

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Monday 27 May 2002

The **SPEAKER (Hon. I.P. Lewis)** took the chair at 2 p.m. and read prayers.

PAPERS TABLED

The following papers were laid on the table:

By the Attorney-General (Hon. M.J. Atkinson)—

Crown Law Opinions—Cabinet Guidelines ‘Representation for Ministers in Defamation Proceedings’—Hon. W.A. Matthew
Dated 31 July 2000
Dated 12 September 2000.

MEMBER FOR BRIGHT

The Hon. W.A. MATTHEW (Bright): I seek leave to make a personal explanation.

Leave granted.

The Hon. W.A. MATTHEW: On Friday 17 May 2002, I was interviewed by an ABC radio journalist in response to a media release issued by me in relation to the Beverley uranium mine. At the end of the interview, the journalist commenced asking questions on another topic in relation to comments that I made in the parliament that resulted in my suspension from parliament on 14 May 2002. I informed the journalist that I did not wish to be interviewed in relation to the matter, and I said:

All of those have been raised between Mr Lewis and I before, and I don’t need to say any more on the matter. The matter has been raised in parliament. Mr Lewis has indicated his reaction to my raising of those, and that’s where the matter ended at the time.

This comment was broadcast on the 7 a.m. ABC news bulletin of Saturday 18 May 2002. My comment was intended to fend off the interview. My comment was not for any ulterior purpose, nor did it relate to any legal proceedings. I did not seek to be nor wish to be interviewed on the topic. The comment was not made with any malice towards you, Mr Speaker. I did not seek to disparage the office of Speaker.

The SPEAKER: I thank the member for Bright for that personal explanation, and I am sure that the house does, too.

DEFAMATION CASE COSTS

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON (Attorney-General): I seek leave to make a ministerial statement.

Leave granted.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: This statement is about a case decided by His Honour Judge Rice in the District Court on Friday, the case of *Hanna v Matthew*, in which the member for Mitchell is the plaintiff and the member for Bright the defendant. Judge Rice entered judgment for the plaintiff in the sum of \$65 000. The costs of the plaintiff and the defendant together are expected to be in the range \$80 000 to \$110 000. These costs would ordinarily be awarded against the defendant.

A private defamation action between two individuals would not in the ordinary course of events be a matter of interest to the government. This is so even if two members of parliament are litigants. In this matter, the taxpayers are exposed because of a taxpayer-funded indemnity for the member for Bright. The previous government awarded the member for Bright an indemnity as to damages, his costs and

the plaintiff’s costs, so the total liability of taxpayers will be in the range \$145 000 to \$175 000.

The members for Bright and Mitchell represent adjoining electorates. In May and June of 2000 the member for Bright made a number of public statements outside the parliament arising from the member for Mitchell’s and the member for Bright’s attempts to prevent a tavern being located next to Woodend Primary School. On 24 May 2000 the member for Bright published a media release that was reproduced in an article in the *Southern Times Messenger* on 7 June 2000. The member for Bright then submitted a letter to the editor of the same publication that was published by the *Southern Times* and by the *Guardian Messenger*. The offending release was also posted on the Premier’s web page.

On 8 June, solicitors for the member for Mitchell wrote to the member for Bright pointing out that the sub-stratum of fact on which the media release was based was false and that the effect of the release was defamatory. The words found to be actionable defamation were:

Earlier this year we saw the member for Mitchell walk away from the school council of the Hamilton Secondary College, and here we have him disparaging the efforts of the Woodend community. His actions are a disgrace.

His Honour found these words to be actionable defamation and he did not find any of the member for Bright’s defences made out. His Honour said:

The general test with respect to fairness of comment is: could any fair-minded person honestly express that opinion on the proved facts? I would answer that question in the negative. No fair-minded person could honestly express that opinion on the proved facts. Further, a comment must not misstate the facts. A comment cannot be fair which is built upon facts which are not truly stated.

Judge Rice says at page 16 of the judgment:

The defendant well knew that the plaintiff was very supportive of the Woodend community in its efforts to oppose the tavern proposal and secure an expansion of the primary school.

At page 19 of the judgment he says:

Even a quick check of the unrevised *Hansard* for question time or the grievance debate for 24 May would have revealed that the plaintiff had not disparaged or denigrated or put down the efforts of the Woodend community. The defendant acted quite recklessly as to the publication of media release B, and more so in respect of the other publications.

The judge continues:

... the reply had little to do with the attack. ... the response went far beyond what was appropriate and was not reasonably commensurate with the attack.

On page 27 the judge awards \$3 000 for publication of media release B to a number of media outlets on 24 May, \$15 000 for the publication of media release B in the *Southern Times Messenger* on 7 June, \$5 000 for publishing media release A on the member for Bright’s website, \$2 000 for publication of a letter from the member for Bright on 15 June in the *Southern Times Messenger*, \$20 000 for republication of the letter in both the *Southern Times Messenger* and the *Guardian Messenger* on 28 June, and \$10 000 for the publication of media release A on the state government website. The judge then adds to that total owing to the member for Bright’s conduct. He says:

To use the colloquial expression, the defendant ‘rubbed it in’. In my view the defendant, by means of the school correction letter, exacerbated the earlier defamation. I award aggravated damages in respect of that publication in the amount of \$10 000.

At the time, the member for Bright was also the minister for minerals and energy and the minister assisting the deputy premier.

There are cabinet guidelines about the Crown's indemnifying a minister who is a defendant in a defamation matter. These guidelines themselves have been the subject of an inquiry by the Auditor-General who, in a report published on 28 October 1999, expressed a number of significant concerns about these guidelines. If we leave aside for the moment the question whether the guidelines are too generous to ministers, the most important part of the existing guidelines for this case is as follows:

The Attorney-General will determine whether the government should provide assistance to the minister with respect to the defence of proceedings. Such assistance will not be provided where the publication complained of did not reasonably arise from the performance of ministerial duties.

The then attorney-general (Hon. K.T. Griffin) sought advice from the Crown Solicitor as to whether the alleged defamation fell within the cabinet guidelines entitled *Representation for Ministers in Defamation Proceedings*. The Crown Solicitor, Mr M.D. Walter, replied on 31 July 2000—

Mr BRINDAL: I rise on a point of order. The Attorney-General appears to be canvassing matters which were rightly the business of the last cabinet and of the last parliament. I ask what responsibility the minister has to this house for the actions of the previous government and the advice received by it.

The SPEAKER: Clearly the minister did not make such decisions, but the minister, and the whole of cabinet, is bound by those decisions, or at least prima facie unless a decision to the contrary is made. I am curious about where this is going myself, and I nonetheless find at this point that the statement is in order, despite my feeling apprehensive.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: The Crown Solicitor wrote:

It is my opinion that the occasion of alleged defamation does not come within the cabinet guidelines *Representation for Ministers in Defamation Proceedings*. The guidelines restrict indemnities for costs and damages to alleged defamations which arose from the performance of ministerial duties. In this matter the alleged defamation concerned the resignation of an opposition member from a school council. The statement cannot even remotely be linked to Mr Matthew's ministerial offices as Minister for Minerals and Energy, Minister Assisting the Deputy Premier. The comments were made in a purely party political context.

The material from the member for Bright was afterwards presented to the Crown Solicitor with a view to his changing his advice. On 12 September he reiterated his advice. The Crown Solicitor writes:

I cannot advise that the alleged defamatory matter was published in the course of ministerial duties.

I will be tabling those two opinions in their entirety. On 11 December 2000 cabinet approved the government's funding legal representation for the Hon. Wayne Matthew in defending the defamation action. On 21 June 2001 the Premier took a further submission to cabinet that cabinet approve the government's paying for any costs and damages incurred by the Hon. Wayne Matthew MP in the defamation action brought against him by Mr Kris Hanna MP. So, I table the advice of the Crown Solicitor of 31 July 2000 and the advice of the Crown Solicitor of 12 September 2000.

I have today through the Treasurer asked the Auditor-General to report on this indemnity. The Auditor-General reported on a previous indemnity granted to the Hon. R.I. Lucas in respect of actionable remarks defamatory of the Hon. Nick Xenophon. This report was ordered printed on 28 October 1999. While the Auditor-General considers this indemnity, the government shall write to the member for Bright to ask him whether the indemnity ought to be with-

drawn. Natural justice requires this. We will be seeking the member for Bright's view on whether the government should withdraw the indemnity and in particular the basis on which it can properly be said that he was acting in the course of his ministerial duties in making the statement he made. We shall be interested in any submissions the member for Bright might wish to make about the relationship between his then ministerial offices and the statements he made. If the government were minded to withdraw the indemnity we would need to know from the member for Bright the losses that he would suffer that would be attributable to his reliance on the indemnity rather than on any other factor such as the making of the statements of which the member for Mitchell complains.

I take this opportunity to ask the member for Bright and the members of the previous cabinet that approved this indemnity—I refer to the Leader of the Opposition, the members for Finniss, Light, Davenport and Unley and the Hons R.I. Lucas and D.V. Laidlaw—to what extent they would be prepared to share the costs of this misadventure with South Australian taxpayers.

Mr BRINDAL: I rise on a point of order, sir. The Attorney cannot ask questions during the course of a ministerial statement. He has just done so and I ask that it be taken from the record; it is improper.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! It cannot be struck from the record but it is probably inappropriate that it was put in the form that it was. I would see it as a rhetorical question; it is quite out of order for any of those members the Attorney has mentioned to answer or attempt to answer the question at this moment. They may do so by some other device, such as a substantive motion. However, I do not find any point of order upon which I can rule in order to have the statement struck from the record.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: I would add in conclusion that the government has not made up its mind about this matter and will take full account of whatever submissions the member for Bright wishes to make. The matter is raised now only because the recent judgment requires an early public response.

HOSPITALS, MODBURY

The Hon. L. STEVENS (Minister for Health): I seek leave to make a ministerial statement.

Leave granted.

The Hon. L. STEVENS: I wish to provide information to the house in relation to the contracts between the board of the Modbury Public Hospital and Healthscope. On 3 February 1995 the Liberal government announced that for the first time in Australia a private operator would assume control of a public hospital under a 20 year contract worth \$700 million. The Liberal government announced that the contract would save taxpayers \$6 million a year and that Healthscope would spend \$14.5 million constructing a 65 bed private hospital adjacent to the Modbury Public Hospital.

The former government said that the private hospital would provide expanded services, choice for the community and save the government millions of dollars in future investment. What happened was something quite different. On 29 June 1995, the Liberal government revealed that up-front contract costs totalled \$17 million. In 1996, Health Scope announced that the company would write off \$13.5 million in losses over the life of the contract. In 1997 the Liberal government renegotiated the contract to manage the hospital.

As a result, the Auditor-General reported in 1998 that the contractor was essentially paid more for doing the same.

The \$14.5 million 65 bed private hospital, due to be opened in 1997, is still not built, even though the Liberal government agreed to a new plan to construct the facility inside the Modbury Hospital. Because of this contractual arrangement, the Modbury Hospital has effectively been locked out of working within the network of the metropolitan public hospital system.

Healthscope has now stated publicly that the company would like to offer a termination of the contract, although I am informed that the company has not approached the board of the hospital on this issue. On 20 May Dr Michael Coglein, the National Manager of Business Development for Healthscope, stated:

... whatever savings that flow to the public through the discount is largely wasted on contract administration.

This is the contractual situation left by the former minister, and I will seek advice from the board of the Modbury Hospital. As announced by the Premier on 6 March 2002, a cabinet committee will examine this contract, along with other Liberal government contracts for the privatisation, leasing and outsourcing of major government services. I can tell the company, however, that the government will act in the public interest.

QUESTION TIME

BUILDING INDEMNITY FUNDS

The Hon. R.G. KERIN (Leader of the Opposition): Given the Attorney-General's statements in the media last week that a scheme to ease the crisis in building indemnity insurance would be announced by last Friday, can the Attorney advise the house why no such announcement has been made? On Friday 17 May a number of senior Liberals met with representatives of the building industry to discuss the escalating crisis in building indemnity insurance. As a result of this meeting, a number of measures were agreed upon to allow builders to get back to work while more long-term solutions were implemented.

In the *Advertiser* on 22 May it was reported that the government was considering the introduction of some of these measures to ease the growing crisis in the building industry caused by the inability of many builders to access mandatory building indemnity insurance. The article suggested that the government was looking at a number of measures, including exempting some builders from the requirement to get insurance subject to certain conditions. It went on to say that the details of the scheme would be announced last Friday. Such an announcement did not eventuate, despite the fact that many builders are still unable to commence work, causing undue financial and emotional strain on many South Australian families.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON (Attorney-General): The Leader of the Opposition has asked a fair question, and I apologise to the house for not announcing those measures on Friday or Saturday (it turned out that our cabinet meeting was later), but I hope to be in a position to announce them in the next couple of days. They have been delayed because the Housing Industry Association wants to see me or my officers about the terms of the exemptions. As the Leader of the Opposition would know, there is some struggle between the Housing Industry Association and the Master Builders

Association regarding this topic, and their interests do not coincide. I hope that the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs will very soon be in a position to grant an exemption to home builders subject to very strict conditions. We have to protect consumers as well as ensure that the building industry can go on doing what it does so well in South Australia.

Other things that we hope to be doing is to have a \$10 million cap on liability regarding any one event or any one builder failing. The biggest previous liability for a builder failing was \$6 million for a home builder in Victoria; so, we think that cap is reasonable and may attract another reinsurer back into the market. I hope to be able to announce that within the next couple of days. I agree with the Leader of the Opposition that there is an urgency about this matter, and the government has treated it urgently. The only issue holding us up now is talking to the Housing Industry Association, telling it what we plan to do and explaining what, and why, we plan to do it. We share the opposition's concerns, and I certainly apologise that I was not in a position on Friday to announce the measures.

TAXIS, SAFETY

Mr HANNA (Mitchell): Will the Minister for Transport inform the house how the government is responding to the safety issues arising from the recent attacks upon taxi drivers in Adelaide? On 13 May this year, the minister made a ministerial statement to this house indicating that he was to meet with the taxi industry as a matter of urgency to examine measures that could be taken to improve the safety of drivers and to reduce the incidence of attacks on them. Since then the matter has attracted considerable media attention with various statements being made by various industry participants.

The Hon. M.J. WRIGHT (Minister for Transport): On 14 May 2002 and then on 21 May, I met with key taxi industry representatives to discuss these very important issues in the light of recent attacks—unacceptable attacks. At the outset, I must commend the industry for its willingness and commitment to address these important issues. The industry undertook those discussions frankly and sincerely and a lot of commonsense was applied to a range of issues. There is no doubt that the most important safety initiative that could be undertaken as a deterrent to such attacks is the installation of security cameras.

The industry recognises that cameras are the single most important safety initiative as does the Taxi Safety Task Force, which surveyed the industry in 1998. Since that time experience in other states has demonstrated a marked reduction in the level of attacks following the installation of cameras. The former government provided for the introduction of a 1 per cent levy on fares to fund the capital cost of purchase and the installation of the safety cameras. This levy commenced in February 1997, and I understand the amount of revenue it should have generated should have been sufficient to meet the cost.

However, it is recognised by both this government and the opposition that the taxi industry has had to operate in a very tough economic climate. To that end, both the former government and the Rann Labor Government have granted extensions to the industry as to the time by which taxi drivers would be required to install the security cameras. Following the fruitful discussions with the industry over the space of just one week, it has been agreed that all South Australian taxis will have security cameras installed by 1 December

2002—an example of the industry and government working together.

Taxi operators have the next six months to order and install cameras, and that is an achievable target. Following consultations the government initiated with the four approved camera supply companies, it has been established that operators need to place their orders for cameras by 1 July 2002. In addition to security cameras, a promotional campaign is being developed and will be funded from the Passenger Transport Research and Development Fund and administered by the PTB. This will cover existing security measures: two-way radio, global positioning system and alarm system.

At the two meetings I held with the industry, it was agreed that these were the two most critical measures that could be implemented now. However, a range of further safety measures were also discussed. These are to be considered by the government and industry, initially through the existing Taxi Industry Advisory Panel but, once established, through the more broadly representative Premier's Taxi Council, announced by the Premier in this house on 16 May. These additional safety measures for consideration include extra training and refresher courses for drivers about how to avoid conflict situations and an examination of existing penalties.

With regard to the levy, once the capital expenditure for purchasing and installing cameras has occurred, the levy will be removed and ongoing costs will be incorporated into the taxi cost index, which determines the regulated fares. The Rann government is committed to ensuring that people trying to make a living can and will do so safely. It has acted quickly and decisively and, most importantly, in consultation with the industry to address this important industry and I thank the industry for its support.

KENDELL AIRLINES

The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY (Light): Can the Minister for Transport advise the house whether a regional impact statement was prepared and considered before the government decided not to provide any assistance to Kendall Airlines to support this vital regional transport service?

