

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Thursday 15 November 2007

The **SPEAKER (Hon. J.J. Snelling)** took the chair at 10:31 and read prayers.

LOBBYING AND MINISTERIAL ACCOUNTABILITY BILL

The Hon. R.B. SUCH (Fisher) (10:31): Obtained leave and introduced a bill for an act to provide for the disclosure of lobbying of senior public officials; to make unlawful the holding and trading of certain property by serving ministers; to regulate the post-ministerial employment of ministers and ministerial advisers; and for other purposes. Read a first time.

The Hon. R.B. SUCH (Fisher) (10:32): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The rationale behind this bill is that in a democracy—and I would argue that we have something approximating a democracy—the electors are entitled to know the detail of who is seeking to influence the outcome of decisions made by government and, indeed, decisions made by this parliament. I say what I have said before in this place. I think in South Australia we have had a very high standard of behaviour by public officials over time—and, as far as I know, by lobbyists—but the point is we cannot always be sure in regard to the latter. However, I think South Australians can be justly proud that, irrespective of which party or group has been in power, we have a fantastic record of a high standard of behaviour and public integrity.

I look with sadness at what has happened and is happening in Western Australia in regard to governmental activities and what is happening in Victoria in relation to some aspects of their police force, but I think it is fair to say—and it should be said—that we should be proud of the collective record here in South Australia. Having said that, I think there is a case to create a register of people who are lobbyists. The bill has drawn upon the experience in Western Australia and also a bill that was put forward by Bob Brown in the Senate; and other actions around the world have guided the drafting of this bill.

It is important to define the lobbyists, of which there are two categories in the bill. One is an employed lobbyist who clearly works for an employer and who lobbies on behalf of the employer. There are various categories relating to that: if the employer is a body corporate, profession, business, trade, vocational group or the like. The other category is what is called a consultant lobbyist, and that is a person who (directly or indirectly) received remuneration for engaging in lobbying activity on behalf of any other person (the client), and is obviously engaged particularly for that purpose of lobbying.

As I said before, I am not suggesting the lobbyists in this state are necessarily doing things which are bad, but I think we are entitled to know the extent to which they are involved in activities. It is important—in fact, it is vital—that in a democracy there is free and open access to institutions of government. Lobbyists can improve the functioning of our democracy by assisting individuals in organisations with advice on public policy processes and facilitating contact with relevant government representatives.

So there is no assumption that simply being a lobbyist or engaging in lobbying is necessarily a bad thing—as I say, it can enhance the workings of our democratic system—but I believe there is a strong expectation amongst members of the public that lobbyists are individuals who reflect high standards, high ethical standards and who behave in ways which accord with the high standards of professional conduct.

I looked at the list of registered lobbyists in Western Australia, and I will not read it now but it is quite an amazing list. Something like 74 lobbyists are registered in Western Australia, and that is a requirement under their Contact with Lobbyists Code which was introduced in Western Australia on 16 April this year. The way in which the registration of lobbyists would work under my bill is that it would come under the aegis of the Auditor-General, who would be required to keep and maintain a register of lobbying activity.

I should say at the outset that there are categories of people who are exempt from the definition of lobbying. Prior to spelling that out, I will define the lobbying activity. Clause 10(1) provides:

...if the person communicates with a senior public official—

and that means a public servant or a minister—

in any manner intended to influence—

- (a) the development of any legislative proposal by the state government or by a member of either house of parliament; or
- (b) the introduction of any bill in either house of parliament or the passage or amendment of any bill that is before either house of parliament; or
- (c) the making, disallowance or variation of any subordinate legislation; or
- (d) the introduction of or change to any state government policy or program; or
- (e) the exercise of any authority or power conferred under any act or law or the expenditure of public money...

Lobbying activity does not include—

- (a) a communication that is—
 - (i) made by a senior public official, or by any other person holding office under any act or law, in his or her official capacity; or
 - (ii) made on behalf of the government of the state, or the commonwealth or another state or territory; or
 - (iii) made on behalf of the government of a foreign country; or
 - (iv) constituted by any application required or authorised by any act or law; or
 - (v) made in response to a written request from a senior public official acting in his or her official capacity; or
 - (vi) made by a representative or employee of a media organisation for the purposes of gathering and disseminating news and information to the public; or
 - (vii) made in a speech, article, publication or other material that is distributed and made available to the public, or through radio, television, or other medium of mass communication; or
 - (viii) made in a petition to either house of parliament or in evidence or submissions to a committee of either of those houses, or a joint committee of both houses of parliament; or
 - (ix) made in the course of any judicial proceedings; or
- (b) arranging or attending a meeting with a senior public official—
 - (i) that is open to members of the public; or
 - (ii) by a representative or employee of a media organisation for the purposes of gathering and disseminating news and information to the public.

The bill clearly sets out what is lobbying and what is not. It also requires the minister who has responsibility ultimately for legislation to prepare a code of conduct to be observed by senior public officials when dealing with lobbyists. Clause 11(2) provides:

The code of conduct must contain the following provisions:

- (a) a provision prohibiting a senior public official from permitting himself or herself to be lobbied other than by a lobbyist registered on the register;
- (b) a provision prohibiting a senior public official from permitting himself or herself to be lobbied other than in accordance with the code of conduct;
- (c) a provision requiring a senior public official to disclose lobbying activity in accordance with the code of conduct;
- (d) a provision requiring a lobbyist engaged in lobbying activity to disclose whether any remuneration is payable to the lobbyist in respect of the lobbying activity (and, if so, whether such remuneration is wholly or partly contingent on the lobbyist's degree of success);
- (e) any other provision required by the regulations.

