

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Thursday 10 March 2005

The **SPEAKER (Hon. I.P. Lewis)** took the chair at 10.30 a.m. and read prayers.

KANGAROO ISLAND

Mrs HALL (Morialta): I move:

That this house acknowledges the importance of Kangaroo Island as one of Australia's most significant international tourism destinations, and in particular—

- (a) recognises the economic contribution Kangaroo Island makes to this state's tourism industry;
- (b) views, with concern, the ongoing funding issues facing the Kangaroo Island community with the current lack of specific infrastructure and maintenance provisions by this government;
- (c) requests the government to update this house on time lines, planning, progress and funding options for upgrading the port facilities and foreshore developments at Penneshaw and Kingscote, the resealing of the tarmac of the Kingscote airport and the ongoing maintenance of the extension of the sealed road network; and
- (d) recognises the need for an increase in power accessibility and reliability across Kangaroo Island.

Members of the house would be well aware that I consider the tourism industry to be so important to this state. I must say that it is my view that the government does not give it the priority that it deserves, despite the fact that the Treasurer and the Treasury is awash with dollars. The tourism industry itself generates more than \$3.4 billion of expenditure and supports more than 36 000 full-time equivalent jobs. I know that, time and again, members have heard me speak as both a former minister for tourism and now as a member in opposition of the value of this industry to our state; of the hard work, dedication and energy of the people involved in its operation; of the pride it generates for the state; and the economic opportunities it provides.

We must work at maintaining and reaching out to that success. It goes without saying that I am enormously proud of our state and its tourism industry and the product that we have, particularly across our regions. It is about the regions that I want to speak today. Kangaroo Island plays a very significant role in the success of our tourism industry. The tourism brochures describe it as a wonderland of natural beauty, wildlife, natural habitat, sandy beaches and sheer cliffs—wild by nature, in fact.

It is truly one of the world's unique destinations, and more than 170 000 visitors descend upon the island each year. Of these, 127 000 stay for more than one day, and that makes up a combination of 396 000 nights. Of these visitors, 28 000 come from overseas, and 16 000 come from interstate, and that makes it, without doubt, the most popular international destination of our state. Whilst we can always get into a debate about these things, it actually puts it ahead of the Barossa Valley, the Adelaide Hills and the Clare Valley.

The former federal tourism minister, Joe Hockey, once said that Kangaroo Island was blessed with natural infrastructure. Natural infrastructure is important because it is that which gets people in and entices visitors from near and far the first time. However, no world-class destination thrives without the necessary man-made infrastructure to supplement it. It is in this highly competitive industry of the future that we have to understand that Kangaroo Island's competition is not Sydney or the Gold Coast—it is Broome in Western

Australia; it is the Alaskan wilderness; it is the rainforests of Costa Rica; it is the game parks of Africa; and it is the riding trails of Mongolia. They are soft adventure, unique eco-tourism destinations. They have the appropriate infrastructure investment from both government and the private sector, and it is needed because it just has to maintain and grow the tourism numbers and the tourism progress of those areas.

So far, this government has failed to do more than pay lip-service to Kangaroo Island about it being the jewel in the tourism crown in South Australia. The government has failed to invest infrastructure dollars that are going to benefit the people of Kangaroo Island who live there and work there, and that is without the hundreds of thousands of people who visit. So, it is with great concern and more than a little frustration that I put this motion to the house, because this government is allowing Kangaroo Island to suffer through its neglect of vital infrastructure needs. The government has failed the tourism industry in its three years and, so far, I can say things like it has not only dismantled all but the minor infrastructure budget but it has also sliced, in a very real manner, the crucial marketing dollars, particularly those of the island.

The government is relying on smoke and mirrors plus carryovers in an attempt to make the figures look good. It simply cannot and must not continue to neglect the potential of Kangaroo Island and our tourism industry to remain one of the world's top must see destinations to crumble through blatant inaction. Over the past few weeks and, indeed, months I have been inundated with tales of frustration, anger and bewilderment at the lack of this government's priorities for Kangaroo Island. This has been caused by comments I made to the local Kangaroo Island newspaper, and it did spark a stronger reaction than I had even thought from tourism operators, visitors and from the community. But the message was always the same: we have the potential here, but money must be spent to ensure that it remains a key destination for South Australia.

There must be a long-term strategic plan of action; there must be priorities; there must be dollars invested in the action plan so that people understand the advantages and the opportunities that it presents; and there must be a vision and a serious commitment to a partnership with government and stakeholders. Besides the well-known areas, they talk about the opportunities of American River, Island Beach, the need for roads and the need to do something about all the marine opportunities. We know the opportunities are there. We have recently seen the investment by SeaLink in New Zealand Ferries (Auckland-based), providing a top-quality tourism product and marketing backup promotion in a target market with a population of more than one million. If you add that to the new direct flights between Auckland and Adelaide, you can imagine the potential increase there is for visitor numbers to South Australia. SeaLink is most important to the tourism industry in our state, particularly Kangaroo Island.

The opportunities that that investment in New Zealand provides for us if the government assists should be enormous. Mr Speaker, I know that you would understand that the potential of bringing visitors out from New Zealand into our state, to the island and to our regions is enormous. Imagine the opportunities that will exist if we get transport, access, infrastructure, power and water right in our regions, and on KI specifically. Think of the numbers of people who could arrive from China, Vietnam and many parts of Asia and enjoy what we have to offer in South Australia. But we have to be out there to get our quality infrastructure in place. We have

the product: we have to provide the add-ons for people to enjoy when they get there.

We have to market our state and, importantly, we have to be alert to the opportunities, because I do not believe that is always the case. There are many pressing needs in all of our regions, but in KI specifically. Under the previous government, a special Kangaroo Island infrastructure fund was established, initially with about \$10 million. Much was achieved with that money. A circular road on the island was sealed, so benefits were delivered to not just the visitors but also the islanders themselves, and I think that is a very important part of any tourism investment dollar. I strongly believe that we need to re-establish a Kangaroo Island infrastructure fund. We have a government that is awash with money, and it should not be too hard.

Kangaroo Island has a population of about 4 300 people, and that is too small to provide enough of a rate base for funds required to grow and maintain the unique beauty and attraction of the island. The Kangaroo Island council should not, and cannot, be expected to fund the impact of tourism on the island. We know that national parks comprise about a third of the island. They do not pay rates. They contribute in other ways, but they do not contribute rates. Road sealing is one of the major issues facing the island. There are approximately 1 100 kilometres of road, and 200 kilometres, so far, are sealed. I know that it is recognised and understood that the previous government did a great deal in this area.

I want to talk very specifically about some of the things that need to be done. Silks Road and Starrs Road are major thoroughfares to the peninsula. The Cape Willoughby road needs to be sealed. Residents complain about the state of the footpaths, for example, and the state of the camping grounds and toilet facilities, and again that is not just confined to Kangaroo Island. Last year the Mayor of Kangaroo Island described in a radio interview the case of the toilets at Chapman River. The toilets are located on one side of the river, but the bridge collapsed some time ago, so it is a bit difficult to get to them. The council of the island is not in a position to constantly pick up the tab and jack up the rates in order for the residents to pay for that sort of stuff. It has to come from an infrastructure fund provided by this state.

Currently, the maintenance and resealing of the tarmac at the Kingscote Airport is under way. It will cost about \$200 000. The council wants to upgrade and significantly improve the terminal building, and that is very important. Two airlines currently service the island, which has hundreds of thousands of visitors, as we know, and the facilities need to be up there to compete with other international destinations. We know and understand how important the Kingscote Airport is, because the island is the third largest island off the coast of Australia. The passenger terminal at Penneshaw desperately needs upgrading.

I know that work is about to start at Cape Jervis, but I remind the house that the money for that project was set aside by the previous Liberal government four years ago, and the work is only just about to start. It is years late, and I have no doubt, because of the delay that has ensued, that the development costs will have increased. I have no doubt about that, but I understand it is likely to be finished in August or September this year. The Penneshaw passenger terminal is quite another story. Travellers still have to endure what can only be described as embarrassing conditions while they wait for the ferry.

The terminal is in need of redevelopment; it must include a check-in area, a visitor information centre, vehicle hire,

better toilets and better access on and off the ferry. We need the carpark upgraded with improved sealing, marking and lighting. The Kingscote foreshore development will obviously have to include a marina. A range of opportunities has been talked about, reviewed, consulted on, sent to committees, planned and announced time and again, but still, many years later, it has not happened and is not happening. The consequences of this delay, in particular, have affected one individual tourism operator and his family who have suffered through this process. I suppose that many people in the house would have heard of Mr John Ayliffe, who is internationally known as 'The Pelican Man'. The story and the row that he is having with Transport SA is just extraordinary. At another time, I will detail the issues that he has to face. He has to face these with a government that knows that Kangaroo Island has all this potential, but we are talking about a foreshore development and about how it will affect one person.

I think that the government has let many areas slip by. One of the issues that I particularly intend to pursue long term is how to address what I call 'the water highway' to Kangaroo Island. King Island and Tasmania do extremely well out of the federal government and there must be a determination, in my view, by state and federal governments to get Kangaroo Island to have the same criteria applied to it, with transport access across that water corridor, as happens to King Island and Tasmania. I have heard the arguments against it—I think they are absolute nonsense. I think that we, as a parliament, have to be quite determined to make sure that we get involved in providing for the island and its visitors the same sort of benefits that have unquestionably been heaped on Tasmania for decades. I feel quite strongly about it. I could go on. I will talk about Mr Ayliffe and the difficulties that he is having at Kingscote—I think that is most important—and that is before we even get on to the issue of the koalas.

Time expired.

Mr O'BRIEN (Napier): I move:

To amend the motion as follows:

After 'in particular—'insert:

- (a) recognises the economic contribution Kangaroo Island makes to this state's tourism industry and also acknowledges the work and commitment by the tourism industry and the South Australian Tourism Commission as well as in promoting Kangaroo Island as a leading ecotourism destination.
- (b) acknowledges the funding contribution by this government in the construction and sealing of the South Coast Road, between Timber Creek Road and the Flinders Chase National Park Headquarters at Rocky River and similarly on the construction and sealing of the West End Highway from South Coast Road to Playford Highway. Both roads are under the care, control and maintenance of Kangaroo Island Council.
- (c) requests the government to update this house on timelines, planning, and progress for upgrading the port facilities and foreshore developments at Penneshaw and Kingscote, the resealing of the tarmac at the Kingscote Airport and the ongoing maintenance and extension of the sealed road network; and
- (d) recognises the need for power accessibility and reliability across Kangaroo Island and acknowledges that the government has committed a direct allocation of \$2 million to work to assist the whole Kangaroo Island community in the matter of power.

In speaking to the amendment and the motion, I acknowledge the splendid contribution and debate of the member for Morialta. I thought it was a very well reasoned and factual contribution. I know that I am speaking before the member for Bragg, who is a native of Kangaroo Island. I have a

connection with Kangaroo Island that is a little more tenuous than that of the member for Bragg, and I have discussed it with the member for Bragg. I had two uncles who farmed on the island and who were soldier settlers, one of whom was a tank commander at the battle of El Alamein. So, it is a little more tenuous, but there is a connection there, and I have a great love for the island, being a keen outdoors person and camper.

In speaking to the amendment, given the fact that the motion spans a number of portfolio areas, I would like to deal with it section by section. With respect to paragraph (a), I think there is now international recognition that tourism has emerged as one of the main economic and social drivers of the present era. Tourism represents a unique opportunity for South Australia and the world to grow both our economy and the international economy further, to redistribute wealth and to create jobs. Kangaroo Island's main appeal is as a wildlife and nature tourism experience. For this reason, it is internationally recognised as South Australia's predominant and pre-eminent tourism region outside Adelaide—and the member for Morialta made that point. With the international growth in the nature-based tourism market, Kangaroo Island has the potential to become one of Australia's leading ecotourism destinations and I think that, in the next few decades with the onset of further environmental degradation, we will see a lot of people from the northern hemisphere visiting Kangaroo Island to see the world as it once was.

The South Australian Tourism Commission has supported the promotion of Kangaroo Island as a leading tourism destination through significant funding of promotional campaigns and support through the regional Festival and Events Program. The SATC has made financial contributions to support KI marketing and the Kangaroo Island Passport campaign. This campaign includes the promotion of Kangaroo Island on Sydney bus and light rail and through other forms of print media. Kangaroo Island features prominently in the \$4.5 million Rediscover campaign to promote tourism to the Australian domestic market.

One-third of a 60-second cinema/television advertisement is dedicated to promoting Kangaroo Island. The advertisements were shown during the Athens Olympic Games, mainly in Sydney and Melbourne. Tourism is the major contributor to Kangaroo Island's economy, and the Kangaroo Island tourism industry is estimated to be worth about \$70 million per year—and I think that will grow quite considerably over the next few decades. In speaking to paragraph (b) of the amended motion, I point out that the state government has made significant investments in infrastructure improvements to assist and promote tourism on Kangaroo Island.

Mrs Hall interjecting:

Mr O'BRIEN: Yes. The state government is specifically responsible for maintaining the Kingscote to Penneshaw road, American River access and the Playford Highway between Kingscote and Parndana. The government invests \$80 000 per annum in the maintenance of these roads. The state government has assisted Kangaroo Island Council by investing \$16 million in the construction and sealing of South Coast Road between Timber Creek Road and the Flinders Chase National Park Headquarters at Rocky River (and the member for Bragg and I attended the opening of that headquarters some three years ago, I would estimate), and \$3 million on the construction and sealing of the West End Highway from South Coast Road to Playford Highway. Both roads are under the care, control and maintenance of the KI Council.

The KI Council was invited to nominate projects in September 2003 and March 2004 for the 2004-05 state Black Spot Program. I have been advised that, unfortunately, the KI Council did not submit any nominations, which is something that the member for Bragg and the member for Morialta might want to raise with the council. Contributions have been made to upgrade facilities and to enhance the experience of visitors to KI. Projects have included an upgrade of the Antechamber Bay picnic facilities, improvements to the Flinders trail, and substantial financial support towards construction of the Flinders-Baudin Research Centre.

In terms of paragraph (c) of the amended motion, the Kangaroo Island Port Management Group was established in December 2003 as a collaboration of key players to advise and assist the government in policy development for Kangaroo Island. Kangaroo Island PMG covers all KI ports including Penneshaw, Kingscote, American River and Cape Jervis, and it has identified a number of strategic initiatives that are currently being scoped for development over the coming months. These initiatives are focused on developing future management plans for the ports of Cape Jervis, Kingscote, Penneshaw and American River. All plans will involve consultation with key stakeholders. The development of a draft master plan for the Kingscote port is currently being finalised by the KIPMG. This project was made possible via funding and project assistance by the Kangaroo Island Regional Development Board. Dredging at Penneshaw was successfully completed in December 2004.

KI council has budgeted \$180 000 for Kingscote airport works to commence on 8 March. The work includes a cold tar rejuvenation treatment of the apron, runway edges and the southern end of runway 01/19, the main runway. This treatment delays the need for a reseal for several years. Kingscote is one of the few regional airports in South Australia with a revenue stream sufficient to fund recurrent maintenance work of this kind, and I think that stands as testimony to the importance of tourism for Kangaroo Island.

All unsealed roads on KI are council roads. Kangaroo Island Council has indicated that it is unable to maintain its infrastructure, principally roads, while its revenue base is limited to rate revenue from its residents. Representations have been made in the past to have a number of roads declared arterial roads, thus becoming the responsibility of the state. However, an arterial road is currently defined as a road that links towns, and as these roads do not (they provide a loop around the island) such representations have been refused lest their acceptance as arterial roads create a precedence in other areas of the state.

Ms CHAPMAN (Bragg): I am pleased to stand today to support the motion by the member for Morialta and, whilst there are some aspects of the amendment which I would be sympathetic to, I indicate that I oppose the same.

The position for Kangaroo Island has changed significantly since it was established in 1836 as the first settlement in South Australia. I am proud to be part of a family that was there from the beginning and has stayed. Other notable families include Dame Roma Mitchell's family, who went there over 100 years ago now and stayed a couple of years practising law, but it was a harsh and inhospitable place in which to reside and raise a family, so many families have moved on. We had a significant introduction of residents onto the island after World War II when the soldier settlement scheme was established there, and there are families—notably Chapmans, Calnans, Willsons, the Pengilly family and

others—who have for decades been part of Kangaroo Island's history, which has predominantly been agrarian.

I look back just 35 or 40 years ago when the only tourists we had on Kangaroo Island, apart from Sir Thomas Playford, were rich retired couples or honeymooners who could afford the very great expense to fly to Kangaroo Island or survive the long journey on the *Karratta* and then the *Troubridge* to actually enjoy the benefits of Kangaroo Island.

So, things have certainly changed. Mind you, I can also remember that at that time there was no mains power to Kangaroo Island and very few roads were sealed between Kingscote and Pandana, so things were very different and tourists were certainly scarce. Notwithstanding that, some of the residents have made an outstanding contribution to preserving the island for the benefit of future generations. My grandfather gave up a cattle lease in what is now the Flinders Chase Reserve. I could wish that he had not done that, because I might have been richer today with that inheritance, but he gave it up for the benefit of future generations of South Australia, and I am proud to be associated with that.

However, not a lot has changed in respect of the provision of infrastructure by successive state governments, particularly over the past 20 years when there has been a major influx of tourists. The member for Morialta has finally espoused to the house the extraordinary interest in this island at an international level. There is no doubt that, for international tourists, it is the most favoured destination in this state. It will not surprise the house to know that even a federal minister (Hon. Joe Hockey) has contacted me to try to secure a property on the island because he has fallen in love with it, and the neighbouring property is occupied by a French family who bought their property over the internet. The international fascination with this island as a holiday destination in this state is unsurpassed, but we still have a major problem with power, and we still have property owners having to purchase and maintain individual generators to protect themselves against frequent and sustained periods of power failure which have resulted in significant economic loss and inconvenience.

Some sealed roads have been introduced during this time, substantially, I might say, in the past 10 years through the efforts of the Hon. Diana Laidlaw and the cabinet of that time, which announced that the *Island Seaway* would cease its operations to Kangaroo Island. Although the mover of the amendment has attempted to claim this as an achievement of the current government, the sealing of the South Coast Road was on the condition that that service would be withdrawn. So, there are a number of aspects of this amendment with which I must take issue.

The fact that the area between the mainland and Kangaroo Island is not recognised as a marine link is, in my view, appalling. I remember a story of when my father was a child. When he grew up he was going to rob a bank and build a bridge from Penneshaw to the mainland. Fortunately, he went on to do more legal and better things, including becoming a member of this house. However, we are still left with the massive cost for international tourists and local residents to travel to and from Kangaroo Island. Whilst the islanders receive a small subsidy, the cost is prohibitive. I can travel to Sydney and back most of the time at a cheaper cost than I can travel to Kangaroo Island. That is an outrage.

One of the things which inspires me in relation to tourism will require a massive contribution from the state government. As I have said, we have captured the international market. Only a month ago I was on Kangaroo Island with a chap from Sydney who was filming the leafy sea dragon—he

has since sent me a copy of the film—and people from the Japanese film industry regularly film our marine life and stay at my family's property where I was born. This sort of activity and a massive influx of tourists onto the island will require the provision of infrastructure by the state, because the resident population of less than 4 000 simply cannot afford it.

The people of South Australia should also be given the opportunity to visit this place at an affordable cost. Whilst the *Island Sealink* and another service which has been established recently have opened up the opportunity for South Australian residents to be able to afford to travel to the island with their families, there is still a huge number of people in South Australia (indeed, in Australia) for whom Kangaroo Island has not been a destination for a holiday or for exploration.

I believe that this is an area of responsibility for the state government. The government must continue on from the work done by the previous government in relation to roads. There must be some provision for a subsidy in relation to the service between the mainland and the island, and there must be some provision for secure power. The one thing I do give credit to this government for is that it at least has made a commitment (I think \$6 million) toward securing the provision of power for the island. However, a lot more needs to be done, otherwise we will still be visiting the island and cranking up the generators and skidding off roads that are unsealed or unsafe, and we will still be paying a huge cost to travel to and from Kangaroo Island to see this icon.

I am proud to continue work on Kangaroo Island in relation to the Flinders Baudin research project. Incidentally, this government was not a major contributor to this project: the University of South Australia and private water companies funded that development. I am proud to say that I am associated with that project through the University of Adelaide. I am proud to continue to invite and secure box accommodation for black cockatoos across the 2½ miles of coastline of which our family has some ownership and to be able to promote the development of wildlife, in particular, by the maintenance of the she-oak species.

This government also has to take a hard line and make hard decisions in relation to what it does with areas of fauna on the island where that has become a problem. I am referring to koalas, because there is clearly a pest problem there. This is a matter which previous governments have grappled with, but it is a matter that is clearly on the plate of this government. The population of koalas has increased very substantially; I am told they are 29 000 in number. I suspect that is probably an exaggeration, but even half that number is unsustainable for the gum trees to which they are causing havoc and damage. If we are to preserve the flora and fauna on Kangaroo Island for future generations and for our tourist base, the government will have to make some hard decisions about koalas, just as it does in relation to corellas and other species which are out of control. I ask the government to think seriously about its future commitment for the benefit of all South Australians.

Mrs GERAGHTY secured the adjournment of the debate.

OLYMPIC DAM

Mr WILLIAMS (MacKillop): I move:

That this house acknowledges the recent expansion announcements by Western Mining Corporation and congratulates the former Tonkin Liberal government, supported by the former Labor

Legislative Councillor the Hon. Norm Foster MLC, for their strong support for the Olympic Dam project and the long-term economic benefit to this state, despite intense rejection at the time by the Labor Party opposition, which was coordinated by a senior adviser who is now the current Premier.

It is with a great deal of pleasure that I rise to speak to the motion standing in my name. I will use my allotted time to go through the issues I have highlighted in the motion and make the case for each one of those issues. The reality is that it will not be difficult to make a case for each one of the points. My first point acknowledges the recent expansion announcements. I will quote something our Premier said this week (and I will come back to some of the other things he said many years earlier) when he was talking on the local media about the proposed expansion at Olympic Dam. He said:

I mean for us it's the state's interest first. We want to see the doubling of the mine's capacity. We want to see a commitment to that now, rather than later.

That is the Premier in 2005, when what we have happening right here and now in South Australia is the result of not only a vision but a lot of damn hard work in the face of strong opposition from people who, for nothing other than political reasons, wanted to see Roxby Downs never happen. One of the ring leaders was the very person who this week said, 'I mean, for us it's the state's interests first'. Somewhere that person has had a significant change of heart, because certainly in the late 1970s and early 1980s that person did not have the state's interests foremost in his heart or mind. I do not think that case has changed very much, as the person is still driven by the media headline and still driven by the political end.