The Hon. M.J. WRIGHT (Minister for Transport): Not that I am aware of; that is the advice that I have received, but I am happy to check the detail and come back to the honourable member with that information. I think it is fair to say that this government has a fairly simple approach when it comes to subsidising airlines and fares: we are not in the business of subsidising airlines and we are not in the business of subsidising fares. The previous government, of course, had a different view with regard to subsidising fares. It is my understanding that it went into a transaction while it was in caretaker mode, without informing the then opposition. That is not the business that this government is into. We have made it loud and clear that we will not be putting forward \$15 million loan guarantee subsidies: that is not what we are going to be about. However, with regard to a regional statement, I am happy to check the detail and come back to the honourable member with the precise information.

SPRING HILL

Ms RANKINE (Wright): What action has the Minister for Environment and Conservation taken into relation to community concern about the development of the last portion of Spring Hill in the Golden Grove development and its possible environmental impact?

The Hon. J.D. HILL (Minister for Environment and Conservation): I am well aware of the concerns of the local community in regard to this piece of development, because the member for Wright has raised this matter with me on many occasions and has shown a great deal of concern about this issue, as she does about any other issue in her electorate. She is terrier-like in her advocacy on behalf of her constituents.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. J.D. HILL: I will not go overboard.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. J.D. HILL: That is not going overboard. I have also received correspondence from local residents about the same matter and, in relation to that, I have asked my department, particularly the national parks and wildlife section, to look at this issue. It has carried out a biodiversity assessment of the area and I am advised that there are no species of state or national significance in the area surveyed—

The Hon. D.C. Kotz interjecting:

The Hon. J.D. HILL: Perhaps the former environment minister would like to give her own answer after I have completed mine.

The Hon. D.C. Kotz interjecting:

The Hon. J.D. HILL: Perhaps if you stop talking and start listening, member, you might hear mine. The biodiversity assessment has been undertaken and there are no species of state or national significance. However, it was assessed by the department that the scattered trees and creek line provide a wildlife corridor between the Cobbler Creek Recreation Park and the more wooded area behind the development. This development is a joint venture between Delfin Limited and the Land Management Corporation and I gather it was approved by the Tea Tree Gully council in 1999. Our powers are limited to effect any particular outcome here. We certainly do not have the resources to buy the land. I have raised the matter with the Minister for Government Enterprises, and I can inform the parliament that the government will ask the joint venturers to consider retaining a larger wildlife corridor along Cobbler Creek than was originally planned.

INSURANCE, INDEMNITY

The Hon. I.F. EVANS (Davenport): Will the Treasurer advise the house what solutions he will be proposing to the ministerial council meeting this week to solve the issue of increasing public liability costs, and will he table South Australia's submission to this forum and all other forum papers before the house? The growing crisis in public liability insurance is continuing to have a crippling effect across the South Australian community. Just recently, members would have been made aware that the Pony Club Association of South Australia will be unable to continue past 30 June this year due to its not being able to secure public liability insurance. This is just one example of the growing effect that this issue is having in the community. This week in Canberra a meeting of state ministers will discuss proposals to address this crisis. South Australians are interested to know what solutions the Treasurer and others will be proposing to this meeting.

The Hon. K.O. FOLEY (Treasurer): We are meeting in Melbourne on Thursday, and I thank the opposition for providing me with a pair so that I can attend that meeting.

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. K.O. FOLEY: Thank you. I am not able now to flag to members opposite the position that South Australia will be adopting at that meeting.

An honourable member: What are you putting to the meeting?

The Hon. K.O. FOLEY: I'm coming to it; please give me a chance to answer the question. At this stage, I have not signed off on what my contribution to that meeting will be. Just to recap for members opposite and members on my side of the house: the process has been that Senator Helen Coonan, the Assistant Treasurer in the federal government, set down a date of this Thursday for us to consider a joint paper prepared by heads of Treasury of all states. I understand that a unified paper will be presented to that meeting, providing a series of options for all states to consider. Only this morning I was advised by my Treasury officials that they hope to have that paper for me tonight to consider, and over the next two days I hope to be in a position to consider fully the suggestions, proposals and options that will be put to us on Thursday. I do not intend to canvass them in this place before that meeting. However, I am quite happy to make statements after that meeting, because clearly there will be a joint communicate from all ministers. I am happy to brief the member on all details and options that are being discussed. These are not options that need to be kept secret at all. It may well be that various states choose to adopt various options as to those that are made available to us.

As I said, I am not in a position to consider fully the options that I will be asked to consider. That briefing will come to me over the course of today and tomorrow. I am happy to have discussions with the member and to make available at the earliest opportunity the full details of the outcomes of those meetings. I suspect that each state will be required to come back from that meeting and consider within its individual cabinets the available options and the options that should be considered.

I would like to add that I would be more than happy to hear from the member for Davenport as to what he thinks we should be doing. I would be happy also to receive the ideas of the member for Davenport who quite correctly asks this question on a regular basis. Unless he is suggesting that we get in the business of writing the insurance for the Pony Club or that we in government get into the business of writing insurance for small business, the only option we have available to us is to work within the system as it currently stands. I do not think the honourable member is suggesting that we should be writing insurance or taking the risk. Is that what he is suggesting?

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. K.O. FOLEY: The member does not respond, and I know that it would be inappropriate for him to do so. If members opposite are suggesting we should write the risk, I need them to come forward and give me that as an option. However, I can assure members opposite that I will not take that option to the table on Thursday.

SCHOOLS, VIOLENCE

Ms THOMPSON (Reynell): Will the Minister for Education and Children's Services advise what is being done to limit the risk of violence against teachers and other people who work in schools?

The Hon. P.L. WHITE (Minister for Education and Children's Services): It is clear that we need to provide safe

and secure environments for effective teaching and learning in our schools. Teachers have the right to teach and students have the right to learn in environments free of the fear of bullying, harassment or violence. Unfortunately, however, our schools are no different from a number of workplaces in that, from time to time, we do have incidences of inappropriate behaviour, such as violence and bullying, which, of course, is unacceptable. It puts people who work in schools at risk of injury; it poses a threat to their health; and it also puts the wellbeing of our young people at risk.

The government has a strong commitment to provide safe work environments and safe systems of work. We are already working on a number of fronts to ensure that all people in schools feel safe and protected in their environment. We are currently investigating the powers of schools and the police to deal with people acting in a disorderly or offensive manner. If necessary, we will legislate to give greater powers for people to be refused entry, removed from school grounds and barred from returning. We are also in the final stages of preparing a management plan and workplace procedures to deal with bullying and violence in our schools. For the first time there will be a consolidated approach to this very troubling issue. Schools will be required to put processes in place to limit and control the incidence of violence and bullying, including identifying and assessing risk factors and looking at how those can be controlled.

On 4 March this year there was an incident at one of our schools where a relative of a student allegedly assaulted one of our school staff. At that time, I wrote to the Attorney-General seeking a review into tougher penalties for assault against school staff. The Attorney-General's office has advised that harsher penalties for assaults on people, including teachers, going about their public duty will be forthcoming in legislation. This issue requires a strong approach from government. All South Australians are entitled to be safe and secure wherever they are, including and particularly in our schools. So, to that end, we are working with other agencies to improve safety in schools.

A number of schools in the northern suburbs have been working with South Australian Police on a trial to better manage school disturbances. A stronger partnership between schools and police is the cornerstone of that trial with the aim to ensure rapid response to school disturbances and closer monitoring during school hours, particularly at the start and end of the school day. At the conclusion of that trial, its success will be evaluated and it will be used to provide direction for better management of disturbances in our schools. Early indications from that trial are particularly good in relation to some of the measures that can be put in place for more effective management of these—

Ms THOMPSON: I rise on a point of order, Mr Speaker. I am sitting behind the minister but the noise coming from the opposition benches is such that I am having trouble hearing her.

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

The Hon. P.L. WHITE: This government will continue to focus on minimising the chance for violence and bullying in our schools, because we place a high importance on providing a safe, secure environment for our children and our staff.

HOSPITALS, MODBURY

The Hon. R.G. KERIN (Frome): My question is directed to the Minister for Health. Given the Premier's strong anti-privatisation policy during the election campaign and in light of the strength of the minister's previous statements in the media regarding the outsourcing of the management of Modbury Hospital, will the minister advise the house why she has not already accepted Healthscope's offer to terminate the existing contract between the government and Healthscope? Today in a ministerial statement the minister has said that a cabinet committee will examine the contract. Last Monday on ABC radio, the minister seemed to rule out the cancellation of the contract, saying that Healthscope would be held to all contract conditions. Previously, in her role as opposition health spokeswoman, the Minister for Health described the Modbury Hospital outsourcing contract as a dismal failure and stated that the Modbury Hospital had the worst record of any of the metropolitan hospitals.

On 21 May 2002 on ABC radio, Healthscope's Dr Michael Coglin indicated that, given the ALP's opposition to the Healthscope contract, they are prepared to terminate the existing contract at Modbury Hospital without any penalty to the government. This now gives the government a clear choice of government operation or Healthscope, which is, by their definition, privatisation.

The Hon. L. STEVENS (Minister for Health): I am surprised to receive this question from the Leader of the Opposition: I should have thought that he would listen carefully to the ministerial statement that I gave prior to question time. Just let me clarify once more that the Modbury Hospital contract will be examined to ensure accountability and public benefit, as part of the review of all privatisation contracts announced by the Premier on 6 March 2002. The examination will be undertaken by a cabinet committee comprising the Attorney-General, the Treasurer and the Minister for Government Enterprises.

MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES COUNCIL

Ms BEDFORD (Florey): My question is directed to the Attorney-General. Given that prior to the recent election the Premier gave a commitment to support the Multicultural Communities Council with a one-off \$75 000 capital grant to establish a meeting place for ethnic communities, when will this commitment be honoured by the government?

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON (Attorney-General): The promise of the then opposition matched a promise from the government to give \$75 000 to the Multicultural Communities Council to renovate its premises at 113 Gilbert Street in the city, so it was one of those rare occasions in the campaign on which the government and the opposition agreed. So, the Multicultural Communities Council was on a pretty good thing: it was going to get this money after the election unless there was an upset result.

I am very pleased to inform the house and, in particular, the member for MacKillop, whose electorate I enjoyed at the weekend, that this commitment has been honoured in full—without any hint of a review—and that on Wednesday 22 May I presented a cheque to the Multicultural Communities Council President, Mr Ron Tan, at the Gilbert Street premises. These funds were requested by the MCC, the peak representative body of the culturally diverse communities in South Australia, to develop the ground floor of the premises. The project aims to provide a meeting place for multicultural

community groups, in particular for small, recently arrived and emerging groups—groups that are without premises of their own.

Since its establishment in 1995 from the merger of the former Ethnic Communities Council and the United Ethnic Communities, the MCC has grown and continues to grow. The MCC's programs, such as the Reconnect program for youth at risk, involving the Cambodian, Chinese and Vietnamese communities, and the Community Visitors Scheme for frail and elderly people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, are a credit to the organisation.

I would like to pay tribute to the management committee, volunteers and staff and acknowledge the MCC's role in ensuring the success of multiculturalism in South Australia and in ensuring that cultural diversity programs are inclusive. Labor pledged to improve equality in tolerance in our state, and to invite—not impede—fuller participation. In providing this one-off grant to the MCC to establish a meeting place for all culturally and linguistically diverse groups, and in particular emerging and newly-established groups, the government is hoping to take a small but significant step towards fuller participation. Support for multiculturalism is public policy here in South Australia and it is bipartisan. The MCC can claim to be a beneficiary of the agreement in policy on multiculturalism between the government and the opposition with the possible exception of the member for Stuart.

ADELAIDE AQUATIC CENTRE

The Hon. D.C. KOTZ (Newland): Will the Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing advise the house of the government's financial commitment to subsidise or support the hire fees for the Adelaide Aquatic Centre, and will he indicate the extent of the subsidy and say when it will commence? I have been contacted by a number of organisations involved in aquatic sports in South Australia and they advise me that many children face increases in hire fees between 80 and 1 000 per cent for use and hire of the facilities and pool space in the Adelaide Aquatic Centre. The dramatic increases arising out of a decision by the Adelaide City Council last year are already operative on a staggered increase basis for some organisations; however, that will be effective for all as of 1 July 2002. The urgency is increased by the fact that they are already being asked to negotiate their lease arrangements for commencement on 1 July 2002 and obviously need to make decisions now as to whether they close up their operations.

The Hon. M.J. WRIGHT (Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing): This issue has been around for some time now and of course it was around when the opposition was in government. The then government ignored this issue and did nothing to renew the indenture agreement when it expired in 1996. The core of this issue relates to when the opposition was in government and it is a serious issue. The Adelaide Aquatic Centre has been a focal point for all major state level competitions and, since the 1960s, the home of several affiliated swimming clubs such as SwimSA, as well as activities including diving, water polo, canoe—and the list goes on and on. The Adelaide City Council believes that the operating loss is approximately \$670 000 per annum and is incurred mainly through elite sport use and should not be subsidised by ratepayers. The council is currently negotiating with the sports. The request by the Office for Recreation, Sport and Racing for council to consider the capacity of the sports to pay has been considered and revised charges have been offered.

This is a serious issue, and I will be meeting with the user groups this afternoon. Negotiations do continue. The core of this problem relates to when the current opposition was in government. It would not take this issue on. It was not prepared to work with the user groups. It was not prepared to renew the indenture agreement, and it is ironic that the former government, now the opposition, should raise this as an issue. It should be embarrassed to raise this as an issue. From the way the former government treated the user groups and the Adelaide Aquatic Centre and failed to negotiate with the Adelaide City Council, members opposite should be too embarrassed to raise an issue of this importance.

HOSPITALS, PRIVATISATION

Ms RANKINE (Wright): Can the Minister for Health outline the government's policy in relation to privatisation of public hospitals given public statements by Healthscope that the company would be prepared to terminate the contract to manage the Modbury Hospital?

The Hon. L. STEVENS (Minister for Health): I thank the member for Wright for her question. I know what a hard campaigner and fighter she is for services in her electorate in the north-eastern suburbs, as are the other members of this house who live in that area. I am pleased to provide some more information, to which I hope the Leader of the Opposition will listen very carefully so that he is quite clear about the government's position in relation to this matter. The government's policy on the privatisation of public hospitals is crystal clear: no public hospital will be privatised by this government. On 6 March 2002 the Premier announced that a cabinet committee would examine Liberal contracts for privatisation, leasing and outsourcing. This will include the contract entered into by the Liberal government for Healthscope to manage the Modbury Public Hospital. I make no apology for having opposed the privatisation of Modbury Hospital which cost taxpayers \$17 million in up front costs and which repeatedly failed to deliver the benefits promised by the Liberal government.

I note the recent public statements by Healthscope that the company would be prepared to walk away from the contract. I have also received advice from the company's managing director that as a matter of principle the company would have no objections to the transfer of the hospital back to public management. As I said before, I will refer that advice to the cabinet committee. Once again I reiterate that I have advised Healthscope that the government is committed to honouring its side of the contract and will be acting in the public interest.

SAMAG MAGNESIUM PROJECT

The Hon. R.G. KERIN (Leader of the Opposition): I direct my question to the Premier. Will the Premier assure the house that the state government will still honour the \$25 million contribution pledged by the previous state government to secure the commencement of the proposed SAMAG magnesium project near Port Pirie?

The Hon. M.D. RANN (Premier): This is another area of bipartisanship. It is important to acknowledge that both in his former role and as the local member the Leader of the Opposition has been a strong supporter of the SAMAG project, and so have I. Both in government and in Opposition we have lobbied our federal counterparts, and it is important to note that both the Leader of the Opposition and I spoke

with the Prime Minister. I understand that the Leader of the Opposition spoke with him, and I spoke with the Prime Minister at the COAG meeting about SAMAG. We want the federal government to give the same measure of support to this Port Pirie proposal as it has already given to a rival Queensland project. Let us remember that this SAMAG project here in South Australia is purely an export industry.

Given our bipartisan approach on the Alice Springs to Darwin railway, before the election both the Liberal and Labor parties in South Australia made a commitment of \$25 million for a gas spur pipeline to go into Port Pirie to support the project, contingent on that commitment by the federal government. We need to continue the fight to get John Howard to make the same measure of commitment to SAMAG as he has made to its Queensland rival. Both parties made that decision to support SAMAG in order to leverage, first up, not only the 500 jobs in the construction phase but also 500 jobs in continuing employment. The original plan put to both parties when we were in opposition under the Kerin government was for an associated power station. Apparently that is now out of the loop, so the proposal is quite different. However, we want it to continue, and I will continue to be a strong supporter of SAMAG, as I know is the Leader of the Opposition.

NURSES

Mrs GERAGHTY (Torrens): Will the Minister for Health tell the house how many nurses working in South Australian public hospitals are employed by staffing agencies; and has the minister taken any action in relation to agencies that are having difficulties in obtaining indemnity insurance?