The Auditor-General would have responsibility for maintaining a register of the lobbyists and lobbying activity. Importantly—and there are specific inclusions that I want in the bill—the bill provides:

- (4) A person is entitled to inspect (without charge) the register at the Auditor-General's office during ordinary office hours.

- (5) A person may, on payment of the prescribed fee, obtain a copy of any part of the register.
- (6) The Auditor-General must cause a copy of the register to be published on a website established by the minister for that purpose.

It is important that, if we have a register of the lobbyists and their lobbying activity, then it is vital that any member of the public, through the web or by inspection at the Auditor-General's office, can access that register at a suitable time during working hours.

Other provisions in the bill relate to the behaviour of ministers. We have a Ministerial Code of Conduct, so there is no point in duplicating it, but the bill strengthens provisions in relation to a minister having to divest himself or herself of all control of all securities and derivatives, including any legal or equitable rights in such securities or derivatives that he or she controls; so within 28 days of becoming a minister they must divest themselves. Clause 16(2) provides that a minister must not, during the period of his or her ministry, purchase any securities or derivatives in the category to which I have just alluded. There are other provisions relating to what a minister must do in relation to notifying residual interests in any securities, and so on.

The bill specifically provides that the Australian Crime Commission may investigate lobbying activity, and the bill makes quite clear what the ACC can do about investigating and taking action in relation to lobbying activity. It also makes provision for the police and the Auditor-General to take action. Clause 18 provides that a minister or a ministerial adviser must not undertake or give advice for personal profit or commercial advantage on any aspect of work undertaken by an administrative unit for which they had responsibility as a minister or involvement as an adviser during the preceding two years. There is a cooling-off period so that ministers (and advisers) cannot go straight from being a minister in a portfolio to receiving payment for advice on matters relating to that former portfolio responsibility.

That is the nub of the bill. It obviously contains penalties, and members can have a look at those themselves under part 5. I think this is a reasonable and balanced measure. I am not in any way suggesting that our society and government or the lobbyist area is full of bad activity. However, I think that it is appropriate, and I think we should learn from the experiences in Western Australia and elsewhere that it is important that members of the public have confidence in the system and do not come to be so cynical as to believe that everything associated with government, or even a part of government, is corrupted by a process where we have people giving advice, paid lobbyists involved in altering the outcome of decisions.

It is best, in my view, to have an open, accountable and transparent system. If a lobbyist is doing the right thing, according to this proposal in my bill, he or she will have nothing to fear, because all it is doing is making clear to the wider community—to the electors—that our system of government is operating in a way that is less likely to have any corrupt behaviour. I think it is a measure that the wider community is very keen to see implemented.

I trust that members will give this measure thoughtful consideration (as they always do). I would ask them, if they have any concerns or doubts about the need for this measure, to reflect on what has happened in Western Australia, even in the last few days, and in some of the other states. I believe that this avoids, or helps to deal with, some of the issues that people advocate in relation to a crime and corruption commission, and that it would help to make things clear and transparent. I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of the Hon. M.J. Atkinson.

STATUTES AMENDMENT (MEMBERS ALLOWANCES—METROPOLITAN COUNCILS) AMENDMENT BILL

Mr HANNA (Mitchell) (10:48): Obtained leave and introduced a bill for an act to amend the City of Adelaide Act 1998 and the Local Government Act 1999. Read a first time.

Mr HANNA (Mitchell) (10:48): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I bring before the house a proposal for a different way of calculating the allowances to be provided to members of local government. At present, by regulation, a maximum allowance is set and each council can choose whether they pay their local councillors that maximum amount or something less. Most, not surprisingly, allocate the maximum allowance to their members. I think that this gives rise to some unfairness. In this legislation, I have produced a simple formula that relates local government members allowances to the number of electors they have. I think anyone would agree that, the more people one has to look after as a ward councillor or an area councillor, the busier

one will be. They will receive more phone calls, they will have to visit more sites, visit people at home, and so on.

I stress that the legislation is set to only apply to suburban councils; that is, any local government area that has any part of its area within the Adelaide metropolitan boundary. It has to be recognised that country councils are in a different situation. You cannot have country councils that represent the same number of population as do city councils or you would have local government the size of federal electorates.

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr HANNA: Let me give some figures to illustrate the point of the lack of equity at present. For example, my two local councils, the City of Marion and the City of Onkaparinga, have an elector representation quota of 5,075, in the case of Marion, and 5,657, in the case of Onkaparinga. In the case of metropolitan councils, I think only Tea Tree Gully exceeds that, with a representation quota of nearly 6,000. That representation quota is derived from the total number of electors divided by the total number of members. So, it is as simple as that.

The contrast is between those councils and others, such as Norwood, Payneham and St Peters, which has a representation quota of less than 2,000, and several that have between 2,000 and 3,000, such as Campbelltown, Holdfast Bay and Burnside. So, we literally have councils where the councillors have twice as many people to represent and yet they are paid the same amount. I think that is unfair. Fair pay for fair work, I think, is a principle that most people agree with.

