would be interested in the minister's comments.

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: This is a very important issue, and I appreciate the member's raising it. I do not agree with her assumption that, in fact, this would have to be GM free for all organisms. For instance, it might be decided that Eyre Peninsula should be free of genetically modified canola, but they might decide to accept genetically modified wheat. Clearly, if it is deemed to be a genetically free area for canola for marketing purposes, no-one will be allowed to bring in genetically modified canola crops. It could become a very significant factor. I believe that some significant areas could be isolated and end up being areas where no genetically modified crop, at least of certain types, is permitted. I saw this from the intensive debate we had for 2½ years in getting the labelling requirements, and it became a real eye opener to me in terms of the potential markets that may exist. The cost benefits that can be achieved by taking a whole region, rather than trying to segregate out within one region those that are GM-free crops and those that are not, knowing the standards that have been put down, have been fairly high indeed.

So, if you do not have those GM free areas, you must have duplication of silos, duplication of transport methods and duplication of just about everything else, and that is going to be extremely difficult and, before long, there will be so much cross contamination, if you are not careful, that you will not be able to achieve it, because small amounts of cross contamination will end up producing a mixed crop that will not meet appropriate standards. That is why I think Eyre Peninsula might be a suitable area to look at, because it is isolated, and there are very few areas of Australia that would be isolated to the same extent.

The same applies to Western Australia: I imagine that there could be opportunities to have some GM free crops in Western Australia. That is why I also mention Kangaroo Island, because it may be appropriate to make the whole area a GM free area. It is a relatively small area. Combined crop production on the island is currently about 30 000 tonnes a year. It has potential to go higher than that, and it might be interesting to see, but you could well end up selling the island for what it already represents, which is a very natural area where genetically modified crops are not allowed. I stress the fact, as I pointed out, that the decision on how to establish those GM free areas is part of the decision of the council, so some very important steps are to be taken once the council meets and is able to look at those issues.

Ms STEVENS: I accept what the minister says and I do not disagree with any of it. I did not intend to give the impression that I was assuming only totally GM free. I understand that it could be a combination of a variety of things, from just one crop right through to the whole lot. But I get the impression when people talk about this generally in the community that they assume it is totally GM free. I think that working through the issues with the community about all of that and just how far they want to go will be an interesting

process, and I suppose eventually we will have the opportunity to begin that process.

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: I appreciate the honourable member's comment. I think, though, it highlights that we need to take a cautious approach to start with because if, in fact, you have an area which is GM free you can keep it GM free—say it is Eyre Peninsula or Kangaroo Island. It is very difficult, once GM crops have been grown, to come back and say, 'This is a GM free area.' That is going to be an enormous challenge. So, I would like to see the GM free areas put down very quickly indeed to pre-empt the spread of any GM crops across Australia and to identify where those areas will be. It is also going to take quite some time, I think, to go through that community debate.

I would urge some areas of the state to take the line right from the beginning and say, 'We will be GM free,' because we can always reverse that decision but, once we have accepted GM crops, it is very hard to reverse that decision. So, I would urge areas of the state to start thinking about this beforehand and to look at what might be done initially. But, at the same time (and I think a lot of members have mentioned this point during the debate), we should not be Luddites and try to turn our backs on the benefits that can be derived from genetic modification and try to shun it for the whole state. That is where I think we need to be pretty rational and apply a great deal of commonsense, recognising that around the world there is a very significant market for GM free foods.

Already, we know that some key supermarkets—in fact, many of the major supermarkets in Europe—have a clear national or international company policy that they will not incorporate any genetically modified components within food on the shelves of their supermarkets. The big French supermarket chain is a classic example—

Ms Stevens: At the moment.

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: At the moment. It might change. It may well change after attitudes change but, for the time being, there is potentially a huge marketing force and almost a premium if, in fact, we have GM free foods available.

Clause passed.

Clauses 22 to 26 passed.

Clause 27.

Ms STEVENS: This clause relates to the functions of the Regulator, and there are a lot of them. My question relates to the size of the Regulator's resources and being able to carry out those functions. I guess it links into a comment that was made by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in her contribution at the second reading stage when she made the point that she is concerned about the inspection and enforcement roles and whether the resources will be there adequately to perform those tasks.

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: In relation to the Regulator, it is Sue Meek. I do not know if members know that. I happen to have worked with Sue Meek. She worked in the Department of Industry and Trade when I was the Minister for Industry and Trade, and she was part of the staff of the Technology Change Council that I established in 1979 or 1980. I was delighted to work with her then, and I am delighted to hear that she is now the Gene Technology Regulator for the whole of Australia, and I congratulate her.

It is expected that her staff will be about 40 to 50 people. They have an initial budget of \$8 million a year for the first two years, fully covered by the federal government. After that, there will be discussions between the federal and state

governments as to what sharing might take place but, initially, the full cost has been picked up by the federal government. But, with that sort of resource—\$8 million and 40 or 50 staff—I believe that, on the present level of activity within Australia, that is quite adequate.

Clause passed.

Clauses 28 to 33 passed.

Clause 34.

Ms STEVENS: I want to refer to the Aventis issue to which I referred in my second reading speech and which the minister in his response mentioned. I want to refer to it in relation to this clause, which is about breaching the conditions of a GMO licence. In relation to the interim Office of the Gene Technology Regulator's assessment of the Aventis incidents, the minister mentioned that GMAC had advised that none of the breaches represented an increased risk to human health and safety, but he omitted to say that, in fact, they advised that the breaches might have resulted in an increased risk to the environment because noncompliance with the GMAC recommendations has increased the potential for outcrossing of GM canola, including through uncontrolled seed dispersal.