The Hon. L. STEVENS (Minister for Health): I thank the member for Torrens for her question on a very important matter. The difficulties experienced by agencies is an important matter for agencies and their staff, as well as for private midwives. I am aware that the AMA, the Australian Private Hospitals Association and Nursing Agency of Australia have formed a committee to deal with this issue. It has the potential to impact on the delivery of public and private health services in South Australia and follows action by the federal government to provide support for indemnity cover for doctors.

In South Australia, our public health services utilise the services of 270 full-time equivalent employees drawn from employment agencies. On 16 May 2002, I met with Professor Hepburn-Brown from Nursing Agency of Australia and offered assistance to work through these issues. Following that meeting, I wrote to the federal health minister (Hon. Kay Patterson) on 22 May 2002 requesting that the commonwealth consider providing national support by way of indemnity for private and agency midwives as an interim measure until a national strategy for dealing with indemnity for medical services is put in place. I was pleased to note the announcement on 23 May 2002 that Nursing Agency of Australia had obtained indemnity cover for a further 12 months, as this will provide cover while a national strategy is developed.

FLEURIEU BIENNALE

Mr BROKENSHIRE (Mawson): Can the Minister for Tourism confirm that the funding and sponsorship for the Fleurieu Biennale will continue under the new government in 2002? This is Australia's richest art prize and has strength-

ened enormously the growth and development of art and artists in South Australia (particularly the Fleurieu Peninsula), as well as putting South Australia on the international map. In a bipartisan way, will the new government continue to sponsor and fund the event?

The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH (Minister for Tourism): Of course, we are interested in regional events in South Australia. There are major advantages for tourism in attracting visitors to such areas, but the member for Mawson will understand that at the moment our budget has not been set for the year 2002-03 and this is one of the items that we are assessing prior to fixing the budget.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH: The member will realise that we were left with a financial situation that does not allow us to finish the budget at this stage.

BEACHPORT FORESHORE

Mr CAICA (Colton): Can the Minister for Environment and Conservation advise the parliament about recent developments in relation to the foreshore at Beachport in the state's South-East? I am aware that there are environmental concerns about the council's proposed location for a new boat ramp.

The Hon. J.D. HILL (Minister for Environment and Conservation): I thank the member for his question. Many members, including the member for MacKillop, will be aware of this issue. The last government, I think, spent some time trying to resolve this issue, and I know that as the opposition spokesman in the last—

Mr Venning interjecting:

The Hon. J.D. HILL: It is an issue that has been going on for some time, I agree. As the opposition spokesman in the previous parliament, I raised a number of issues about this matter on a couple of occasions. Shortly after becoming the minister, I was briefed by my department which raised concerns about the environmental impact of the boat ramp that was proposed at Beachport. I immediately contacted the local council and suggested that we have a discussion about it. The mayor and the CEO visited me and we had a very cordial meeting. I said, 'Let's try to work together to get a good outcome here. We have environmental concerns and I know that you have been frustrated about this. You want to get it done but can we work together for a six-month period to try to resolve this issue in a positive way?' I said that I would—

Mr Brindal: Good luck.

The Hon. J.D. HILL: We had a very fruitful discussion, and subsequently I have written to the council proposing that a Beachport foreshore advisory committee be established to prepare a foreshore management strategy plan. The plan will investigate foreshore management issues, including the reasons for loss of seagrass and underlying protective sandbanks, to examine the impact of the loss of sandbanks on the foreshore and to explore ways to restore and manage the loss of seagrass. At the same time I want the plan to look at the options for a ramp. We said that we would work with the council to get this done as quickly as possible, certainly within—

The Hon. I.F. Evans interjecting:

The Hon. J.D. HILL: Certainly, the funding that has been allocated will be maintained; and we said that we would work with the council to get other—

The Hon. I.F. Evans interjecting:

The Hon. J.D. HILL: They are the issues that we need to work through with the council, and that is what we said we would do with the council. In fact, on Saturday I had a further conversation with representatives of the council in Penola when the government held its country cabinet meeting in that town. I had very good discussions with the people from the council. I spent at least half an hour listening to their side of the story. I was persuaded by their seriousness and sincerity, and I am sure that we will be able to work with them to get a good outcome.

ADELAIDE AIRPORT

Dr McFETRIDGE (Morphett): Does the Minister for Transport agree with the objectives outlined in Business SA's manifesto transport section—

The SPEAKER: Order! I am sorry, I could not hear the member for Morphett's question.

Dr McFETRIDGE: My question is directed to the Minister for Transport—and the member for Reynell gives good advice over there: be quiet.

The SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will leave those matters to me.

Dr McFETRIDGE: Does the minister agree with the objectives outlined in Business SA's manifesto transport section to remove the curfew on Adelaide Airport?

The Hon. M.J. WRIGHT (Minister for Transport): I have not read the manifesto of Business SA. I am happy to do so and, when I have done so, I will form an opinion.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

CABINET MEETINGS

Ms BREUER (Giles): Will the Premier report to the house on the outcomes of the community cabinet meeting in the South-East over the weekend?

The Hon. M.D. RANN (Premier): We held the second in our series of community cabinet meetings over the weekend, starting on Friday. I would like particularly to thank the member for Mount Gambier for his work in arranging appointments throughout his area for many ministers over the weekend. It was important, I think, not only to listen to local concerns, challenges and problems but also to send a clear message to the South-East that we are interested in its development. I was therefore very pleased to make an announcement of \$10 million in funding for the reconnection of a freight train line from Wolseley to Mount Gambier. We believe that this is a very important link.

We had a look at all the infrastructure needs around the regions, and the South-East was the only region that did not have a freight line link. We believe it is important, in partnership with the private sector, for that to be under way. We are hopeful that construction on the \$10 million rail line will start before Christmas and that we will see freight trains running on it by about April or May next year. Also, of course, we hope to see the operation of tourist trains, such as the limestone coast tourist train. It is being done in a way so that that train can run on it. That is very important, but we would love to see the private sector engage in other tourism and passenger promotions using the lines. We thought that was a useful thing to announce at our first community cabinet meeting in the South-East.

Some other announcements were also made. In terms of the Melaleuca Park Primary School, the Minister for Educa-

tion was able to announce a new school hall, and that was particularly well received. Announcements were also made across the portfolio areas, but one I know that was particularly well received was an increase in the quota by 50 tonnes of the rock lobster catch. We think that, after some consideration, that should be trialled, given the success of the industry. On Saturday, ministers met with a range of deputations in Penola, and I thank the honourable member for attending the luncheon there. We were also able to meet with proponents of wind farm and biomass energy projects.

Overall, it was a very useful exercise. It was good to go down to the South-East and make some important announcements in backing the development of an area which, I have to say, has been leading the charge in terms of export growth. To see the diversification in terms of viticulture, horticulture and aquaculture, as well as traditional industries in the area, and to see the progress made was most important.

The community cabinet meeting approach is quite different from the fly-in, fly-out country cabinet meetings of the past. We open ourselves up to questions. We did that in Mount Gambier, and we invite questions from the floor, not only to ministers but also to the chief executives of government departments who attend the meetings with us, as well as the briefings. I think it is useful to open the windows on government, and we thought this was an important step forward.

BAROSSA MUSIC FESTIVAL

Mr VENNING (Schubert): I direct my question to the Premier and Minister for the Arts.

Mr Brindal interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Unley is making it extremely difficult for me to hear the member for Schubert.

Mr VENNING: Thank you, sir. Why did the Premier not support a restructure or refocusing of the Barossa Music Festival, or at least continue to support the festival until an alternative regional event is up and running? In the past 10 years, a committed group of enthusiastic local businesses and volunteers have dedicated themselves to promoting the Barossa Valley through a series of music festivals held in churches and wineries throughout the region. I was disappointed to hear that the present government has announced its intention to cut government funding for this festival.

The SPEAKER: Order! It is not appropriate for members to express opinions and feelings in the explanation of their question. Disappointment or anything else is quite disorderly. The Premier.

The Hon. M.D. RANN (Minister for the Arts): I am delighted to answer this question. The defunding of the Barossa Music Festival in terms of the government's contribution—and we hope some private sponsors might want to kick into the tin—was as a result of the recommendations of the Organisations Assessment Panel. I have been to the Barossa Music Festival with the member for Schubert and I know his opinions of the festival. However, the Organisations Assessment Panel is an independent panel consisting of representatives from the arts industry. Panel members are practitioners with a strong industry knowledge and hands-on experience.

The peer panel process has been in place since the 1980s, and this particular panel was formed in 1998 by the former Liberal minister for the arts, Diana Laidlaw. This is an approach that the arts industry always wanted—assessments

on funding by an independent group of their peers—and this panel was appointed by your minister for the arts—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. M.D. RANN: The panel members are Nick Carroll, dance teacher and choreographer; Roma Dainus from Musica Viva; Steve Evans, writer and poet; Cate Fowler, the highly respected Artistic Director of the Windmill Theatre, set up by the former government and minister; David O'Connor, Visual Arts Program Manager of the Art Gallery; Carolyn Ramsay, formerly from the Jam Factory and Port Youth, now with the Adelaide City Council; Pat Rix, composer and community artist; and Joe Velikovsky, script writer for Ratbag, and everyone would know about Ratbag.

In 1996, the Liberal government invested \$52 500 in the Barossa Music Festival. In 2001-02, the total government investment was \$219 250. That was a blend of money from Arts SA, health promotion and tourism. Let me just explain it to members opposite: this equates to a government subsidy of, I am advised, \$35.59 for every seat sold. In recognition of the importance of festivals and events to regional arts and tourism in this state, we have asked Country Arts SA to explore options for a new arts event for regional South Australia. Indeed, when I met with Anthony Steel, I asked him to assist with this investigation. At the meeting I said—and I should add that this was following the recommendation of this peer assessment group appointed by the former government—that we simply could not afford to pile in more and more taxpayers' money when there are issues about the emergency sections of hospitals and schools, at the same time as attendances were going down.

I have known Anthony Steel for years and years, and I respect him greatly. I knew him in the 1970s when I was wearing safari suits and he was wearing caftans! So I have known him for a long time. I said that the government cannot afford to keep piling in the money with declining attendances and taxpayers' money going up and up. Everyone would be aware of all the blues going on inside the Barossa Music Festival. The honourable member opposite would be very aware of the arguments that have been going on and the discord in terms of John Russell, and so on. We wanted a pause for a radical rethink so that we could float something that is financially viable. Members opposite would all attack me if I came in here and announced that I had vetoed the assessment group's recommendation and went ahead even though I had been told by my arts department that the Barossa Music Festival was financially non-viable. We want to make sure that it is fixed up and look at a different way of doing it so that we can have a better festival in the future. I have already announced that assistance will be provided to the Barossa Music Festival organisation to enable it to manage this change in its financial situation and to meet outstanding liabilities.

I heard what Anthony Steel said on radio this morning, and it was a bit different from what he said to me when he came to see me in my office. That is fine; I can understand his shock and hurt. Now we want him to help Country Arts SA to come up with something that is financially viable, as well as artistically excellent, where people can come along in droves to enjoy it. Members would agree that a government subsidy of \$35.59 for every seat sold has been pretty generous. Members opposite were part of the decision to put tens of millions of dollars into the National Wine Centre. According to reports this morning, the wine industry wants the Barossa Music Festival to go ahead, so I hope that

members of the wine industry will be kicking some more money into the tin to make sure we get a successful event in the future.

MURRAY RIVER FISHERY

The Hon. R.G. KERIN (Frome): Will the Treasurer, representing the Minister for Fisheries in another place, inform the house whether a regional impact statement was considered by cabinet at the same time as it considered the future of the river fishery? In the lead-up to the election, the government constantly said that no decisions of importance to regional South Australia would be considered without the preparation of a regional impact statement to be attached to the cabinet submission.

The Hon. K.O. FOLEY (Deputy Premier): As the minister representing the Minister for Fisheries in another place, I am happy to get an answer for the Leader of the Opposition and have it returned to him as soon as possible.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

EMPLOYMENT

Mr O'BRIEN (Napier): Will the Minister for Employment, Training and Further Education inform the house of the impact of the federal budget on employment in South Australia?

The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH (Minister for Employment, Training and Further Education): I thank the member for Napier for his perspicacious and astute question. I know that in his electorate he is particularly aware of the impact of the federal employment policy on small business and unemployment. He would well know that \$64 million was stripped from employment assistance through the Job Network for the next four years when the federal budget was handed down on 14 May. It is important to note that assistance from Job Network providers is critical for job seekers and is particularly important for those who are young and chronically unemployed.

It has been pointed out by the Productivity Commission recently that there is already great need in this area and that stripping money from this function may well have an adverse impact, particularly in South Australia. Additionally, the redefinition of the eligibility criteria for the disability support pension will impact on Job Network providers, because there will be greater pressure on them to provide assistance across the board. Such stress on Job Network can mean that more people who need dedicated assistance will in fact receive less. Unfortunately, as Minister for Employment, I believe that the federal budget has done nothing to help the unemployed in South Australia or those members of our community who have a disability.

FISHING, RECREATIONAL

Mr MEIER (Goyder): Can the Treasurer advise the house whether recreational fishing licence fees will be introduced in the forthcoming budget?

The Hon. K.O. FOLEY (Treasurer): I am pleased to get such a probing question from the member for Goyder, somebody who has a longstanding interest in all issues of fishing. Unfortunately, I am not about to announce or reveal anything contained in the July budget, until 11 July.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

SCHOOLS, VIOLENCE

The Hon. P.L. WHITE (Minister for Education and Children's Services): I seek leave to make a very brief ministerial statement.

Leave granted.

The Hon. P.L. WHITE: During question time today in response to a question from the member for Reynell I made reference to an incident in one of our public schools that occurred on 4 March whereby a relative of a student of that school allegedly assaulted one of our staff members, a student counsellor in that school. There was some interjection from the opposition at that time to the effect of: why wasn't that individual charged? I inform the house that that individual was charged and the matter is currently before the courts.

SUPPLY BILL DEBATE

The SPEAKER: Before calling grievances, it occurs to me that it might help those members who are contemplating the substantive order of the day, the Supply Bill, to know that, according to standing orders and practices, Supply Bill contributions will need to be about supply. There is, of course, the opportunity for a grievance debate which follows the second reading debate on that proposition and subjects of a wider nature may be canvassed then.

GRIEVANCE DEBATE

ELECTRONIC TECHNOLOGY

Dr McFETRIDGE (Morphett): I congratulate the staff of Hansard for the fantastic job that they do in recording and transcribing the debate and the various speeches in the house. I was delighted to read a very accurate transcription of my maiden speech. There were only three minor typos involved there. I know that the Hansard staff had a fair job of understanding my very rapid speech; I was forced to deliver it in a somewhat shorter time than I had hoped due to the dinner break. But congratulations to Hansard. I received the draft copy the next day, and congratulations again on the rapid response from Hansard. Because of the electronic technology that we have I was able to correct those minor typos in the *Hansard* electronically, very easily, while sitting in the chamber here and listening to speeches. So in that way I was very quickly able to correct those one or two typos. In fact, can I read into *Hansard* an email from Pattie Tancred, Deputy Leader of Hansard:

Dear Dr McFetridge,

Congratulations on being the first member to use our electronic corrections request facility; in fact, the first ever member of the South Australian Parliament to use this service.

Sir, it was very easy to use. I would like to congratulate the web page designers for Hansard, and certainly the rest of the parliamentary web page is very easy to use. I, along with many other members, am enjoying the use of electronic facilities within the house. I am sure that all members will, with time, accommodate themselves with the use of laptop

computers in the house. While some would agree that the use of laptop computers is the best thing since sliced bread to give quick access to information, sometimes there are others who do not wish to move along and have rapid access to reliable information. From my point of view, in the new electronic age, being able to correct *Hansard* online is one of the advantages, as is being able to come into the house and look up bills and papers, communicate with my office, if I need to, and to continue my work not only as a member of parliament but also as a member of the local community. Keeping in touch at all times is vital, particularly with the extra sitting days. It allows us to make use of our parliamentary time in the most efficient way.

I would like to see online streaming developed in the chamber—I am not sure of the exact technological terminology. Readily available access to live video and audio from parliament is something I would strongly encourage. I know that the cost may be considerable with the installation of cameras and accessing the audio, but I am sure that the cost would be well worth the effort. The opportunity for members of the public to see that this house is not just a bear pit, that there is worthwhile debate and that members of parliament on both sides of the house are honourable people is something that we should strongly encourage. I do not know whether the cost for implementing this facility is included in the budget this year. I would like to think that some effort is made for its inclusion in the budget.

The new government claims to be right up with modern changes. At the moment we are not seeing too many decisions made, but I hope that this is one decision that the government does make. Intranet, internet, email and live broadcasts on the internet are something that we are seeing from all over the world. The world is becoming a smaller place. The tyranny of distance is no longer something that we live in fear of. South Australian businesses are able to communicate with the rest of the world in an instant. I believe that this parliament should follow the trends that are happening in South Australia, with the IT industries connecting with the rest of the world. *Hansard* is leading the way, and members of parliament should follow that by using the technology that has been made available in this house. If we are able to keep up with the times, we will be able to dispel the perceptions that this is a house where not much is done. As I have said before, people will actually see that parliamentarians are honourable people. This government and this parliament does serve this state well. They are basically honest people. If we use the intranet and internet it will enhance our standing in the community.