The process for setting the rate is similar to what we have now. It is just that a different maximum allowance would be set by regulation. Councils would then still choose what to do but, almost inevitably, the maximum amount would be set. This measure if adopted would bring more equity to local government pay. It is not to say that there should be a reduction or increase in councillors' pay necessarily because, in any case, the new amounts will be set by regulation. It does bring a differential between those councillors who have a lot of people to represent and those who have few to represent, but the precise amount relative to the amount they are paid at the moment would remain to be set by regulation.

The Attorney-General by way of interjection said that country councils should be included in this measure. I do not agree with that. If one looks at the representation quota for country councils one can see that the vast majority are substantially under 1,000.

Mr Pengilly interjecting:

Mr HANNA: For the benefit of the member for Finniss, I will explain again. That is the number of electors divided by the total number of members of the council. For the benefit of the member for Finniss, I point out that, at last count, for Alexandrina Council the quota is 1,811. So that is somewhat similar to Norwood, Payneham and St Peters, which is about the lowest of the metropolitan councils, and one might well expect that, given the size of Victor Harbor. However, that is an exception, though—

Mr Pengilly interjecting:

Mr HANNA: —Murray Bridge—among country councils. Most are well under 1,000. They are in a different category and I leave them to one side. There is another great advantage of adopting this measure (apart from addressing an issue of equity between councillors within different suburban councils), that is, that it may serve as a motivation for those who represent only a few people, such as in Walkerville, to choose amalgamation with other councils.

I do not mean to ascribe the motive of greed to local government members. I have been one myself. I know how hard they work and the allowance is generally well spent. However, I do suspect that, if local government members with only a few representors were being paid less according to the formula I am putting forward today, there might be greater consideration of merger with larger local government entities. We will see how that comes out in the wash.

In summary, the bill deals with metropolitan councils, the Adelaide City Council, as well as other councils that have an area coming within the metropolitan Adelaide boundary. If one looks at the clauses of the legislation, part 1 is largely formal, part 2 deals with the City of Adelaide (because, of course, the City of Adelaide is distinct in a number of ways from other metropolitan councils) and part 3 deals with allowances for the remainder of Adelaide metropolitan councils.

The formula is self-explanatory once one reads the definitions. Clearly, the calculation is done to include the representor quota to which I have already referred. I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mrs Geraghty.

STATUTES AMENDMENT (DELEGATE MINISTERS) BILL

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 21 June 2007. Page 520.)

Mr HANNA (Mitchell) (11:00): I move:

That Private Members Business, Bills, Orders of the Day No. 5 be discharged.

I move this on the basis that this bill is consequent upon the Constitution (Number of Ministers) Amendment Bill which was voted down on the last Thursday of sitting (25 October) after the Deputy Leader of the Opposition indicated that the Liberal opposition would not support the bill, notwithstanding that it is Liberal Party policy and the publicly announced policy of the Leader of the Opposition.

Motion carried.

Order of the day discharged.

PASSENGER TRANSPORT (SAFETY OF PASSENGERS) AMENDMENT BILL

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 13 September 2007. Page 816.)

Mr O'BRIEN (Napier) (11:03): I spoke to this matter some weeks ago, and I will have to now recap. The member for Mitchell's bill seeks to amend the Passenger Transport Act in two ways. First, to make it compulsory for a taxi to be fitted with a GPS system that operates when the engine is running and records the GPS tracking for at least three months. This measure is clearly designed to assist police in identifying the perpetrators of sexual attacks on female passengers. Secondly, the bill seeks to improve the taxi security camera system so that an image is recorded every 60 seconds while the engine is running. This measure is clearly designed to improve safety for both the driver and the passenger.

The government will oppose the bill for the following reasons—and not on the basis of lack of merit. First, the requirement that a taxi be fitted with an operating GPS and a security camera system is already addressed in the Passenger Transport General Regulations 1994. Any finetuning of the operation of both these systems (GPS and security camera) would best be done by changes to regulation rather than the amendment to legislation being proposed by the member for Mitchell.

Having accepted that regulation would be the government's desired path, I would like to examine the member for Mitchell's proposals. On the issue of security cameras taking an image every 60 seconds, the government is currently considering a national standard which will stipulate a prescribed minimum standard that taxi camera security systems will have to meet. This standard is currently with the Australian Passenger Transport Group, a subcommittee of the Standing Committee on Transport.

I understand that the subcommittee questioned the benefit of recording images at one-minute intervals and is considering the taking of more frequent images at key times during a journey, such as the opening and closing of doors, the activation of the meter and the use of brakes, this to be done in conjunction with regular images taken during the journey. Rather than adopt the member for Mitchell's proposal, nationally there is consideration of what is believed would be a more effective use of the limited memory capacity of the camera. Rather than operating all the time and at one-minute intervals, it would actually be activated at those times when something probably amiss is happening within the taxi, that is, when the brakes are being activated or the doors are being opened.

Mr Hanna: Let's get some action.

Mr O'BRIEN: The problem is that it has gone to a national forum to get a bit of national uniformity on this particular matter. Also under current taxi camera specifications, when the driver activates the duress alarm which notifies the centralised booking service of a security incident, the camera system then overwrites the existing memory with continuous recording to ensure the

incident is recorded in full. This specification would be removed if the one minute recording was mandated.

The issue of improving GPS tracking systems is being considered by the Taxi Council of South Australia at present, with a view to delivering a range of benefits, in addition to the safety issues addressed in the bill. Chief among these is linking the GPS system with a dispatch system and also using it to provide GPS direction for drivers. Additionally, recent regulatory changes have mandated the use of PINs which allow the clear identification of drivers with vehicles and specific locations. Again, it is an issue for the police in terms of the police knowing on what day, time and location an incident has occurred but also having a great deal of difficulty in identifying the taxi and the driver responsible.