To run through Western Mining Corporation and its involvement at Olympic Dam in a short potted history, the discovery of copper at Roxby Downs occurred in 1975. It was a ground-breaking discovery because the ore body was some 300 metres below the surface. The discovery was not made on the site as certainly copper discoveries in South Australia were prior to that; it was made in an office in Melbourne—analysing data, speculating, extrapolating and using the best brain power and technology available almost 30 years ago. They went out and started drilling and, lo and behold, their greatest expectations were realised. That was in 1975.

The Whenan shaft was begun in 1981 during the political battles happening in this very chamber. Shortly after that, the indenture agreement act went through the parliament and was signed in 1982. A pilot plant started at Olympic Dam in 1983, the 50th anniversary year for Western Mining, which was formed in 1933 to explore for gold in Western Australia. In 1985, the pilot plant established there completed its testing, and the construction phase at Olympic Dam began in 1986, with the operations officially being opened in November 1988.

In 1992, there was a significant expansion of operations to approximately 66 000 tonnes of copper per annum, and shortly thereafter, in 1993, Western Mining acquired the 49 per cent shareholding of its joint venture with BHP (and I hope to come back to its involvement because our now Premier had some things to say about BHP in those early years). In 1996, Western Mining announced a \$1.25 billion expansion program at Olympic Dam to take an annual production rate of 200 000 tonnes of copper production per annum. I believe that grew to about a \$2 billion expansion project. In the most recent announcement in late 2004, a \$50 million development study was begun to determine how

and what expansion might occur at Olympic Dam. We are expecting, among other things, probably a doubling of capacity at Olympic Dam.

This year Western Mining expects to be mining at about the rate of 10.5 million tonnes of ore for the calendar year—a huge expansion from those early days. Everybody would like to acknowledge and congratulate Western Mining for what it has done at Roxby Downs.

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson: I was always a supporter.

Mr WILLIAMS: I am pleased to hear it. The production figures for mineral production for that operation for last year was: 225 000 tonnes of refined copper; 4 404 tonnes of uranium oxide; 88 600 ounces of gold; and 861 628 ounces of silver. The expansion plans seek to have a production rate of 500 000 tonnes of refined copper a year, 15 000 tonnes of uranium and 500 000 ounces of gold. That is what Western Mining is hoping will happen at Roxby Downs in the not too distant future. I certainly hope—and I expect that every member of this chamber would also hope—that those aspirations come to fruition.

I move to the second part of my motion; that is, to congratulate the former Tonkin Liberal government, supported by former Labor Legislative Councillor, the Hon. Norm Foster. I found a publication in the Parliamentary Library entitled *Uranium—play it safe*, written by Mike Rann. At page 6 it states:

Since the September 1979 election, Premier Tonkin has pinned his government's political hopes on a development he has described as eventually being as big as Mt Isa. Faced with record unemployment, the South Australian Liberal government has painted itself into a corner over Roxby Downs. No serious commentators are now likely to join the Premier in trumpeting the economic impact of Roxby.

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson: A mirage in the desert!

Mr WILLIAMS: That is what the Premier (and the Leader of the Opposition in those days) called this project: a mirage in the desert. This has been a fantastic boon for South Australia. Only this week the biggest mining company in the world—BHP Billiton—announced a takeover bid of \$9.5 billion for what the Premier (the then leader of the Labor Party) described as 'a mirage in the desert'. Also, in the booklet that was written by Mike Rann—

The SPEAKER: The member for MacKillop will refer to members by their seat or by their office, not their name.

Mr WILLIAMS: Thank you, sir; I was referring to the author of the book. The book then quotes people talking about Roxby Downs' being a white elephant. At page 25, it states:

[Rann asks] Do you think that South Australia could be landed with a white elephant, or is that going too far?

[A person called Patterson said] Not at all. I think it is likely to be a very large white elephant. . .

Well, both Mr Patterson—who is someone who was dug up as a supposed expert—and the author of the book got it horribly wrong. The expansion project, which is mooted by Western Mining for the Olympic Dam operation, in itself will be about a \$5 billion project, if and when it comes to fruition; and I much prefer to say 'when' rather than 'if'.

The house might wonder why I offer my congratulations to former Labor Legislative Councillor, the Hon. Norman Foster. The inside cover of this booklet, which was supposed to scare South Australians (in a political sense) away from being involved with Roxby Downs at all, lists the names of the ALP South Australian Nuclear Hazards Committee members. The first name listed is Norm Foster MLC. South

Australia will be forever indebted to Norm Foster because, unlike the Premier, he always had the future and what was best for South Australia in both his mind and his heart. That is why I think South Australia will always owe a debt of gratitude to Norm Foster, and to David Tonkin and his government, because in spite of fierce political opposition they showed extreme courage and stuck their neck right out. I think that Norm Foster paid a very heavy price, but he has the eternal gratitude of all South Australians for doing so.

Currently, the Olympic Dam mine returns to the government by far the majority of the \$85-odd million received by way of mining royalties in this state, and I think that probably in the order of \$80 million comes directly from the Roxby Downs project. That is an annual income stream directly into the coffers of the government of South Australia. Of course, if the expansion plans go ahead, that sum will double. So, as well as employing 4 000 South Australians at its current level of production, underpinning the town of Roxby Downs, it also provides an annual income stream of almost \$80 million directly to the Consolidated Account of South Australia.

I mentioned BHP, which is a joint venture partner in the establishment of the Roxby Downs-Olympic Dam project. In this booklet, the then adviser to opposition leader Bannon, and now Premier of South Australia, was talking about what people could do to undermine the project, as follows: 'A good example of this type of activity is the 'Boycott BP' campaign being run by a number of anti-nuclear groups in SA.' I suggest that all members avail themselves of this booklet, *Uranium: Play It Safe*, which is in the library, and read what the then senior adviser to the opposition leader said, in trying to scare the people of South Australia and to stop this incredible project in its tracks, which is the biggest project that has ever happened in this state, calling it a 'mirage in the desert' and saying that it was unsafe and would kill South Australians and that it was a white elephant. However, this week, he says that we should double it and that it would be for the benefit of the state.

In concluding my remarks, I say that the same Premier and the same ALP have said on their web site, as part of their party policy platform, that there will be no more uranium mining in South Australia. So, under this government, companies currently in the desert of South Australia spending lots of money exploring for uranium—and they will find it—will not be allowed to mine.

Mr SNELLING (Playford): I move to amend the motion as follows:

Delete all words after 'congratulates' and insert the following: the Rann Labor government for its strong support and active efforts to work with Western Mining Company to expand the Olympic Dam Mine.

When accused of inconsistency, John Maynard Keynes once replied: 'When the facts before me change, I change my mind, sir. What do you do?' Very well might we ask the same question of the member for MacKillop. The federal government has put in place Australian laws with respect to uranium sales, where all uranium exported from Olympic Dam, and any other mine, is to be used only for peaceful purposes and with all international obligations being met. The federal government will need to ensure that any new purchaser of the Olympic Dam mine abides by these laws. Even before the announcement by Western Mining that it intended to investigate the feasibility of expanding Olympic Dam last year, the government worked closely with Western Mining to investigate the possibility of expanding the Olympic Dam

mine. In 2002, the government set up a task force of WMC executives and senior public servants. Since the announcement of the expansion study, the task force has been working with WMC to investigate those parts of the expansion that involve the government, such as the sourcing of water, power supply and other infrastructure requirements.

If it goes ahead, the capital cost of the expansion will be up to \$4 billion, should double the capacity of the mine and could begin by the end of the decade. The proposed expansion would lead to the creation of hundreds of jobs and further growth in the population of the Roxby Downs township, already 4 000 people. This would help the state achieve many of the targets laid out in the state's Strategic Plan, including increasing minerals production to \$3 billion and increasing minerals processing by a further \$1 billion by 2020, as well as increasing South Australia's population to two million by 2050. It should also help us in our target of trebling the value of South Australia's export income to \$25 billion by 2013.

Last year, Olympic Dam generated \$670 million in export income for Australia. Western Mining Corporation has already invested \$4 billion in developing Olympic Dam, including \$600 million in the past three years and another \$80 million during this year of mine development. Olympic Dam currently has an annual production capacity of 235 000 tonnes of copper, 4 500 tonnes of uranium and 100 000 ounces of gold. Studies so far have shown that, by extending underground mining, Olympic Dam could provide up to 350 000 tonnes of copper every year.

Open pit mining, when added to the continuing underground operations, could increase copper production to more than 500 000 tonnes a year. The state government is to be congratulated on its swift action to progress the expansion of the mine.

Mr RAU (Enfield): This is a very interesting debate. I am more than happy to support the amendment moved by the member for Playford but, in looking at the original motion, I am struck by what a crude and unsophisticated device this is, using a motherhood statement about Western Mining as a vehicle to take a ham-fisted swipe at the Premier. If the mover was genuinely interested in congratulating Western Mining—which, incidentally, I am more than happy to do and join with him in doing—why did he not just bring up a proposition saying 'We congratulate Western Mining'? I am sure that everyone would have been very happy with that.

But the real purpose of the motion is not to congratulate Western Mining at all: the congratulating of Western Mining is purely and simply a motherhood statement to which he can then attach this fairly crude, unsophisticated swipe at the Premier. Let us look at the relevance of the main argument, because the main argument here is not about Western Mining: Western Mining is irrelevant; the main argument here is a political attack on the Premier. Let us have a look at what relevance this debate has today. This has the same relevance to the ALP today as the honourable member getting up and saying, 'But you blokes didn't support conscription in 1916', or getting up and saying, 'You blokes opposed state aid in non-government schools in the 1950s.' That is the same level of relevance that this has.

I have decided that what I am going to do to respond to members opposite is run a similarly relevant argument to theirs. I am going to say, 'Why don't you have any view about states' rights any more? Why do you characters over there think it is a good idea to have your federal Treasurer

kicking us in the backside week in, week out over the GST and all these damn laws that he imposes on us from Canberra? None of you blokes squeak about it: I am the only one who says anything about it. Occasionally, the member for Stuart, to give him credit, gets up and says a couple of worthy things on the subject but, otherwise, it is left to me. I am doing your work for you. You blokes have completely lost the way.

Let us talk about the Liberal Movement, another equally relevant topic. How many members opposite were members of the Liberal Movement? Put your hands up. Let us see the hands go up for members of the Liberal Movement. I reckon that what I might do in the next week we are here is move that we support all mothers in South Australia and criticise the Liberal Party for being so rough with the Liberal Movement! That would have a similar degree of relevance to this proposition, because it is absolute nonsense.

Mr Goldsworthy interjecting:

Mr RAU: Exactly right! Let's go back to the DLP—that is a great interjection from the member for Kavel! This mob is in a time warp. Somebody needs to communicate with members opposite that we are in the year 2005—say it slowly, 2005—and the opposition is talking about something that happened in 1975. There is a big difference; work it out on a calculator. I am not going to ruin it by telling members opposite the answer, but it is a big, big difference. So, why not get contemporary? The member for Kavel is still back in the 1950s. He is out there with Mark Posa and all that mob. The member for Kavel needs to move forward. We have passed that century. What members opposite need to do is to get with it.

Mr Koutsantonis interjecting:

Mr RAU: I am happy to go back as far as anyone wants to go—the conscription debate—I will go back as far as you like. The point is that this is a very poorly conceived and executed political stunt, and the best thing that the honourable member could do—and he is a nice fellow who genuinely supports uranium mining—is to move a differently worded motion which says (as I think everyone here would agree) that it is marvellous that Roxby Downs is going ahead, it is marvellous that more South Australians are going to be employed, it is marvellous that the state is going to receive all these additional royalties, and it is marvellous that all of us can join in offering congratulations. However, instead of having that marvellous ecumenical moment thrown into our midst by the member, we have got this very sad, tawdry attempt to jump into the time tunnel, go back to 1975, throw up all these old arguments, and make us all think, 'Aren't we clever?'

I am really sorry; I think that the honourable member needs to refine his technique. If the member is going to try these wedges, at least try wedging on a contemporary issue. We do not have any, but if you can find one, good luck to you, wedge on it. However, jumping into the time tunnel and going back to 1975—the member might as well go back to 1916 and hit us with the conscription debate. So, I join the honourable member in the motherhood part of his motion. I think he is dead right: Roxby Downs is a good thing for South Australia, it is going ahead well, and I wish them well. The only question I ask the honourable member is, 'What did his federal Treasurer do to protect Western Mining from the predatory advances of Xstrata?' Nothing; we did not hear anything about that.

Mr Goldsworthy interjecting:

Mr RAU: The member for Kavel has asked what our Treasurer has done about it. I have got some very shocking news for the member for Kavel. Sit down, hang on to your hat—the federal Treasurer runs the Foreign Investment Review Board—the state Treasurer does not. The state Treasurer has absolutely no influence whatsoever.

Mr Williams: Then why are you suggesting that I was going to have so much influence?

Mr RAU: Why would the member for MacKillop have so much influence? Because I have been watching him here for the last three years and he has influenced me, and I am sure that he could influence his federal colleagues. In fact, he has influenced me so much that I would not be speaking now if he had not put this thing up. I agree with his motherhood statement.

Mr Williams: I might start to regret it.

Mr RAU: I want to give him credit where credit is due. His motherhood statement about Western Mining deserves support, and it has my complete support, and the support of everyone else on this side of the house. However, the fairly shoddy attempt to nail on a bit of 1975 time tunnel, wedge politics has not really worked. We have seen through it, we have put on the binoculars.

Mr Goldsworthy interjecting:

Mr RAU: The member for Kavel is moving forward in the time tunnel. He has adjusted the setting and he is up to 1980. I reckon by the time we get back here in three weeks, he will be up to the 1990s or even maybe the year 2000.

Mr Koutsantonis: Or the 1983 election.

Mr RAU: The 1983 election; he could be there. I agree with the honourable member's kind remarks about the Hon. Norm Foster. He was a great fellow, an excellent member of this parliament, an excellent member of the federal parliament and a person who deserves the respect and praise of the members of this house. I do offer that in support of the honourable member's resolution. I think that it is great that Western Mining is going ahead. I applaud the honourable member's support of that, but I am less than happy with his use of that as a vehicle to come in with a rather less sophisticated attack on the government.

Mrs HALL secured the adjournment of the debate.

SKILLS SHORTAGE

The Hon. R.B. SUCH (Fisher): I move:

That this house calls on the state and federal governments to increase the number of apprentices and trainees in areas where there is a clear shortage of technicians and tradespeople.

This subject has been a passion of mine for a long time. As members would remember, I was the minister for employment and further education many years ago. I was on this bandwagon then and I am on the bandwagon now. I am pleased that other people seem to be getting on the bandwagon even though the hour is somewhat late. I notice that the Prime Minister made comment about this very matter the other day. Over time, naturally, there will be fluctuations in the skills shortages. One can highlight a particular trade or technical skill area today and then one might be contradicted in the very near future.

It is safe to say—and these figures are based on reliable and accurate sources—that the commonwealth and the state both have good data. In August 2004 there were significant vacancies in the metal trades areas—that was across Australia, which included, of course, South Australia. Those

vacancies were up 5.1 per cent. In the food trades (and that includes chefs and the like) vacancies were up 4.8 per cent. As an ongoing shortage (and relating to those I have just highlighted), some of the specific shortages include metal fitters, metal machinists, toolmakers, metal fabricators, welders, sheet metal workers, motor mechanics, auto electricians, panel beaters, vehicle painters, electricians and refrigeration/airconditioning mechanics.

Vacancies in the construction trades include plumbing; in the wood trades, cabinet making; and, in other trades, furniture upholstery, and the list goes on. Suggestions have been made recently that we need to import skilled people. I do not have a problem with that per se, but I do have a problem when we fail to train enough of our own people, not just young people but people of any age because, I think, like charity, training begins at home, and that means in our country. The focus should be on assisting people to get into the trades and into the various technical areas. The Skills for the Future inquiry highlighted some inadequacies in the system and matters relating to cross-sectoral linkages.

I will try to avoid the jargon, but there are problems in areas such as skills recognition and, for those familiar with the training area, user choice, purchaser provider arrangements, and so on. In regard to TAFE, the cost of training has increased for individuals in many particular areas. I acknowledge that the state government sought to cap some of those charges in the past year or so, and I welcome that. Pathways from school to employment are being expanded, but not to the extent that is necessary. Some worthwhile changes have been made, but one of the big changes required is an attitudinal one. We still have this snobbish view about people who use their hands as well as their head.

We should value tradespeople; we should value people doing apprenticeships but, at the moment, we seem to have an obsession with university qualifications and experience. I do not say that in any negative way against the universities, having spent a lot of my working and non-working life in universities—16 years as a student, eight years full time and eight years part time. I guess I am in an unusual position having attended Goodwood Boys Technical High School, as it was then, leaving school at 14 and coming back through the system; so I have been able to see, if you like, both sides of the equation. A lot of people in the community still want to look down on tradespeople and those who have technical skills.

I am always thinking of the technician who fixes and maintains the jet engine on an aircraft when I am up in the sky. I like to think that those people are adequately trained and have a high level of skill. People tend to forget that their very safety in situations like that depends on the competence of the technical people who maintain aircraft, service those jet engines, and so on. For people to suggest that those sort of people are somehow lacking is not only obviously derogatory, but it is very unfortunate. Maybe we are at a turning point. As I said earlier, the Prime Minister is indicating that people should be thinking about taking up a trade, although I do not agree with his suggestion of dropping out of school too early, because if you do drop out of school too early, in competing for an apprenticeship or traineeship, you will be up against people who have not dropped out of school early, so I do not think that is necessarily sensible advice.

We want a range of options where people can train in the school environment, linking in with TAFE and through private providers. The more opportunities available, the

better. I think our school system—and, once again, this is not reflecting on teachers—obviously is staffed by people who have, in the main, come through a non-trade area and, therefore, naturally have a bias towards university type study. I think it is regrettable—and it has been expressed by many people over time—that we ever got rid of technical high schools, and that will be the substance of a debate a bit later. The argument that our comprehensive high schools cater for everyone is just not the case. I do not think it ever will be the case when you try to be all things to all people in one size fits all school. I am sure the minister would argue that the government is trying to change that, and is changing it, and I would say that, in fairness, that is happening, but not on a large enough scale or quickly enough. I will not pre-empt a motion on the *Notice Paper* which we will, hopefully, get onto shortly.

The purpose of this motion is to keep pushing the case that we are not training enough apprentices and trainees. It is ironic that we have a youth unemployment rate that hovers around 20 per cent, and I know that there has been arguments about what that actually measures. The reality is that it is much higher than the general unemployment figure. I am not saying everyone can get into a trade or a technical area, but there should not be impediments, particularly financial impediments, which prevent people getting into a trade or technical area.

I have two nephews. One has just completed plumbing and is doing other study in that area. Such tradespeople are really valued by enlightened employers. One of my nephews works for A.G. O'Connor, a very enlightened company in terms of valuing young people and tradespeople. My other nephew is a second-year apprentice (just into his second year), doing a refrigeration mechanics course, which can lead to plumbing, and he is with Frigrite. Both are earning reasonably good money: the apprentice is earning good money, and the nephew who has just completed his course is earning quite good money as well.

Part of the solution (and it is often indicated by commentators) is that, if we paid tradespeople more, we would get more people attracted to it, and I think there is an element of truth in that. People respond to where the money is. However, importantly, I think it is also a question of how the community regards the status of a particular occupation and that also influences what people do. Ultimately, one would hope people train in an area that is of interest to them, not simply doing something for the sake of the money, but perhaps that is being a little bit idealistic.

As I indicated earlier, we have an ongoing debate about bringing in people from overseas. I think in the short term we probably have little choice, but I think it is a sad indictment that we are in the situation where we may have to bring people from overseas. I would like to see not only emphasis on young people getting into trades and technical areas but also assisting mature age people to get into those areas. That cannot happen unless there is significant financial support which would enable people at a mature age to train in a trade or technical area. I think that is something that, in particular, the federal government needs to look at, because that is the only level of government that would have the resources to make that possible.

Putting forward this motion is part of an ongoing crusade of mine. I think to waste the potential of our young people is bad. I think there are people who, if they cannot be fully qualified in the trades area, could be provided with an opportunity to be a trades assistant. Not everyone has the

ability to become a tradesperson or technician, but we could have more levels for people to acquire the skills to at least be a trade assistant—not to use them as cheap labour but to supplement the existing skills shortage.

One of the schemes that I introduced when I was a minister was called Upskill, which required businesses getting government contracts to commit to training apprentices and trainees. It seems to have gone fairly quiet in recent years. One would hope that it is still actively being pursued by the government but I have not heard much about it. I do not think it is unreasonable to expect contractors getting government business to commit to training young people—and older people—in apprenticeships and traineeships.

It was pointed out in this house, I think yesterday, that the government no longer trains many apprentices—in fact, I am not aware that it trains any, but, if it does, it would be a very small number. It does have traineeships but, years ago (10 years ago, or more), the state government was a major trainer not only as a result of ETSA being in government hands but also what is now SA Water, the railways, and so on. They were major providers of apprentice training and a great source of tradespeople for our community. Now, despite innovative approaches such as group training schemes, many companies do not pull their weight in training people. They do not provide the opportunities in apprenticeships or traineeships.

There has been a blurring of the figures, and when people hear the figures they think that all sounds well, but many of the traineeships are not in areas which are of any significant length or depth. You can do a traineeship in ice cream serving. I do not put that in the category of someone who does an apprenticeship in electrical or plumbing. People need to look closely at the sort of figures that are often trotted out and that there is no blurring of that distinction between an in-depth training which spans, say, three or four years and a short-term traineeship which, in itself, can be valuable, but it is not the same thing. I urge members to support this. I am not interested in the blame game—I want to see this issue addressed. I think that, at the state and federal level, both governments need to get behind training more of our people in the trades and technical areas.

Ms CHAPMAN (Bragg): I rise to support the motion, but not to identify what each of the federal and state governments should be doing in numerical terms or a dollar amount. I commend the mover of the motion in highlighting a difficult problem that we have now in Australia. Ten years ago we were worried about mass unemployment. Our problem today is how we might garner enough people to undertake industry work in a number of areas where there is a shortage. What has been described as the skills shortage debate in this country is a very broad one and, for the purposes of identifying it in relation to this motion, I wish to focus on the shortage of technicians and tradespeople as highlighted by the motion. That is not to ignore the enormous number of areas of skills shortage in areas other than those which are not in our traditional areas of technical and trade work that have been identified. I do not think we should underestimate that.