Time expired.

JOB CREATION

The Hon. R.B. SUCH (Fisher): I have always been passionate about creating job opportunities. An innovative scheme in France is working very successfully and is credited with lowering their unemployment rate by at least one or two percentage points. That scheme allows tax deductibility when you engage someone to do the cleaning and gardening at your house, look after your children or look after elderly relatives. I have pursued this matter with the federal government, without success at this stage, but I intend to keep on.

It makes a lot of sense. There are a lot of people who would like to do, and indeed who are able to do, this sort of work. Obviously, they pay tax on their earnings and in many cases come off the welfare system. That is exactly what has

happened in France, and I believe that the scheme has merit. The initial reaction from the Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer (Hon. Senator Helen Coonan) basically reiterated the standard line, and in this respect I quote from a letter in reply to my letter of 14 January this year, in which she said:

Under the general deduction provision, section 8(1) of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997, for expenses to be deductible, there must be a direct connection between the incurring of the expenses and the production of the taxpayer's assessable income; that is, the expense must be necessarily incurred in carrying on a business for the purpose of gaining or producing assessable income. Consistent with this principle, expenses associated with domestic help are not tax deductible as there is no direct connection between the expense and the taxpayer's income-producing activities.

Following what was fairly well known, she continues:

The government is concerned that allowing income tax deductions for private expenses such as domestic help would lead to pressure to allow deductibility for a wide range of other private expenses, with a resultant potential for a significant loss to revenue.

Senator Coonan goes on to point out some of the measures that the government introduced in last year's budget. Whilst I appreciated her response to my letter, I did not appreciate the negativity. I trust that over time the matter will be reconsidered, because the federal government can determine the guidelines, so Senator Coonan's point that it would allow for further claims of a private nature I do not believe has any substance, because the government would determine the rules that would apply.

I am sure that there are in our community many people who would avail themselves of the tax deductibility provision, and there would need to be some guidelines to ensure that the system was not abused or misused. However, I can think of many cases where people have an elderly relative or children, and they may prefer that the children be looked after in the home by someone whom they know and trust and who could do the cleaning, the gardening and activities like that. I believe that it is an issue worth pursuing, and I intend to pursue it.

There is one other matter that I would briefly like to address. I met recently with Dr Tim Flannery, the Director of the South Australian Museum, and we found that we shared a common interest in the possibility of establishing a koala night walk in an appropriate location in the parklands. The koalas would not be walking, but tourists would. Adelaide is ideally placed with the parklands to establish a facility such as that, and I think it would be a great tourist attraction to have conducted koala night spotting through a section of the parklands. Dr Flannery suggested that near the zoo could be the ideal site.

The other possibility that we canvassed was having an area in the parklands where kangaroos could be readily seen by tourists. That is more problematic because of dogs and other factors; nevertheless, I think Adelaide needs to consider some attractions in the heart of the city that will appeal to tourists. We do not have some of the attractions that other states have, and it is unlikely that we will attract things such as Legoland, the sort of facility that is very popular in some countries.

I think we could be innovative, and one idea that has considerable potential is a night-time koala walk, which would need to be established over time with appropriate plantings of suitable species of trees in an appropriate section of the parklands. I commend those ideas to the community and to the authorities for consideration as a way of making

Adelaide even more attractive, not only to tourists but also to locals.

BAROSSA MUSIC FESTIVAL

Mr VENNING (Schubert): Further to my question to the Premier today, the state government's decision to abandon the Barossa Music Festival for 2002-03 has, as we know, led to its cancellation. I am very disappointed and concerned about that, and I hope that the decision is not altogether final. The Barossa Music Festival board has reluctantly made the decision to terminate the program planned for 2002 and subsequent Barossa Music Festivals. I have been in contact lately with the Barossa Music Festival chair, Mr Anthony Steel, who states:

The decision to end one of Australia's longest running, most respected and internationally recognised music festivals has been forced upon the board by the state government's withdrawal of funding.

An honourable member: Shame!

Mr VENNING: It is a shame: very much a shame. Mr Steel continues:

This is particularly difficult given the amount of work that has been done over the past nine months to plan for a successful future. The recently formed partnership with Country Arts SA, which was to have provided administrative services, offered the festival a sound organisational base. We believed we had successfully resolved four of the five outstanding issues raised by former Arts Minister (Hon. Diana Laidlaw).

Mr Steel stated that the decision by the Premier and Arts Minister (Hon. Mike Rann) to accept the recommendation of the Arts Industry Assessment Panel to remove funding for the Barossa Music Festival without first consulting the board was most unexpected and extremely disappointing. Through Arts SA, the state government contributed \$159 000 to last year's income of \$539 000. More than 7 000 people attended the 36 performances staged over the nine days of the 2001 festival, generating a box office of \$178 000.

While total numbers have inevitably dropped because of the reduction of the festival period from 16 back to nine days in 1998, the average attendance at festival performances has, in fact, increased since 1998. Since 1990 the Barossa Music Festival has generated ticket sales worth more than \$2.3 million, presented 683 performances to more than 104 000 festival patrons from South Australia, interstate and overseas, and generated in excess of \$2.5 million annually for the regional and state economy.

The Barossa Music Festival was recognised internationally as a music festival of high quality, presented in unique, intimate venues provided by local historic churches and the Barossa wine making community, and we have had many comments from the community in recent days, particularly from those providing venues. I know that the Lehmann family, in particular, has gone to great cost to provide these excellent venues. This will all be very seriously missed. Whilst the core of the program was chamber music, there was also a broad mix of musical styles including jazz, music theatre, dance and orchestral performances.

Highlights over the years have included four new productions from great Australian choreographer Meryl Tankard; visiting orchestras from Germany, China, Italy and Britain; jazz ensembles from Australia, the United States, Italy and Scandinavia; and chamber ensembles from many countries around the world. The Barossa Music Festival has also included the Spring Academy, which provided an opportunity for young chamber ensembles to attend the festival and to

benefit from master classes and performances with visiting festival artists.

We acknowledge the important contribution made by previous government bodies. The Barossa Music Festival relied heavily on the enthusiastic support of a number of contributors. These included a legion of volunteers (there are hundreds of them—and I know them personally), the Barossa community and the wineries, the audiences from near and far, the artists, the media and generous donors. I want to pay tribute to Anthony Steel, John Russell and all those associated with the festival. What has happened is sad indeed.

The Premier intimated during his answer to my question today that he knew what I thought about the festival. I did not always say that every program was my cup of tea, but it is a vast over-reaction to have this festival cancelled. We should have left the music festival there and rejigged it. To start again from scratch means that 12 years of international exposure is going down the drain. I only hope that it is not too late, because it is a very silly, short-sighted move, and I hope that the music festival can go on. Whatever comes next, it will take us years and a lot of money to get into the same position that the festival held.

RECONCILIATION WEEK

Ms BEDFORD (Florey): I acknowledge that we are on Kaurna land, especially this week, as it is Reconciliation Week. Yesterday, we had Sorry Day, which is our annual day of considering the impact that European settlement has had on Australia and the indigenous population.

I would like to take this opportunity to speak about a couple of things today. One of my first duties this week was to attend an assembly at Valley View Secondary School this morning where I presented to the school community their contribution to the Florey Reconciliation Task Force quilt project. The school contributed 13 panels of artwork which have been sewn together to form a quilt. That quilt will be on display at the school this week but also, later this week, at the big dinner which will be held at the Adelaide Entertainment Centre, hosted by the Premier with Martin Luther King III speaking, and I will speak further about that a little later. This morning the school community also had a presentation of an Aboriginal flag which they will fly on a flagpole that is in the school grounds. I know that a lot of indigenous students there will take a great deal of comfort from the fact that the school is making moves to show that it is more than accepting of indigenous culture.

I spoke a little earlier about the Florey Reconciliation Task Force and its quilt project: several of those panels will also be on display at the City of Tea Tree Gully's Reconciliation Week indigenous art exhibition which will be opened this evening at the Golden Grove Recreation and Arts Centre, on the Golden Way. There will be a great number of indigenous paintings on view as well as the quilts which have come from schools and churches in the Florey electorate as well as community groups. They are a very colourful reminder of how important reconciliation is in the Florey area and how well it has been regarded by our constituents.

I would also like to mention the Aboriginal Reconciliation Debutante Ball that I attended last night at the Hilton Hotel. The member for Morphett was in attendance along with the shadow attorney-general. This is the second ball that has been hosted by the Salisbury High School. I attended an Aboriginal debutante ball the year before, and this concept has grown into the fantastic event that we attended last night. It was

absolutely tremendous to see those young people strutting their stuff, for want of a better expression. They were really remarkable, realising their hopes and acknowledging the educational advantages they are receiving from that enormously supportive environment that has been created by Helen Paphitis, the principal out at Salisbury High.

I would like to mention too the tremendous words of encouragement from the Federal Minister for Education, himself a former old scholar of Modbury High School which I thought was a rather unique association with my electorate. I know he was very impressed with what he saw. He said he is going to spread the word around Australia about the good things that are going on here in South Australia with reconciliation.

The other thing I did on the weekend, prior to the beginning of Reconciliation Week, was attend a workshop called Walking the Talk, which was put on by the Reconciliation Council. It was very well attended, down at the UniSA campus on the corner of Frome Road. I did a couple of things including attendance at a workshop called Bafa Bafa which divides you into two groups and gives each group an alien culture to embrace and then you try to work between the alien cultures. It gives you a feeling of what it is like to be on the outside and unable to participate in what is going on in the community. I think that is a really powerful experience which I would like other members to have the opportunity of participating in, so I intend to make some arrangements to try to bring it here to the house on a sitting day so that we can all take part in it. We also made a trip out to Warraparinga to look at the good work going on out there. There is a centre being built by the council and indigenous interpretive guides took us around the sites which are very important. You begin to understand the importance of land for the indigenous people.

The dinner at the Entertainment Centre on Friday, which I spoke of earlier, will have Martin Luther King III present. He is a direct descendant of the great man from America and is holding similar dinners throughout the country. The Florey Reconciliation Task Force quilts will be on show at the Entertainment Centre and I urge any member who is able to attend that dinner to do so.

STATE ELECTION

Mr SCALZI (Hartley): Today I wish to talk about the recent state election. We all know that a government is formed by getting the majority of votes and, of course, the majority of seats in this place—the lower house. We also know that, if it went just on the number of votes, the Labor Party's 36 per cent of the primary votes in the lower house and 32 per cent in another place would not enable it to govern.

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson interjecting:

Mr SCALZI: The Attorney-General is correct in saying that that is not the only way to form government, because with 40 per cent of the primary votes the Liberal Party would also not be able to govern in its own right. But it is important to note that 40 per cent is a higher vote than 36, and 40 per cent is higher than 32. It is not 50 per cent, but we are in a preferential system, so we have a Rann Labor government, because 24 seats beats 23 every time. I acknowledge that, and we must work within that framework to ensure that the government governs and that we provide a responsible alternative opposition.

What I want to talk about today is the idea of being independent. I specifically joined the Liberal Party because, although I belong to a party, I am able to be more independent within that framework than is a member of the government on the other side. That might be a matter of opinion, but that is what I believe. That is why I joined the Liberal Party, and I have not regretted doing so since 1982. I joined because of its philosophy: that the individual's identity is not developed from his or her contribution to production alone. That is important (I am a member of a union and proud to be so), but that is not the only aspect that makes an individual's identity. It is his or her interaction with family, society, business and other organisations.

I and members on this side believe that we should care for the poor and the underprivileged. I assure members opposite that they do not have a monopoly on compassion; both sides of politics show compassion, but on this side we believe in a trampoline, not a safety net. A trampoline rescues people but allows them to bounce back to tap into their own resources. That is what I taught as a teacher and that is what I believe as a member of parliament. Whilst a safety net rescues people, it traps them into cycles of dependence and prevents their tapping into their own resources, ultimately detracting from their total human worth. That is a matter of opinion and philosophy.

When we talk about Independents, members opposite tell us that members in another place such as the Hons Terry Cameron and Trevor Crothers also changed their support, but it is important to note that the members in another place supported a policy for the sale of ETSA, and that is totally different from forming a government. It is important to make that distinction: there are Independents and Independents. Those members in another place were not facing preselection. When we talk about Independents, it is important to note that there was much talk about how many members would be in this place and that we would have a number of Independents holding the balance of power. After the election this is not the case. There are not that many Independents, and it is important to note—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr SCALZI: —that the major parties still have the majority of votes.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member will not speak over the chair. The member for Playford.

JOHNSON, Hon. J.

Mr SNELLING (Playford): I rise to congratulate somewhat belatedly the former President and member of the New South Wales Legislative Council, the Hon. 'Johnno' Johnson on his retirement. Johnno was born on 26 July 1930 and left school at the age of 15. He commenced work in the retail industry and was actively involved with my union, the Shop Assistants Union, eventually rising to the position of Assistant Secretary. Johnno was elected to the New South Wales Legislative Council in 1976 and was elected President of that august body in 1978. He held the position of President of the Legislative Council for 13 years. Johnno made the terms 'Labor Party' and 'raffle' synonymous and over a number of years raised many millions of dollars. Indeed, in 1987 it was reported that Johnno more or less single handedly raised \$5 million with his fundraising raffles.

Johnno is also renowned as a great mentor of younger members of the Australian Labor Party and believed very

strongly in the importance of mentoring younger members of the party and bringing them through, teaching, instructing and promoting them. Over the years Johnno mentored such members of the Labor Party as the former Prime Minister, Paul Keating, and Graham Richardson, and the current New South Wales Premier, Bob Carr, is a protege of Johnno Johnson. While I am not quite in that league, I am proud to say that Johnno has been an invaluable guide in my own political career.

Shortly after Johnno announced his retirement, Laurie Oakes, columnist for the *Bulletin*, wrote a column about Johnno entitled 'Nurture in his nature'. I quote briefly from that article, as follows:

Politics attracts prima donnas. Johnno has never been one of them. In election campaigns there are plenty of people who think they should be devising strategy or making television commercials or addressing public meetings. But even in his 13 years as President of the NSW Upper House Johnno's chosen role in elections was to look after distribution of materials—getting posters, stickers, badges, T-shirts and how-to-vote cards to each electorate. Year after year at the NSW ALP conference, Johnno took on the thankless task of running the kitchen. And he was never without a book of raffle tickets. He would travel the country, Queensland and the Northern Territory as well as the back blocks of NSW, teaching ALP members the rules and skills of fundraising—from organising chook raffles to soliciting donations from business. Johnno could have been a minister in several state Labor governments, but that was not his bag. Says a colleague: 'His job was to pursue a pastoral role.'

When I last asked Johnno whether he was enjoying retirement he took some umbrage and firmly replied that he had not retired and was going into the party office every day, continuing his previous role. One of his colleagues once described him as being father confessor to the New South Wales right. Nevertheless, I wish Johnno and his good wife Pauline and their family the very best enjoyment of Johnno's retirement, at least from the parliament if not entirely from the political process. I wish to thank Johnno for his long and continuing service to the Australian polity.

BUILDING INDUSTRY

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON (Attorney-General): I seek leave to make a personal explanation.

Leave granted.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: In respect of the answer I gave to the first question without notice from the Leader of the Opposition I apologise to the house for not announcing on Friday or Saturday the rules for exemption from the requirement of building indemnity insurance. I added that the cabinet meeting was held later. In fact, the announcement was planned for Friday on my mistaken assumption that there would be a cabinet meeting in Mount Gambier on Friday morning. Although ministers visited Mount Gambier on Friday, we did not meet as a cabinet there and instead met at Penola on Saturday. In any event, the announcement could not be made until we consulted the Housing Industry Association. The Commissioner for Consumer and Business Affairs will meet representatives of the Housing Industry Association tomorrow at 1 p.m.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I draw your attention to the state of the house.

A quorum having been formed:

SUPPLY BILL

Adjourned debate on second reading.
(Continued from 7 May. Page 21.)

Mr BROKENSHIRE (Mawson): I rise to support the Supply Bill. It is very important that support for this bill is bipartisan because, of course, it is essential for the continued running of the state. The Public Service needs to be paid and projects, commitments and opportunities need to be honoured. However, while I support the Supply Bill and acknowledge support for some of the law and order issues that the government has tabled or has indicated it will table, I point out that, almost without exception, either those bills and policies were announced by us during the last election campaign or the principles when announced by the government were generally supported by us. I refer to the arson attack and the issues surrounding—

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: I rise on a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker. We heard today the Speaker give his ruling that speeches on the second reading would deal with matters associated with the budget and finance. I think the former minister did not hear that: he is plainly debating a range of issues that have nothing to do with financial matters.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Koutsantonis): I uphold the point of order. I remind the member of his responsibilities in this debate and urge him to keep to the topic.