In closing, changes are clearly afoot within the local industry through the Taxi Council of South Australia and at the national level through the Australian Passenger Transport Group that will deliver a set of outcomes clearly superior to those enunciated within this bill. For that reason, we oppose the bill.

Mr HANNA (Mitchell) (11:08): I have listened carefully to the contributions that have been made. I think everyone is concerned about safety for taxi passengers and taxi drivers. Clearly, the measures I have brought forward contribute to additional safety for passengers and drivers. The government response is encouraging but it does not really do away with the need for taking action now to improve passenger safety. It is good to know discussions are taking place at national level, but I am afraid that it is often an excuse made by this state Labor government that there have to be national discussions. Why on earth do we need uniform taxi safety measures across the whole of Australia? If we can do it better than Victoria or New South Wales, why don't we go ahead and do it? That is what I am asking this House of Assembly to move towards today.

As far as GPS is concerned, it is dead easy to link the GPS tracking to the booking service. A company is already doing it; I think it is called Smart Move. It is a brilliant system whereby they can track the time, speed and bookings of every taxi on the road and track them in real time if need be. So, the technology is there. It is taking too long to get action, and passing this legislation today will prompt some more action sooner, even if ultimately there will be more broad-ranging measures put in place.

Second reading negatived.

CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES (CANNABIS OFFENCES) AMENDMENT BILL

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 21 June 2007. Page 517.)

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON (Croydon—Attorney-General, Minister for Justice, Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (11:10): The bill introduced by the Hon. Dennis Hood does away with some government amendments to the Controlled Substances Act 1984 which have not come into operation yet contained in the Controlled Substances (Serious Drug Offences) Amendment Act 2005. Mr Hood's bill would do three things. It would set a blanket penalty of \$5,000 or two years' imprisonment or both for the offence of cultivating cannabis.

It would deny the courts the discretion to consider cannabis differently from other serious drugs when it comes to fixing a penalty and it would remove the ability for a person to expiate an offence of cultivating cannabis, even if only one plant. Mr Hood's bill treats cultivating cannabis like producing any other serious drug. The bill removes the concept of personal use from the act completely and, effectively, it says that any cultivation means the grower intends to sell the drug to someone else.

The government's amendments recognise that any cultivation of cannabis is still an offence. We make no apologies for being tough on illegal drugs because of the harm they cause not only to the individual user but also the extended harm in the form of robberies to feed habits and the activities of outlaw bkie gangs. The more you cultivate, the worse things will be. However, cannabis is not like any other serious drug. It is the most widely used drug after alcohol and tobacco and it is quite prevalent in our society. Nearly two in every five Australians—in fact, 39 per cent—aged 14 or older have used cannabis at some stage.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: So, 40 per cent of Australians—

Mr Hanna interjecting:

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: Yes, I would like the member for Finniss to answer that question. I think it is most pertinent. How does he achieve that state? Perhaps he achieves it naturally. Forty per cent of Australians are not deserving of two years' imprisonment which is what Mr Hood's bill maybe thought to imply. There is no doubt that some users grow small amounts of cannabis for their own use. That is why the government's amendments impose a tiered penalty structure depending on factors like the quantity of cannabis being cultivated and the intended end user.

Speaking about the bill on radio, Mr Hood said that the bill also 'gives the judges more options'. That is not true. Mr Hood's bill would remove the discretion currently given to a judge when fixing penalty to treat cannabis differently from other serious drugs. The government's amendments, to be proclaimed very soon, are preferable as they are more sophisticated and proportionate. The government's amendments will operate like this. The expiation fee for cultivating one non-hydroponically grown cannabis plant has already been doubled from \$150 to \$300. Anything more than one plant still means that the offence will not be expiable. In this way, the government position recognises that, although personal use of cannabis is still an offence, it is not treated as a serious drug for the purpose of setting a penalty.

Mr Pengilly: It should be.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: 'It should be', says the member for Finniss. Anyone who has possession of any amount of cannabis should go to court. Is that the position of the member for Finniss? I am waiting for an answer from the member for Finniss. So, the member for Finniss does not have the courage of his convictions when it comes to putting it down on the record.

Mr Pengilly: It's not the only alternative.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: Any cultivation where the grower supplies it or intends to will attract a penalty of \$2,000, or two years imprisonment, or both. This reflects the evil of spreading illicit drugs in society, and may well mirror what Mr Hood's bill is really trying to achieve. Cultivating a trafficable quantity of cannabis—250 grams or more—presumes that there would be a sale, and therefore attracts a maximum penalty of \$50,000, or 10 years imprisonment, or both. Cultivating a commercial quantity of cannabis—1 kilogram pure, 2½ kilograms if mixed with something else, say, garden herbs—will attract a maximum penalty of \$200,000, or 25 years imprisonment, or both. Cultivating a large commercial quantity of cannabis—2 kilograms pure, 12½ kilograms mixed—will attract a maximum penalty of half a million dollars, or life imprisonment, or both.

These quantities have been recommended by the National Model Criminal Code Offices Committee, and that was the information for which we were waiting before we could proclaim the bill. The government's amendments are tougher again on sales involving children and will attract a penalty of \$1 million, or life imprisonment, or both.