Of the 70 per cent of the children coming out of our schools who do not go to university, a small number go directly into employment for full remuneration. It might be work in a family business or they may have been accepted into a position for which they require minimal training or experience. However, the overwhelming majority of that 70 per cent of children who are leaving our school system

require some kind of extra training or education for the purposes of being able to undertake fulfilling, financially remunerative and long-term sustained employment.

In that category, we have a number who choose to go into apprenticeships—that is, a direct employment arrangement with on-the-job training. Some of that is coupled with formal training at institutions. Some go to our public school tertiary training institutions or our TAFE system, which provide a more academic experience that is still centred around practical experience, both away from the TAFE premises and on-site. We have our training opportunities where a subsidy is provided for employment with the company or employer whether or not training is given on the job. Whether they come with or without certificates, diplomas or any other qualification, the important thing is that there is significant support from state and federal governments to facilitate this process. When it breaks down, we do not have sufficient numbers to fulfil the consumption in the community for those trades. At the moment, we hear of shortages in IT, electronics, engineering, building and construction, hairdressing, and what we might call the traditional areas, which traverse a whole lot of those industries such as plumbing, electrical engineering and the like. Mechanical engineers are in that category as well. So, that is the situation we have.

What is the obligation of state governments around the country to contribute to the issue we have to deal with? They need to be able to support apprenticeships, which are largely funded at a commonwealth level. I am proud to say that, from the information I have seen, there have been well over 400 000 apprenticeships during the term of the Australian government. I am pleased it is progressing that issue, and it probably needs to do more. With respect to the provision of services through the state government, there are two areas that I would like to identify. One is the obvious one; that is, TAFE courses have to be affordable and accessible.

As members know, a university student can defer payment and then make payments for the small cost of their degree upon receiving remunerative employment at a certain level. That is an option not available to a person who enters a TAFE course. They have to pay, in some cases, \$1 400 a year up front for their course. They do not have a loan system; they do not have that opportunity. It is often a major cost to families to be in a position to do that. It seems to me that the state government has to look at the cost of these courses—and I note that, in the last three years of this government, regrettably, it has increased by 50 per cent. That is clearly a disincentive for people to undertake a course. I ask the government to think seriously about reviewing it.

Another thing that has been a shock to me is the reduction in the number of courses that teach skills in the areas where we now we have skills shortages. Training places in the construction industry and the automotive sector have decreased by the hundreds in this state. Child care is another area (and the minister denies this) where, in terms of real, face-to-face training time in TAFE colleges in this state, we have a significant reduction in the places available. The government must address this issue. There are thousands of industries across the country in that category, for which the opportunities for training places have plummeted, and that must be addressed.

An area where there seems to be an expansion of opportunity, and for which the state is responsible, is the courses that are offered. I note that the federal minister (Hon. Brendan Nelson), in relation to the cutting down of training places in the automotive sector and the construction and

mining and utilities industries, which is replicated in this state, somewhat cheekily said (but I think it raises a valid point) as follows:

You know, what they've replaced them with? You can do feng shui, there is fruit carving, you can now do rave party management and there is belly dancing for beginners.

The reality is that, whilst they may have a place in training opportunities for people, they are clearly not addressing the shortage of skills in the areas in which we are facing a savage shortage.

Another aspect that I think is very important for state governments to appreciate is the significant influence they have on giving children an opportunity to make a choice (and we support their having that choice) to take up a trade. Unless we teach respect for skills from an early level—and I am talking about 10, 11 and 12 years of age—and unless we indicate to children in our school system that these are trades to be respected, and in which they will have remunerative and sustained employment, they simply will not go into them. This issue was raised with me by the Chamber of Mines. They said that, here in South Australia, there are four new mines opening and there is a chronic skills shortage; they are having difficulty in accessing the labour to open these mines in the north, with the expansion of Roxby Downs (we have heard some debate on that this morning), sand mining in the South-East, and other mines we are looking at in the Adelaide Hills. These projects will be ready to go in the next two years, and there are not enough people to work in them.

These are areas in which we must redress that issue at the school level. It is time that schools and the teaching and careers counselling professions in schools understood that energy and mining is a major industry for this state. It is not an industry which they should be ashamed to go into but which they should be proud to go into and which this state will rely on for its future sustenance. It is time that we took aside the lack of respect for trades and that we understood that the industries these people are desperately needed in should also take away the cloth of shame and that they should be promoting the energy industry as a major producer in this state and that they ought to be encouraged to be able to take up that option. They do not have a hope in hell of taking up that option unless they are exposed to it and it is promoted in a positive manner.

I am appalled and concerned, when I go around the state, to see the lack of promotion of this industry in our schools. They are looking at it through the very narrow mechanism of promotion of academic achievement—which, of course, is terrific but we know that at most only 30 per cent of our children are ever going to do that. So there is the importance of recognising trades and explaining to children and exposing them to the fact that these industries are out there to welcome them. They are a very important part of our state and they are becoming an even more important part of our state. It is about time our education system in South Australia—and the state government has a direct responsibility on this—opens the minds of our schools makes sure that our children have an opportunity to be exposed to that information. We will never address this problem at the use end of this issue unless that happens.

Mr CAICA (Colton): I would like to acknowledge—and I guess I am using his words here as well—the honourable member for Fisher, who continues to raise the level of debate with respect to traineeships, apprenticeships, and the like. Indeed, he is a crusader and I hope he continues to be so.

I start off by again reinforcing points I made the other day on the Prime Minister's comments about dropping out of school, and put that in the context of some of the other comments that have been made by previous speakers. I was not too happy with the headline that suggested 'drop out' because that in itself is putting a question mark over what a person is doing. They are not dropping out to take up an apprenticeship: they are choosing a direction in life and should be congratulated for doing so.

Indeed, it is the collective responsibility of everyone to ensure that this skills shortage—and that is what it is called at the moment—is addressed. It is the responsibility of the federal government working in tandem with the state governments. One of the issues that has been missing in the debate today, particularly from the previous speaker, the member for Bragg, is industry. Industry is responsible for having a role in ensuring that it is able to survive as well. I will talk about the public works perspective and my role on the Public Works Committee just briefly, but if, for example, the project we had before the Public Works Committee yesterday was undertaken 25 years ago it would have been conducted under the auspices of the Public Buildings Department or other government agencies. It would be a safe bet that there would have been an enormous number of apprentices on the work site who were doing their apprenticeships under the auspices of that department.

Some of the criteria that ought to be used for the granting of tenders to large companies should have a particular focus on the obligation or otherwise that that company is providing to future generations of employment in South Australia through their engagement of apprentices and trainees. I think that is an extremely valid point and I know from a public works perspective that all the members on that committee will continue to raise those questions on all the projects that come before them.

I am in an interesting position at the moment in that I have a 17-year old son who wants to leave school and take up a trade, so I have taken an active interest in what he is attempting to do and how he is mapping out a path to get to where he wants to go. Contrary to the views expressed by the member for Bragg, I think the particular school he goes to has been very helpful in creating a situation where he can explore the various options available to him so that at the end he is able to make the choice of what he wants to do based on those options, and on the foundation that he himself, coupled with the school, has built. This involves contemplation of VET courses, prevocational courses, and the like. Indeed, only last Friday I took him out to a group training scheme so that he could undertake a prevocational aptitude test, and James told me that there was a real cross-section of people there. He was the only school student and there were 30-year olds and others who may be employed elsewhere.

The point that I would like to stress is that this was an aptitude test for only a limited number of vacancies. So, not everyone will be able to get there, irrespective of the aptitude that they might show for the particular course they wish to undertake. We have to realise in harking back to the PM's comments that to leave school at year 10 without having the proper foundation and educational requirements to contest these things adequately (pre-vocational courses for one) is only setting up a student for failure. They have to be properly prepared, and most group training schemes and most of the organisations that take on apprentices require as a minimum year 11, with year 12 being preferable, so that they take with them a host of skills when they undertake an apprenticeship

in the industry of their choice if they have been lucky enough to secure one.

So, we must ensure that they have that foundation that enhances their choices and options as they go along. Leaving school at year 10 will not provide that. I think that was a very silly and ill-thought-through comment. Like the member for Fisher, I am glad that there seems to be a mind shift at the federal level with respect to the importance of ensuring that people are armed with these skills so that Australia can meet its requirements with respect to employment and economic growth in the future. I think there has been a shift, but I am not convinced that we are necessarily going about it in the right way. However, if the problem has been identified, albeit very late in the game, at the very least it seems that there will be attempts made to fix these problems.

I quite enjoyed the contribution of my colleague the member for Enfield the other night with respect to the mining industry in relation to apprenticeships: that is, they are happy to take the dough for major projects; they are happy to make sure that, at the end of the day, their shareholders get the best bang for their buck with respect to the shares they hold, but whether or not they are really committed to engaging apprentices and trainees still has a big question mark over it.

I again refer to what it was like 25 years ago when we had the Public Buildings Department and other government agencies which provided apprenticeships, but I question whether, today, industry is acting responsibly, because they like to take over those contracts and pick up the dough they want, but rarely have they played their part in ensuring that we are going to have skilled workers in the future. I say that is not the case. From that perspective, when we grant contracts in the future that ought to be one of the many criteria looked at with respect to the granting of those contracts: how many traineeships and apprenticeships does this company have, and is it playing its part to ensure the long-term stability of that particular industry?

I would like to conclude on one point. When I attended James's pre-vocational aptitude test last Friday, I took the opportunity to speak with one of the people there. It took a long time. I took *The Australian* with me and by the time I finished reading that I needed some more reading material. So I went up and grabbed everything relating to traineeships and apprenticeships in this particular group training scheme. I had a chat with a very nice man there and, in the end, he said that one of the things that people do not realise or have not come to terms with is that to become an apprentice you need to be properly nurtured and supervised and you have to ensure that you pick up all the skills that you require to be successful in that trade when you have completed your course. He said that, quite simply, there are just not enough tradespeople out there in certain areas to accommodate all the people who want to do a trade.

The Hon. R.B. Such: It's a Catch-22.

Mr CAICA: As the member for Fisher says, it's a Catch-22, and the problem becomes compounded. How do we get these people into the skills and trades required in the numbers that we want if there are not the numbers of tradespeople to properly accommodate them? That in itself is a dilemma. We will have a continuing problem unless we find a mechanism to enable us to put on as many as we can possibly accommodate to ensure that the tradespeople of the future can play their part in ensuring that the skill shortage becomes a diminishing, not a growing, problem.

I take issue with one point made by my colleague the member for Fisher. He is quite correct in saying that trades-

people today when they finish their training in the main are making very good money. I congratulate them and welcome that because that will attract more people into the trades. One of the problems is the starting wage for apprentices. If you look at a school situation—and I am very close to my schools, as I know most honourable members are—a person moving into a trade has to decide whether it will be the trade or serving beer in a hotel, where they will earn \$400, \$500, \$600 or \$700 a week, or doing another job where they will finish up getting \$600 or \$700 a week, as opposed to the \$5 or \$6 an hour they will get as a tradesperson. I think we have to look at an amalgam—

Mr Koutsantonis interjecting:

Mr CAICA: Eventually they do, but a lot of people live for the here and now. I think it is important to review the level of wages provided in the initial stages, because we will attract more people to the trades. Having said that, there are not necessarily enough vacancies to accommodate what we have at the moment. Industry is interested in quality, and we have to look at the best way in which to get quality and the best way we can accommodate a situation where this skills shortage will be addressed.

Time expired.

The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY (Light): I rise to speak to this motion and to identify that the current situation is very serious. The members for Colton and Bragg both raised some very interesting points. First, the member for Bragg commented on the school counsellors and steering young people towards university. I well remember the late 1980s and early 1990s when the message to young people at school was that unless they went on to university they were basically worthless. That was completely the wrong message. As the member for Fisher has said, in 1991 Goodwood Technical High School, the last technical high school in the state, was closed, all because of this direction from the education department at the time. It was totally the wrong direction, as we all now recognise, and it was very unfortunate that that happened.

I well remember that, when we opened Windsor Gardens Vocational College, a past teacher from Goodwood Technical High School wrote to me and said that he was very pleased we were again introducing vocational and technical education. He cited the case where five boys were not accepted by any other school in the state because of behavioural issues, yet he took them on at Goodie Tech. As a result, he had no problems with them whatsoever, because they were young fellows who wanted to work with their hands and had good skills in that area. They completed their education at Goodwood Technical High School and went on to apprenticeships. I am concerned that the information being given to our students is of the view that apprenticeships are very much a secondary or almost a B-class level of vocation and that people should be aiming at something higher. Let me say that there is nothing B-class about it at all. If my son wants to be a plumber when he grows up, I will be extremely happy about that. If he wants to do that and is happy doing that, that is the vocation he should follow. I will be encouraging him to look at all the trades and vocations available and to pick the one that best suits his talents, and the same goes for my daughter.

The member for Colton raised a good point in relation to apprentice wages, particularly when they start. It is a complaint I get from a number of parents, where they have young people very keen to get into an apprenticeship. However, their mates who are working in supermarkets, in

retail shops or wherever are going out on the weekends for entertainment, buying a car and all those sorts of things, and the apprentice does not have enough money to do that. Whether it should come through a support mechanism from the federal government or whether a wage lift through the Industrial Court is needed, I think it is an issue that has to be addressed.

It is one of the issues that see young people dropping out of an apprenticeship because their mates are all off doing things and they cannot afford to do the same, or the fact they want more money, because they cannot survive on an apprenticeship wage. There is a balance there because from the employer's viewpoint a young person is coming in with a limited range of skills and as a result the employer says that they should not have to pay them a full wage. I agree with that, but the apprentice wage should be looked at, particularly when we are trying to attract young people into trades.

School-based apprenticeships were introduced in our time in government and they took a long time to take off. I am pleased to see the number of school-based apprenticeships are increasing, with over 1 000 young people undertaking one. I remember having a discussion with industry heads when I was minister and saying to them, 'What do you require from the education system? What can we do for you to enable these young people to be better prepared when they get into the work force so that their contribution to your company is greater at an earlier time?' One of the issues was occupational health and safety. When a young person comes on to a factory floor, whether it be garage, GMH or wherever, occupational health and safety is particularly important, as are some of the other skills in which schools should be able to train young people before they leave school so that the employer is able to tap into those skills immediately. That is where, with school-based apprenticeships, young people could pick up the skills before they were fully employed, take on the full apprenticeship and be of value to the employer.

Getting back to counsellors and advice to young people, one of the best books I saw as minister for education was produced by Le Fevre High School. It produced a guide to students and parents which states that, if you take this range of subjects through the years, these are the vocations it will lead to. It is a brilliant piece of work by Le Fevre High School and I recommend parents to get hold of a copy because it shows the subjects you need to complete to be able to take up an apprenticeship in the electrical or other trades. I remember the president of the electrical trades organisation coming to see me and saying that one of the most important things young people needed to do these days to go into anything in the electrical area was complete year 11 maths.

It is one of the problems in the system that school counsellors are not telling young people because a lot of students are dropping maths at year 10. They are not telling young people that, if they want to leave open their options and give themselves as many choices as possible, they must continue with maths in year 11. With the level of technology the community has moved on to, to understand a car engine, the electronics and computerisation housed in the engine, that level of maths and study is needed to be able to work through and understand an apprenticeship. That is where, in speaking with the Motor Trade Association, a lot of young people who sign on as an apprentice motor mechanic have dropped out because the skills required and the level of technology and understanding now required is so much higher than one needed with the old engines we grew up with in terms of the carburettor, the distributor and spark plugs. If you had all

those under control, along with the timing, that was most of what you needed to know. It is now quite different and much more difficult, so our students need to be better prepared and stay at school for a longer period to ensure that they are successful in their apprenticeship.

This is a critical issue. There is no doubt that both the state and federal governments need to address it, and need to speak with industry about which is the best and most attractive path for education and industry to walk together, so that we can attract young people into apprenticeships; and also have the wage at that lower level being attractive to invite them into an apprenticeship.

Mrs GERAGHTY secured the adjournment of the debate.

HIGHER EDUCATION CONTRIBUTION SCHEME

The Hon. R.B. SUCH (Fisher): I move:

That this house calls on the federal government to review its policy on the Higher Education Contribution Scheme with a view to its reduction and eventual phasing out.

I have never been a supporter of the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) for a range of reasons, which I will canvass in the next few minutes. I do not believe we should have a system such as this. It is inherently unfair and it is open to giving special benefits to some at the expense of others. Reports that have analysed this issue, including reports from the federal government, have indicated that a consequence of this scheme has been that many school leavers have been deterred from going to university, as have many mature-aged people. The big losers from the introduction of HECS and its increased cost over time, even allowing for inflation, is that the people who have suffered the most, in terms of lack of opportunity, are mature-aged students, poor males and people in rural areas, particularly those who are not well off.

My argument is simple. As I have indicated previously, I had the privilege of going to university at a time when we did not have to pay HECS fees. I paid my own way for the first year of university from money I saved as a result of working the previous three years. I managed to get a commonwealth scholarship, which took me through to the end of Honours; and, when I got employment, I continued studying. I have not been subjected ever to any HECS provisions. One could argue that we do not have a perfectly fair tax system: we have a system which, in part, is fair. Many people who do not pay tax should pay tax, and some people pay some tax but should pay more. I pay a lot of tax—and I am happy to pay it. I know how to minimise my tax, but I do not go out of my way to artificially lower my taxation. I believe that, as a responsible citizen, one should contribute towards the provision of services and institutions in the community. If we had a fair tax system, the logic is that, once a person graduates, they would be paying via their taxation contribution towards the cost of their higher education. That seems to be fair and reasonable.

As I said, you can argue about whether our tax system is completely fair. I argue that it is not, but it is still a progressive system in the sense that, theoretically, the more you earn the more tax you pay. Therefore, if you become a medico, you expect to have a higher income and therefore pay back more than, say, someone who becomes a teacher. Critics might say that that is factored into HECS, because the charges imposed by that scheme vary according to the type of occupation or training undertaken. This year, the projected

HECS level for band 3 (medicine, law, dentistry and veterinary science) is \$6 427, with a maximum of \$8 034. The reason for the variation is that universities have a discretion in some aspects of the fee. The band 2 HECS level (accounting, commerce, administration, economics, maths, statistics, computing, health, engineering and science) is \$5 490 to \$6 863, and band 1 (humanities, arts, behavioural science, social studies, languages and visual and performing arts) is \$3 854 to \$4 818. The federal government made a commitment that education and nursing, which is part of band 1, would not increase this year.

Under current arrangements, people can get a discount if they pay up-front, which means that, presumably, you or your parents are well off. You do not pay back HECS if you remain 'unemployed', and that word is in inverted commas because it is possible (and I know of such cases where the parents are very well off) that a son or daughter does not have to work after graduating; therefore, they are not earning any income and, therefore, if they have not taken advantage of the up-front discount, they can, in effect, escape the provisions of HECS. So, there are many elements to this scheme that I think are unfair. There is a big disincentive for people from the country, particularly those who are not well off. Their children have to be accommodated somewhere in the city, so they have the burden of paying for accommodation as well as all the other additional costs associated with someone at university.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics reported that in 2003 the total debt incurred by students as part of this HECS scheme was equivalent to \$10 billion (and I have rounded off that figure) and is expected to reach \$13 billion by 2006. What is significant about the HECS charge upon graduation is that it comes at a time in your life when you probably want to have a good time; that is to be noted but not used as a strong argument. However, these young and not so young people will want to buy a house but will be confronted with having to pay for a mortgage as well as a HECS debt, and they may want children—that rare species almost but not quite extinct in Australia, and I know some members in here have made a contribution to address that issue. They have a HECS debt that can amount to many thousands of dollars, and they are faced with buying a house in a market inflated by my generation. If they are thinking about having children, they have an additional burden. In that respect, I think it is very unfair.

It is preferable to have a progressive taxation system so that, as you earn, over time you pay back on a time payment basis during your working life. I argue that not only am I still paying towards the benefits I received as a student but also supporting the Army, members of parliament and so on, and I do not have a problem with that.

We can look at countries that have been smarter than us, such as Eire, for example, the Republic of Ireland, which has gone down a totally different path. It was once regarded as the backwater of Europe, somewhere that was behind the times, but the Irish economy has been turned right around by a progressive approach to higher education; not only to university education but also to technology education, in effect making it free of HECS-type charges. Not only that, but it has been assisting people to get into higher education if that is their wish and if they have the ability; not simply traditional university courses but also technology-oriented courses.

Eire has gone from being laughed at to being a leader in terms of not only its level of education but also its level of

sophistication in technology and other respects, and it is now a showcase because it has seen education, especially at the tertiary level, as an investment and not as something to be imposed as a cost or a burden on young graduates or, in some cases, not so young graduates. There is a living, breathing example of not going down the HECS path that has worked very well in Eire, and we should learn from its experience rather than continuing to go down this path of making tertiary education less and less affordable and less and less available to those who have the ability and who wish to go into tertiary study.

A study undertaken for the federal Education Department had accusations made against it at the time, with one heading being 'Critical report on education "doctored"'. It suggested that the HECS arrangements—and these were changes made in 1996—deterred 9 000 school leavers and 17 000 mature age people from going to university each year. The report also suggested that there was a 38 per cent drop in the number of men from disadvantaged backgrounds taking up courses such as law, medicine and dentistry. The report suggested that, since 1997, the perceived cost of higher education has deterred 39 per cent of would-be applicants from attending university, highlighting in particular a point that I made earlier that, for financially disadvantaged rural families, the prospect of their children entering higher education became increasingly less likely.

The Bureau of Statistics and other data, including reports prepared for the Academic Committee of Flinders University, suggested that applications for university places fell by 5 per cent this year, and various theories have been put forward. One is that people are seeing that there is more likelihood of getting a job through TAFE and other private providers than there is through going to university. I think it is a bit early to say whether it is the attraction of the employment certainty, if you like, or whether it is the deterrent factor of the higher HECS charges, but the reality is that the charges have increased significantly over time.

One must take into account inflation, but in 1989 a \$1 800 a year contribution was required for an arts degree, and this year it is a minimum of \$4 808. For a medical degree, in 1989 it was \$1 800 and now it is \$8 018. So, it is not surprising that in many respects we are deterring our fellow citizens, especially those from poorer backgrounds, from accessing a tertiary education at university.

I have been consistently opposed to HECS, and I do not think that as a nation we need it. People say, 'Why shouldn't you make a contribution?' You make a contribution in any event, because you give up much of your youth, and if you are a mature aged person, likewise, you give up much of your life to study at university; so, you are making a contribution. There is no free ride at university for anyone doing a normal course. The suggestion—and this is a misunderstanding—that university is a holiday, is incorrect. I urge the federal government to review the scheme, and ultimately to abolish it. Let us get back to a scheme that is fair and equitable for everyone, and where you pay for your education as you earn income once you graduate, rather than this HECS scheme, which is an albatross around the neck of not only young people but also others who want to access university education.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Thompson): I draw the house's attention to the presence in the gallery of a delegation to Australia from Malaysia, led by Dr Shafie Salleh, the Minister for Higher Education. I welcome you to the chamber

and express the hope on behalf of the house that your visit with us is valuable for both sides.