Mr BROKENSHIRE: Thank you for your advice, Mr Acting Speaker, but I point out to the house that this is clearly part of the Supply Bill, because I was going to talk about—

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! The member will not reflect on my ruling. He will continue his remarks and refer only to supply.

Mr BROKENSHIRE: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. When dealing with supply there are a lot of agencies and departments that need to be funded in order to carry out their duties, including the duties of law and order and protection of the state. I refer, therefore, to the funding and budget lines provided for in the Supply Bill when I talk about such agencies as the South Australian Police Department. In doing that, I want to get back to the point in question, namely, the Supply Bill. Of course, we are going to support the Supply Bill because we want to see the state continue to grow, but decisions also have to be made so that everything is not put on hold or subjected to review. Such decisions should mean delivery, performance, continuity and the carrying out of expectations with respect to the growth and development of the state.

Of course, we all know that South Australia is strong at the moment. We know that South Australia for nearly two years has had either the fastest or second fastest growth of any state in Australia. It is gratifying that the Supply Bill can now be supported with a strong degree of confidence by parliament in a bipartisan way because we know that the tax system and the revenue base are strong and sustainable as a result of the state of the economy at this time. Of course, when looking at other agencies that will be supported by the Supply Bill (such as agencies within the portfolios of the ministers responsible for tourism, employment, training and further education), it is very important that in three or four years' time there is a further reduction in unemployment numbers, as we have seen them on a downward trend for some years now under the former government and, of course, under the existing federal government.

I hope that the matter involving SAMAG and the \$25 million which was asked about by our leader today is provided for in the Supply Bill by virtue of the fact that it is already included in budget lines. Of course, we did not get an answer from the Premier today about whether that \$25 million was still available, yet we are being asked to support the Supply Bill. In good faith and by virtue of the strong spirit of bipartisanship on the part of this opposition, we will support the bill, but I think it is only fair that we get answers to basic questions such as whether the \$25 million that is allocated at the moment is available and ready to be handed over at any time so that the government can get on and finish the work done by the previous government, in particular the previous Premier, Rob Kerin. If this government gets on with that job, we have a right to be told straight out in parliament whether or not that \$25 million is available. One would expect that it would be available, given the strong situation we find ourselves in with regard to the budget.

The Supply Bill is very easy to support at the moment. One only has to consider stamp duty. Because of the vibrancy and strength of the economy, not one person in South Australia who owns a home or a property—be it industrial, commercial, residential or farming—has not benefited from enormous capital value increases in recent years. Treasury returned \$60 million from stamp duty alone in this current financial year on top of the projected and expected revenue base. In addition, in the last couple of months I think there has been \$37 million in additional funding that we did not expect from the federal government.

Again, I say to the house and to the community of South Australia that it is easy to support this Supply Bill, because this state is in such good shape when it comes to considering the state budget. Clearly, there are always cost pressures but, as I said recently, one would have to say that a budget today, a budget built around the Supply Bill debate about which we are talking today, this existing budget, is a budget of absolute paradise compared to the budget from hell that we inherited in 1993 when the Labor government last left office. Let members opposite not, in the debate around this Supply Bill, try to fool the people any longer. In fact, they are not. I can tell you, Mr Acting Speaker, that members of the community are not fooled by the government's claim of black holes, etc. They know that there are cost pressures.

In fact, I ask you, sir, and any of our colleagues: who does not have a cost pressure in their own personal budget? Every one has a cost pressure but, of course, one must be able to manage that cost pressure. Some members have talked about structural pressures, etc., but one could argue that there is not a family in South Australia—no matter how well off they are—that would not have structural pressures in terms of the financial situations around their budget or, indeed, the budget of the state. I am concerned, in supporting this Supply Bill, about a number of projects that are on hold in my own electorate.

From past times (certainly those of us who are long term in the south know) we know about the forgotten south. That was a tag I did not like at all and our community did not like, and it is one of the two key reasons why I am in this house today. In relation to budget arrangements, I gave a commitment to my community that when an opportunity presented for a Supply Bill to be funded through the parliament we would get our fair share of it and that we should no longer be known as the 'forgotten south'. Of course, we saw that change to the point where confidence, empathy and financial investment capital is enormous in the whole of the Fleurieu

Peninsula. Families and small businesses have gone out on a limb as a result of confidence in the way in which the state is growing, the state of the budgets and the direction of the future. But—

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: I rise on a point of order, sir.

Mr BROKENSHIRE: This is about the Supply Bill.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: This debate does not come anywhere near the Supply Bill.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I uphold the point of order and ask the member for Mawson to return to the substance of the debate, which is supply.

Mr BROKENSHIRE: Mr Acting Speaker, I will not argue with your ruling but, in my comment, I do point out that the Supply Bill is about supporting the Supply Bill.

The ACTING SPEAKER: My ruling is clear: if the honourable member wishes to take another path, options are available to him. My ruling is that the honourable member will stick to the substance of the debate, which is supply. I uphold the point of order. I ask the honourable member to return to the debate.

Mr BROKENSHIRE: I therefore ask you, sir, for your guidance. Explain to me and to my other colleagues, then, around what parameters will you allow the Supply Bill to be debated?

The ACTING SPEAKER: The honourable member heard the Speaker in question time. The honourable member was present during question time and I ask him to work within those parameters.

Mr BROKENSHIRE: I ask you, Mr Acting Speaker, to clarify further those parameters, please.

The ACTING SPEAKER: There is no scope for questioning the Acting Speaker in this issue. The point of order was upheld. The debate is about supply. The honourable member will talk about supply. If not, the honourable member can sit down and we will move onto the next speaker.

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH: On a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker. This is a Supply Bill. The honourable member is addressing matters of supply dealing with a number of portfolios.

The Hon. P.F. Conlon interjecting:

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH: Mr Acting Speaker, my point of order is that the honourable member is addressing matters of supply. Could you please explain how the honourable member is not addressing matters of supply?

The Hon. P.F. Conlon: He does not need to.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I have considered the point of order of the Minister for Government Enterprises. I had been listening to the member for Mawson's debate. I feel that he has strayed into other areas of debate and I ask the honourable member to restrain himself to the business of the house, which is supply.

Mr BROKENSHIRE: With respect to the Supply Bill, we have seen a significant increase in this year's budget and we need, therefore, now that we are supporting a Supply Bill, to see delivery. In supporting this current Supply Bill which, indeed, is part of the 2001-02 budget, I understand that the government has said that it would continue to see through the current budget. As a member of parliament, I therefore do not think that it is too much for me to ask, on behalf of my constituents, to see projects that are within the current budget and that are within the parameters of the Supply Bill not put on hold but delivered, such as roadwork projects and contracts for health.

We could talk about a range of other issues, including sponsorship and whether or not it is available under this Supply Bill. People have made absolute commitments in relation to bringing international artists to the state. They are delivering growth opportunity, vibrancy and jobs for South Australia and they need to know whether they will get grants or sponsorship under this Supply Bill. This Supply Bill talks about money being made currently available so that people can get on with making decisions. The bill is not just about, I might add, providing money to pay for Public Service wages, electricity bills and those sorts of basic utility costs: it is also about supporting a bill of many millions of dollars that allows the state's activities to continue.

That is why I am debating this now. I am a little disappointed that I have been partly gagged by the government. I suggest to the parliament that this is gagging and it makes my job in opposition very difficult. In fact, it would be very interesting to look at debates on supply bills from opposition members over the eight years that I can remember and just see how much they did not talk about the Supply Bill and how much they did not talk about projects, infrastructure, etc. In terms of tying the Supply Bill into my own electorate, I want to talk about an issue that directly relates to the Minister for Transport's portfolio, that is, the metro ticket.

The Hon. P.F. Conlon interjecting:

Mr BROKENSHIRE: We are very happy to talk about that. Indeed, we will talk about rescue helicopters and some of those issues because lives are at risk when governments play around and interfere with decisions of boards. Sadly, whilst I will not share too much of the grief with members in this place, on the weekend I had occasion to call ambulances to my own area. I will not go into too much detail, however, I will say that, on the weekend, it was very difficult because I had to call a priority A to cover a most difficult situation in which I found myself. The Aldinga ambulance was attending a job at Victor Harbor with the Victor Harbor ambulance when the biggest trauma I have ever experienced in my life occurred in my own home town. We will talk about ambulance budgets, members need not worry about that. We will talk about how much money—

The Hon. P.F. Conlon: Instead of stealing money from the helicopter why did you not fund your own ambulance?

The ACTING SPEAKER: The member for Unley has a point of order.

Mr BRINDAL: If you had been listening, sir, you would have heard one of the government ministers using the word 'stealing'. That is clearly unparliamentary and I think that you should rule as such.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: I apologise and withdraw. I will insert the term 'improperly using money'.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! The minister cannot do that. The Minister for Government Enterprises has withdrawn. The member for Mawson.

Mr BROKENSHIRE: We will talk much more about what needs to be done in South Australia to continue to grow our current opportunities, and each member will, within the Supply Bill, have the right and the opportunity to tie that in with what they expect for their electorate. In the next five minutes left to me I will not go through every project that has been put on hold just in my own area, but in terms of health, life and property issues, I say that no government can afford to run the risk of not keeping those projects going, particularly when the government made a commitment that it would honour what is contained in this current budget. As I said, it

is not as if the state is in the diabolical trouble that it was in 1993.

Is there more that has to be done when it comes to continuing budget positions? Of course there is. Is there more that has to be done in reducing debt? Of course. It would be great to see the \$3.27 billion of debt further reduced, but the hard work has been done. The monkey on our back, which was impinging on every opportunity we had, has been removed, and this Supply Bill will go down in the history books as being one of the best opportunities that this state has had for a long time to be able to spend money, but to spend it wisely, so it will continue to grow a future, continue to grow opportunities and continue to strengthen the position our families are in at the moment.

One has only to look at the *Sunday Mail* surveys of recent times which ask South Australians how they feel about the financial situation of the state and how much confidence they have, and about what businesses are saying about investing in South Australia—

The Hon. P.F. Conlon: They like the change of government; that is what they like.

Mr BROKENSHIRE: It is nothing about the change of government, I must say, and that is one thing I am hearing all the time. On the weekend, the Minister for Police and I were at the same function, and it was interesting how many people came to me and said—

The Hon. P.F. Conlon: Wait until the Auditor-General's finished with you, mate. You won't be bobbing your head up again.

Mr BROKENSHIRE: Mr Acting Speaker, I ask that you request the police minister—

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member may not ask the Speaker anything unless it is by way of a point of order.

Mr BROKENSHIRE: It is interesting how the police minister keeps referring to the Auditor-General and pre-empting issues that the Auditor-General might be looking at. I find it interesting that the police minister pre-empts many times in this house what the Auditor-General may or may not do. To get back to the facts, yesterday at a meeting where there were hundreds of people, it was amazing how many of them came up to me and said that they were delighted to see the effort that I had put into supporting the previous government and that they were disappointed that we are not in power still because they would have loved to see—

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: I rise on a point of order. The fellow is a recidivist. Can he please talk about the Supply Bill?

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! I again uphold the point of order and ask the member for Mawson to contain himself to the debate at hand, which is supply.

Mr BROKENSHIRE: The point is that those people want to see growth and opportunity continue in South Australia. So do we in the opposition. That is why we support this Supply Bill. That is why we, unlike government members when they were in opposition, are bona fide, genuine in every respect and bipartisan where we should be. However, when it comes to supply bills, when it comes to the management of government, not only around the Supply Bill but also around the strategic planning and future directions for this state, when this government starts to get off the rails—and believe you me it will, sooner rather than later—we will make sure that we intervene then and let the South Australian community know exactly what this government is doing every time it goes wrong. We cannot afford to see a return to the

situation where, unlike this Supply Bill, which is easy to support, it was difficult to support supply bills in the past because the money was simply not available under the previous Labor government.

Mr BRINDAL (Unley): Like my colleague the member for Mawson, I rise to support this wonderful Liberal initiative. I will be mindful of the minister opposite and you, sir, and direct myself distinctly and strictly to the Supply Bill. This bill is about the appropriation of the sum of \$2 600 million from the Consolidated Account for the Public Service of the state for the financial year ending on 30 June 2003. The act defines 'agency' quite clearly as 'a minister, an administrative unit or part of an administrative unit, of the Public Service of the state or any other instrumentality or agency of the Crown'. It is not in parliamentary terms a long bill, as supply bills traditionally are not. I note, in particular, clause 3(3), which provides:

Where a purpose for which parliament appropriated money in respect of the 2001-02 financial year was to enable a particular agency to carry out its functions and duties and—

- (a) some of the functions or duties of the agency are transferred to another agency; or
- (b) the agency is abolished or dissolved and some or all of its functions or duties become the functions or duties of another agency,

the issue and application of the money under this act to enable the other agency to carry out those functions or duties will be taken to be for the same purpose as the appropriation of money for the firstmentioned agency in respect of the 2001-02 financial year.

That is a most important clause, as is clause 3(2), which provides:

Money must not be issued or applied pursuant to that appropriation for any purpose in excess of the amount appropriated by parliament for the same purpose in respect of the 2001-02 financial year.

The new Rann Labor government comes in here with a bill to fulfil the obligations of the previous government as they were appropriated by the last parliament—not one penny more, not one penny less—and the bill quite clearly says that this government is totally committed, as my colleague the member for Mawson said in his contribution to the debate, to honouring the commitments of the last government. They make a brave statement that, having reorganised the Public Service, having got a number of agencies and amalgamated them together, with the prescience for which the Public Service of this state has long been noted, they can come together and in an instant know exactly what the money is to be applied for and spend that money wisely and perspicaciously, which I believe was the word used by the member for Adelaide.

The Hon. P.F. Conlon interjecting:

Mr BRINDAL: The Minister for Police corrects my pronunciation of 'prescience'. We will accept that for Hansard because they will know how to spell it, whoever says it. These agencies are to come together and they are to appropriate that money to use it wisely and well in the period between now and the end of June. I can guarantee to the minister opposite—his not being the Treasurer, but I am sure that he will convey it to the Treasurer—that this opposition will look most heartily and carefully to see that the money is applied for the purpose for which this parliament is voting it, not for some new initiative that the new Rann Labor government wants to see, but in line with this bill, because this bill clearly says that the commitments of the last budget will be honoured and met.

At the end of the financial year, if the money is not spent exactly as it was appropriated to be, every single shadow minister on the opposition side will want to know why and we will not be accepting hollow excuses about, 'Oh, we were in a middle of having a review. Our public servants did not realise there was an odd million sitting around for this or that. You can't blame us simply because we amalgamated the agencies.'

The Hon. P.F. Conlon: Your problem will be that your agencies have spent more than you appropriated.

Mr BRINDAL: The minister says that our problem will be that our agencies have spent more than they were allocated. Can I remind this house, sir, that it is not our problem at all. It is his problem. He is sitting on the Treasury benches; he is the minister.

The Hon. P.F. Conlon: You have washed your hands of your deficits, have you?

Mr BRINDAL: No, the minister interjects quite wrongly, and I know that you, sir, will pick him up any minute (although your hearing must be selective on your right side) on his rude and churlish interjection. The fact is that we have not washed our hands but, because certain events occurred in this state, despite the wishes of 51.7 per cent of the electorate, we find ourselves sitting on this side of the chamber and he finds himself sitting on that side, and on that side of the house comes the responsibility and the ability to sit behind the desk and to make decisions. Here is one: \$2 600 million worth of decision making is occurring, and a decision is being made to spend the money wisely and well.

The Hon. P.F. Conlon: A bit more than that.

Mr BRINDAL: It had better be because this parliament expects no less. This applies not only to those who have got the big white cars and the salary increases but also to the honest people who sit behind them and who missed out on the perks and privileges and the things that go with office and the equally honest people who sit on this side of the house and whose job it is as Her Majesty's loyal opposition to keep those fellows who sit on the front bench honest and applying the money properly.

With regard to my shadow portfolio of water resources—and this relates to the Supply Bill because in this budget we established and maintained a water enforcement agency—I distinctly remember, with some horror and dismay, an article (the title of which alludes me) featuring a woman photographed with some capsicums and some product of the Northern Adelaide Plains. The gist of the article which I found concerning was this: they were bemoaning the fact that they would have excess water bills this year because we had a dry summer; instead of watering their crops every two or three days, as had been their wont, this summer they were inclined to water their crops rather more and their excess bills would therefore be larger. I raise this matter quite deliberately, because the Northern Adelaide Plains is the most fragile aquifer in this state.

In some sort of cognisance of that, licence holders are issued with a volumetric allocation. It is not a matter of being able to take a certain amount at a certain rate and then taking as much as you like at an additional rate: it involves the amount that it is believed the aquifer can sustain. With underground aquifers there is no such thing as excess water—despite the fact that, if you abuse the law, if you break the law and take additional water, a penalty applies. The argument that some of those irrigators and horticulturists seem to use is this: you can drive at 90 km/h along any road in Adelaide, with the difference between those speeds involving some sort

of excess bill for excess speed. It is not like that. There is a law in this state that says that there is a speed limit and, if one exceeds that speed limit, one is subject to a series of fines. It is the same in the case of water in the Northern Adelaide Plains. That is appalling.