Mr Hanna: Mr Hood is tougher.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: Well, the member for Mitchell has record in this area of law. It reflects his history of being a member of the Greens—

Mr Hanna: And of the Labor Party.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: —and of being on the extreme left of the drugs debate. He is at the opposite pole from Mr Hood. I recommend that the house not support the bill.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mrs Geraghty.

DOG AND CAT MANAGEMENT (CATS) AMENDMENT BILL

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 7 June 2007. Page 372.)

Mr KENYON (Newland) (11:19): I rise today to oppose the bill brought to us by the member for Fisher on a number of grounds.

Mr Hanna: The fur's going to start flying now.

Mr KENYON: It already has in my electorate. I believe that these decisions should be left to local communities. They should be decisions for local councils, local areas, people who know their circumstances best and are able to take into account what is going on in their local communities, not by a state government.

Mr Hanna: It's the same everywhere.

Mr KENYON: It's not necessarily true, though, that the environment in which they exist is the same. Whilst cats have an effect on the local environment in the metropolitan area, it is not as marked as it might be in a more pristine area out in regional areas. It may mean that you need to adopt a different attitude to the way you manage dogs and cats in other areas.

One of the best examples of the way you might have local management has been brought up by the Tea Tree Gully council in my electorate. Until very recently the council was planning to have very rigorous enforcement laws. It proposed cat registration and the enforcement of laws, and it proposed that ratepayers should have enclosures for cats. One of the consequences of that was quite a large impost on individuals wishing to own cats, probably far and above what they should have to wear, and, in fact, far and above the effect that the cats might be having on the local environment.

I think the Tea Tree Gully council was proposing to make residents pay thousands and thousands of dollars on cat enclosures. They wanted to have fines, they wanted to employ people, and buy them cars to drive around and catch cats. It might be getting back to the cat detector van of Monty Python fame. They may indeed be going down the route of having a dog licence crossed out with crayon, and cat written in. Who can tell?

Be that as it may, it would have imposed a large burden on Tea Tree Gully council ratepayers at a time when they are already receiving some of the highest rates in the state. It is something that was being strongly opposed by some members of the local community, and I am happy to say that on Tuesday night the council decided to trial other methods—hopefully cheaper and more effective—for controlling cats in the Tea Tree Gully area. If there was a state-based system, as proposed by the member for Fisher, it would take away the flexibility of local councils and communities to manage cats in a way that is most effective for their council area and also for the environment. So, I have no difficulty at all in opposing this particular bill.

The Hon. R.B. SUCH (Fisher) (11:22): A very disappointing contribution from the member for Newland, who sprouted information—

Members interjecting:

The Hon. R.B. SUCH: I think he has been severely injured in a scrum at some stage. But there was no research evidence. If he talks to anyone who knows anything about the subject they will know that cats in the urban area kill a lot of native birdlife and other fauna as well. If you talk to people like Associate Professor David Paton at the University of Adelaide he will give you the statistics.

The member for Newland and, sadly, this government is unwilling to have the backbone that other Labor governments have had in Australia. I wrote to the minister here saying, 'Why can't you follow the lead of other Labor governments and have a statewide coordinated approach?' It does not take away the role of councils. The member for Newland obviously has not read my bill. It gives councils the role, the responsibility, for establishing cat management plans. That is what it says. It says the cat management plan can incorporate the following: can limit the number of cats per household; can provide for desexing; can provide for lower fees for pensioners and those on fixed or low incomes; can impose a cat curfew; can deal with roaming cats or cats causing a nuisance. And it does provide for microchipping by regulation.

The original argument from the government was that it did not provide for microchipping. It does. It allows for it by regulation, and it provides for the registration of cats. I do not know whether the member for Newland or the minister, who is the same minister responsible for animal welfare, is happy that thousands of cats are destroyed every year in the metropolitan area by the welfare agencies. Thousands of them. That is not the total that are killed out in the countryside. Anyone who knows anything about feral cats will know that anyone who has a commitment to the environment will destroy them on sight. I have done it myself and I will continue to do it.

I feel very sorry for cat lovers and for cats, having regard to, as I say, the number of cats destroyed every year in the metropolitan area. I think the number of cats that the Animal Welfare

League destroys each year—I will have to double check—is in the order of 2,500 cats. And you get from this government a wimpy approach.

John Hill when he was minister for the environment almost had this issue sorted out. He had consulted with councils. What we have now is a Labor government without any backbone and not prepared to tackle an issue which is one of the most devastating impacts on native fauna. Even in our street we had someone move in recently with a Siamese cat; it is up on our roof and other roofs tearing possums apart. Is that something that this government condones? Are they happy to have cats destroying birds and other native fauna? They do not seem to care.

But the government of Victoria did, and does. The government in New South Wales did, and does, and the answer I got back from the minister was, 'Oh, they can do it because they are bigger.' That is not a rational argument; that is a nonsense. I do not know who has got the minister by the fur, but someone has. Someone got hold of the minister by her fur and got her to wimp out on this issue. This is a government that talks about global warming and climate change, but does not worry about what is happening to biodiversity under the umbrella of an overheated sky. It is absolute hypocrisy and weakness on the part of this government. I thought this government would show some potential and show some backbone in dealing with this issue. But we get: 'Leave it to councils. Let's hope they do something.' How pathetic. They are not going to do much at all.