Ms BREUER (Giles): I very much support the motion by the member for Fisher on the issue of the Higher Education Contribution Scheme, particularly in relation to the issues for country parents, with the expense of bringing their children to Adelaide for further education. The member for Fisher mentioned that some 9 000 school leavers were deterred this year from applying for tertiary education, and I would say that a significant number of those students would be country students, because more and more country parents are finding it very difficult to bring their children to Adelaide. They cannot afford to do it.

One of the reasons for this is the situation with allowances, and it is often said that allowances are provided for country students. However, those allowances are means tested. The means test has been around for many years, and it has been a good means test for those parents on very low incomes, parents on welfare benefits of some sort, or those in very low-paid positions. However, I think that the cut-off point is something like \$27 000 a year, which a parent can earn before their allowances are affected and their children are not able to get money. Many parents are certainly above that, but if you have a family with two or three children, and you are earning around \$40 000 or \$45 000 a year—and a lot of country parents earn in that range—it is almost impossible to send your children to Adelaide to study, because you cannot afford to pay the money that is involved in sending a student to Adelaide as well as raise a family. Allowances have been an issue in the past, and I have spoken on this many times, but I have to keep reiterating this.

Now with increases in the cost of the higher education scheme, parents are having to sit back and say, 'No, you are going to have take time off.' Of course, a lot of young people take a couple of years off, earn some money, and then have to support themselves in Adelaide and get some sort of allowance in that way. So, it means that these young people delay their education by two or three years because they are not able to do it in the current situation.

There is a significant lack of country students in tertiary education, and this reinforces the problem in country areas of attracting professionals to our areas. Everybody is aware that in the country it is very difficult to attract health professionals—doctors, physiotherapists, nurses, etc. That problem is somewhat alleviated in Whyalla, where students are able to study nursing, and significant numbers of nurses from the Whyalla Campus of the University of South Australia go into nursing in country areas: in Whyalla, on Eyre Peninsula, and to the north of the state.

That helps to alleviate many of those problems because they are trained in the country and they are able to afford to attend the Whyalla campus. However, with respect to other professions, we find it almost impossible to get our full numbers of teachers at the start of any school year. School principals tear their hair out trying to find teachers for their schools. Again, I will push one of my favourite causes, namely, that we train our teachers locally at the Whyalla campus and send them out to schools in that region. That seems to be an ongoing issue for me and one that I will have to keep working at.

It is very difficult to get professionals, such as child protection workers and social workers, in the country because they cannot afford to go to university to study. The increase in higher education fees is making a significant difference.

Currently, my daughter is undertaking tertiary education in Adelaide. It was a real eye-opener for me. Certainly, I know that if I was not doing this job I would never have been able to afford to send my daughter to university. It would have been extremely difficult for me on my previous income.

You have to look at the cost of accommodation. The price of some of the residential colleges in Adelaide where tertiary students tend to stay when they come from the country is something like \$240 a week. I am very lucky: my daughter lives with me in my accommodation here in Adelaide. I also have my nephew living with me. Certainly, if we did not have that accommodation it would be very difficult to send them off to one of those colleges where they charge well over \$200. There are living expenses on top of that because, of course, they like to have a lifestyle that is appropriate for a university student.

You must make sure that they are well-funded. You have to look at transport costs for them, whether that be public transport or a vehicle. For a lot of country kids, using public transport is very scary, and so the parents need to buy transport for them. I bought my daughter a small car. She is living in North Adelaide and studying at Flinders. The best thing I have done for her for a while is to give her that transport to enable her to get to university. Trips home for the weekend, of course, are very expensive. The further they live from Adelaide the more difficult it is for them to drive home. The price of airfares is quite phenomenal.

If you come from Coober Pedy or Port Lincoln it is not feasible to spend 14 hours of your weekend travelling home by car. You have to look at airfares. The other issue that was a bit of a shock to me relates to computers. You have to buy a computer for your kids because the family computer cannot be taken to Adelaide. There are all sorts of hidden costs in educating kids in Adelaide when they come from the country. I support the motion. We do need to have a look at the higher education scheme. I know that it is costly to train someone, to put them through university. I think that, probably, parents should be prepared to pay some costs, but the current rates are deterring many students. Certainly, the whole system needs to be reviewed and, if it is at all possible, we need to look at eventually phasing it out.

The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY (Light): I find this motion very interesting, because we would all remember—or some of us would remember; some of us are a little younger—the Whitlam government abolishing university fees when it came to office in about 1972 or 1973. That was continued by the Fraser government, but it was the Hawke government (under federal minister John Dawkins) that introduced HECS fees.

Mr Koutsantonis: It is a good tax.

The Hon. M.R. BUCKBY: The member for Torrens says that it is a good tax, and I agree with him. The whole reason for former prime minister Hawke introducing HECS fees was to attract people who could not afford the full fees into university. That system operated for about, I think, 11 or 12 years. Former minister Dawkins obviously looked at the social profile of people going into university—and I know this because I have spoken to him on the matter—and found that it had not made any change whatsoever. All that was happening was that those people who could afford to make a contribution were getting their university studies for free. I believe that the HECS fee is a good idea.

It is a matter of ensuring that those people who can pay something do pay. If we abolish it, it will not change. As we saw during the 70s and the 80s, it will not change the strata

that is going through universities, it will not attract lower socioeconomic people who cannot afford to pay the up-front fees into a university. This is a way of ensuring that a contribution is made and, as a result of that, it is more valued, I believe, because you have to make that contribution, but it does not have to be paid back until you are employed and reach a certain level of income.

As I said, I am surprised by this motion by the member for Fisher, because it has long been proven, if you look back in history, that free university does not work. It does not attract the people that you want to get into university. As the member for Bragg said in an earlier debate, only 30 per cent of people go to university anyway, so the majority of the community do not go. About three or four weeks ago, *The Advertiser* gave the commencing wages of graduates. I cannot remember the lowest one now, but it was certainly just under \$30 000—somewhere around that figure. Most young graduates were earning between \$30 000 and about \$42 000 or \$45 000, which is not a wage to be sneezed at, in my opinion.

This perception that all is going to change if we abolish the HECS fee and that university again becomes free is quite wrong. The whole idea of HECS, as the Hon. John Dawkins saw it, when he was the Labor federal minister for education, was that we had to place some value on education. We had to ensure that a contribution was made so that people valued it and recognised that. Free university education was not doing the job that it set out to do. In his wisdom, the Hon. John Dawkins introduced the HECS fee to ensure that some contribution was made towards a person's education.

Mrs REDMOND (Heysen): I rise to endorse the comments made by the member for Light and to say that I thoroughly approve of HECS fees. I have two sons who are currently in university and, therefore, there are a couple of HECS debts around our house. I believe that it is appropriate for people to contribute something towards their education. I am a great believer in all people having the ability to go to university. Certainly, when I finished high school, that was not the case. Free education at university, sadly, was introduced shortly after I left high school and, as a consequence of that, I had to undertake my studies part time at night because my family was not well off enough to enable me to go to university.

At that time, as I recall, my father was earning something less than \$6 000 a year with a wife and, by then, probably only two or three children of the five of us to support. The university fees for first-year law were already then over \$2 000 a year, so it was simply an economic impossibility for someone from my background to go to full time law school. Although I had been offered a spot in Sydney University and the University of New South Wales, I was unable to go because of the financial cost. However, had someone said to me, 'Look, I will pay the cost of your university education, and you can pay me back when you finish,' I would have thought it was my fairy godmother tapping my on my shoulder enabling me to do that. I would have been more than happy to be able to contribute—

The Hon. J.W. Weatherill interjecting:

Mrs REDMOND: I do like winning scratchies, as the Minister for Families and Communities points out, and that has helped me from time to time. I would happily have entered into a situation where I had to meet a cost after I finished my studies, graduated and got a job that was paying me a sufficient wage, and I am more than happy to con-

plate my two sons and, ultimately, I assume, my daughter going through that process.

I do not want to see our students deprived of university education because they cannot afford to go, and I certainly would not like to see us in a situation where the actual cost of a university education was imposed on every student, because I think that does become untenable. When I was in the United States in 2003 I studied for some of the time at The Catholic University of America in Washington DC, and I investigated the possibility of studying there—not for myself but for one or more of our children, who are all American citizens and could go to study in the US. The cost at that time for just first year, even with a scholarship at a university such as The Catholic University of America, which is one of the cheaper universities which provides what financial assistance it can for young applicants wanting to go there, was \$US22 000. That is without the cost of your keep and the cost of living in Washington DC. At that time \$US22 000 was the equivalent of maybe \$A33 000. It is an unthinkable amount of money to do a four or five year degree.

My two boys have both gone into five year double degrees and I guess, on average, their HECS debt is rising at something between \$15 000 and \$20 000 a year, but that is nowhere near the actual cost of educating those boys in those double degrees. I think it is entirely appropriate for them to recognise that the cost of their education is something to which they should contribute. I have no difficulty at all with the idea of HECS debts. As I say, I do not want them to go very high so that people pay the full amount, but I think it is entirely appropriate that the 30 per cent of people who choose to go to university and choose, therefore, to have that extended education should start to contribute towards the cost of that education, and the Higher Education Contribution Scheme does nothing more than that.

As the member for Light said, the indicators are that simply having free university education does not actually change the socioeconomic background of the people who go to university. In fact, from what I have read, it is generally the case that, if you come from a family in which your parents have a university education and are therefore likely to value education, you have a much higher chance of attending university; and, if you come from a background where your parents left school at perhaps 15 years and did not pursue further study, you have a much lower chance of attending university. It appears to be the case that family background and the importance placed on education by the family is much more likely to be the indicator of whether you go to university rather than whether or not that university education is free.

I think that the HECS scheme gets us to a point where we are able to achieve a reasonable balance so that the percentage of people who go to university do so in the knowledge that they do not have to pay up-front but they will ultimately have to contribute. Given that it is costing money, in my particular case I told my children that the HECS debt is their responsibility. I do not intend to pay their HECS fees for them. I hope it will be something of an impetus for them to go on and pass their exams and not run up HECS debts for years if they are studying and do not pass because, the more they do, the higher their own debt will be. I do not think it is up to me to pay their HECS debts, and I think that the HECS debt has the balance about right. I do not want it to go a lot higher but, in those circumstances, while I enjoyed a lot of

the member for Fisher's suggestions that have been debated in this house, I am afraid I cannot support his motion.

Time expired.

Mr SCALZI (Hartley): I, too, wish to make a brief contribution, and I note the member for Fisher's good intentions. As the member for Light outlined very well, university fees were abolished by the Whitlam government, and then the policy of so-called free education (because someone has to pay for it) continued under the Fraser government. They were reintroduced by the Hawke government under minister John Dawkins.

As he outlined, the intention in abolishing the fees was to give access to a university education to those students from backgrounds who were not able to, and the statistics did not show that. As the member for Heysen has clearly outlined, my son has been in the United States. We are very fortunate in comparison to many other countries in the world where any tertiary education comes at a great cost. Perhaps we should look at how we can encourage people from lower socio-economic backgrounds and rural areas to get a tertiary education, because we need those professions in those areas. I went to university. I was fortunate in having one of those teaching scholarships. I believe that, in cases where we need to assist people, perhaps the system of assistance that we have provided for teachers and nurses in the past should be looked at. The idea should be that we do not prevent anyone from maximising his or her potential, but not to abolish the HECS scheme, which really is asking for a contribution from students who benefit greatly from a higher education.

Compared with the difficulties overseas, I do not believe that this system is really unfair. Of course, if one could afford it, it would be ideal to allow everyone access without making a contribution, but the reality is that there is a cost, and it has to be borne by the community. If we do not share that cost, we are going to disadvantage more people than we intend. So, the system introduced by former Labor minister Dawkins has some merit, because you do not have to contribute until you have the ability to contribute. It does not prevent you from getting a tertiary education; there is no question that there is a debt to be paid, but you pay when you have the ability to pay. As I said, perhaps we should look at ways of providing scholarships and subsidies for students to enable them in certain areas.

An area that we have to look at is TAFE, where students have to pay up front; there is no HECS scheme for them. That is a difficulty for a lot of students. Even if we look at the secondary school level and some of the VET programs, the burden on parents is certainly a problem; often, it is put on parents and students who can least afford it. So, it is not only the university area that we have to look at but also how we can facilitate all education, including training for skills, where there is a great shortage, so that people are not disadvantaged in maximising their potential. I commend the member for Fisher for bringing on this debate, because it is important that we review and discuss these issues. I believe that, when we did not have the HECS scheme, the intent of abolishing those fees really did not materialise when you looked at the reality of the statistics.

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

SUPPLY BILL

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

RAIL SAFETY

A petition signed by 1038 residents of South Australia, requesting the house to urge the government to immediately appoint an independent investigation into the death of Karl Petry on the Leigh Creek to Port Augusta Railway line by the Australian Transport Safety Bureau; begin a formal review of the South Australian Rail Safety Act and develop a National Code of Practice for Hi-Rail vehicles, was presented by the Hon. P.L. White.

Petition received.

CENTRAL STANDARD TIME

A petition signed by 1563 residents of South Australia, requesting the house to urge the government to move South Australia to true Central Standard Time of our correct Greenwich Mean Time of 135 degrees longitude being one hour behind the eastern states and one hour ahead of Western Australia, at 2 am on Sunday 27 March 2005 at the end of daylight saving time, was presented by Mrs Penfold.

Petition received.

ADOPTION SERVICES

A petition signed by 302 residents of South Australia, requesting the house to urge the government to immediately reverse its decision to close the Australians Aiding Children Adoption Agency, was presented by Mrs Penfold.

Petition received.

SPEED ZONES

A petition signed by 129 residents of South Australia, requesting the house to urge the Minister for Transport to review all 50 km/h speed zones on all roads other than back streets, was presented by Mr Brokenshire.

Petition received.

MAIN SOUTH ROAD, VICTOR HARBOR ROAD INTERSECTION

A petition signed by 72 residents of South Australia, requesting the house to urge the Minister for Transport to make a budget allocation for the urgent upgrade of the Main South Road, Victor Harbor Road intersection, was presented by Mr Brokenshire.

Petition received.

POLICE, VICTOR HARBOR AND GOOLWA

A petition signed by 29 residents of South Australia, requesting the house to urge the Minister for Police to make a priority budget allocation for the establishment of a 24 hour police station and police patrols in the Victor Harbor/Goolwa area, was presented by Mr Brokenshire.

Petition received.

POLICE OFFICER NUMBERS

A petition signed by 26 residents of South Australia, requesting the house to urge the government to continue to recruit extra police officers, over and above recruitment at attrition, in order to increase police officer numbers, was presented by Mr Brokenshire.

Petition received.

TRANSPORT SYSTEM

A petition signed by 19 residents of South Australia, requesting the house to urge the Minister for Transport to urgently upgrade the transport system for Aldinga, McLaren Vale and Willunga, was presented by Mr Brokenshire.

Petition received.

EMPLOYMENT FIGURES

The Hon. M.D. RANN (Premier): I seek leave to make a ministerial statement.

Leave granted.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: In the wake of the third anniversary of this government, I am pleased to inform the house that 40 000 South Australian jobs have been created since we came to office. Australian Bureau of Statistics figures released today show that the number of South Australians employed reached a new record high in February of 732 400. This represents 1 700 more people than in January this year. On average, more than 1 100 jobs have been created in each and every month that this government has been in office. Last month—

Members interjecting:

The Hon. M.D. RANN: Surely, you would support this given your own lack of attraction in government. Last month, full-time employment rose in trend terms for the 13th consecutive month. Both men and women shared in this growth in full-time employment. Fewer South Australians were also unemployed last month, with the headline unemployment rate falling by .4 of a percentage point to reach 5.3 per cent. Last month there were fewer people unemployed in South Australia than there has been since May 1978. In addition, the number of South Australians participating in the labour market rose. The participation rate for February was 61.7 per cent in trend terms.

I was also pleased to participate in celebrating another important anniversary this week: International Women's Day. So, I am particularly happy on this occasion to inform the house that South Australia has the lowest unemployment rate for women in the nation. Our unemployment rate for women is down to 4.8 per cent in trend terms compared with the national rate of 5.2 per cent. This is really good news for South Australia. However, despite these real achievements this government will not rest on its laurels. The 'Return to Work' credit, which began three weeks ago, helps parents with training costs so that they can return to work after caring full-time for children. I have been informed that in those three weeks 900 applications for the 'Return to Work' credit have been issued.

Recently, I also announced the South Australian Youth Engagement Strategy (SAYES) which is helping to keep our young people engaged in school, work or training and builds on our \$28.4 million social inclusion package of school retention initiatives. I am proud that after three years our record shows not only a strong economy resulting from good

economic management but also a record of providing assistance aimed at helping all South Australians to take advantage of these new jobs.

PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

The Hon. R.J. McEWEN (Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries): I seek leave to make a ministerial statement.

Leave granted.

The Hon. R.J. McEWEN: The 2003 financial statement for the Department of Primary Industries and Resources South Australia (PIRSA) was qualified by the Auditor-General. The qualification related to discrepancies in the reconciliation of balances of the cash at bank and the accumulated surplus. The two issues of qualifications are interrelated. PIRSA initiated measures to address the issues raised by the Auditor-General's Report. As I advised in October 2004, in order to resolve these issues PIRSA established a reconciliation project team, consisting of four PIRSA staff and an additional two specialist contract staff. The tasks involved reconstructing bank reconciliations and financial statements in order to identify and resolve all outstanding differences dating back to the formation of the department in 1999. The target date set for the reconciliation of these issues was 28 February 2005.

I am pleased to advise that the project team investigation of the reconciliation matters was completed by the target date of 28 February 2005. The reconciliation project team has re-established the opening balance of PIRSA's accounts commencing 1 March 1999 and performed reconstructed year-to-date monthly reconciliations from March 1999 to June 2004. Furthermore, the outcome of the project clearly demonstrated that the discrepancies do not involve any misappropriation of funds, fraud, or any suggestion of hidden moneys. I table with the statement a summary of the adjustments made to enable the cash at bank reconciliation to the Westpac bank account and a more detailed analysis of the process undertaken to reach the reconciliation.

The Auditor-General's Department has reviewed the work undertaken by the reconciliation project team and is satisfied that:

1. All items for the cash at bank reconciliation have been identified; and
2. The balance of the accumulated surpluses as at 30 June 2004, as reported in the financial statements, now reconciles to the balance, as recorded in the general ledger. The Auditor-General's office has advised that it will review the ongoing completeness of the work as part of the annual audit process for 2004-05.

In summary, the issues that gave rise to the audit qualification date back to the practices in place since the formation of PIRSA. The assistance of accounting specialist experts has helped resolve the historical issues, and PIRSA is now in the process of upskilling staff and improving processes to maintain the momentum for continuous improvement that has arisen from the issue.

PAPER TABLED

The following paper was laid on the table:

By the Minister for Transport (Hon. P.L. White)—

Passenger Transport Act 1994, Section 39—Service Contracts Report.

QUESTION TIME

NAVY CONTRACT

The Hon. R.G. KERIN (Leader of the Opposition): Will the Premier advise the house of the outcome of the discussions he had with the Prime Minister regarding South Australia's bid for the \$6 billion—

Members interjecting:

The Hon. R.G. KERIN: That's right—Navy warfare destroyer contract?

Members interjecting:

The Hon. R.G. KERIN: We are allowed to be bipartisan; don't complain. I, too, met with the Prime Minister in Canberra yesterday to push South Australia's case for the contract. In doing so, I assured the Prime Minister that the Liberal Party in South Australia fully supports the state government's own endeavours in this area, and I was pleased by the Prime Minister's response.

The Hon. M.D. RANN (Premier): I am absolutely delighted to respond to the question in the way in which it was presented, which is in a bipartisan way. This project is bigger than politics. Having been closely involved in the bid 20 years ago for the submarine contract, I know that bipartisanship in relation to these projects is very important.

I had a very good hearing from the Prime Minister yesterday. We are talking about a contract that is worth up to \$6 billion, and it is a contract that is not just over two or three years but over a 15 to 20 year time frame. It will create thousands of jobs in South Australia. As a state government, we have made a multimillion-dollar commitment to build and invest in infrastructure down at Osborne. That infrastructure includes a ship lift, a wharf transfer system and also, of course, the development of a 90 hectare maritime defence precinct at Osborne, adjacent to the Australian Submarine Corporation's site.

The Prime Minister was obviously at pains to let me know that, as the guardian of the national interest (he did not use those words), as Prime Minister, the decision would be based on its merit and would go to the best bids, and I welcome that. We saw the bizarre statements made by the Victorians in the *Melbourne Age* last year that somehow there was a fix in and, because of South Australian federal ministers working hand in hand with us, the bid had been fixed for South Australia. The Prime Minister has pointed out the probity of the federal government's assessment of the respective bids.

I did, of course, point out to him a number of things, namely, that we have the best site in Australia—essentially a greenfields site—a highly equipped work force, a cluster of defence companies which were attracted or developed by the proximity of the Australian Submarine Corporation's projects, and our industrial relations record. I pointed out to the Prime Minister that we have one-third of the disputation rate of Victoria—half that of the nation—and that we have in fact negotiated an EB with the three unions involved that is second to none in South Australia, with a 'no strike' clause that was an enhancement of the same kind of industrial relations agreement entered into that helped secure a significant expansion of Holden's automotive production facilities at Elizabeth. So, we have the best site, the best equipped work force, the best cluster of companies and infinitely better industrial relations than Victoria. By contrast, the Williams-town site is crowded, Dickensian and nineteenth century in nature.

Tomorrow we will be unveiling the extent of our bid for this project and our four defence sector plans. There will be a major function tomorrow, so we are looking forward to outlining what we have in mind. Whilst there is no doubt that this is a national project and each of the states will share in it, we have put together, with bipartisan support, an outstanding bid. I commend the Defence Industry Advisory Board that includes, apart from the Deputy Premier and me: Robert Champion de Crespigny, Chair of the Economic Development Board; Malcolm Kinnaird, a leading Adelaide businessman who was a prime mover in the building of the railway from Alice Springs to Darwin; and people of the calibre of former federal defence minister Ian McLachlan and John White, the former CEO of Transfield, involved in the Anzac ship project.