I just wanted to get the whole picture on the table, because the point that I was making in my second reading speech was that, when Aventis did that here in South Australia, it was part of that undermining of the confidence of the community in biotechnology and in multinationals and their role in biotechnology.

In relation to breaching conditions of a GMO licence, I am taking my information from the Senate Community Affairs References Committee report on the commonwealth bill, which mentions that, as part of the investigations, Aventis had disagreed with the findings in relation to Breach 1 and Breach 2. They maintained that the so-called breaches were of a technical, administrative or very minor kind. The report states:

In several cases, the 'so-called breach' arose from a lack of certainty as to what GMAC 'recommendations' mean and how in practice they should be interpreted. Aventis contends that 'there was not enough clarity and certainty in some of the GMAC "recommendations"... for anyone to characterise the divergences between GMAC's expectations and Aventis' performances as "breaches".'

If that is what their opinion was, it seems to me that, if we say that people should not breach conditions, the conditions need to be absolutely crystal clear and we must ensure that we do not have possible loopholes or uncertainties for both sides of the equation, that is, for the company and for the community. I would just like the minister's comment on that because it highlights the need to be absolutely clear.

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: The Aventis situation took place under a different regime completely. It was self-regulation at that stage and the commonwealth act did not apply. We are now under a totally different regime, we have the federal legislation and the Gene Technology Regulator is very conscious of the need to be very clear in definitions and requirements, so the point that the honourable member has raised is quite valid.

I was not the minister specifically responsible for that area at that time. I have only fairly recently been made the minister responsible for gene technology. I have been responsible in the food side but not in the specific area that was under the then Deputy Premier, now Premier. I cannot really comment and I do not feel that I am in a position to comment on the issue in detail except to say that the commonwealth legislation did not apply, and the point that

the member for Elizabeth raises is understood and agreed to by the Gene Technology Regulator.

Clause passed.

Clauses 35 to 39 passed.

Clause 40.

Ms STEVENS: I refer to subclause (6), which provides that the application for a licence must be accompanied by an application fee prescribed by the regulations. What is the level of that fee?

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: For the first two years while the commonwealth government is recovering all its costs, there will be no fees. That will be set by regulation at the end of the two-year period.

Ms STEVENS: To clarify that further, in debate on a previous clause about resourcing, the minister mentioned \$8 million per year. Now he has just mentioned that it will be while the federal government is recovering the cost. Will the commonwealth pull back from the \$8 million a year commitment as time goes by? Is that what the minister means?

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: It was agreed under the intergovernment agreement that, until 2003, the federal government would cover all the costs and there would be no fees. After 2003, there would need to be negotiation to determine, firstly, what cost recovery would occur and, therefore, what the fees might be, and how the costs would be broken up between the states. That is all part of the intergovernment agreement.

I have made available to the opposition a copy of the intergovernment agreement. If any other member of the committee wants a copy of that agreement, I am happy to make it available. It is an agreement that has not yet been signed by all the states, but they have all agreed in principle to it. It is simply a matter of the appropriate copy getting from one state to the next because they all have to sign exactly the same copy, and it takes some time to do that around the whole of Australia.

Clause passed.

Clauses 41 to 72 passed.

Clause 73.

Ms STEVENS: Can the minister give some information about and examples of notifiable low risk dealings?

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: Notifiable low risk dealings will be prescribed in the South Australian gene technology regulations, very much in line with the commonwealth regulations which have already been prescribed. Dealing which involves the intentional release of the GMO into the environment cannot be a notifiable dealing. Such a dealing must be licensed by the Regulator. Notifiable dealings are based on such dealings under the previous administrative system overseen by the Gene Manipulation Advisory Committee, which over 25 years of practical experience have been determined to present low risk to human or environmental safety.

The commonwealth regulations prescribe five classes of notifiable low risk dealings. Examples of notifiable low risk dealings are: dealings with a genetically modified flowering plant which do not involve the plant being grown to flowering stage; dealings with a genetically modified flowering plant which do involve the plant being grown to a flowering stage if the plant is male sterile and unable to set seed—I am not sure whether the purple carnation comes into that category, and do not quote me on that—and also the use of a GMO to produce a protein in a culture of less than 10 litres to enable the study of the structure or function of the protein.

Clause passed.

Clauses 74 to 139 passed.

Clause 140.

Ms STEVENS: I have chosen a clause that includes the expression 'exempt dealing'. I ask the minister to outline to the committee five categories or examples in the exempt dealing class.

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: Exempt dealings will be prescribed in South Australia's gene technology regulations in line with the exempt dealings under the commonwealth Gene Technology Act, which are prescribed by the commonwealth gene technology regulations 2001, which provide that the intentional release of a GMO into the environment cannot be an exempt dealing. Such a dealing must be licensed by the Regulator. Exempt dealings are based on the exempt dealings under the previous administrative system overseen by the Gene Manipulation Advisory Committee which, after

25 years of practical experience, has determined that they present no significant risks to humans or environmental safety.

The commonwealth regulations prescribe five classes of exempt dealings. Examples of this are, for instance, dealings with a gene knock-out mouse if no advantage is conferred on the adult animal by the knock-out of the gene—please do not ask me what that means—and the shotgun cloning of mammalia DNA in one of the prescribed highly characterised and well understood host vector systems.

Clause passed.

Remaining clauses (141 to 194), schedule and title passed.

Bill read a third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

At 9.13 p.m. the House adjourned until Thursday 1 November at 10.30 a.m.