Kangaroo Island is trying to do something; a very serious issue there. But here councils like Norwood—pathetic. They do not want to upset a couple of people who have an obsessive view that cats should be able to do what they like, where they like, how they like. I can tell you that there are a lot of people in the community who feel strongly about this issue and who are very disappointed that we have a Labor government that is not as committed to the environment as previous Labor governments were, and when John Hill was minister for the environment.

What we have is a wimpy approach, 'Leave it to Beaver, leave it to councils, let's hope it sorts itself out.' They know full well it will not. Nothing will happen. It is a cop out. It is a weak approach by a government that should know better, and they should stop listening to a couple of people who have a one-sided, obsessive view about this, people who do not care about the wider environment. And, so, a sad outcome.

The house divided on the second reading:

AYES (2)

Hanna, K.

Such, R.B. (teller)

NOES (35)

Atkinson, M.J.

Bignell, L.W.

Breuer, L.R.

Ciccarello, V.

Conlon, P.F.

Foley, K.O.

Fox, C.C.

Geraghty, R.K.

Goldsworthy, M.R.

Griffiths, S.P.

Hamilton-Smith, M.L.J.

Kenyon, T.R. (teller)

Kerin, R.G.

Key, S.W.

Koutsantonis, T.

Lomax-Smith, J.D.

Maywald, K.A.

McEwen, R.J.

O'Brien, M.F.

Pederick, A.S.

Pengilly, M.

Piccolo, T.

Pisoni, D.G.

Portolesi, G.

Rankine, J.M.

Rann, M.D.

Rau, J.R.

Redmond, I.M.

Simmons, L.A.

Stevens, L.

Thompson, M.G.

Venning, I.H.

White, P.L.

Williams, M.R.

Wright, M.J.

Majority of 33 for the noes.

Second reading thus negated.

MURRAY RIVER DROUGHT MANAGEMENT

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (11:35): I move:

That this house expresses its dismay at this government's inability to manage the River Murray in South Australia through a drought that is as much man-made as it is climatic, not just as a source of water, but also as the state's environmental and economic cornerstone.

As has been ably pointed out by my colleague Mitch Williams in the paper recently—

Mr Pengilly: The member for MacKillop.

Mr PEDERICK: The member for MacKillop, thank you, member for Finnis—this government's boast that South Australia has the country's best record in recycling is due in no part to its own efforts. It has not made any; it has just taken the \$1.61 billion profit generated by the former Liberal government's restructure of SA Water and bragged about its budget surplus and AAA rating.

While the government seeks praise for its constant deferring of a decision to build a weir at Wellington, the reality is that tardiness on this whole matter has generated almost as many problems as 700,000 tonnes of rock dumped in Australia's greatest river would generate. I do not want to sound ungrateful for the fact that the weir has not been built, but the fact that it remains a possibility is almost as big a problem. Premier Rann's bold announcement on 7 November 2006 was a classic case of the Premier's belief that the headline is all that matters and the small print is someone else's problem. His announcement was unresearched and ill-conceived, but it sounded good to all the Labor voters at the time. It did not matter to him that it was impractical, vastly understated in cost, socially divisive and environmentally catastrophic.

The pull-a-figure-out-of-the-air guesstimate of \$20 million for a weir, placed in a position that has long been known is impractical and impossible, shows just how irresponsible the statement was. As it now stands, the weir, if it is ever built, would likely cost between \$110 million and \$200 million, and no-one knows how much it would cost to remove. The fact that some experts believe the rock wall will subside one metre every 18 months into the soft base of the 2.6 kilometre span from Pomanda Island to Wellington Lodge suggests huge, ongoing annual maintenance costs and reduced effectiveness; and perhaps, ultimately, will deny us the ability to ever restore this vital part of Australia's biggest and most important Ramsar-listed site to its former condition.

Mr Rann was quick to claim such environmental champions as Dr Suzuki among his supporters. I can tell the house that when Dr Suzuki learnt earlier this year of this proposal through one of my constituents he was gravely concerned and, according to his response to my constituent, asked the Premier to forward a copy of his explanation to that constituent; to this time no such explanation has been provided.

The government's first action on the weir was to try to find a way around the commonwealth's Ramsar commitment. If it had instigated a proper environmental impact statement, then and there, it would have been completed by now and either reassured us all that the damage would not be completely irreversible or taken the whole proposal off the table, thereby relieving the entire community and the Eastern States of this continuing uncertainty. This would have allowed a great many of the state's food producers to make better decisions about their own critical situations.

When doctors talk about the dire health problems such indecision is causing, one has to believe that this is not sour grapes or sour milk from moaning farmers. Suicides are the biggest worry for many families and communities, and the general health issues that arise are many and varied. Worse still, some rural doctors are finding it hard to justify remaining in shrinking communities—which compounds the problem.

It is difficult, but not impossible, to understand why the government is continually delaying this decision, but the question that needs to be asked is: why are we in this position? There are some who believe that Mr Rann is secretly happy about the federal government's insistence on a full EIS—which has just got underway. It means that he does not have to be the one who knocks his own idea on the head if that is the decision. But thinking people will see past that and they will be asking why it has come to this in the first place: why was the Premier so keen to promote a plan that his minister has been telling us ever since 'the government does not want to carry out'?