I note that no government member or minister has stood in this place or gone to the press to say that this is an abuse of a resource—a resource in the Waterloo corner section of that aquifer that is already saline and will probably shortly be unusable; a resource that is perilously endangered; a resource about which some of the very people who are endangering say, ‘When we have basically destroyed this resource, we will sell the land for residential values, and we will move somewhere else’, and in doing so, one would think, completely destroying another fragile Australian resource as they shift around basically—and I am trying to think of some polite words—wrecking one resource after another, and depriving our children and their children of any beneficial enjoyment of it.

In the context of this Supply Bill, I hope that this new minister for the environment, the Murray River, the south and whatever else he is handling—and there are certainly many things—will concentrate on this issue, because it is an issue of vital importance to this state. It is because of this Supply Bill and because of what previous governments—including Labor governments—have done that those very irrigators have more choice than any other irrigators of this state. They have underground water from the Northern Adelaide Plains, including grey water from the Bolivar sewage treatment works at an unbelievably low price. Believe me, sir, I and every member of this house would like to water our gardens for the same cost as that for which they get their water from Bolivar. Thirdly, they have mains water. They have three different sources of water, all available and enabling them to grow commercial crops at a competitive price.

There is not one excuse in the world for anyone exceeding their water allowance in the Northern Adelaide Plains. Had we been in government now, I would have taken to my party room and presented to this house a bill that basically says, ‘If you go over your water allowance in particularly fragile areas without good cause more than two years in a row, your licence is forfeited.’ It is a matter not of excess water but of stealing—and I use that word in its correct sense—from the future of this state and imperilling one of our most precious resources with no regard at all for either those who come after them or their neighbours. If this house is not prepared to do anything about this, I ask the question: why? If this government, despite its complexity and its newness, is not prepared to come in here and stand up for what is important in this state and what is important for the future of this state, this state deserves an answer from this government as to why it is not prepared to do something about this.

I highlight the Northern Adelaide Plains. However, we can also talk about the Baroota Wells district, and we can talk about the Speaker’s own area. Through the aegis of the Supply Bill, the government might be slow in its response to act in the Northern Adelaide Plains area—and, of course, it will have nothing to do with the members there. It might be somewhat quicker to act in the Murray-Mallee area, where I know the Speaker has a definite and distinct interest in this matter. I know that the Speaker, as local member, will not rest on his laurels and allow the government to behave with cavalier gay abandon while a resource in his district is destroyed. If any minister opposite doubts the member for Hammond’s ability to lobby, pressure and have his say, I

counsel that they come and see me because, when I was Minister for Water Resources, he quite rightly said what he thought about the resources and the needs of the people in his area. Despite his being Speaker, I have every guarantee that he will continue to use his position as member for Hammond to do so.

Whether it is Baroota Wells, the Murray-Mallee or the South-East, we can ask in the context of this Supply Bill how much of the money I had set aside to see that the South-East forestry issue came to its conclusion has been and will be used, and how quickly the forestry issue in the South-East will reach a conclusion. I sat here rather timorously for a number of years while then shadow minister Hill berated me and said that I needed to get on with it and I needed to fix it quickly. Time escaped me. We had it fixed. There was a solution in hand, and we had all but signed off on it when we went into caretaker mode. This government has had a number of months—

An honourable member interjecting:

Mr BRINDAL: March, April, May—that makes about three months. Three is a number, just as two, six and 16 are numbers. They have had three months and a good part of two or three months preparing for government before that: you might as well say the best part of six months. For the benefit of the minister who is now at the front bench opposite, I say this: this matter was virtually concluded before we went into caretaker mode. All the minister has to do is sit at his desk, read the bit of paper and make a decision. It does not matter whether he takes another three months and consults another 50 000 people, 5 000 people or, indeed, no-one at all: at the end of whatever time he chooses, the same piece of paper will come across his desk, and the same minister will have to make a decision. That happens not just to Minister Hill but to every single minister, up to and including the Premier of this state, on a daily basis.

Mr Speaker, because you have not had the privilege I have had, let me share with you that that is why they get the extra money—because they are paid to make decisions. I hope that you, Mr Speaker, get the experience—and I hope that the young member for Playford gets the same experience one day, too—and I am sure, sir, that you will be able to make a decision when you get there. I regret that, despite this Supply Bill and having \$260 million to play with between now and the end of the year, all this government seems capable of doing is having reviews, establishing more committees, and putting it all into the too hard basket, hoping that it might go away until some time in the future. Well it does not, it will not, and the state needs some wise decision making now.

I would like to encourage the ministers. I actually think that some of them are not without ability. Some of them might actually have a brain nestling somewhere behind their craniums. To those ministers, I say, ‘Go for it. You might get only one opportunity to be a minister.’ It might be nice to have done something between the time they were sworn into office and the time they retire. There will be a few—as there are in many governments—who do nothing for the whole time: they will collect their salary and think themselves very smart. However, they will not be remembered very well by the people of this state, whereas those who do something will.

I want to spend the last few minutes of the time available to me in the context of the \$2 600 million that we are spending on this supply measure between now and the end of the year. I want to talk briefly about the concept of the water catchment management boards. I believe that the minister is currently looking at those boards and the levy

which they receive and which may or may not form part of this \$2 600 million. Unless you, sir, know that it does not, I hope you will indulge me a little.

During this period into the winter, and certainly in the first budget to be delivered by the Rann Labor government, we have to face an emerging issue, particularly, sir, in your electorate and me in mine, namely, that of flooding in metropolitan Adelaide. It is estimated that in the Patawalonga catchment alone \$150 million will be needed to correct matters that have arisen from the member for Mitcham's electorate through to that of the member for Elder, my electorate of Unley and, sir, your electorate of Torrens, as well as that of the member for Bragg. A number of metropolitan electorates are affected, none more so than the low lying ones which you and I represent and which will be subject to flooding. That is a \$150 million ask, and whether it be out of this Supply Bill that a start is made or whether it is under the next Supply Bill, the government must decide from where some of this money will come. Will it be taken from an increase in the catchment management subsidy scheme and the levy that is applied to it? Will it be garnished from councils in the form of a levy on ratepayers, or will it be taken from Consolidated Account? I hope that the minister, in reading this contribution, will have a look at that matter and see that, no matter how it is handled, it is handled.

Sir, we do not need your electorate 90cm under water and my electorate 75cm under water, and even the odd house or two flooding in the member for Waite's district, and perhaps even the electorate of the member for Bragg—although I think she is a little too high up the hill—before this parliament does something about it.

The issue of flooding in metropolitan Adelaide is a disaster waiting to happen. Many people's homes will be flooded and they will find themselves uninsured. I am absolutely confident, sir, that those people will beat a path to your door, to my door and to the government's door on a continuing basis. I commend the bill to the house.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Stuart.

Ms Breuer interjecting:

The Hon. G.M. GUNN (Stuart): I am very pleased that the member for Giles is interested in my contribution. We are looking forward to her contribution. We are debating the appropriation of \$2.6 billion of taxpayers' money for the general services of the government of South Australia and for the provision of services to the people of this state. Of course, the debate will be on how wisely or otherwise the government will spend the money that it is appropriating from the exchequer. That is the question that we can debate here.

We all recognise that governments need revenue. We all recognise, too, that there is a range of services that are essential for the proper workings of a decent society. We will debate what level of assistance we should give various areas. In question time today, we had quite a debate in relation to the expenditure of this money towards the Barossa Music Festival. The only question I raise in relation to that matter is: if we apply a set of criteria and gauge the Barossa Music Festival on a set of standards, we should apply it to the Festival Theatre and the State Opera. If they do not come up, the same action should be taken against them.

I am of the view that if we are to spend money on the State Opera it should be judged accordingly—whether it is a worthwhile project and whether the people who frequent that institution have the ability to pay. I have no problem with people frequenting the State Opera, but, in my view, there are

probably other priorities in relation to the State Opera where the money could be better invested. I look forward to the response of the arts community to my comments, because I know that they are very protective of their patch. I sometimes think that they are slightly too protective. In my view, we should be cautious as to how we expend the money—taxpayers' money—that we are appropriating today.

I have a view in this world that we have a great responsibility to provide adequate health services. This is very costly in the isolated parts of the state, but there is a need. When we consider the expenditure of money on the State Opera, and when we hear on the news this morning that the community at William Creek—a small, hardworking group of people—do not have the resources to purchase an emergency trailer to be used in relation to road accidents, I am of the view that the State Opera comes second and the emergency services trailer, which may assist in saving people's lives, is a higher priority.

So, I do not mind a bit if the arts community is cross with me, because I think we have reached a stage in our political and economic development when this parliament, and other parliaments around Australia, will have to have a very sensible and constructive public debate on how we raise revenue, where we spend it and on whether governments spread their money thinly or target where they spend it and get proper results. It appears that all governments try to appease small interest groups by giving a little money and then drip feeding them. I believe we have come to a stage in our development where we have to look at that process and say, 'Well, we are doing lots of things and doing a lot of them not very well.'

I know that it is good for members of parliament to hand out these cheques and make good fellows of themselves but, at the end of the day, is that in the long-term best interest of the people of this state? I have some questions about this matter. In my view, the expenditure of this money on which we are about to vote needs to be very carefully looked at.

I am of the very strong view that the promotion of industry and commerce is something that we need to look at carefully. For example, the tourism industry, which will be a great thing for South Australia, has a great need—as does the mining industry and other sections of the agricultural industry. For a very long time, we have been spending money propping up, by way of government direct grants and non-repayable loans, sections of industry and commerce. That is fine. I have participated in that, and remain a member of the Industries Development Committee.

However, what has concerned me for a long time is that certain companies and groups seem to know how the system works and continually ask for money. However, if you are on the outer—if you happen to have a small enterprise in a region of rural South Australia—you do not have the same access and do not get the same consideration. Let me give an example. A farmer could go along to the department and say, 'I want to get one of these non-repayable loans.' And they made it by way of a loan that was never going to be paid because it is not taxable. That is the trick involved: it is not taxable. If a farmer said, 'I want one of these non-repayable loans for \$500 000 so that I can buy a new air seeder and a new tractor, so I can more efficiently grow these crops that I have a market for', I would not like his chances for success.

Around South Australia today there are many small engineering businesses that are doing great things and employing lots of people. They are showing a great deal of initiative and innovation. I know of one at Farrell Flat in my

electorate that has been involved in developing a machine that bales hay more quickly, and they have export orders for it. The only help they have got from the government and its institutions is to have bureaucratic red tape where one council says that you can build a shed and the other one says you cannot.

The bloke is nice and cross. Here he has great demand, including orders from overseas, having developed this machine, employing 12 people, and the only help he gets is Sir Humphrey with his bureaucratic nonsense. There are two things that we have to do to ensure that we continue to build on the great work that the previous government did in South Australia in getting the economy right. I hope that all members read the BankSA report, about which there was considerable discussion last week on the ABC in relation to the strong financial position that South Australia is in today and the benefits flowing to the community. If we want to ensure that we continue along that line, which will help employ South Australians, create opportunities and raise the standard of living, we have to do a number of things.

Where this government will get into trouble if it is not very careful is if it allows political activists within the bureaucracy, the public service, to have their way. They will nosedive the economy in a suicide dive. If you allow the crazies in the department of environment and others who want to stop development—

Members interjecting:

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: They do. I could actually name them if you want me to.

Mrs GERAGHTY: On a point of order, sir, the honourable member is referring to your previous ruling in his contribution to the Supply Bill.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I am reluctant to call the father of the house into line in a debate: he is a former speaker. I would ask him out of courtesy if he could please refrain from debating other issues and return to the substance of the debate, which is the Supply Bill, and maintain the dignity that he deserves.

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: I am discussing the appropriation from the exchequer of \$2 600 million, and what I am doing is debating how the government is going to spend that money.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will not reflect on the chair's ruling.

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: Of course not. I would not even consider it. I would not consider such an improper act under any circumstances, because I am aware of the standing orders and of Erskine May, of the practice of the House of Representatives and all the other previous rulings that Speakers have given here, and it would be quite remiss of me to in any way reflect, because this is a broad-ranging debate. Spending \$2 600 million is a lot of money. It is going to employ a lot of public servants and it will be involved in lots of programs, some in the Government Whip's electorate.

I am sure that she will want to talk about them—and now the Treasurer is coming in, he is taking an interest, and I am sure that he will be interested in the comments that members of parliament make on the appropriation of this money for the general services of government of the state. I was talking on two subjects that I am sure are near and dear to his heart, the industries assistance money—

The Hon. K.O. Foley interjecting:

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: I have had a bit to say about them: I suggest you read my comments. I have had a bit to say and I will have a bit more as the days go on, because I firmly hold those views. I say again that I would sooner be

paying for hospital beds and schools than for people at the State Opera every day of the week. And I do not care whom I have offended.

The Hon. K.O. Foley: And the Barossa Music Festival?

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: I think what we should do is apply the same criteria that were used on the Barossa Music Festival to the Adelaide Festival Centre and to all these other arts groups, to make them front up and justify the expenditure. If they do not front up, they do not get the money. That is my view, and I think that taxpayers would appreciate that sort of judgment. I am pleased to have made these brief comments. I will have more to say in the grievance debate, but this is an important discussion that members should avail themselves of.

Many years ago, Sir Thomas Playford told me before I came here as a member of parliament that one should study the Auditor-General's Report closely—I think that was wise advice—and that we should test ministers on their knowledge of their departments. I look forward to doing that over the next few months, and I hope that a considerable amount of the \$2 600 million will be spent on worthwhile projects that will continue to employ people and that it is not going to be used to create opportunities to stop people from doing things, to be obstructive or to get in people's way.

It should be proactive in encouraging and assisting people with their enterprises so that people can be employed and we can better educate our children and provide better health services, particularly for those people in isolated and regional parts of the state. I support the bill.

Mr SNELLING (Playford): I wish to address this bill that appropriates \$2.6 billion of taxpayers' funds. In doing so, I wish to address some of the issues that have arisen of late with regard to the state of the budget, particularly to some of the furrphies from the former treasurer about the state of the budget and issues arising from the mid-year budget review released by the former treasurer on 16 January. The most amazing omission in that review was the significant cost pressures that the Treasurer, I think culpably, omitted from the mid-year budget review in order to make the state's finances appear somewhat better than they really were on the eve of a state election.

I might just go through some of those cost pressures that the former treasurer and former government omitted from the mid-year budget review to give this false impression to the public of South Australia about the state's finances. If I might go through the four financial years, these cost pressures amounted to \$60 million in 2001-02; \$89 million in 2002-03; \$119 million in 2003-04; and \$168 million in 2004-05. The mid-year budget review stated that there would be a surplus of \$2 million throughout those four financial years, whereas in fact, when you add those cost pressures that the former government or the former treasurer omitted from the budget review, you have deficits of \$26 million for 2001-02; \$77 million for 2002-03; \$85 million for 2003-04; and \$152 million for 2004-05. These are not insignificant sums. They are enormous sums and I believe that the figures released by the former treasurer were massaged in order to give an appearance of a sounder budget than in fact was the case.

Now, if we might go through some of these cost pressures that were left out by the former government. For example, in the Department of Human Services, a recurrent budget overrun by the state's hospitals meant that provisioning for these budget overruns in the state's hospitals were omitted

and the provisions that needed to be made for those budget overruns in the state's budget amounted to \$11 million over those four financial periods.

But the greatest omission, the most amazing omission and the omission which has the greatest effect on the state's finances was the failure to include the cost pressures arising from the teachers' enterprise bargain. These amounted to \$19 million for 2002-03, \$42 million for 2003-04 and \$72 million for 2004-05. These figures are as well as the statutory requirement of the state government to replace the state's public transport bus fleet, which will mean a cost pressure of \$20 million for the financial year 2004-05.

The former treasurer did not allow for any cost pressures other than those already explicitly approved by cabinet. When you are drawing up a state's finances you have to make provisioning for all those other things that might come later on. You do not provide only for cost pressures arising from decisions that have already been made by cabinet, because cabinet does not stop making decisions, including decisions allowing for extra expenditure for the next four years. Other decisions have to be made over that period of time and those cost pressures have to be allowed for. The former treasurer has included only those cost pressures where cabinet decisions had already been explicitly made. The result has been a significant underestimate of the required expenditure on the part of the state and, where there was a prediction of a \$2 million surplus over that period, what we in fact had was, on a cash basis, a seriously deteriorating state budget.