We could not have a better Defence Industry Advisory Board. I am pleased with the work of its CEO, retired Rear Admiral Kevin Scarce; David Shackleton, former head of the Royal Australian Navy; Cheryl Bart of the Economic Development Board; Andrew Fletcher and others, who are also involved in this project. It is full steam ahead, and we are now down to the final part of the assessment project. More work could not have been put in on any project than we have undertaken over the past two years, and I welcome the Leader of the Opposition's bipartisan support.

TOURISM, NEW ZEALAND

Mr SNELLING (Playford): My question is to the Minister for Tourism. What initiatives have been employed by the South Australian Tourism Commission to promote visitors to South Australia from New Zealand now that direct flights have commenced?

The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH (Minister for Education and Children's Services): I thank the member for Playford for his question about a very important route into South Australia from New Zealand. As members would know, one of the great impediments to increased tourism from international destinations around the world is the lack of inbound international seats to Adelaide. It was a disappointment that, whilst New Zealand was the premier origin of the numbers of tourists coming to Australia, it only ranked fourth in the place of origin lists for South Australia.

We worked on this issue with Qantas and, as part of our strategy to increase the number of inbound seats per week, since November 2002 we have increased the inbound seat numbers by almost 40 per cent; with 29 per cent of that growth being since November 2003. Those additional seat capacities—168 seats three times a week—are important because, having produced the capacity, we had to fill those passenger opportunities. We have invested significant sums of money to make sure those opportunities are well garnered.

The South Australian government, through the SATC, has invested \$950 000 in marketing programs to make sure that those seats are full. A major component of that, of course, is the television campaign, which includes four absolutely splendid advertisements filmed around South Australia, as well as some inserts of postcards seeking further information being put into some key magazines; extensive participation in trade and consumer shows; training for staff in travel agencies; and a series of visiting programs for journalists from New Zealand coming to South Australia.

The tactical elements of these advertisements are to produce humour and insight, and many of our advertisements have produced extraordinary acclaim with over 700 inquiries

in the past few weeks from New Zealand about areas in the Adelaide Hills, shopping, beaches, markets, restaurants and the River Murray, which is one of the key and most attractive destinations for New Zealand visitors. The feedback from New Zealand on these TV ads has been extremely positive, and we expect this to generate, over time, 177 600 additional visitor nights for the state, as we aim to increase our income from tourism significantly over the next five years.

I point out that New Zealand wholesalers are also running newspaper advertisements, instore promotions and e-marketing campaigns in South Australia because, clearly, to make this travel route viable, we need to have South Australians travelling in the opposite direction in order to book seats in both directions. It is quite clear that those people leaving South Australia, taking up these cheap flight opportunities and these packages, are not competing with South Australian destinations but, more likely, removing market share from other states for short-haul holidays. Bookings are strong. There has been a strong load factor over the past few months, and I look forward to growth in the market of New Zealand travellers.

ORTHOPAEDIC SPECIALISTS

The Hon. D.C. KOTZ (Newland): Will the Minister for Health advise the house of the measures she has taken to reduce waiting times for patients seeking appointments with orthopaedic specialists in each of our metropolitan public hospitals? Constituents advise me that they have had to wait for three years to get an appointment with an orthopaedic specialist at Modbury Hospital. Freedom of information documents identify that across all metropolitan hospitals there are nearly 2 500 people currently on a 24-month waiting list for orthopaedic surgery. A further 3 737 South Australians are waiting to get on the waiting list for surgery. Of these 3 737 people, most will wait up to three years to have their first appointment with an orthopaedic specialist, before being placed on the two-year surgery waiting list. Overall, a total 6 154 people are waiting for orthopaedic treatment.

The Hon. L. STEVENS (Minister for Health): I am pleased to address the question. I think there is a number of parts to the question. First, it is not correct to make the assumption that, because a certain number of people are waiting for an appointment with a specialist, they all necessarily will need surgery. Of course, seeing an orthopaedic specialist is the time when the appropriately qualified medical practitioner makes a decision about what needs to happen in relation to that person. That is the first point. This second is that—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The member for Newland has had an extensive explanation.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The Minister for Health has the call.

The Hon. L. STEVENS: Thank you, sir. The second point I would like to make is that there is indeed increased demand for the services of orthopaedic specialists, and this has come about for two reasons: first, we have an ageing community and, therefore, there is an increasing demand in terms of just wear and tear on hips, knees and other joints; secondly, we have a particular shortage of orthopaedic specialists in our work force. Perhaps the member for Newland, the deputy leader, and anybody else on the other side who has an interest in this matter, might like to take up that issue with the Hons Tony Abbott and Brendan Nelson

because, of course, shortages in the medical and health work force in general (but we are here talking about orthopaedic specialists) are largely the province of the federal government, in terms of the number of university places put aside for their training and clinical training at the end of their courses, which involves the colleges. So, I advise that the member for Newland joins with the state government in trying to get her federal colleagues to take on their responsibilities.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. L. STEVENS: I would like to finish my answer. In relation to the issues that I am sure are specifically of concern to the member for Newland, and to those of us who have seats in the north-eastern suburbs of Adelaide, there is a shortage of orthopaedic specialists at Modbury Hospital. Putting aside the overarching issue of orthopaedics, the Central Northern Adelaide Health Service is well aware of that situation and, via the new governance arrangements we have put in place, it is trying to achieve a greater degree of networking across the hospitals in order to share out the resources in orthopaedic surgery and to try to do something about the situation that particularly affects Modbury Hospital but also affects the Lyell McEwin Health Service. I add that the root cause of this issue is the work force shortages in orthopaedic surgery I mentioned previously.

Finally, I point out to the member for Newland that, in terms of elective surgery, this government has already begun the major task of turning around the slashing of elective surgery activity that occurred under the Brown-Olsen-Kerin governments. I have given that information to the house, and I am very happy to provide the figures to the member for Newland so that she can see that it is this government that has achieved that turnaround—the latest effort being the \$10 million of extra funding allocated in October to address elective surgery.

OFFICE FOR THE AGEING

Mrs GERAGHTY (Torrens): My question is to the Minister for Ageing. What are the new developments in relation to the Office for the Ageing?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL (Minister for Ageing): It is a great pleasure to announce to the parliament that we have welcomed Anne Gale to the role of Director of the Office for the Ageing. Anne is a well-known public sector performer who is very well-equipped to manage this new role. She will be a sad loss for the member for Whyalla, as Anne is Whyalla born and bred and is currently in the role of Regional Manager of the Housing Trust.

She has a strong background in policy, planning and development, in particular experiencing success in implementing strategies to assist people to live independently, which will really benefit her in her new role of looking after the state's ageing population. The Department for Families and Communities figures show that there will be 513 000 people aged 55 and over in 2015, which will account for 32.5 per cent of the population. It is a crucially important area of public policy.

Recently, Ms Gale has also been known for her work with the Department for Families and Communities as Director of Homelessness, where she worked with the Social Inclusion Unit and coordinated the Social Inclusion homelessness initiative. I have great pleasure in informing the parliament of this appointment which, I must say, has been warmly welcomed by the aged sector.

ORTHOPAEDIC SPECIALISTS

The Hon. DEAN BROWN (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Will the Minister for Health confirm that the official waiting lists for elective surgery, which are published quarterly, only record patients once they have been seen by the medical specialist and placed on the waiting list and, therefore, do not include those people who are still waiting to see an orthopaedic specialist for an initial appointment?

The Hon. L. STEVENS (Minister for Health): Yes, I will. That is correct. Of course, as the deputy leader knows, that is exactly the situation that has occurred over a number of years.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The deputy leader.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! Yet again, the point is illustrated that the house wishes to debate matters of policy at this moment on this day, but the facility to do so is not there. A change to standing orders enabling it to be undertaken rather than by mockery and false approach through question time would be a better way to go.

GOLDEN GROVE FIRE STATION

Ms RANKINE (Wright): Will the Minister for Emergency Services update the house on the progress of the Golden Grove fire station?

The Hon. P.F. CONLON (Minister for Emergency Services): I am glad that members of the opposition are happy for the member for Wright, because she has done an absolutely outstanding job for her electorate. Since she has been the member she has achieved a new police station and a new fire station and she should be congratulated. I am glad to hear the warm, generous congratulations coming from the opposition, because she deserves it. She is a great champion for community safety. She is a stout volunteer—not stout, she is a very svelte volunteer—

Members interjecting:

The Hon. P.F. CONLON:—and a sterling volunteer in the Country Fire Service! For the past five years she has organised in her electorate an annual fire safety day with the Metropolitan Fire Service and the Country Fire Service to lift community awareness about fire protection. In fact, so notable is she that this Sunday at 1 o'clock the member for Wright will represent the government in launching the South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service—

Mr BRINDAL: On a point of order, sir.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: They don't like nice things about our people, do they?

Mr BRINDAL: My point of order is on relevance. The question was specifically the progress of the fire station. It was not a eulogy on the member.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr Venning interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! There is always one who wants to rattle on. The honourable minister has the call. The honourable minister knows that, whilst I understand the enormous contribution the member for Wright is making to emergency services, she is not the fire station, and the question asked was about it.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: I take your direction, sir. However, it is a shame that the member for Unley does not think that the Change Your Clock, Change Your Smoke

Alarm Battery campaign is relevant. It is extremely relevant, and it is important: it saves lives. I am prepared to defer to the opinion of the member for Unley that it is not relevant and talk about the fire station.

The fire station construction commenced in April 2004, with practical completion (although we are still doing a few things) on 28 February 2005. It is a \$3.85 million fire station including a land purchase of \$426 000. A solar photovoltaic module rated at 1 980 watts has been installed, and the station has been designed with a view to the needs of modern fire fighting. It is a significant net improvement to the safety of the people in the member for Wright's electorate. The member for Unley might not like me congratulating her but I am going to do it again. Congratulations to the member for Wright. It is a tremendous achievement for her electorate.

SCHOOLS, CEDUNA

Ms CHAPMAN (Bragg): What action has the Minister for Education and Children's Services taken with regard to serious incidences of violence, bullying and intimidation at the Ceduna Area School, including one incident where a student threatened to rape another student's sister? I am advised that Mr Brian Perry, father of two students at Ceduna Area School, wrote to the minister at the beginning of the school year informing her that a student had threatened his son that he would rape his sister. Since then, there has been a further rape threat directed at Mr Perry's daughter.

The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH (Minister for Education and Children's Services): I thank the member for Bragg for her question, and I am pleased that she has turned her attention to one of the public schools and is talking about school education, even though, as ever, she wants to talk down the quality of our education by implying that our schools are places of high risk and danger.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH: The matter that she wishes to describe, and has done so in florid detail, has been raised with me by the member for Flinders, and I have seen the letters from the gentleman in question. I cannot help being alarmed by the tone of some of the discussion about Ceduna as a town, which has considerable tourism potential. I have even read—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The members for Bright and West Torrens might like to sit together and have a chat, or adjourn to the lobby.

Mr Koutsantonis: No thank you, sir; I might catch something. I don't know where he has been.

The SPEAKER: Order! Without back-chatting the chair.

The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH: I have even seen copies of accounts of the member for Flinders' views about Ceduna in Balinese newspapers, talking about lawlessness in a way that is quite disturbing, and it puts a very bad spin on our state for overseas people.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order, the member for Newland!

The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH: In terms of Ceduna, there has been considerable ill will in the community, and through my discussions with the district director, Mr Bill Parker, I have been able to ascertain that there is a longstanding grievance within the community. I think that everybody knows that schools are not separate places from the communities in which they reside. They are microcosms of the

prejudice, the ill will and the arguments that occur out in the community, and very often the impact of outside social community events spill over into the school yard. The episode that we have heard described—

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: I rise on a point of order, sir. The question was very specific in terms of the serious allegations raised, including a threatened rape on two occasions, and the minister is doing no more than going off on a very general debate and, therefore, is in breach of standing order 98.

The SPEAKER: I uphold the point of order. Does the minister have any information in response to the inquiry about what is being done to avert the violence?

The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH: As I said, I have spoken to the district director on seven occasions about the matters raised by the member for Flinders in schools in Ceduna. From discussions it appears that there has been a longstanding antagonism between certain members of the community. And I have to say it evolved some years ago based on a football match. It is hard for me to understand how such ill-will, such hatred, such antagonism and such feeling can be generated by a football match—

Mr Brokenshire interjecting:

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

The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH: —but the underlying issue appears to relate to a community—

Mr Brokenshire interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister has the call. I remind the member for Mawson that he is on his last life.

The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH: As I said, there has been a dispute within the community which has spilled over into the schoolyard and which involves sports matches and some serious injuries in a football match. Blame has been cast. Accusations have been made. There have been defamatory accusations. There has been a range of activity within the community relating to what is a community episode. However serious these claims are I know that they have been investigated. I know that anything that has occurred on the school grounds has been dealt with. I trust the local school teachers. I have faith in the professionalism of the staff in the schools, the local police and the local community workers. This is a difficult situation, but it has been well-investigated, appropriate authorities have been informed and action has been taken.

Mr BRINDAL (Unley): As a supplementary question: in view of her last answer, does the minister accept that if anything happens to any of those children she and her servants may well be liable for a lack of duty of care in respect of the safety of the children that she compels to go to the school?

The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH: Clearly, we have a duty of care within our schools, and I think the honourable member knows that.

NURSES, AGENCY

Ms BEDFORD (Florey): My question is directed to the Minister for Health. How are agency nursing services bought by the state government, and how will these changes benefit South Australia's public hospitals?

The Hon. Dean Brown interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The deputy leader is out of order! The Minister for Health.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. L. STEVENS (Minister for Health): Thank you, Mr Speaker; I will try to answer the question amongst all the noise.

The Hon. P.F. Conlon interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Infrastructure is out of order! The Minister for Health has the call, and I want to hear the answer.

The Hon. L. STEVENS: The way in which agency nursing services are purchased by the state government has changed with the recent announcement of a new Nursing and Midwifery Agency Panel. The panel consists of 10 agencies, which will now be the sole providers of nursing and midwifery agency staff to the South Australian public hospitals. The new arrangements will ensure an agreed pricing model for agency nurses and midwives across all South Australian public hospitals, both metropolitan and country. This service was an open tender process. The best candidates were successful, whether they were local or interstate; and the nurses that these firms engage will still be South Australian nurses.

The benefits of the panel and the tender approach include greater accountability, greater price certainty and interstate agencies bringing increased competition into the market. This is about delivering best value for money and quality assurance to taxpayers. Our public hospitals have been utilising a relatively high number of nursing and midwifery agency staff to supplement the nursing and midwifery work force over the past few years; although, of course, as members would remember, I spoke yesterday about the halving of nurse vacancy rates in our public hospitals, which is also pleasing.

These agency nurses and midwives, while fulfilling an important role, come at a higher cost than permanent employed nurses and midwives. The tender has delivered fixed pricing from each agency for the next 12 months and a single point of management for pricing and price variations. Previously, agencies negotiated separately with hospitals on an ongoing basis. The contract for the successful agencies is for a two-year period with the option of a further one year extension. This new approach will also ensure quality of care for patients by requiring agencies to provide staff in line with set criteria and standards—including relevant experience for a position, offender history checks and occupational health and safety assessments—prior to their placement in public hospitals. Importantly, the cost and quality benefits generated by the panel tender process will be enjoyed across the entire health system both metropolitan and country and not just by an individual hospital.

The Hon. DEAN BROWN (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): I have a supplementary question for the minister. Why did the government give contracts to six companies owned and operated from interstate—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: —while excluding local companies which would have been willing to provide those services at the standard contract rate?

The Hon. L. STEVENS: I am delighted to answer the question.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. L. STEVENS: The answer is simply that this was a tender process based on merit with an independent

probity auditor following the step-by-step process. The important point is that the nurses provided by these companies will be South Australians.

EMPLOYMENT

Ms CHAPMAN (Bragg): Is the Minister for Employment, Training and Further Education aware that since February 2002 the total employment growth in South Australia stands at 5.6 per cent, which is the second lowest in the nation, and 2 per cent behind the national average? The figures released today by the Australian Bureau of Statistics show that, if South Australian job creation matched the national average, 52 000 new jobs would have been created rather than the 40 000 the Premier announced in his ministerial statement.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. S.W. KEY (Minister for Employment, Training and Further Education): Thank you, sir.

The SPEAKER: I have not called the minister; I am waiting for order because I want to be able to hear the answer. The members on both sides seem willing to engage in debate in the matter, but deny themselves the opportunity to do that formally by refusing to amend standing orders in a way which would enable it.

The Hon. S.W. KEY: I am sorry I jumped the gun earlier, sir. I would like to thank the member for Bragg for her question. I am also very pleased to actually finally get a question from the member for Bragg rather than reading her very unusual media releases that she usually puts out when the figures are released each month. I am not quite sure how the member for Bragg could get such a negative point of view about the Australian Bureau of Statistics' figures when, as the Premier already said, all the indicators show us that, despite some of the problems about consumer confidence that have recently been identified on a national level, in fact, South Australia is still viewed as having very strong economic growth, and also that we have 732 400 jobs that have been created in our total employment area on a trend basis. In trend terms, this is the fourteenth consecutive monthly rise in job numbers, and this represents 1 700 more South Australians in work.

Last time the member for Bragg asked me a question about employment, I think it was to do with women's employment—which, like her, I am very concerned about. But the good news for February and the good news about the trend with regard to women's employment is that 600 more full-time jobs for women have been created in the last period. So, with all the figures looking good, the labour force participation rates looking good and also the fact that all the figures that the ABS has put forward for February are looking positive, I am really not sure what her point is.

SERVICE SA

Mr O'BRIEN (Napier): My question is to the Minister for Administrative Services. How is the government delivering better services to the public through Service SA?

The Hon. M.J. WRIGHT (Minister for Administrative Services): I thank the member for his question. The government is committed to providing improved access to government information and services. The existing Service SA customer service network consists of four regional customer services—one at each of Whyalla, Gawler, Port Lincoln and Port Augusta—and I acknowledge the former government for

its role in that. There are other outlets that are critical for South Australians to conduct their business with government, for example, the customer call centre, web site and shop. I am pleased to announce today the expansion of the Service SA customer service network so that five regional Transport SA customer service centres (located at Berri, Mount Gambier, Kadina, Murray Bridge, Port Pirie and North Terrace) and call centre will now progressively become Service SA outlets providing a comprehensive state-wide network of delivery points for government information and services.

All South Australians, whether they live in the city or regional areas, will have better access to government information and services because of this important initiative. This specifically demonstrates the government's ongoing commitment to building sustainable regional communities. Currently, Service SA centres provide communities with greater choice and flexibility when they need to conduct business with government agencies. These centres make services more widely available and more easily accessible. As well as the additional motor registration and licensing services at the former Transport SA shops, the new Service SA centres will deliver a range of additional services where people can obtain government information on a broad range of topics (for example, water conservation and birth certificates), pay their bills, obtain application forms and permits, apply for licences, and order and purchase government products. Most importantly, complex inquiries from members of the public can be addressed in one visit.

Service SA centres add value by providing people with up-to-date government information, helping them transact their business with government and linking them with a specialist agency service if required. The new Service SA centres will display information about the new availability of services. The Service SA expansion demonstrates the government's commitment to providing for all South Australians an efficient, coordinated and easy way to conduct their essential business with government agencies. This government is committed to improving services for the whole community, especially in regional South Australia.

ALLEGATIONS, INVESTIGATION

Mrs REDMOND (Heysen): Does the Premier still have confidence in the Speaker?

The Hon. M.D. RANN (Premier): Any discussion of the Speaker's role in raising allegations against a member of parliament and the manner in which those allegations were raised involves the discussion of matters which are the subject of a current police investigation, so it is highly undesirable to allow a debate that pre-empt the findings of that investigation, and I am not prepared to risk compromising that investigation. There must be no pressure and no interference in that police inquiry by anyone. I am mindful of the high standards of behaviour and propriety expected of all members of parliament. In particular, I am mindful of the standards proclaimed by the Speaker when he assumed that office, when he stated:

It is my determination to do my utmost to protect all members' rights collectively and individually and thereby uphold the dignity of parliament and maintain the level of respect which the institution properly demands as the very foundation of our representative democracy.

That police inquiry must proceed and must be unfettered in its inquiries. There must be no pre-emptive comment by anyone. I certainly await the results of the police inquiry with

interest. However, I have the greatest confidence in the Police Commissioner of South Australia and the greatest confidence in the South Australia Police.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

METROPOLITAN FIRE SERVICE

Mrs GERAGHTY (Torrens): Can the Minister for Emergency Services provide the house with the information on OH&S and WorkCover in the South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service, which he said yesterday he would seek by question time today?

The Hon. P.F. CONLON (Minister for Emergency Services): I have that information. I said that I would get it promptly.

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: I think that, as a point of order—

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: You were interested yesterday.

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

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: Mr Speaker, I think you ruled previously that, once a minister has been asked a question, if he cannot answer it and then subsequently comes back with the information, he should do so by way of a ministerial statement, not by way of an answer to another question from another member.

The SPEAKER: That is precisely the case.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: I rise on a point of order, sir. Can you explain to me for my benefit what standing order demands that?

The SPEAKER: The honourable minister would know that that is practice, not only in this parliament, but also in other parliaments which follow the convention of Westminster. It has been established for a couple of hundred years now. On reflection and recollection, I think it is since the glorious reforms of 1832.

OLYMPIC DAM

Mr WILLIAMS (MacKillop): My question is to the Premier. Given the Premier's public assertion yesterday that the government wants to see the doubling of the capacity of the Olympic Dam mine, the biggest known uranium deposit in the world, will the government assure other companies exploring for uranium currently in South Australia that they also will be encouraged to mine and export uranium from South Australia, despite the Labor Party's policy of no new uranium mines?

The Hon. K.O. FOLEY (Deputy Premier): I thank the member for that question. This government is a very significant supporter of the Western Mining Corporation and the huge development that awaits this state which would see a potential doubling of capacity for Western Mining—

Mr WILLIAMS: I rise on a point of order. The minister, in answering the question that I directed to the Premier, is seeking to debate an issue which is outside that which I asked him. I specifically wanted to know whether other uranium explorers in South Australia, or companies exploring for uranium in South Australia, could have confidence that, having found a deposit of uranium in South Australia, they will be allowed to exploit and export it.

The Hon. K.O. FOLEY: Thank you, and that is exactly what I am answering. The—

Members interjecting:

The Hon. K.O. FOLEY: Yes; absolutely, yes. Western Mining is looking at a significant expansion and exploiting the huge known reserves of uranium, but we have other mines in South Australia. We have the Beverley mine. I have visited the Beverley mine and, recently, in San Diego I met Mr Neal Blue, the Chairman of General Atomics—an outstanding company that is producing uranium oxide from the Beverley mine. That company is now exploring and looking at other options.