One of the reasons the government wanted a weir is that it said it could not lower the pump offtakes below Lock 1. 'It can't be done,' they assured us. We kept asking the question until eventually they said that they can be lowered to minus 1.5 metres AHD but no more. It was welcome news, of course, but we still pressed them for more depth. They insisted, 'It can't be done.' Lo and behold, they are now able to get the pumps down to minus 2.1 metres AHD—another 600 millimetres.

It is amazing what you can do when you do not have the soft option of a weir on tap. This is mismanagement of the highest order. So is ignoring the obvious side effect of accumulating water above a weir wall at Wellington. Salinity and toxicity would blow out to unacceptable levels. Apart from being unusable to all direct users around the Lower Murray and lakes, it would have a catastrophic effect on the native aquatic flora and fauna.

The government conceded this fact on 16 February this year, but has never offered any solution to the resulting problems. Could it be that we have to build a desalination plant at Murray Bridge to service the just-in-time pipeline supplying the Upper South-East? That would be another world-first for the government—a desalination plant on the river. Now the government wants to extend Mount Bold to multiply its holding capacity fivefold from 45 gigalitres to 240 gigalitres. What will they fill it with? The vital river that has been the main artery of South Australia's existence is to be mismanaged even further, with more non-existent water pumped away to fill another dam. Yesterday's thinking from yesterday's leaders!

On top of this, the government has separated groundwater from surface water by having two different ministers, whose responsibilities are so poorly defined that even they seem unsure of who should deal with what. There was a clear example of this confusion and mismanagement during estimates when I asked the Minister for Water Security a question about the rainwater tank rebate scheme. Minister Maywald declined to answer, saying that it was not her responsibility, and chastised me for not knowing that before I asked the question. Minister Maywald declared it to be the responsibility of the Minister for Environment and Conservation. Only three weeks before this, a letter to me from minister Maywald about the rainwater tank rebate scheme states 'this matter now falls within my portfolio'. How can the government properly manage these things when its ministers contradict each other—and even themselves—about responsibility for water management?

There is a widely held view around this end of the Murray (and further upstream) that while cotton and rice growers were originally seen to be the problem, the real villain is the big managed investment schemes that earn huge tax offsets to establish new plantings of olives, vines and almonds—which are hardly vital to food production in this time of drought. What is the government doing about that? What approaches have been made to the relevant authorities to curb this activity—at least for the short term—while the production of essential goods and survival of existing plantings is at stake? If we were running out of fuel oil would it simply be sold to the highest bidder to do with it what he liked, or would it be thoughtfully distributed to the most essential users?

My colleague from the West Coast (the member for Flinders) has spent years trying to make this government take responsible action to manage water quality and supply issues on Eyre Peninsula, some of whose water is drawn from the River Murray. Not surprisingly, Mr Rann and his cohorts have trouble seeing anything beyond the end of city limit signposts, so West Coast farmers go on paying to maintain infrastructure that the government should better manage. Further to the West Coast problem, repeated and sensible efforts to provide a solution to their own water problems through funding and building local desalination plants have been thwarted by the government's nonsensical refusal to allow them to put that water into existing SA Water supply lines. Surely, that is smarter and cheaper than further strangling the ailing River Murray.

Scientists have been telling governments for over a decade that water resources in the Murray-Darling Basin are overallocated, yet less than half the state's homes have rainwater tanks. The confusing and half-hearted subsidy offered by this government is nowhere near as attractive as the aggressive and effective schemes being offered interstate, and the low uptake has demonstrated how ineffective it is.

Editorial opinion expressed in various country and Riverland newspapers all agree on one thing: the SA government has bungled every aspect of management of the state's water crisis. From allocations to backyard gardens, they have managed to upset everyone. The heavy-handed schoolmaster approach to domestic water users is typical. Instead of presenting ways in which to promote and encourage water conservation and reduce consumption, they go for the big stick method. Any behaviourist would tell you that, if you have a donkey and a stick, putting a carrot on the end of the stick and holding it in front of the donkey will have a quicker and longer term effect than using the stick to whack the donkey's behind.

In Queensland, for example, which has been on level 5 restrictions since April this year, the government has instituted incentive schemes to encourage home owners and businesses to save water. The programs are many and varied, and include home water use audits to give residents the information they need to initiate changes. The rewards are substantial and the results are impressive. I understand that Queensland now leads the nation in water conservation.

I note that the South Australian government has at last announced incentives for householders to be introduced in January. It is long overdue, in the dry driest state in the world's driest continent. Until now, all we have had is the bucket brigade, which has been great for physiotherapists, but not much help with respect to the water crisis.

And how is this government managing the effects on tourism? The government's management of that is best characterised by an item that appeared in the *Murray Pioneer* on 28 September 2007. The headline says it all: 'No impact on tourism: Maywald'. This was in reference to the closing of Lake Bonney and to reassure local tourism operators. She offered the explanation that, even after a year, the lake's surface would reduce by only 5 per cent.

Apart from ignoring the fact that this closure was likely to be somewhat longer than 12 months, it also overlooks the fact that, in tourism, as with so many other industries, perception is reality. Tourists making decisions about holidays and travel plans will base them on their perceptions of the situation at Lake Bonney—and, for that matter, the rest of the river, from the border to the mouth. If people think that is not happening, they should talk to any houseboat hirer or other tourism operator up and down the river. Bookings have dropped and cancellations are up. So much for 'No impact on tourism'! Then again, tourism is not minister Maywald's portfolio, as I am sure she will be quick to point out to me.