I have spoken previously sir, about the importance of the accrual figures. They are not just some accounting trick used by state government to mystify the state's finances. They are in fact a significant tool used by credit agencies and other governments and commentators when they are assessing the state's finances. Accrual figures make allowances for various capital expenditures that might have to be made over a certain period, depreciation in assets and all of those other figures that are easily hidden if you are just looking at a budget on a cash basis. If you look at accrual figures you get a much better reflection of the health of the state's finances. On a cash basis it is very easy for a treasurer to play around with the figures, allow for nuances, move expenditures around from one financial period to another, in order to change the cash result of the budget, whereas the accrual figures give a far better indication: they do not allow the figures to be massaged in that way.

What do the accrual figures show? They show a state budget in an even worse position than you get purely from looking at the budget on a cash basis. The general government net lending/borrowing position over the forward estimates that I have been talking about, for 2004-05, is \$414 million worse off than the position that was reported at the time of the mid year budget review. One of the big factors resulting in this deteriorated position on an accrual basis is that, as well as obviously the \$348 million increase in expenditure and provisioning to which I have already referred in the cash budget, there is also a \$66 million deterioration in the accrual budget due to provisioning for targeted voluntary separation packages, which were just not taken into account by the former Treasurer.

I have already spoken about this. In fact, when the former Treasurer was interviewed on radio about the state of the budget upon the release of the mid year budget review, he said to the radio announcer that in fact the accrual budget result does not really matter; all that matters is the cash result; the cash result is what people look at. However, any econo-

mist worth their salt and any person with any interest in or understanding of public finance knows full well that it is the accrual result that the commentators and, most importantly the ratings agencies, look at. The ratings agencies are absolutely crucial to this whole process, because they assess the risk from lending money to the state. If they are lending money to the state and we have a large deficit on accrual figures, and our state's finances on an accrual basis appear to be somewhat in poor shape and as a result they downgrade the state's credit rating, that means the state has to pay higher interest when it wants to borrow money—which state governments do every now and then—and that means, in turn, that more taxpayers' money has to be paid in interest on our outstanding debt. That money comes out of schools, hospitals, roads and all those other crucial things that the state budget provides for. So, that money is taken out of those things and, if we have a deteriorating credit rating, the interest rate we must pay goes up, and that money goes to international financiers and the other organisations that lend money to the state.

Finally, I wish to mention the way in which the previous government used the income from the South Australian Asset Management Corporation in an absolutely shameless way to prop up the state budget. As people would know, the South Australian Asset Management Corporation handles the assets of the former 'bad bank'. In a quite shameless and cynical way, the previous government used dividends from the South Australian Assets Management Corporation to prop up the state's finances.

This means that, under the previous government, the budget outcomes for the years 2001-02 to 2004-05 were underpinned by \$586 million worth of dividends from the South Australian Asset Management Corporation and SAFA. That money was used to prop up the budget. The problem with that is that those dividends will disappear towards the end of the forward period. The South Australian Asset Management Corporation is not a bottomless pit which the state government can continue to dig into in order to prop up the bottomline of the budget. So, I think the previous government was being somewhat mischievous in using those dividends to prop up the budget and make the state's finances appear much better than they were when it knew full well that the dividends from those two agencies would dry up in later years and not provide an ongoing flow of dividends to the state.

In conclusion, I support the \$2.6 billion which this Supply Bill makes available to the government to fund our schools and hospitals and pay our police officers. It gives me great pleasure to support the passage of this Supply Bill from the Rann Labor Government through all stages of the house.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Koutsantonis): I remind members that the use of mobile phones in the chamber is prohibited under standing orders. I am aware that some of the newer members might not be aware of this standing order, but it is a longstanding tradition of the house.

The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY (Light): Thank you for your very good advice, Mr Acting Speaker. I support the Supply Bill. It is important to keep the wheels of government turning, particularly in terms of paying public servant wages and other government matters. In my comments this afternoon, it is of interest to note that one would almost think that there is a different group of Treasury officials working for the new government than we had for the old government, because the figures that were presented to us as a cabinet prior to the

change of government (outlined by the former treasurer the Hon. Rob Lucas in another place) are quite different from those which have been put forward by the current Treasurer. In addition, \$96 million of income from stamp duty on land sales in South Australia was not taken into account or included in the forward estimates in this year's budget. So, I find it interesting that the figures that have come out are wildly different from those which Treasury presented to us when in government.

The member for Playford raised some cost pressure issues, one of which I would like to take issue with in particular: that is, the teachers' wage agreement. The previous government allowed for a 3.5 per cent wage increase in the forward estimates over the next three years. Obviously, the union proposal of 14.5 per cent was not allowed for—we have seen that the government has offered teachers 12 per cent—but to say that no allowance had been made for a wage increase in the forward estimates is extremely misleading and quite incorrect, because that is just not the case. I had discussions with Treasury during bilateral meetings in December, and that money was certainly in the forward estimates and in the mid-term review. So, that is quite a misleading statement by both the member for Playford and also the Treasurer.

In the time allowed, I want to look at South Australia and the state of the state. When the previous government came to office, employment was at 12 per cent and, through a range of measures in various budgets (such as the government traineeship scheme and the federal government's measure involving apprenticeships in schools and apprenticeship training schemes) the previous government upskilled our labour force and, by strengthening the South Australian economy, reduced that unemployment rate. Of course, I recognise that the unemployment rate has been reduced right across Australia.

We would all like to see full-time permanent jobs, but the economy and the structure of the work force has resulted in an increasing number of part-time jobs. Because of the flexibility within the work force now in terms of working hours compared to 10 or 15 years ago, I do not believe that we will have a reduction in the number of part-time workers, because that is the way that business is moving. It does not matter whether you are in Australia or anywhere around the world: it is happening in all the OECD countries, and certainly we are not going to be immune to it here.

One of the important areas of government investment is regional development, and over the past eight years of the former Liberal government it was concentrated on by the then Deputy Premier (Hon. Rob Kerin). Great strides were made over that period through the government working with industry to develop the food plan and an export culture, as well as directing assistance to industries and introducing various companies and growers to international markets. The wine, aquaculture and horticulture industries developed beyond belief over that period. As various members have said in this house, the growth in the wine industry over the last eight or nine years is nothing short of incredible. That has not happened just by sheer accident: that has been because the government, through its budgets and through its concentration on regional development, recognised the fact that a lot of our young people move from the country or from the regions—

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! I do not wish to interrupt the member for Light in the course of his remarks, but I remind him of the Speaker's ruling before question time concerning the relevance of the supply debate and ask him to return to the parameters of the debate.

The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker, for your guidance. I thought that by concentrating on money directed towards regional development my comments were relevant, but I will take your advice. There is a number of areas which this government will have to address in the future. Certainly, the ageing of our population will continually pressure the health budget, regardless of the persuasion of the government at the time. Because of our ageing population there will be an increasing demand for services and, therefore, an increase in the health budget not only of the state government but also of the federal government. There are now a number of medical procedures which were not even thought of some time ago, and there are waiting lists for hip replacements, knee replacements or whatever. There is an increased expectation in the community that the government will provide funding to enable an enhanced quality of life. That is understandable, but the point is that the money has to come from somewhere and it is a matter of the amount that is available in that state budget for health purposes.

We all want to see waiting lists reduced and we all want to see very good health services in place. All members in this place know that when one talks about raising government revenue and the actual tools available to do that, particularly in terms of the Federal Court ruling regarding the tax on tobacco, fuel and alcohol passing back to the federal government—the ruling that state governments could no longer control that taxation—it has meant that the state has a limited number of tools in its bag to be able to raise revenue. Therefore, we are relying on licences, taxes such as land tax, and various other levies to raise revenue to ensure that good government continues.

Of course, on the other side, there are the pressures of wage increases, which are normal and natural, to all sectors of the community. It is where, I believe, this particular government will have to look seriously at the current inflation rate within the community, within the South Australian and Australian economies, and the current wave of 4 per cent wage increases. Inflation is not sitting at 4 per cent and, at some stage, when the next round of wage rises comes up—and I am not sure who is next cab off the rank—serious consideration must be given to whether that 4 per cent keeps rolling on or whether there is a reduced percentage to fall within a state budget. It will be a continuous pressure and it does mean that governments will have to look at efficiencies. The government when in opposition prior to the election talked about the money spent on consultancies, and the previous government wound that back to some \$52 million, from what I remember. That is an area which will not yield all the money required to bring in the government's program that it announced running up to the election.

Likewise, when I was the education minister, it would have been lovely to have another \$300 million or \$400 million in the bucket, because you could have easily spent it. Similar to health, it is an area which the state government will have to look at to see exactly how it will best spend its money. There are only limited areas where savings can be achieved without attacking class sizes. Of course, both the opposition (the former government) and the government (the former opposition) in their policies running up to the election wanted to look at the reduction of class sizes for Reception to Year 2 students because that is where research is showing that additional money needs to be spent. That will be an issue for the government in its budgets, and certainly in its supply of money to those sectors.

It is a portfolio into which you can just continue to pour money. I raised the issue with the former treasurer running up to bilaterals in terms of backlog maintenance of school buildings. In 1968, a report was produced that looked at the number of buildings that had been built during the baby boom period of the late 1950s and the 1960s. That report noted that from 2003 to 2010 the refurbishment of those buildings would be a major issue for any government that was in power. Those buildings, which would then be between 30 and 40 years old, would be in need of major refurbishment. We are getting close to that period, and I raised the issue with the former treasurer and with cabinet in about September or October last year as this was an area which, regardless of whether we were re-elected or whether the Labor Party was elected into government, would be a pressing issue for a number of years.

We are talking not \$10 million or \$20 million but some \$70 million to \$80 million that is required over a period of years to ensure that our buildings are brought up to a fit state of repair. As always, I think that there are a number of challenges and, as always, you end up with pressures on budgets. They are unavoidable because various issues will arise that will see changes in a budget. A budget is, of course, an estimate, and you hope that you are able to maintain that estimate; most times you do but, from time to time, pressures jump out of the woodwork over which you have no control. As other members in this place have said, it is a matter then of governments having some room to move to be able to address those cost pressures. I support this Supply Bill and look forward to the upcoming budget in July to be presented by the Treasurer.

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): The Supply Bill 2002 asks that the sum of \$2 600 million be appropriated from the Consolidated Account for the Public Service of the state for the financial year ending 30 June 2003. Today, Flinders electorate, with just 3 per cent of the state's population, contributes more than \$1 billion to the state's revenue: \$934 million from fishing and farming and aquaculture industries and another \$137 million from tourism. New ventures are starting or are in advanced planning stages. Population is increasing or stable. Services have been maintained or increased and the general mood is one of hope, wellbeing and excitement.

I ask that the new Labor government acknowledge the considerable contribution of the people of Eyre Peninsula towards this \$2.6 billion of funding and, in doing so, that the government and its agencies continue to support the electorate of Flinders to assist them to develop the potential of this wonderful region of the state that has barely been tapped. The roads in the country region of the Eyre Peninsula are only 5 per cent sealed. The Liberal government put in place a program to seal all the unsealed rural arterial roads by 2004. That program was ahead of schedule.

This was a particularly welcome program in my electorate, which had the two longest unsealed rural arterial roads in the state: Kimba-Cleve and Lock-Elliston. Kimba-Cleve is now sealed. At the end of this financial year, Lock-Elliston will have just over 15 kilometres of unsealed road. Funds for this were planned for the 2002-03 budget. It will be a measure of the Labor government's recognition of the value of rural and regional South Australia if the necessary funds are included in that 2002-03 budget, and that planning must be done now for the next budget.

Highways have been widened to improve safety and traffic flow. Truck drivers said that it was fortunate that sections of the highways cambered towards the centre as large vehicles were within centimetres of collision when passing. Passing lanes have added to road safety. Passing lanes for Eyre Peninsula were on the agenda, and the Labor government needs to honour the commitment to upgrade road safety. With the imminent completion of the rural arterial roads sealing program, the Liberal government implemented a program to assist local government councils to seal rural roads of economic importance.

Metropolitan residents have little understanding of the hazardous conditions of dirt roads when heavy vehicles compete with cars in dust, which obscures vision and potholes that threaten to damage vehicles, or of winter conditions when mud and water present a different set of dangers. School buses find these conditions extremely hazardous, even life threatening. Rural and regional South Australia have helped to bring the state to boom times that have lifted the quality of life of every person in the state. Roads in the country are a lifeline in a way that is totally different from those in urban areas.

I challenge the Labor government to continue the sealing of rural roads for the safety of those using them, not only as a matter of social justice but also in recognition of the economic importance of rural and regional South Australia. I also ask that, on the same basis, the government supports airlines to connect people quickly and safely to their capital and all the benefits and services that are found therein. A subsidy for buses in the city and taxis for frail and disabled are taken for granted.

However, a hard line is being taken towards a subsidy for an airline to once again service the small towns of central Eyre Peninsula. If city people had to pay the huge costs of road travel in time, money and discomfort, particularly for the sick and elderly, to access health and education services in the city, a subsidy of our airlines not only to provide a service where currently there is not one but also to bring down the cost, would be automatic. The current cost of a trip to Port Lincoln is more than double that of a trip to Melbourne. Financial assistance for Kendell Airlines or another airline to provide a service to Cleve and Wudinna I believe is only justice.

Eyre Peninsula still has 10 hospitals, and what a difference there has been in them over the past eight years. All are improved, many are expanded with more services and associated aged care facilities have been added, while tenders for others were in the process of being let. The Liberal government's \$16.4 million upgrade of the Port Lincoln hospital puts it amongst the top hospitals in country South Australia, including those in cities larger than Port Lincoln. Enrolled nurse training is being put back into our country hospitals, a positive move that will alleviate the chronic shortage of trained staff.

The Liberal government also supported the recruitment and retention of doctors in rural regions through the \$6.5 million Rural Enhancement Project and the South Australian Rural and Remote Medical Support Agency. The Liberal government's health budget increased by upwards of three-quarters of a billion dollars, or \$2 million a day more than when we took over government. In addition, rural health scholarships are helping to put more health professionals into the country. Metropolitan people expect these services at their fingertips.

Country people appreciate the Liberal ethos of treating all people the same, so that essential needs are met. The fact that these programs and services are supported by the new Labor government is of great importance to the quality of life of people living on Eyre Peninsula—indeed, the very survival of the small towns—as without a well-equipped hospital, doctors and staff, people will not remain in the regional areas.

Advances in education have been one of the many major highlights of the Liberal years in office. In fact, the education budget increased by 60 per cent in the last five years of the Liberal government. The Liberal government quickly recognised the importance of training and equipping our students for the computer age. There is now one computer to each five students in our public schools, up with the top achievements in the world in this area, and better than both the USA and the United Kingdom. This compares with almost no computers in the schools eight years ago. We have 1 231 new computers installed in schools on Eyre Peninsula.

An international study last year found that South Australian students were amongst the world's best in maths, science and literacy. Students ranked second in the world in literacy, third for science and eighth for maths, well above the average of the Organisation of Economic Cooperation Development. The then minister, Malcolm Buckby, said that the world class standards reflected the high quality of our teachers and the world-leading advances made in school management, curriculum and technology. Continued funding for the servicing and upgrading of technology in our rural schools is essential, particularly as many students are undertaking their senior subjects by open access.

For many years our region lobbied for tertiary facilities to complement TAFE. In my Address in Reply speech eight years ago, I said:

I believe that TAFE colleges should be able to provide at least the first year of education and that, over time, Flinders University should develop in Port Lincoln to a full university campus specialising in marine studies. Port Lincoln. . . [which] has the largest fishing fleet in Australia, a very wide range of wild fisheries and now the development of fish farming and aquaculture, all centred around a harbour five times larger than Sydney Harbour, should become a centre of excellence for marine studies in this state, Australia and internationally.

This was partly fulfilled when federal, state, local government and industry provided funding that was put into the Port Lincoln Marine Science Centre, an adjunct of Flinders University. The centre has been extended twice and has now outgrown its facilities.

South Australia is the top aquaculture state in Australia, and Port Lincoln is the base of the biggest fishing fleet tonnage in Australia. It is therefore appropriate that a research and teaching facility of this calibre is located where the activity is. Plans for expansion and consolidation were being developed. It will be interesting to see whether Labor's claim to support education extends to country university campuses. Perhaps a new campus that is needed in Port Lincoln could be provided by private enterprise. That has been suggested recently in the media.

Some of my 70-plus education institutions, ranging from kindergarten to tertiary, were so poorly maintained that some areas were considered too dangerous to use. A strong program for maintenance removed the negatives, leaving property in good condition for the incoming government, in contrast with that which we received eight years ago.

Looking to the future, I supported the testing for wind farms on Eyre Peninsula. The former Liberal state government was working to make South Australia a sustainable

energy hub for the nation. Wind farms nearing the development stage on Eyre Peninsula have the potential to supply 20 per cent of the state's power needs by being connected to the national grid. This power generation could earn the state income by providing the federal government's 2 per cent green power requirement for both this and other states. Private sector investment of more than \$700 million added 850 to 1 000 megawatts of power to state use but consumption was still increasing rapidly as the state's economy powered ahead under the Liberal government.