I made it very clear to Neal Blue from General Atomics that he has this government's full support with respect to his activities. General Atomics can invest with confidence when it is dealing with this government, as can Western Mining Corporation or, indeed, whoever is the eventual owner of the Western Mining deposits at Olympic Dam. These mines have licences to operate, and they can do so with the full confidence of this government. I only hope that further deposits of uranium can be found. The sooner we can find it, dig it up and get it out of the country, the better.

Mr WILLIAMS: Sir, I have a supplementary question.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr WILLIAMS: In view of the minister's answer to my earlier question—

Mr Koutsantonis interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for West Torrens is out of order for the third time.

Mr WILLIAMS: Thank you, sir. Can the minister tell the house when the Labor Party will change its stated policy on its web site so that people exploring South Australia can do so—

The Hon. P.F. Conlon interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Emergency Services is out of order.

Mr WILLIAMS:—people who wish to explore, and who are exploring, South Australia for uranium can do so with confidence?

The Hon. K.O. FOLEY: The member is doing something I have not done: I have not checked the ALP web site to see whether or not that is on there. But I can say this: these companies have licences to mine and explore in this state, and they can do so with the full support and the confidence of this government. The ALP, if the member had not noticed, is not in power federally: it is a conservative federal government. So, the issue of the Labor Party's policy on three mines is irrelevant. I for one in the Labor Party would like nothing more than for the three mines policy to be scrapped.

DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROSECUTIONS

Ms CHAPMAN (Bragg): My question is directed to the Attorney-General. Was Wendy Abraham QC one of the two people recommended for the position of Director of Public Prosecutions by the panel that was appointed by the Attorney-General? Yesterday, the Attorney-General told the house that a panel had put forward the names of two people who it considered, in its words, could do the job.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON (Attorney-General): The panel recommended two outstanding candidates as the preferred candidates for the job, and Ms Abraham was not one of them.

RURAL COMMUNITIES

Ms BREUER (Giles): Can the Minister for Urban Development and Planning outline how the government is working with rural communities and regions to undertake improvements to town centres and public spaces?

The Hon. P.L. WHITE (Minister for Urban Development and Planning): The importance of regions to the state is highlighted in many ways, and I am pleased to inform the house of recent projects undertaken by the state government in partnership with local councils in our regions. The state government's Places for People program provides funding to councils across the state for urban design improvement strategies and projects, and assists in building partnerships with local government with the aim of strengthening communities through the revitalisation of public places.

Rural and regional communities have been keen participants in the program since its inception and have been the big winners in the latest round of the program. Of the 13 grants that I approved with this round, 11 went to rural and regional councils. This amounted to over \$1 million out of the \$1.1 million total of state government approved funding that I approved in this particular round.

This is an important outcome for those communities, and for some it builds upon previous projects funded through the same program. For example, the Clare and Gilbert Valleys Council will receive \$30 000 to commence design development for the conversion of a car park to a town square, and that follows some previous funding in round 3 of the program; Whyalla will receive \$500 000 dollars to commence capital works that will implement design work that had previously been part-funded by the state government; and Tatiara will receive just over \$95 000 for capital works to implement the upgrade of its North Terrace boulevard following completion of design stages that were previously part-funded by the state government.

Other rural and regional councils to receive funding include Loxton Waikerie, Mount Remarkable, Goyder, Lower Eyre Peninsula, Light Regional, Port Lincoln, Ceduna and Northern Areas councils. Metropolitan area councils also to receive funding through this round are Port Adelaide Enfield, which received \$40 000 for the completion of an urban design framework for the port centre, and Prospect and Port Adelaide Enfield Councils, which jointly received \$35 000 to undertake an urban design framework for the Prospect and Sefton Park district centre.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND COMMERCE COUNCIL

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH (Waite): My question is to the Minister for Economic Development. To what extent have funds for export programs and activities conducted by the Council for International Trade and Commerce South Australia, known as CITCSA, been restructured and significantly reduced? When and why were these decisions taken?

The Hon. M.D. RANN (Minister for Economic Development): I am happy to get a report for the honourable member on this, but I am also happy to talk at length—whatever the house would prefer. The fact is that the Economic Development Board made a recommendation to establish an export council, which is advising us on the best way of improving our exports—in fact, tripling the value of our exports—over time. I am quite happy to share with honourable members some of the things we saw in the past,

such as when I went to a trade fair in another country that was opened by a former premier. Massive support was given for people to go there for the grand opening to be reported in the media, but when I went back the next day you could have fired a cannon through the place. People had left their leaflets there and had shot through to go down to the beach or visit friends and so on. So, there is a real difference between perceived efforts and real efforts. We are taking the advice of people who know rather than, basically, looking after our mates, as the previous government used to do.

The SPEAKER: The honourable member for Mawson. The honourable member for Stuart. The honourable member for Mawson missed the call; the honourable member for Stuart has got the call. If honourable members on the opposition benches—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. DEAN BROWN: I rise on a point of order. I am sitting closer to you than the member for Mawson and I could not hear because of the rather rowdy behaviour of the ministers, who are tending to act like schoolboys today.

The SPEAKER: Whilst I uphold the observations of the deputy leader insofar as they relate to the members on the government benches, it is no less the case on the opposition benches. The honourable member for Mawson, let us get on with it.

SKYSHOW

Mr BROKENSHERE (Mawson): Will the Minister for Transport advise the house when and why the decision was made to provide free public transport for those travelling to and from the Adelaide Skyshow on 29 January?

The Hon. P.L. WHITE (Minister for Transport): As the Premier made quite clear, it was a move of goodwill towards the people of South Australia. It is a highly patronised event to which thousands and thousands of people travel. Free public transport was provided and extra security was put on. From all reports, if you listen to talkback radio—

The Hon. K.O. Foley: Don't be a party pooper.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Transport is on her feet, not the Deputy Premier.

The Hon. P.L. WHITE: Feedback from the people of South Australia—not from the Liberal Party—is that it was a resounding success. People enjoyed themselves, and they travelled to and from the event safely and for free.

Mr BROKENSHERE: I ask a supplementary question. Given the minister's last answer—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BROKENSHERE:—will she say why, on the day before (the Friday), her department bought significant advertising space promoting Metroticket?

The Hon. P.L. WHITE: The decision was made fairly late in the week. So what? The fact is that the South Australian Labor government provided free public transport for South Australians to attend the Skyshow. This event was enjoyed by all—

Members interjecting:

The Hon. P.L. WHITE: The opposition can sit there and nitpick—

Mr Brokenshere interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Mawson! He has had more than a fair go today.

The Hon. P.L. WHITE: The Liberal opposition does not appear to like the fact that the South Australian government took the step of providing free public transport. It was a resounding success. The people of South Australia liked it. For the narrow-minded opposition to—

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister will not make disparaging remarks about the capacity of the minds of the opposition.

The Hon. P.L. WHITE: If the opposition wants to take a pot shot at the government for its generosity and its encouragement of people to use public transport rather than getting in their cars and congesting our roads, I think that is very narrow-minded.

PETERBOROUGH HERITAGE RAILWAY

The Hon. G.M. GUNN (Stuart): Mr Speaker—

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson: The father of the house.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Attorney-General is out of order!

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: Will the Premier give a guarantee that he will meet a delegation from the District Council of Peterborough to discuss their concerns about the deterioration of the old heritage railway sheds and other infrastructure, which have great appeal to the tourist industry, because if action is not taken it will become too dangerous for tourists?

The Hon. M.D. RANN (Premier): I am delighted to answer this question from the member for Stuart. He knows I am interested in Peterborough. He also knows of my interest in tourism (being a former minister for tourism) and that I have a profound interest in trains. I have visited the Peterborough Museum on several occasions, and I was very impressed. A huge amount of work has been done by volunteers over many years. This is an extraordinary asset consisting of locomotives and rolling stock—

Mrs Hall interjecting:

The Hon. M.D. RANN: They failed to receive adequate funding from the former minister, who just interjected. I make this statement today—it might be controversial—but I am prepared to meet with a delegation from the people at Peterborough and, what is more, I am also prepared to visit the museum personally again.

SEAFORD MEADOWS

The Hon. J.D. HILL (Minister for Environment and Conservation): I seek leave to make a ministerial statement.

Leave granted.

The Hon. J.D. HILL: I rise to update the house on the proposed release of land at Seaford Meadows by the Land Management Corporation. This land is being made available for residential development, because it has been zoned residential for decades, as part of the larger Seaford development area. I am advised that development will be staged over eight to 10 years, depending on market demand. However, good planning needs to happen now to make sure that this development is environmentally sound and socially sustainable.

I note that consultation and negotiation between the state government and the City of Onkaparinga has been under way for some time. More recently, the council has been in the media calling on the government to require infrastructure

upgrades and prescribed standards for environmental sustainability before the land is released. I want to make it clear that councils, as the local planning authority, have the power to approve the sorts of developments they would want, in accordance with their development plans.

The fact that inadequacies still exist after more than 20 years of this land being identified for residential use is evidence that the development plan has significant shortcomings. This is an opportunity for the council to show leadership in tackling this problem by using its considerable planning capacity, having one of the largest planning departments in local government. In any event, the council will have the power to approve the developer's master plan prior to any development commencing. This power is provided in the deed that will be formed between the LMC and the developer. This means that the ultimate approval for the design of the development rests with the council. The council can require the developer to meet its request for ecologically sustainable development and local infrastructure provisions.

For its part, the government is getting on with the job of improving health, education and policing in the southern suburbs. For example, the government has announced a new 24-hour police station to be built at Aldinga, and also a total of up to 17 additional police officers will be stationed in the southern suburbs, under the state government's recruiting plan. In health, \$8.4 million has been allocated over the next five years to the Noarlunga Health Service to increase the number of doctors working in Adelaide's southern region.

ABS STATISTICS

The Hon. S.W. KEY (Minister for Employment, Training and Further Education): I seek leave to make a ministerial statement.

Leave granted.

The Hon. S.W. KEY: During question time, the member for Bragg asked me a number of questions about the labour market and particularly about the ABS figures that were released today. It is important for the house to note that South Australia's population growth from June 2001 to June 2004 was 1.5 per cent, and the national population growth from June 2001 to June 2004 was 3.6 per cent. That means that South Australia has less than half the national population growth. During that time, South Australia's jobs growth from June 2001 to June 2004 was 5.8 per cent, and the national jobs growth from June 2001 to June 2004 was 7.4 per cent. Therefore, South Australia has more than half the national jobs growth. If the South Australian jobs growth was only half the national growth (like the population growth), for example, 3.7 per cent, we would have created only 25 600 jobs over that period. It is important to advise the house about those statistics, because I believe the information directed to me through the question needed to have that background information.

PREMIER'S COUNCIL FOR WOMEN

The Hon. S.W. KEY (Minister for the Status of Women): I seek leave to make a ministerial statement.

Leave granted.

The Hon. S.W. KEY: In my capacity as the Minister for the Status of Women, I join with the Premier to announce the new appointments to the Premier's Council for Women. These appointments were announced on International Women's Day, but I think it is important to inform the house

that Suzanne Roux has been appointed as the new chair of the Premier's Council for Women, with Pat Mickan taking on the role of deputy chair. Ms Roux has had a long association with the arts, particularly as the Gallery Director and an arts consultant and has been involved with women's issues in South Australia for many years. In addition to her own sporting accomplishments in netball as a state representative and coach, Ms Mickan is the first female specialist skills coach in the AFL. The appointments of Suzanne Roux and Pat Mickan will provide leadership and advice to the government to ensure that the needs and interests of women are at the forefront of the government's policies and strategies.

The council has been expanded from 14 to 18 members to boost the representation of indigenous and multicultural women to ensure that they have a strong voice on the council. There are now three indigenous women on the council: Nerida Saunders, the General Manager of the Aboriginal Housing Authority; Diat Alferink, the Artistic Director of the Karruru Indigenous Youth Performing Arts; and Kerryne Liddle, journalist and editor.

Three women from culturally diverse backgrounds have also been appointed: Eugenia Tsoulis, the Executive Director of the Migrant Resource Centre; Rosa Colanero, a consultant with expertise in multiculturalism, languages and bilingualism; and Kim Tolotta, a Director from WorkCover with strong links to the Asian community. The full membership provides the council with a range of backgrounds and experience in the community services, business sector, trade union movement, academia, the arts, sport and the media.

Members are selected in respect of their understanding of issues impacting on Aboriginal women, women in rural and regional areas and on issues including domestic violence, disability, ageing and health. I take this opportunity to congratulate the previous council and outgoing chair, Dr Ingrid Day, for their many achievements. The full list of women appointed to the Premier's Council for Women is: Ms Suzie Roux; Ms Pat Mickan; Ms Diat Alferink; Ms Dascia Bennett; Dr Ingrid Day; Ms Rosa Colanero; Ms Judith Cross; Ms Janet Giles; Ms Danielle Grant; Ms Mandy Keillor; Ms Sue Lamshed; Ms Kerryne Liddle; Ms Sarah Macdonald; Dr Susan Magarey; Prof. Eleanor Ramsay; Ms Nerida Saunders; Ms Kim Tolotta; and Ms Eugenia Tsoulis.

GRIEVANCE DEBATE

HOSPITAL WAITING LISTS

The Hon. D.C. KOTZ (Newland): Waiting times for specialist health procedures in South Australia have degenerated to third world standards, and this government has run out of excuses for failing to act. The apathy shown by the Labor government towards those in our communities who desperately need access to medical facilities is nothing short of disgraceful. Two of my constituents are representative of thousands of South Australians now sitting on a waiting list just to get an appointment with an orthopaedic specialist, and I shudder to think how many others across the state have been forced to live with pain as waiting lists blow out to unmanageable proportions.

One of my constituents is a 66-year old man who will be forced to wait almost three years just for an appointment with an orthopaedic surgeon. That is just for the appointment—no mention of actual surgery. In the meantime he will be forced to rely on painkillers to help him cope with a floating bone in the knee. A second constituent, an 83-year old woman with

a serious leg ailment, has been waiting for more than 14 months for an appointment. She is relying on a walking frame or stick and is having trouble caring for her 83-year old husband who, after a mild heart attack, was fitted with a pacemaker and was then diagnosed with cancer and diabetes.

The Minister for Health presents a pathetic performance of financial mismanagement of our hospital system, with complete disregard for the welfare and health of South Australians. It is inhumane and totally callous to leave people in extreme pain for such long periods of time because of the incompetent mismanagement of our health system by this Labor government. When I learnt that Modbury Hospital had a three-year waiting list for patients just to see an orthopaedic specialist, I became curious about the number of people who might be on that list, as well as the number of people statewide who may be on similar lists at each of our public hospitals. I must admit that I thought we were talking of hundreds of people. I did not fully understand the massive crisis that had developed in this area and that we are not talking of hundreds of people but of thousands of people in pain with knee, ankle or shoulder problems and others requiring hip replacements.

Through freedom of information the true picture was revealed. The people waiting for a specialist appointment at Lyell McEwen numbered 983, Modbury Hospital 638, RAH 430, Queen Elizabeth Hospital 952, Flinders Medical Centre 574, and Noarlunga Health Centre 150, totalling 3 737 people just waiting to see a specialist. Those on surgical booking lists waiting up to 24 months in major metropolitan hospitals number 35 at the Women and Children's, 330 at Flinders, 583 at RAH, 548 at Queen Elizabeth, 130 at Lyell McEwen, 402 at Modbury and 389 at the Repat. That totals 2 417 people. Overall, 6 154 South Australians are on waiting lists for either an appointment to see a specialist (a wait of approximately three years) or elective surgery (a wait of approximately two years). This also means the 3 737 people waiting to see a specialist will wait almost five to six years for elective surgery. This minister has overseen the worst period of health mismanagement in South Australia's history and should resign before there is no health system left to rebuild. The winter elective surgery figures for 2004 showed that the number of people waiting 12 months or more for surgery increased to record levels.

People are living in extreme pain for extended periods of time, and it is time for the minister to forget the rhetoric, stop calling for report after report and deal with the reality that the state's health system is breaking down. This Labor government is collecting more taxes than any other government in the history of the state, yet basic fundamental health services are breaking down because the health system is being starved of funds. The ministers in this government have become notorious for refusing to take responsibility for their own mismanagement of the portfolios they are duty bound to manage. They create crises and then hide their incompetence by setting the blame on public servants and senior advisers.

I say to the Minister for Health: thousands of people in pain, waiting three years for an appointment with a medical specialist before being placed on an elective surgery waiting list, cannot be hidden. The minister cannot hide by ignoring 6 150 people. Every member of this parliament has some of these people in their own electorate. No-one in this state in the 21st century should have to wait between five and six years for elective surgery to relieve their agony and pain. South Australia is hurting. Minister, either do the job you

have to do or give it to someone who can. It is common knowledge—

Time expired.

ALEXANDRINA COUNCIL ENVIRONMENTAL AWARDS

Ms BREUER (Giles): Last Friday night, I had the pleasure of going to the Goolwa Old Police Station and Courthouse facility (which is an excellent facility) for the presentation of the Alexandrina Council Environmental Awards. The member for Finnis was also there on the night. I must say how pleased I was to be there as chair of the Environment, Resources and Development Committee and to represent the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation.

Four awards were awarded on the night: the School Initiative to the Goolwa Primary School for its peace garden; the Community Venture to the Goolwa to Wellington LAP for assisting and coordinating on ground works for local environmental groups; the Mayoral Award to Bruce and Annette Allnutt for ongoing revegetation and erosion control works; and a Special Commendation to Bev and Alex Stone for their wetland monitoring. I thank the Alexandrina Council for inviting me. It was a pleasure to attend the awards and to taste the wonderful Coorong mullet and cockles. As a person who lives near the sea and Spencer Gulf, I always say that we have the best seafood in South Australia, but the Coorong mullet was nice. Incidentally, we throw mullet back into the sea when we catch them.

On the weekend, I also attended the Eyre Peninsula Local Government Association annual general meeting at the Whyalla City Council chambers. I spent the afternoon with members of the association. I commend members of Whyalla council on the excellent job they did; and also the people there for the Water and Wheels Conference on the following two days. I have not been to a Local Government Association meeting for some time and, while there was a lot of whingeing at the meeting, it was refreshing to see constructive whingeing and criticism; and some great things were talked through at that meeting. It was an excellent meeting to attend.

One of the issues that was raised was that of country health services. I was interested to hear that, despite sending out two letters to all the health services in the region, only two responses were received, which would suggest that our country health services are healthy and doing very well. Waste landfill, the cost implications and the EPA environment standards for landfill were major issues for the councils involved. While many were certainly very willing and would like to become involved and support it, they wanted to make the point that in some cases it was unaffordable and unachievable for small councils to be able to introduce and follow the EPA environment standards. For those small councils, Zero Waste is also a similar situation. It is important to recognise that issues such as transport in regional areas preclude many recycling proposals. During my time on the ERD committee, I have also been very aware that this is an issue for country councils, so it was good for them to get together, talk about these issues and try to come up with some constructive solutions for them.

Of course, coastal development is a key issue for the Spencer Gulf area and Eyre Peninsula, where the key issue is regional collaboration, and community consultation is essential. Eyre Peninsula water issues were seen as important, and we are all aware of that. In their terms, desalination of the

Tod Reservoir was essential as a short-term measure to help resolve some of the water problems on Eyre Peninsula. However, they were also very interested in desalination plants, particularly the proposals from Western Mining and Whyalla council. I think this is a major issue for Eyre Peninsula. Certainly, coming from Whyalla, I know that we have relied on water from the Murray for so long, but it will become a major issue in the future. I certainly support the Whyalla solar oasis and the Western Mining projects.

Another area discussed was the proposed changes in the Local Government Act, and there was a report from the Local Government Association. There was a very spirited discussion about the title of 'mayor' versus 'chair' in the new legislation, and they became very upset about this. There was also some discussion about whether they should be called 'chairman', 'chairwoman', or 'chairperson', and they also became very hostile at times about that issue. However, in relation to 'mayor' versus 'chair', the proposal was that a person elected by the community would be 'mayor', whereas 'chair' would refer to someone elected by the councillors themselves. They felt that this needed to be clarified in the new act, and they would like to stick with the title of 'mayor'.

CENTRAL STANDARD TIME

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): Today, I was very pleased to present a petition containing more than 1 500 signatures obtained in a few weeks, without any effort, in support of South Australia moving to true Central Standard Time. The quickest and strongest support for this proposal came from the aeronautical and marine sectors. I was delighted to receive today, through my web site guestbook, an email from a pilot, Mr Peter Mitchell, in support of true Central Standard Time, as follows:

Liz, I am strongly in favour of changing our time meridian to UTC plus nine hours. Note UTC is 'universal coordinated time' which is the replacement for Greenwich Mean Time. UTC has been used in aviation for years and I understand it is being written into the Australian time regulations. (Practically the same as GMT). In addition to the points in your speech I have thought these to be persuasive: The only difference is that the sun rises and sets ½ hour earlier. Our new true time meridian of 135 degrees E runs right through the middle of the state just west of Port Lincoln. The present CST meridian is 142.5 degrees E which runs through Warmambool. During daylight saving the meridian is 157.5 degrees E near Lord Howe Island! The argument that we need to align with business in the eastern states is mainly to do with the complexity of the half hour conversion and daylight saving differences. A 1hr difference is much simpler than ½ hr and easy for business to adjust for. After all, Queensland seems to prosper with one hour difference from NSW and VIC for the daylight saving period. We can make the change painlessly at the start or end of daylight saving. If we do it at the start of daylight saving then we would move our clocks forward by half an hour only. From then on we move the clocks by the usual hour at start and end of daylight saving.

I am a pilot and consider the half hour difference a constant source of confusion. We have to give arrival estimates in minutes UTC, eg Goolwa at four three minutes. On my CST watch that is one three minutes.

There is the potential for a safety issue in both sending and understanding the correct arrival time. I am strongly in favour of both eliminating the half hour and doing it by moving to UTC plus 9 hours.

Mr Alan Paterson of Marsden said that ever since he became a pilot in the Royal Australian Air Force some years ago he has been a supporter of South Australia moving to our correct time zone of 135° longitude. Mr Andrew Maitland of Aldgate offered ample information about the need for South Australia to move to Greenwich Mean Time plus nine hours, which I

have consistently referred to as true Central Standard Time. He commented:

The aviation industry in particular will thank you if you can get it changed.

Looking at Australia as a whole, it makes sense to have three time zones differing by one hour; that is, the Eastern States one hour ahead of South Australia and South Australia one hour ahead of Western Australia. It is also easier for travellers to understand and, as has already been alluded to, is safer for the aeronautical and marine sectors. One of the intangibles when discussing time is the power supply.

South Australia purchases power from the Eastern States, with the cost of power fluctuating wildly from, I understand, \$20 to \$10 000 a megawatt hour. Adopting true Central Standard time would offset the periods of peak use and, therefore, probably enable power to be bought more cheaply. A constituent who spent five years on the board of a national company and who did business with clients and the head offices of companies in both the east and west of Australia said in 1999:

I have never found the time difference between the states a problem whatsoever. Our communications are mainly done electronically on the phone, fax, net, etc. Interstate offices are now open day and night to cater for our needs. So it doesn't matter as far as business is concerned. As I said before, what does matter is our family lifestyle.

These points barely touch on the positive arguments for moving South Australia to true Central Standard Time. However, I am hopeful that some debate will be generated as we once again move towards the end of daylight saving and can sleep in for an extra hour on Sunday morning of 27 March. We could so easily have slept in for an hour and a half and ended the stupidity of the half hour difference between South Australia and the Eastern States for all time. Adopting true Central Standard Time gives this state a tourism and trading advantage, especially in the lucrative export markets.

PLAYFORD CONSTITUENTS

Mr SNELLING (Playford): I rise to congratulate two of my constituents for outstanding achievement. The first is Mr Nik Vogiatzis, who was presented recently by the Minister for Transport with the David Willis Memorial Prize. Mr Vogiatzis is a doctoral student at the University of South Australia and is working on setting up a natural decision-making system that allows for better management of traffic.

As part of his work, Mr Vogiatzis has developed a prototype database that allows trends in traffic movement to be reported using historical data from Adelaide's traffic signalling system, ACTS (Adelaide Coordinated Traffic System). He is able to compile an enormous amount of data collected by traffic controllers and utilise that information for traffic management. The award is given by the Australian Transport Research Forum.

The second constituent is Ms Philippa Olsen, who on Australia Day was named Female Salisbury Citizen of the Year. Ms Olsen is currently the chairperson of the Pooraka Farm Neighbourhood House and chair of the Salisbury University of the Third Age. Philippa was one of the people instrumental in setting up the Salisbury University of the Third Age. In the early stages, when there was an accommodation crisis, she approached the principal of Salisbury East

High School and was offered a room at the school, which is where the university still resides.

Philippa has worked at bringing together the generations with the University of the Third Age and participants from neighbourhood houses in an arts project, some of which has been exhibited in the John Harvey Gallery in the City of Salisbury offices. Philippa has had a lifelong commitment to providing the best options for older people. She trained as a nurse and later as an occupational therapist, and she has had a long interest in geriatrics. Philippa's other passion is textile arts and crafts. She commenced seriously exhibiting her work in 1990, and was made a fellow of the Royal South Australian Society of Arts in 1996. She has used these skills to teach and to encourage others. So, to both of my constituents, I offer my warm congratulations on their high achievement.

ROADS, NAIRNE

Mr GOLDSWORTHY (Kavel): I reluctantly raise these issues in the house this afternoon because, if the Minister for Transport were a good, efficient, attentive minister, looking to address issues that members raise with her and her office, I would not be standing here in this place speaking about these matters. They relate to two separate issues that I have written to the minister about on at least two separate occasions. I raised one issue in this house about a month ago in a question to the minister, and I am very glad that the minister has decided to come in to the house and listen to this. The minister was here previously and she left, but now she is back and I am glad of that.

Mr Hanna: It is rude to refer to such things.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: It is the only way, member for Mitchell, that I might get some responses to the issues that I raise. The first one relates to the ongoing, longstanding matter of the Nairne Primary School crossing and the intersection of Woodside Road and Princes Highway immediately adjacent to that crossing in the township of Nairne. In May last year I wrote to the minister on behalf of the local community and the primary school community, requesting that the matter be treated with some urgency, because the community had raised it with the previous minister for transport at the community cabinet meeting held at Hahndorf in, I think, July 2003. That minister for transport, who was subsequently sacked from the job by the Premier, neglected to address that issue raised with him at the community cabinet meeting, so I took it up in correspondence to the current Minister for Transport in May last year. We had the usual ministerial acknowledgment that we all receive in reply to correspondence sent to respective ministers, but that is all we heard. My office did not receive any further response to that letter in May.

I wrote again in October last year raising the same issue and received nothing. As a consequence of that, I raised the issue in a question to the minister about a month or so ago. The minister undertook to investigate the matter, and I trusted that the issues raised would be treated in an expeditious fashion. It is now 10 March 2005, and we still hear nothing. The township of Nairne is growing at a significant rate in terms of its residential development. The numbers of children attending the local primary school are increasing. There is more traffic causing congestion at that intersection, and still we hear nothing but deafening silence. The previous minister for transport was sacked from that portfolio responsibility because of his inefficient and inept manner in handling his

duties. It seems to me that the current Minister for Transport is heading down that same track.

Another issue concerns a change in the speed limit on the Princes Highway between Littlehampton and Nairne. Again, I wrote two letters to the Minister for Transport concerning this issue. The second letter said, 'No, we are not going to amend the speed limits on that road,' after I raised those concerns on behalf of the local residents. I wrote again on 8 September last year requesting a review of the speed limits and an on-site meeting with the local residents and Transport SA officers. I still have not heard anything; there has been no response to my letter—nothing.

GOLDEN GROVE FIRE STATION

Ms RANKINE (Wright): It was extremely good news to hear the response from the Minister for Emergency Services today that, within weeks, a new \$3.8 million Golden Grove Fire Station will be up and running. It is certainly good news for the residents of Golden Grove and it is good news for all residents of the Tea Tree Gully area. As we heard from the minister, the new station really is a state-of-the-art facility. The new fire station, as residents would know, has been a long time coming. As was the case with so many matters under the previous Liberal government, they were talked about a lot but not very much was ever delivered.

Mr Brokenshire interjecting:

Ms RANKINE: The former minister for emergency services is sitting in the chamber, very fortuitously, and I would like him to outline one thing in that area which he promised but which he ever delivered.

Mr Brokenshire: Plenty.

Ms RANKINE: What? Name one.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs Penfold): Order!

Ms RANKINE: I challenge the honourable member to name one thing which he promised but which he ever delivered—absolutely nothing.

Mr Brokenshire interjecting:

The ACTING SPEAKER: The member for Mawson will come to order!

Ms RANKINE: This fire station is one of many major projects that are now happening in our area, including the Golden Grove police patrol base that has now been announced under the state Labor government. We all remember that it was the Liberal government that closed it down and moved it out, and it is the Labor government that is building a new one. We will see the first ever major upgrade of the Salisbury East High School in about 37 years, as well as electronic security for the park and ride out at Golden Grove, and the list goes on.

This fire station will replace the Ridgehaven Fire Station, which was built in 1972. Those facilities are now about 33 years old. It is located on the corner of Golden Grove Road and Yatala Vale Road and will enable firefighters to be able to respond much more quickly when an event occurs. I know that this has been a concern of firefighters in that area for sometime. They were very concerned about their response times. I know that it was also a concern for the ambulance service, and that is why it relocated along Golden Grove Road. It was a very sensible decision to respond to the expansion of our area. With the population growing in Golden Grove, the service recognised that it did need to move.

This facility is looking quite magnificent. As I said, it is a \$3.8 million project. It was designed to the latest environ-

mental criteria, and I will outline just some of the facilities. The station itself will produce nearly 8 per cent of its average electricity usage, and that will be supplied through solar panels on the roof. Daylight and natural ventilation will be incorporated into each room of the building. Shading for the building has been incorporated. Airconditioning has automatic cut-off switches that will turn off the airconditioner after two hours. There will be lighting controls with motion sensors, and low wattage globes will be installed throughout. The hot water throughout the station will be provided by solar and gas systems, and water recycling has been incorporated into stormwater management systems in its design. The stormwater that is used to wash off appliances will go through a filtering system and held in retention tanks on-site. That will also help reduce the amount of discharge into the council's stormwater system. The design for the new facilities commenced in May 2003, and construction commenced in April last year. As we heard from the minister, the practical completion of the building occurred on 28 February this year.

I am very much looking forward to the opening, as I am sure are the firefighters. I really appreciate their efforts in protecting my community. I also appreciate their very longstanding involvement in my community fire safety days, which the minister mentioned briefly in his answer. They are community fire safety awareness days that we have been conducting in the shopping centre at Golden Grove along with the Country Fire Service and the State Emergency Service, building people's awareness about things they can do to help our firefighters help protect them.

Time expired.

HERITAGE (HERITAGE DIRECTIONS) AMENDMENT BILL

The Hon. J.D. HILL (Minister for Environment and Conservation) obtained leave and introduced a bill for an act to amend the Heritage Act 1993 and to make related amendments to the Development Act 1993, the History Trust of South Australia Act 1981 and the Valuation of Land Act 1971. Read a first time.

The Hon. J.D. HILL: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

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

Leave granted.

Today it gives me great pleasure to introduce to the House the *Heritage (Heritage Directions) Amendment Bill 2005*. Strengthening South Australia's heritage legislation is an important step towards fulfilling the Government's suite of heritage reform policy.

Heritage has always been an important issue for our community as it is part of what defines us and is integral to the culture we live in. More than ever, heritage issues are becoming of increasing interest within our communities. Through initiatives such as the Government's Thinkers in Residence program, we are being asked to re-consider who we are, and where we are heading as a community. As we work towards defining our identity and determining our preferred future, we inevitably turn to the past to consider where we came from. The prospect of losing our common heritage—through demolition or inappropriate management—provokes a strong response from the community, particularly as we fight to conserve our heritage for the benefit of future generations.

At the last election, in response to increasing community concern regarding heritage matters, the Government proposed a package of heritage commitments. We promised to establish a Heritage

Advisory Committee consisting of representatives from relevant Government authorities, departments and key community organisations. We promised a new grant program to restore Heritage Cemeteries. We promised to hold an Architecture Symposium every two years, and to celebrate our State's heritage through a new heritage awards program, the Edmund Wright Heritage Awards. We have delivered on these commitments.

Over the past year or more we have been working on the bigger question of how we protect built heritage in South Australia. We have asked how we can save buildings of significance from demolition and how we can help to protect the character of our communities. This work revealed cracks in the system.

In 2003, the Government commissioned the *Heritage Directions* report to propose new ways to improve heritage protection. Public forums were held, and more than 80 written submissions were received from groups such as the National Trust, the Property Council, the Conservation Council and the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, and from resident groups and concerned individuals.

Meanwhile, heritage issues were prominent in the pages and airwaves of local media. The message is clear - the community wants better protection for the heritage of our city and suburbs.

This Government is responding to those concerns, demonstrating our continued and unwavering commitment to improve heritage protection in South Australia.

In May 2004, the Government announced that the Government would deliver better heritage protection, through an increase to heritage funding, and through proposed amendments to strengthen both the *Heritage* and *Development Acts*.

Heritage Directions includes an extra \$448 000 in 2004/05, followed by \$676 000 in 2005/06, \$798 000 in 2006/07 and \$986 000 in 2007/08.

Approximately \$2 million in total of this funding over five years is being directed towards support for Local Heritage, with an expansion of the network of Heritage Advisers to \$777 000. This will result in an increased number of councils having access to professional heritage advice at the local level. This extra funding is being targeted to local councils because, more than ever before, heritage protection will be the joint responsibility of Local and State Government.

Extra funding is also being directed towards improved management of State-owned heritage assets. This includes an extra \$650 000 over 5 years for the National Trust, which manages 42 State heritage buildings on the Government's behalf. This funding is being used to develop a property management program to provide a framework for sustainable management of properties.

Heritage Directions also provides \$500 000 over 5 years for new heritage information and interpretation programs.

As a package, this will be the most significant heritage reform in decades.

The next, critical stage of *Heritage Directions* is to strengthen the legislation. The *Heritage (Heritage Directions) Amendment Bill 2005* has been drafted in consultation with the Department for Environment and Heritage and Planning SA, and complements the Government's proposed *Development (Sustainable Development) Amendment Bill 2005*.

The focus of this Bill is on State Heritage, and institutional arrangements, whilst the proposed Sustainable Development Bill has a focus on Local Heritage. There are strong links between the two bills, with the intention of tying heritage protection legislation together.

In early August 2004, the Government released the draft *Heritage (Heritage Directions) Amendment Bill 2004* for public consultation. I am pleased to advise that 52 submissions were received on the Bill. It is also pleasing to note the support that has been received for the Bill from a number of peak bodies.

Heritage Directions is deliberately strategic; we are working to reform and strengthen the heritage system to ensure that heritage management can be appropriately addressed well into the future.

Importantly, however - and in recognition of current inadequacies in the management of Local Heritage - this Government is working to strengthen the heritage system itself. This is being addressed both through the proposed Sustainable Development Bill, and through *Heritage Directions'* increased funding to the Heritage Advisers network, which operates through local councils to provide support and advice to owners of heritage places.

This Government is working to fix the system and provide a strategic approach to the management of South Australia's heritage that will benefit generations to come.

In respect to this issue of increased resources for the management of heritage places, it is also this Government's intention to continue to work with our interstate counterparts, at a national level, to explore heritage incentive opportunities for owners of heritage places.

The issue of support for owners of Heritage Places has also been raised. In the past, owners of State Heritage Places have been eligible for reduced valuations where heritage listing has been determined to reduce the practical value of that place. This provision will now extend to owners of Local Heritage properties. This is included as an amendment in this Bill to the *Valuation of Land Act 1971*. The effect of this change is that expenses such as water rates, council rates, and land tax—in fact, all expenses related to property values—will be reduced for affected owners.

I take this opportunity to draw to the House's attention that the Valuer-General has advised that, in the majority of cases, heritage listing does not reduce the value of properties. This indicates that practical use can be made of heritage listed properties without affecting their valuation. None-the-less, the measure introduced in this Bill ensures that in those instances where the valuation is affected, adjustments can be made.

After taking into account the many excellent public submissions we have received, some of the key changes that the *Heritage (Heritage Directions) Amendment Bill 2005* seeks to make are as follows:

South Australian Heritage Council

The State Heritage Authority will be reconstituted as the South Australian Heritage Council. The Council will have a more strategic role, and will be given broader responsibilities, including advising the Minister on national and international developments in heritage policy and practice.

As a result of comments received in the public consultation process, the make-up of the Council has been amended to provide for an increase (by one) in its size and the ability to form Committees to undertake specific tasks. The functions of the proposed South Australian Heritage Council have also been clarified, in order to highlight its strategic role and the reduction of its administrative role.

South Australian Heritage Fund and Heritage Register

The State Heritage Fund will be renamed the South Australian Heritage Fund, and the State Heritage Register, the South Australian Heritage Register. The Register will list buildings of both State and local significance, making the listing process simpler and improving protection for local heritage buildings. The scope of the Register will be expanded to include local heritage places and Local Heritage Zones (known as Historic (conservation) Zones in the current *Development Act 1993*).

Movable Objects

The Act will allow for movable objects to be included in the entry of a place in the State Heritage Register if they are judged to be related intrinsically to the heritage value of the place.

Archaeological Provisions

Sections of the Act relating to excavation and removal of artefacts, and protection of archaeological sites or artefacts, will be strengthened and extended.

Places of Speleological Significance

The Act will allow for the designation of places for their speleological significance, in addition to the existing provisions for geological, archaeological and palaeontological significance. The amendments also allow for an increase in fines for damage of such places and for not complying with the conditions of the South Australian Heritage Council's permits relating to them.

I commend the Bill to Members.

EXPLANATION OF CLAUSES

Part 1—Preliminary

1—Short title

This clause is formal.

2—Commencement

The measure will be brought into operation by proclamation.

3—Amendment provisions

This clause is formal.

Part 2—Amendment of *Heritage Act 1993*

4—Substitution of long title

The long title of the Act is to be revised in order to make reference to the principal purposes of the Act, being to make provision for the identification, recording and conservation of places and objects on non-Aboriginal heritage significance, and to establish the South Australian Heritage Council.

5—Amendment of section 1—Short title

The short title of the Act is to be altered to the *Heritage Places Act 1993*.

6—Insertion of section 2

The objects of the Act are to be expressed as follows:

- to recognise the importance of South Australia's heritage places and related objects in understanding the course of the State's history, including its natural history; and
- to provide for the identification and documentation of places and related objects of State heritage significance; and
- to provide for and promote the conservation of places and related objects of State heritage significance; and
- to promote an understanding and appreciation of the State's heritage; and
- to encourage the sustainable use and adaptation of heritage places in a manner consistent with high standards of conservation practice, the retention of their heritage significance, and relevant development policies.

7—Amendment of section 3—Interpretation

This clause makes provision for the definitions required for the purposes of the Act. A key definition to be inserted into the Act will be a definition of *place*, which is to be defined as follows:

place means—

- (a) any site or area, with or without improvements;
- (b) any land;
- (c) any building, structure or other work, whether temporary or permanent or moveable or immovable (including an item or thing that is permanently fixed or moored);
- (d) any other location, item or thing that constitutes a place within the State, and includes—
 - (e) any fixtures or fittings;
 - (f) any land where a place is situated;
 - (g) any subsurface area;
 - (h) any part of a place.

8—Substitution of heading to Part 2 Division 1

This is a consequential amendment.

9—Substitution of sections 4 and 5

The *South Australian Heritage Council* is to replace the State Heritage Authority. The Council will consist of the following members:

- (a) not less than 6 and not more than 8 persons who, in the opinion of the Governor, have knowledge of or experience in history, archaeology, architecture, the natural sciences, heritage conservation, public administration, urban and regional planning or property development (or any combination of 2 or more of these fields), or some other relevant field; and
- (b) 1 person with knowledge of or experience in heritage conservation chosen from a panel of 3 such persons submitted to the Minister by the Local Government Association of South Australia.

The functions of the Council are to be revised so as to provide as follows:

- (a) to provide advice (especially from a strategic perspective) to the Minister on matters relating to—
 - (i) trends, shortcomings and opportunities with respect to heritage protection at the State and local level and, insofar as may be relevant, at the national level; and
 - (ii) the development and effectiveness of heritage conservation programs, policies, initiatives and incentives; and
 - (iii) the operation and enforcement of the Act; and
 - (iv) other issues referred to the Council by the Minister for consideration and report;
- (b) in connection with the administration of the Act—
 - (i) to administer the *South Australian Heritage Register*; and
 - (ii) to identify places, and related objects, of State heritage significance, and to enter them in the Register; and
 - (iii) to identify areas of State heritage significance, and to promote their establishment, in appropriate cases, as State Heritage Areas under the *Development Act 1993*; and

- (iv) to initiate or support community awareness programs that promote public understanding and appreciation of the State's heritage, taking into account the objects of the Act; and

- (v) to promote the objects of the Act in such other manner as the Council thinks fit, including through the work of other bodies or persons;

- (c) to provide advice (especially from a strategic perspective) to the Minister to whom the administration of the *Development Act 1993* is committed on matters relating to—

- (i) the interpretation or application of the criteria set out in section 23(4) of that Act (and, if appropriate, the consideration of any potential amendment with respect to those criteria); and

- (ii) other matters on which that Minister is required to consult with the Council under the provisions of that Act;

- (d) to perform any other function assigned to the Council by or under the principal Act or any other Act.

10—Amendment of section 6—Conditions of membership

11—Amendment of section 7—Proceedings of Council

These are consequential amendments.

12—Insertion of section 7A

The Council is to be given express power to establish committees (which may, but need not, consist of or include members of the Council).

13—Amendment of section 8—Delegation

It is appropriate to allow the Council to delegate a power or function to a person for the time being holding or acting in a particular office or provision.

14—Amendment of section 9—Remuneration

This is a consequential amendment.

15—Substitution of heading to Part 2 Division 2

16—Amendment of section 10—South Australian Heritage Fund

The State Heritage Fund is to continue as the *South Australian Heritage Fund*.

17—Amendment of section 12—Application of money from Fund

This is a consequential amendment.

18—Substitution of heading to Part 3

19—Amendment of section 13—The Register

The State Heritage Register is to continue as the *South Australian Heritage Register*.

20—Substitution of section 14

The Register will contain a description or notes with respect to—

- (a) any place entered (either as a provisional or confirmed entry) in the Register under Part 4 of the Act; and

- (b) any place taken to be entered in the Register under Schedule 1 (as enacted on the commencement of the Act);

- (c) any local heritage place designated by a Development Plan; and

- (d) any State Heritage Area; and

- (e) any local heritage zone or local heritage policy area established by a Development Plan; and

- (f) any place within the State—

- (i) entered in any register of places of natural or historic significance; or

- (ii) declared to be a *World Heritage Property*, under a law of the Commonwealth; and

- (g) any heritage agreement; and

- (h) any other matter prescribed by the regulations.

The Council will be able, in relation to a place or area that is entered in the Register—

- (a) to include as part of the entry for the place any tree, component or other item, feature or attribute that, in the opinion of the Council, forms part of, or contributes to, the heritage significance of the place or area; or

- (b) to include as part of the Register any object (not necessarily being located at the relevant place or area) that is, in the opinion of the Council, an object of heritage significance.

21—Amendment of section 15—Register to be available for public inspection

The Register will be kept available at a designated office and may be kept in the form of a computer record. The Council will be able to exclude from public inspection details of the location of any place or object that may be at risk if the location is disclosed.

22—Amendment of section 16—Heritage significance

The term *heritage value* is to be replaced with *heritage significance*. The heritage significance of an object (as it relates to a place or area entered in the Register) may now be important in its own right.

23—Variation of section 17—Proposal to make entry in Register

A number of consequential amendments must be made to section 17 of the Act.

24—Amendment of section 18—Submissions and confirmation or removal of entries

The Minister will be able to direct the Council, by instrument in writing, to defer making a decision on whether or not to confirm a provisional entry in the Register if the Minister is of the opinion that the confirmation may be contrary to the public interest. The Minister will also be able, after consultation with the Council, by instrument in writing, to direct that a provisional entry be removed from the Register if the Minister is of the opinion that the confirmation of the entry would be contrary to the public interest.

25—Amendment of section 19—Registration in Lands Titles Registration Office

This is a consequential amendment.

26—Amendment of section 20—Appeals

An appeal will not lie against the removal of a provisional entry at the direction of the Minister.

27—Amendment of section 21—Correction of errors

The Council will be able to correct an error in the Register. The Council will give appropriate notice of a decision to take action under section 21.

28—Amendment of section 22—Certificate of exclusion

The Council will be able to decide whether or not to invite public submissions on an application under section 22 (but will be required to take into account the criteria under section 16 in making this decision).

29—Substitution of heading to Part 4 Division 4

This is a consequential amendment.

30—Amendment of section 23—Council may act if registration at State level not justified

It is to be clear that section 23(1) of the Act relates to a State Heritage Place.