Eyre Peninsula has the potential to double its contribution to the state's gross domestic product in the next five years—a compelling argument to make the area a special development region. The 10 local government councils, the Eyre Peninsula Local Government Association, the Flinders Regional Area Consultative Committee, federally, and the Eyre Regional Development Board, on a state basis, form a major driving force for this region. The framework is in place. Some of the hard yards have already been covered. We need to step into the future with confidence, with vitality and with the knowledge that the state government is a partner in our progress.

The possibilities for Eyre Peninsula can be gauged to some extent by looking at one of the region organisation of councils in New South Wales, namely, the Hunter Region Organisation of Councils (HROC). HROC is an incorporated body comprising 13 local government areas containing urban, industrial and rural sectors within the Hunter Valley. A number of HROC's projects are grounded on the integrated local area council (ILAC). The key elements of ILAC are that existing jurisdictions are maintained, that each council controls the extent and level of its participation in the progress of each ILAC agreement, and that economies of scale are usually sought through amalgamation.

The Hunter model is as much about improving service quality for all councils and providing some councils with access to a broader scope of services as it is about increased economies of scale. The base annual budget of HROC is in the order of \$240 000. In addition to this base amount, HROC attracts council, state and federal government grants for various projects. The Hunter is one of Australia's most diverse and dynamic regions, responsible for about 4.5 per cent of the national gross domestic product. It produces 80 per cent of New South Wales' electricity, 65 per cent of its coal and 100 per cent of its aluminium. As can be seen from this brief explanation of HROC, Eyre Peninsula has the potential to rival the Hunter. We currently account for 65 per cent of the state's seafood industry, with the potential to increase that exponentially.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Koutsantonis): Order! I do not want to interrupt the member for Flinders for too long, but I remind the honourable member of the Speaker's ruling this afternoon about the debate on the Supply Bill and ask her to return to the substance of the debate.

Mrs PENFOLD: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. I point out that \$2.6 billion of the total budget of \$8 billion is in the Supply Bill, and I believe that the planning is being done currently by the Public Service, and that is my point, that the planning for the development that I need on Eyre Peninsula is currently being done for the budget. If I do not put these things on the record now—

The ACTING SPEAKER: I understand the member's apprehension. I am just restating a ruling that the Speaker made in case the member again strayed into debating other

issues. I accept her argument and ask her to stay within the parameters of the debate.

Mrs PENFOLD: Thank you, sir. I believe that I have probably put sufficient on the record anyway. I support the bill.

The Hon. D.C. KOTZ (Newland): The Supply Bill, as we all know, provides appropriation through Treasury to enable government and the Public Service to maintain services to the people of South Australia. Therefore, it is quite appropriate to note that those services are paid from the public purse and, as a member of this parliament, I am happy to address the services which the Supply Bill enables. It is firstly pertinent to relate the overall performance of our state in economic terms, as the relativity to supply is an economic one, as well as any social justice and equity matters that form the basis of services provided by the supply appropriation.

As members of this house—whether opposition or government members—we should acknowledge the economic performance of South Australia compared to other Australian states, supported by influential financial forecaster Moody's Investors Service. The South Australian economy has performed consistently better than other states and, for the past five or six years, the rate of growth per capita has been the second highest in the nation. Moody's changed South Australia's financial outlook from stable to positive on its AA2 domestic currency debt rating. Access Economics described South Australia as the untold economic success story of Australia; the National Bank said that we have recorded the strongest business conditions of all states; and we lead the nation in important economic indicators such as export growth, business investment growth and, importantly, wages growth. Large, small and medium sized businesses are all reporting strong levels of optimism above the national average. We on this side of the house are certainly very proud of the state and what it has been able to achieve. It does not deserve to be talked down and, in fact, many people deserve a pat on the back—including public servants, who work very hard to increase the export performance and general wealth of all South Australians.

I trust that this new government will continue to consider what has been achieved, look at the wants and the needs of all South Australians, and get on with the job of providing the services that this Supply Bill appropriation enables. I hope that this government will talk up the state and its future economic potential rather than continuing what has been a very negative mentality that has been extremely apparent over the past eight years.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member that the debate is about supply, not any other issue, and I ask the member to refrain from entering other debates and return to the issue of supply.

The Hon. D.C. KOTZ: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. We, as Liberals, did get on with the job and we have the runs on the board for even the most meagre intellect to recognise, and I am happy to be able to address the Supply Bill, as have other members, in terms of the services it provides for, enabling public servants to continue to implement the budget measures which have been undertaken throughout this last financial year, coming to the new budget—which we are all interested to hear once the time has arrived for the new government to let us into those secrets.

When the private sector is convinced that South Australia has the potential for major investment, it provides government with the impetus to arrange its finances through its

supply appropriation and through its budgets. Private sector moneys can relieve government expenditure, when industry sets up in South Australia, to improve the opportunities of employment for the people of this state and their children.

To give an example of our commitment, we targeted industry sectors to develop smart industry precincts with the greatest potential to be the employment generators of the future. That is why we targeted the automotive industry, our food and wine sectors and our biotechnology and information technology industries. It was all about creating long-term job security, creating future opportunities and, certainly, opportunities for our young people. The defence and electronics industry is clearly a key sector in that respect. It currently employs more than 16 000 people and contributes more than \$2 billion to gross state product each year. That is why, as a government, we moved to attract significant and other major defence companies such as BAE Systems, General Motors Defence, SAAB Systems and Tenix. That is why we 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.

Part of what this Supply Bill should be enabling is the completion of services provided for in the previous government's budget. These include many projects such as the completion of 57 new Housing Trust homes worth some \$5.1 million. These homes are part of the program for 2001-02 in which 280 new homes will be built at a cost of \$28 million. I trust this government will support the very projects in place now and looking to the future, and will support the Housing Trust by a similar strong commitment.

I also trust that the appropriation of \$2.6 billion will continue to enable public servants to enable the additional funds of \$3.5 million to support country hospitals, which includes more money for mental health and surgery throughout this financial year. As the Supply Bill is not specific, I would trust that \$1.1 million will go to mental health services, and \$775 000 to the regions for targeted surgical activity, as well as \$1 million to fully fund pay increases for nurses, and \$488 000 to the regions for the use of the Royal Flying Doctor Service. Will the Treasurer advise the house whether the allocations for surgery are enabled through this bill and, therefore, that the service of government is overseen by public servants? I specifically ask about the following:

- Eyre Peninsula, where \$90 000 was to be spent for additional orthopaedics and ophthalmology at Port Lincoln hospital and ear, nose and throat surgery at Ceduna;
- the Hill Mallee, where \$175 000 was to be spent for additional ophthalmology at the South Coast Hospital, Kangaroo Island and Mount Barker;
- the Mid North, where \$50 000 was to be spent on orthopaedics and ophthalmology;
- the northern and far western regions, where \$150 000 was to be spent for dental procedures at Coober Pedy, ophthalmology at Port Augusta and orthopaedics at Whyalla;
- the Riverland, where some \$60 000 was allocated for orthopaedics at Loxton, Waikerie, the Riverland Regional Health Service and Renmark, and ophthalmology at the Riverland Regional Health Service, Berri campus;
- the South-East, where \$100 000 was to be spent for additional general surgery at Mount Gambier and Millicent; and
- Wakefield where \$100 000 was to be spent on general surgery at northern Yorke Peninsula and Barossa Health Service. I have mentioned these areas because I am

concerned that the Labor Party has not shown a propensity for country regions—

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! The member will not stray into debating other areas; you will remain on the topic of supply. I have warned you twice. This is the last time.

The Hon. D.C. KOTZ: Sir, I did not realise I had a warning, but I will take that on board. When talking about the Supply Bill, we are also talking about the budgets already in place to compensate public servants to ensure the implementation of those services and completion of those projects provided for in the budget finances for the financial year 2001-02. We believe we have taken steps forward—and hopefully this new government will do the same—in giving South Australia a world class contemporary education and training system. Our teachers need to be complimented as well, because they have certainly transformed schooling. We now have the new flexibilities of localised management; we have seen schools appoint over 600 additional staff; and we have encouraged over 90 per cent of schools and preschools to volunteer to move to local management. One of the areas that has always been a passion—

The Hon. P.F. CONLON (Minister for Government Enterprises): I move:

That the time for moving the adjournment of the house be extended beyond 5.40 p.m.

Motion carried.

The Hon. D.C. KOTZ: I was talking about the passions I hold and have always held in relation to education, and that relates to literacy and numeracy. I am pleased to say that in this state our literacy, numeracy and particularly our science standards are now in a world top five position overall. We have bettered our ambitious goal—and it was an ambitious goal—of having one computer for every five students. Again, I trust that the Supply Bill and its appropriations will enable all these systems to function at an even greater pace than we have seen in the past.

Our schools' use of information technology is certainly a match for any, and our vocational colleges and attractive school options are producing more and more job ready youngsters. All these are things of which South Australia needs to be very proud.

Further, 96 per cent of year 11 and 12 students have achieved the national goal of year 12 or its vocational equivalent, and that exceeds the national average. Our TAFE Institutes produce the most successful students in the country, with 91.4 per cent of them going into jobs or higher training. Our Adelaide Institute of TAFE is acclaimed by UNESCO as an international centre of excellence in vocational and technical education.

The Evatt Foundation in its November 2001 report ranked South Australia top of the nation for education policy. Independent national statistical collections ranked South Australian schools overall as the best staffed and best resourced in Australia.

In terms of training, apprenticeships and the general areas of employment that are gained only through highly skilled areas, it has been extremely important for this state to have improved in terms of the number of apprentices and trainees in South Australia, and these numbers have grown rapidly. There were 9 200 apprentices and trainees in 1994, compared to 32 460 in 2001, and more than 90 per cent of new apprentices are employed three months after completion of their apprenticeship. The number of South Australians undertaking

training has increased dramatically in recent years. For example, in 1995, 89 379 students were in vocational education and training, compared to 146 200 in 2000.

South Australia again, particularly TAFE itself, leads the nation with 82.7 per cent of our state's TAFE graduates having the greatest chance of being employed after completing training, compared to 76 per cent nationally. A figure of 91.4 per cent of South Australian TAFE graduates were working or were in further study after training, compared to some 89.2 per cent of TAFE graduates nationally. South Australian employers certainly have shown that they value training highly, with some 72 per cent of employers indicating that training pays for itself through increased worker productivity.

It is extremely pleasing to know that all those who worked so hard in the TAFE area have managed to improve its efficiency by some 25 per cent in the past four years. Examples of South Australia's quality training system have also been recognised in the prestigious Australia National Training Authority awards. These have been the title of Australian Training Provider of the Year, which was awarded to Regency Institute of TAFE in 1997 and to the Spencer Institute of TAFE in 1999. A South Australian was named the Australian Apprentice of the Year in 1998.

The Prime Minister's Small Business of the Year awarded to South Australian businesses went to Pro Paint and Panel in 1998 and Angus Clyne Australia Pty Ltd in 1999. One of the other areas that is extremely important to this state—and we again look at the enablements that the Supply Bill allow us to take the implementation of these aspects through to fruition—comes in information technology and communications, which are now basic services that underpin all aspects of our lives, from work to education to recreation and to leisure. The success of every sector of our economy is increasingly dependent upon the existence of a very strong and viable IT sector. By itself the IT sector is a significant contributor to the economy, through the direct employment of approximately 30 000 people in specialist IT and related support jobs. Additionally, it supports the business sector in South Australia, with approximately 9 000 IT specialists. The growth of IT in South Australia has certainly been fostered by the emergence of what is most definitely an informed and enabled community which knows how to use IT for personal as well as business benefit.

We saw the need for South Australians to be part of the continuing IT evolution, to maintain support for creative approaches and to encourage community-wide access and individual participation. As a Liberal government we recognised that reaping maximum benefit for our state would require the continued building of partnerships between the IT sector, business and the community, and supported by government. Of course, it is our hope that this government will follow suit and join with the private sector in these types of partnerships, which have benefits for the whole of our community and for residents in specific areas of the state. It certainly has benefits for those in the remote areas of South Australia, encompassing some of the vastness that makes certain areas of communication difficult.

This approach is critical if we are to continue to develop the lifelong skills and knowledge that enable us to respond to the very rapid evolution of ideas, of technology and the applications we are seeing coming into being that actually transform our lives. They certainly transform the means by which we do business. They certainly transform access and quality and exchange of ideas on a far quicker basis than

possibly any of us as individuals have experienced in the major part of our working lives. So, it is a model which allows us to continue to grow our state's capability to support and encourage the growth of small, medium, and certainly large, IT enterprises within South Australia.

I would like to think that we would encourage all members of our community to gain skills and certainly a great degree of confidence in IT—not only students and adults but also business operators and service providers. We are really talking about people from all walks of life. I hope that we will look to support the continued adoption of IT in the education sector through the Information Economy and the Information Technology Literacy program, which will ensure that all students leaving school have an industry-acknowledged accreditation, and the Pathways SA program, which has provided high bandwidth internet connections to every public school in South Australia.

Time expired.

Mr MEIER (Goyder): I am pleased to support this supply debate, and very pleased to see that our economy is in such a good condition. In fact, it is interesting to see some of the comments that have been made lately in relation to our economy, and certainly this \$2.6 billion is obviously very necessary so that we can keep the state's economy running through—according to the Treasurer—to about October or November.

It is interesting that the Treasurer should try to find a black hole of some \$300 million. I cannot find any reference in this Supply Bill to the \$2.6 billion that he is making available. However, I did some figures, basing it on an annual budget of about \$8 billion—in fact, I think our budget is a bit more than \$8 billion. His black hole was \$300 million over four years. If you do the figures based on an \$8 billion budget over four years—that is about \$32 billion—and they have this \$300 million so-called black hole, what does that work out to? It is .9 of 1 per cent. In other words, his black hole is less than 1 per cent. That is a sad reflection on the Treasurer of this state. It is difficult to believe that some of the media actually fell for it as though it was something out of the ordinary.

I think it shows up very clearly that the previous Liberal government was an excellent economic manager of this state. It brought the economy back from a catastrophic situation to be amongst the best in the country. And that is being reflected in comments from a variety of people. Certainly the Bank SA report, which the member for Stuart referred to a little earlier, indicates that the consumer confidence level is climbing to a five-year high. I am very pleased to support this Supply Bill, which makes another \$2.6 billion available to keep the state going, to keep the Public Service going, and to keep the many projects going that the previous Liberal government implemented in virtually every case, although I assume that one or two things will change.

It is not only Bank SA that has made those positive statements but also the business sector. Business SA recently indicated that we are enjoying the best economic conditions that we have had for the past two decades. It is wonderful to be part of this state and to see how unemployment has been brought down from about 12 per cent to just over 6 percent—

in other words, it was halved in the time the Liberals were in office.

I am very pleased to support this Supply Bill, this \$2.6 billion extra for the next few months, because I want things to continue in a positive way. But, as I said during the Address in Reply debate, I am extremely worried about the current government's attitude towards the progress of this state in saying, 'We will review this, that and the other', because this \$2.6 billion goes for things such as active club grants, community grants and larger regional grants.

Thankfully, the active club grants have been given the go-ahead again. I just hope that they will have the distribution that they had and that country areas will not be disadvantaged, because certainly country areas have a lot more sporting clubs and need the money more. The situation in respect of the next lot of grants, those in between \$20 000 and \$50 000, is still on hold, and I assume they are being reviewed. I certainly hope that we will not see a withdrawal of some of this \$2.6 billion from those funds for the slightly larger community grants. I think it is essential that the appropriate amount of money that would normally have been made available in this \$2.6 billion continues to be made available under the new government.

With respect to the black hole, as I have said, it is less than 1 per cent of the total budget and therefore totally insignificant. I would like to see any government that has done better than ours with respect to balancing the budget. I guess the feds could claim that they have done better with their much larger budget, even though the defence area in the last federal budget has caused a few problems. Despite the less than 1 per cent, we also have the former treasurer (Hon. Rob Lucas) highlighting the fact that what Mr Foley put out was not correct, anyway, so we do not even have to identify that.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will return to the debate and not enter into any debate not relating to the Supply Bill.

Mr MEIER: Thank you, Sir. Certainly, the fact that there is not a black hole means that the whole of the \$2.6 billion can be spent on what it should be spent on, and I hope that the Treasurer will make sure that that occurs. The positive things have been so many. You, Mr Acting Speaker, would remember that in the last budget (and, of course, this is a continuation from the last budget so that the \$2.6 billion can keep the good things going) there was a record amount spent on health. We all acknowledge and applaud that.

There was a record amount spent on police and a record amount spent on education. All those things were record amounts, and it is good that this \$2.6 billion is being made available so that that record spending can continue well into this government's term. I will be very interested to see how the budget shapes up and whether it seeks to trim some of the areas this \$2.6 billion is going towards. I would not want to see any less expenditure on health, I would not want to see less expenditure on education and I would not want to see less expenditure on police. I seek leave to continue my remarks.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

At 6 p.m. the house adjourned until Tuesday 28 May at 2 p.m.