31—Substitution of section 24

This amendment revises the scheme for altering the designation of a place from a State Heritage Place to a place of local heritage value. The Council will be required to invite submissions on the matter. The Council may then make a recommendation to the Minister to whom the administration of the *Development Act 1993* is committed that the appropriate Development Plan be amended so that the relevant place is designated as a place of local heritage value.

32—Substitution of heading to Part 5 Division 1

This is a consequential amendment.

33—Amendment of section 25—Places of geological, palaeontological or speleological significance

The penalty under section 25 of the Act is to be revised. Items of speleological significance are to be protected under this measure.

34—Amendment of section 26—Places of archaeological significance

The penalty under section 26 of the Act is to be revised.

35—Substitution of sections 27 and 28

The provisions relating to the protection of archaeological artefacts are to be revised. A person who is aware or believes that he or she has discovered an archaeological artefact of heritage significance will be required to notify the Council of the location of the artefact (unless the person has reason to believe that the Council is already aware of the relevant object).

36—Amendment of section 29—Permits

An express power is to be given to the Council to vary or revoke a permit, or the conditions of a permit. A person who is dissatisfied with the exercise of a power under section 29 will be able to appeal to the Minister about the matter.

37—Insertion of section 29A

It will be an offence for a person to buy or sell an object that the person knows, or has reasonable grounds to believe, has been recovered in contravention of these provisions (unless the person is acting with the consent of the Council).

38—Amendment of section 30—Stop orders

39—Repeal of section 31

These are consequential amendments.

40—Amendment of section 32—Heritage agreements

A heritage agreement may be expressed to apply to the person who is the occupier of the land from time to time.

41—Amendment of section 33—Effect of heritage agreement

42—Amendment of section 34—Registration of heritage agreements

These are consequential amendments.

43—Substitution of section 36

A person will be guilty of an offence if the person—

- (a) damages a State Heritage Place; or
- (b) engages in conduct that destroys or reduces the heritage significance of a State Heritage Place.

The maximum penalty will be \$120 000.

A person will be guilty of an offence if the person—

- (a) fails to take reasonable care of a State Heritage Place; or
- (b) fails to comply with any prescribed requirement concerning—

- (i) the protection of a State Heritage Place; or
- (ii) the state of repair of a State Heritage Place.

The maximum penalty will be \$25 000.

Various defences will apply.

44—Repeal of section 37

Section 37 of the Act is to be incorporated into proposed new section 38A.

45—Amendment of section 38—No development orders

These are consequential amendments, plus a penalty is to be revised.

46—Insertion of section 38A

If a person has engaged in conduct in contravention of the Act, an application may be made to the Court for 1 or more of the following orders:

- (a) an order restraining the person, or an associate of the person, from engaging in the conduct and, if the Court considers it appropriate to do so, requiring the person, or an associate of the person, to take such action as may appear appropriate to the Court in the circumstances (including an order to rectify the consequences of any conduct (including an order to make good, to the satisfaction of the Council, any damage caused by any conduct), or to ensure that a further contravention does not occur);

- (b) an order that the person pay into the Fund an amount, determined by the Court to be appropriate in the circumstances, on account of any financial benefit that the person, or an associate of the person, has gained, or can reasonably be expected to gain, as a result of the contravention;

- (c) an order that the person pay into the Fund an amount as a monetary penalty on account of the contravention.

The power to make an order under this section will only be exercised by a Judge of the Court.

47—Amendment of section 39—Right of entry

Express power is to be given to a person authorised by the Council to enter and inspect a place, or to inspect any object in a place—

- (a) for the purpose of determining whether a provision of the Act is being, or has been, complied with; or

- (b) for the purpose of investigating any alleged contravention of the Act.

48—Insertion of section 39A

The Minister will be able to issue an order to ensure or secure compliance with a requirement imposed by or under the Act. A right of appeal will lie to the Court against the making (or variation) of an order.

49—Amendment of section 40—Erection of signs

This is a consequential amendment.

50—Amendment of section 41—Obstruction

The penalty provision under section 41 of the Act is to be revised.

51—Insertion of section 41B

No personal liability will attach to a member of the Council or any other person engaged in the administration of the Act for an honest act or omission in the exercise or discharge of a power, function or duty under the Act. Instead, the liability will lie against the Crown.

52—Amendment of section 42—General provisions relating to offences

An offence against the Act will lie within the criminal jurisdiction of the Court.

53—Amendment of section 43—Service of notices

It will be possible to serve a notice under the Act by facsimile transmission or electronically.

54—Amendment of section 44—Evidence

These are consequential amendments.

55—Substitution of section 45

The regulation-making powers under the Act are to be revised.

Schedule 1—Related amendments and transitional provisions

A number of related amendments are to be made to the *Development Act 1993*, the *History Trust of South Australia Act 1981* and the *Valuation of Land Act 1971*.

Mr BROKENSHERE secured the adjournment of the debate.

**RAILWAYS (OPERATIONS AND ACCESS)
(REGULATOR) AMENDMENT BILL**

Adjourned debate on second reading.
(Continued from 9 December. Page 1304.)

Mr BROKENSHERE (Mawson): I am the lead speaker for the opposition and, I believe, the only speaker for the opposition on this occasion. I am sure that the minister is disappointed that we are not going to spend hours on this very—

The Hon. I.F. Evans interjecting:

Mr BROKENSHERE: Yes, you could. In fact, the honourable member for Davenport has huge concerns about trains travelling through his electorate, and I am sure he will continue to push that.

The Hon. I.F. Evans interjecting:

Mr BROKENSHERE: It is to do with the ESC. But I want to say a few things. As the Deputy Speaker well knows, there are times in this house when shadow ministers representing the opposition talk for hours—indeed, days—on a particular bill, and a few of us have been guilty of spending a lot of time on a bill—where needed, where required. However, in this instance I am happy to report to the house that that is not the case. This bill basically is what we often describe here as a nuts and bolts bill. It is a bill that tidies up something that has been working in practice for a while before the legislation was introduced. Probably some would argue that the legislation should have come through earlier but, essentially, this bill provides for a regulator to monitor and oversee access matters, determine pricing principles and information requirements, refer access disputes to arbitration, and use conciliation and arbitration to resolve access disputes.

The Railways (Operations and Access) Act 1997 also gives the minister powers relating to the construction and operation of railways such as powers in relation to acquiring land, traffic control devices, supply of liquor and authorisation of gambling facilities. I understand the minister's powers in relation to the construction and operation of the railways will remain unchanged. Currently, the situation is that the regulator is subject to the control and direction of the minister

except that no ministerial direction can be given to suppress information or recommendations provided or made under the act.

Back in 2002 members will remember that the Essential Services Commission was established and, prior to that, I believe there was the intent by successive governments that the ESC (the Essential Services Commission) would be proclaimed as the regulator under the act and the minister's powers to direct the regulator would be removed in keeping with the independent role of the ESC.

Some of my colleagues say it is interesting to see how often ministers' powers are delegated, removed or flick-passed to other authorities, and I put that on the public record. But, as I said, I do not see any problem in this. The only thing that I also want to have on the record is that the ESC commenced performing these functions of rail regulator on 18 March 2004 when the Governor assigned the functions of the rail regulator to the Essential Services Commission. Therefore, this bill has to pass now to ratify that and ensure that the legislation fits with what is happening in common practice daily. Therefore, we support this bill.

I believe it is appropriate and relevant when talking about supporting this bill and in concluding my remarks (so that the member for Torrens does not start to interject and make points of order, which is a bit of a habit with the member for Torrens while I am speaking—it is nice to be friendly on a Thursday afternoon rather than making points of order) to mention that there are some rail safety problems that do require urgent action in South Australia. The Rail, Tram and Bus Industry Union this week protested on the steps of the house with respect to safety and, in fact, today a petition was tabled in parliament. Karl Petry was tragically killed in a railway workers' accident between Port Augusta and the Leigh Creek coal fields, and the union is calling for an independent accident investigation. We strongly support that and do not have a problem with it. We need to know why those sorts of things occur and how we can improve the safety of workers in the future and reform the South Australian Rail Safety Act. Again, we would be supportive of the government's looking at an assessment, review and reform of that act. We have quite a bit that we would be keen to contribute to that.

Members need to remember that these days the whole rail system is much more complex than it used to be. In fact, I think it goes back to the Dunstan government when privatisation and outsourcing of rail lines first started to occur, getting away from the old state transport authority ownership and management. It is imperative that, now we have a number of companies running rail infrastructure on other private rail lines in the state, that infrastructure complies with the very best safety requirements, as worker safety is, and must continue always to be, foremost in our minds when addressing the responsibilities that we have as members of parliament with legislation in this house.

Having said that, I am sure that the minister will, at some stage, come back and advise the house on what she is doing with those two matters, and we will talk more about that then. As I said, given the nature of this bill and the reasons why the minister has introduced it, in my cooperative and bipartisan fashion, I advise that the opposition supports the bill.

The Hon. P.L. WHITE (Minister for Transport): I thank the honourable member for Mawson, the shadow minister, for his support on behalf of the opposition for this bill. It is a fairly straightforward matter and his comments in

relation to the substance of this bill were sensible, so I thank him for displaying bipartisan support for it.

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

**PUBLIC FINANCE AND AUDIT
(AUDITOR-GENERAL'S POWERS) AMENDMENT
BILL**

Adjourned debate on second reading.
(Continued from 23 September. Page 265.)

Mr O'BRIEN (Napier): I begin by commending the Treasurer for introducing the bill. I also acknowledge the role of the Premier who has had an unwavering and consistent approach to making government more honest and accountable to the people of South Australia. This is a bill that will ensure the independence of the Auditor-General and thereby strengthen democracy within the state. The relationship that is shared between the parliament and the Auditor-General is one of the primary ways by which use of public money by the executive can be scrutinised. The foundation of this relationship exists through the reports that the Auditor-General produces for the parliament.

These reports examine the financial undertakings of the executive and usually focus on the ways in which public money is used within government departments. The data contained within these reports provides the parliament with an important tool that can be used to scrutinise the executive. Such reports, therefore, provide a fundamental avenue for a separation of powers between the executive and the legislature. This separation is vital for the functioning of democracy as it ensures that power is not concentrated in one authority thereby preventing absolutism or corruption which is a common feature of unchecked power. Hence, the Auditor-General has a fundamental role in ensuring that there is a suitable separation of power between the executive and the legislature, while also aiding the parliament in fulfilling its constitutional function of holding the government accountable for its use of community resources.

The need for a separation of powers between the legislature and the executive is appropriately explained by Justice Isaacs. To refresh the memory of members of the house, Justice Isaacs had an exceptional career, including numerous important posts such as Attorney-General of Australia, Chief Justice of the High Court and Governor-General of the nation. In the High Court judgment of *Horne v Barker*, Justice Isaacs stated:

When a man becomes a Member of Parliament, he undertakes high public duties. Those duties are inseparable from the position: he cannot retain the honour and divest himself of the duty. One of the duties is that of watching on behalf of the general community the conduct of the executive, of criticising it, and, if necessary, of calling it to account in the constitutional way by censure from his place in parliament—censure which, if sufficiently supported, means removal from Office. That is the whole essence of responsible government which is the keystone of our political system and is the main constitutional safeguard the community possesses.

This powerful statement by Justice Isaacs should remind us all that keeping the executive accountable for its actions is one of the most important duties we have as members of parliament.

While the independence of the Auditor-General is crucial for the proper functioning of our democracy, past events have illustrated that the Auditor-General does not always have adequate protection. In fact, the treatment of the Auditor-

General throughout his examination of the Hindmarsh stadium redevelopment project revealed that there is a dire need for reforms that enhance the independence of the Auditor-General. For example, throughout the examination of the Hindmarsh stadium redevelopment project the Auditor-General was continually and deliberately exposed to unacceptable intimidation in an attempt to stifle the findings of his report. Such unacceptable behaviour included threats of legal action and criticism of the Auditor-General's competency under the protection of parliamentary privilege.

The Public Finance and Audit (Auditor-General's Powers) Amendment Bill is a response to such unsuitable behaviour. Accordingly, this bill makes necessary reforms to the Public Finance and Audit Act 1987 that recognise the important role that the Auditor-General plays within the functioning of South Australia's democracy. The reforms contained within this bill will ensure that the Auditor-General has the authority and independence to perform his or her duties without unnecessary interference. In this respect, the bill will make certain that we do not see a repeat of the totally unacceptable obstacles that were faced by the Auditor-General in relation to the Hindmarsh Soccer Stadium debacle.

As the house may be aware, the bill gives all future auditors-general the same powers as were granted to the Auditor-General when he conducted his report into the Hindmarsh Soccer Stadium development. Thus, the specific powers that were granted by the Hindmarsh Soccer Stadium (Auditor-General's Report) Act 2001 will now be available to all future auditors-general. However, the amendments within this bill are not limited in scope, like the powers that were granted to the Auditor-General in 2001. Thus, this bill introduces additional new powers for the Auditor-General that will further enhance his or her powers and independence. Finally, the bill seeks to reinforce the independent nature of the Auditor-General by repeatedly and exhaustively expressing the independent nature of the Auditor-General. One of the most important new features of this bill is the reforms it makes to the appointment of the Auditor-General. This is because the way in which the Auditor-General is appointed can have major implications for the independence of the Auditor-General. For instance, the independence of the Auditor-General can be seriously undermined if the executive decides who is to be the auditor.

Such a scenario would be similar to a football team appointing its umpires. Currently, the appointment of the Auditor-General is determined by the Governor. Unfortunately, the Public Finance and Audit Act 1987 does not stipulate how the Governor is to make his or her decision and, under such circumstances, the executive may have undue influence over the appointment of the Auditor-General. In recognition of this dilemma, the bill will enable the parliament to have a key role in the recommendation of the Auditor-General. Hence, clause 4 of the bill will amend the current legislation to ensure that the Governor appoints the Auditor-General on the recommendation of both houses of parliament. Such a measure not only ensures that the Auditor-General is independent, it also enables the parliament to have an active role in determining the best candidate for a position that will help keep the executive accountable.

Clause 4 is also important as it will enable the independence of the Auditor-General to be reinforced through legislation. Thus, clause 4 expressly stipulates that the Auditor-General is an 'independent statutory officer who is not subject to the direction of any person, body or authority.' Reinforcing the independence of the Auditor-General through

legislation will aid the courts to determine parliament's wishes in having an independent Auditor-General should any legal action occur.

The bill also increases the independence of the Auditor-General by giving the Auditor-General more powers to determine his or her mandate. Thus, clause 5 enables the Auditor-General to:

... consider and report on any other matter that is relevant to the proper management or use of public money or that should, in the opinion of the Auditor-General, be examined in the public interest.

Clause 5 gives the Auditor-General greater independence as it enhances the powers by which the Auditor-General can conduct his or her affairs. For this reason the bill enables the Auditor-General to have a more independent and comprehensive mandate to conduct financial statements and performance audits of authorities, agencies, companies and individuals. Clearly, a comprehensive and independent mandate is crucial for the Auditor-General.

Clause 6 of the bill also enables the Auditor-General to have increased powers when conducting an examination on the request of the Treasurer. Accordingly, an examination under section 32 of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1987 will now be able to encompass any matter associated with the governance or financial management of a publicly funded body as well as other matters relevant to public finances or to the management or use of public resources. Thus, when an examination is requested by the Treasurer, the Auditor-General will be able to assess all issues associated with the proper management or use of public money. Clause 6 will enhance the areas in which the Auditor-General can conduct his or her examination. Such an expansion of powers will enable the Auditor-General to be more comprehensive and independent within his examinations, thereby making them more accurate.

In addition, clause 6 also reinforces the independence that the Auditor-General must have when conducting examinations. Hence, clause 6 stipulates that the Auditor-General can conduct examinations in such a manner as the Auditor-General thinks fit. Such language leaves no doubt as to the independent nature to which the Auditor-General's examinations are to take place. The bill also strengthens the powers of the Auditor-General by introducing new powers that will aid the Auditor-General through his examinations. The bill will enable the Auditor-General to set time limits and impose other requirements on parties to which he or she is conducting an examination. An important advantage of these new powers is that they will enable the Auditor-General to more readily access important information, thereby reducing the time in which examinations are conducted.

The limitations that the bill places on legal action against the Auditor-General is another way by which this bill will ensure that the Auditor-General's examinations are not unnecessarily delayed. These legal limitations will also ensure that the Auditor-General is greater protected from threats of unwarranted legal action. Sadly, unwarranted legal action has been threatened in the past as a means to hamper and obstruct the work of the Auditor-General. For example, the Auditor-General was threatened with legal action while he was conducting his audit on the Hindmarsh Soccer Stadium redevelopment project. Such threats were used in an attempt to intimidate the Auditor-General from publishing his findings. This bill will put an end to such inappropriate action by ensuring that any action that challenges the Auditor-General will be commenced within 28 days. As a result, legal

action will no longer be such a feasible means to delay and obstruct the work of the Auditor-General.

Clause 7 further enhances the powers of the Auditor-General by allowing more extensive and independent reports on any matter that concerns the use of public money. Clause 7 will enable the Auditor-General to consider and report on any other matter that is relevant to the proper management or use of public money or that should in the opinion of the Auditor-General be examined in the public interest. To ensure that the directions and the authority of the Auditor-General are followed, the bill also introduces new tougher penalties for all parties that do not comply with the Auditor-General's directions. Thus, the penalty for not complying with a requirement imposed by the Auditor-General in relation to an examination will increase from \$5 000 to \$10 000. Such a penalty will help to ensure that the Auditor-General's requirements are taken seriously, thereby enabling examination to be more accurate and more readily available.

Finally, clause 10 will enable the reports of the Auditor-General to be more accessible to the public and the parliament. Governments will no longer be able to deliberately bury the important work of the Auditor-General during major events such as elections. This legislation will ensure that there is no recurrence of the regrettable events that occurred during the 1997 election when an important report of the Auditor-General was not made accessible to the public.

Clearly, one of the most important features of democracy is that the public be made aware of the undertakings of the government and the parliament so that they can make an informed vote. In the interests of democracy and good governance, this bill will ensure that the public are informed of the findings of the Auditor-General even during an election. Thus the bill will require that all reports received by the parliament from the Auditor-General will be published immediately.

The bill also ensures that the parliament and the public have access to the findings of the Auditor-General even when the parliament is not sitting. Hence, a report that is received when parliament is not sitting will be published at the expiration of one clear day. A clear indication of a positive effect that this bill will have on public awareness can be found in the fact that the Auditor-General has indicated a clear willingness to make reports available on his web site once they have been published by the parliament. Such an occurrence will be greatly beneficial to public awareness and therefore democracy.

I now return to the motivation behind this bill. Eight years of a Liberal government in South Australia revealed the dilemmas that can arise from a government that is involved in less than ethical practice. Accordingly, this Labor government has introduced a plan of honesty in government. This plan has been designed to ensure high standards of honesty, accountability and transparency in government. One of Labor's key commitments within the plan is to increase the independence, powers and authority of the Auditor-General. The enactment of this bill will ensure that Labor's goal of providing for an independent Auditor-General is delivered, thereby making the government more accountable to the parliament and the people, resulting in turn in a strengthening of democracy within South Australia.

The Hon. R.B. SUCH (Fisher): I support this bill. The role of the Auditor-General is critical in a democratic society such as ours where, increasingly, the financial and administrative activities of government are more complex. The

people need a financial watchdog more than ever to keep an eye on the activities of the government, no matter which party is in power. This bill will help to ensure that the Auditor-General can act in a genuinely independent way and not be subject to inappropriate and undue influence. I know some people have been critical of the current Auditor-General. I have always found him to be a person of great integrity, and I believe he has done his job without fear or favour. I would be surprised if an auditor-general did not get under the skin of the government of the day at some stage or another. I suspect that an auditor-general (and I am talking in very general terms) who did not get under the skin of the government would probably not be fulfilling the role as vigorously as one would hope. I think this bill goes a long way towards ensuring that the Auditor-General can do what the overwhelming majority of the community would want, that is, keeping an independent watch on the activities of the government as they relate to administration and finance.

I indicate that I will be moving two amendments. I have previously raised this matter, and it concerns the question of efficiency and effectiveness. I know the member for Napier is very keen on this aspect as well. When I raised this matter some years ago in the Economic and Finance Committee, the Auditor-General said that he did have the power to look at the issue of efficiency and effectiveness. I want to make sure that that focus is in there, but not to tie the Auditor-General down in spending an inordinate amount of time and resources going into the question of efficiency and effectiveness. It seems to me that looking at conventional spending and making sure that money X came from the appropriate account and all that sort of thing is fine and has to be done and is a very necessary part of the role of the Auditor-General. However, if you have those highly skilled auditors going around, whether they be in the direct employ of the government or, in effect, subcontracted by using commercial firms, it makes sense to me that they should be able to bring to the attention of the parliament and the government if they observe activities which could be done in a more efficient and effective way.

Recently, we heard of the National Audit Office highlighting how money could be saved in various agencies. It might be something very minor or it might be something quite significant. I think it is good if you have an extra pair of eyes and ears looking through a government agency and for someone to pose the question, 'Why don't you do it a different way?' or 'Why isn't it done a different way?' It would then be up to the government of the day and the parliament, of course, to take that into account. It is not a

burdensome task put on the Auditor-General's office. It would really draw attention to the possibility of focusing on efficiency and effectiveness, hopefully so that taxpayers can get the best value for their dollar and we get the best form of accountability possible.

My other amendment relates to the staffing in agencies. Its intention would be that, rather than getting an aggregate figure of how many people are employed in an agency, it would provide for a breakdown so that you would know, for example, how many people are involved in front line policing and how many nurses are under the umbrella of the Health Commission. The public are very keen to know, and it would help resolve some of the ongoing debate, for example, about how many police are on the beat. It would be useful to know that there are X number in the traffic section and that this compares to the number several years ago, and that the number of nurses has increased rather than the number of administrators.

For the Auditor-General to provide that information by way of his or her annual report is a useful approach. That information would be very useful for the wider community and members of parliament to get a better handle on what is happening in the allocation of staffing and resources in agencies. They are the two aspects that I will seek to have incorporated in the bill. I understand that the government is looking favourably upon those amendments, which I think are reasonable and do not take away from the independence of the Auditor-General in any way and will bring benefit to the community.

I support the bill as it is a step in the right direction. One of the critical aspects is to ensure that, in the future, whoever is the auditor-general is the best person for the job. I have been very satisfied and impressed with the performance of the current Auditor-General, but like all of us there will come a time when he needs to step down or retire, and it is crucial that the parliament is able to select someone who is the most appropriate person and can be fearlessly independent and act for and on behalf of the collective good of the community. I support the bill.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS secured the adjournment of the debate.

ADJOURNMENT

At 4.32 p.m. the house adjourned until Monday 4 April at 2 p.m.