One thing that this government has done is to waive transfer fees paid by irrigators endeavouring to top up their water allocations through this difficult time. But why did it take so long to decide and announce it? One major player in the water market has expressed surprise at the delay and said, 'It's disappointing that it has taken three months for the government to make this decision', explaining that the delay has created confusion in the marketplace—more mismanagement.

The Liberals' 19-point water plan, announced last August by our leader, Martin Hamilton-Smith, seeks to employ a number of measures to take the pressure off the River Murray. It was roundly condemned by Premier Rann in this house a few weeks ago, yet all he has offered since is a half-baked plan for a desalination plant—a desalination plant promoted originally by the Liberals—and a 10-year plan to extend Mount Bold, which would further plunder the River Murray, was Rann's idea. Moreover, last November, the government rejected our three-pronged legislation to make better use of existing stormwater, grey water and sewerage resources, but offered nothing in its place.

What is the government doing to work with and support irrigators in the region to secure sufficient water to maintain permanent plantings that will be vital to the quick recovery of food production and the state economy once this crisis is over? The Liberal Party has again led the way by meeting with Riverland irrigators and actively looking for ways in which to help them through this crisis. It is already too late for many of them, as it is for the growing number of dairy farmers who have run out of confidence in this government and their future. The whole fabric of life in country South Australia will be torn apart by this mismanagement.

The former Liberal government instigated and championed the Lower Murray Reclaimed Irrigation Areas project, which was a program to rehabilitate swamps along the Lower Murray. Local irrigators applauded the plan and began taking action to implement it. Unfortunately, a change of government in 2002 spelt trouble for this worthy project. The incoming Labor government was half hearted about it, and what should have been done in two years dragged on and on as it tried to extricate itself from spending money in the country. Five years later, the LMRIA is still not completed, and landowners of the remaining unrehabilitated swampland are fighting all sorts of battles to see it through in the spirit of the original plan.

As I said at the beginning, it is evident that much of the infrastructure and activity now in place that relieves some of the state's dependence on the River Murray was instigated or promoted by the Liberal government. To call this government's handling of the River Murray and the state's water resources in general 'mismanagement' is being very generous. At the very least, it has been more like crisis management and, at worst, simply a lack of management.

Mr PENGILLY (Finniss) (11:49): I rise to support the motion of the member for Hammond and to thoroughly endorse the comments he has made this morning about the way in which the River Murray has been mismanaged in South Australia. The situation at the moment with respect to the Murray is a cause of enormous concern to me (and, I know, to every member at least on this side of the chamber). It is disastrously affecting the lives of so many people, and it will have a devastating effect on the economy of South Australia.

Indeed, later on today, I understand that there will be a rally on the steps of Parliament House by a group of irrigators who can see the lifeblood not only of the River Murray but also their own businesses, their way of life and their homes, disappearing as they watch every day. It is enormously concerning that this government has failed and, in particular, the Premier and the minister seemingly have not done anything to remedy the situation.

In fact, I visited the Riverland the weekend before last, and there is a mood of great anger about the activities—or the lack of activities—of the member for Chaffey with respect to what she is doing about these things in her electorate. One does not have to move very far around the traps in Loxton and down through that country to pick up the vibrations that are rapidly building up over the inactivity, as people see their precious bit of water disappear down the river to be pumped up into reservoirs to supply Adelaide. It is unfortunate that this is creating a 'them and us' situation.

The fact of the matter is that we have been experiencing this drought across the nation now for five years. This government has been in place for five years, and it has done absolutely zilch to supply other sources of water to the people of South Australia and, in particular, to the most populated area, Adelaide. They are still pumping from the River Murray. We heard only yesterday that the irrigators are going from 16 per cent to 22 per cent. Well, that will not save anyone. It will do nothing whatsoever for the whole economy, particularly the Riverland and as you come down along the Murray. I think we face some enormous problems.

I listened to Professor Peter Cullen this morning in the Natural Resources Committee. Speaking to him before he went into the committee, he said that he has major concerns about the enormous amount of algal bloom that will happen. There is just nothing up the top, and there is nothing in the storages. He said that the period of hot weather we are facing at the moment will only exacerbate the situation. He predicts catastrophic algal blooms the length of the Murray. He is also predicting that, in the very near future, we will see a fish die-off in the Murray the likes of which we have never seen before, and he has no doubt about that whatsoever. Indeed, Professor Cullen showed graphs this morning on the lift in CO₂ until the year 2100 which, quite frankly, were just frightening; and the graph he showed on the snowfall reductions over the last 20 or 30 years in the Australian alps indicate a steady decline.

Of course, ultimately, some of that water comes back down through the Murray-Darling system. It does not all come down; I am well aware of that. The Great Dividing Range has a fairly serious impact on where all that goes. Really, we are just slowly seeing our lifeblood fritter away. With respect to the economy of the whole Murray, the member for Hammond talked about the tourism side of it. I have been trying to talk up the tourism side because water is still there. Obviously, there is not much flow in the river, but water is there and everything is still operating.

It is important that every member of this parliament, no matter their political allegiance, supports the tourism industry and supports those businesses that rely on the Murray. I do urge that members pick up on that. We have been fiddling around now listening to prolonged verbal dialogue from the Minister for the River Murray. The minister should become the minister for the Murray not of the Murray. The minister and the Premier need to get realistic and do something about providing an alternative water source for Adelaide so that water produced from a desalination system can be put into the storages and used through the system that supplies a lot of the people of South Australia.

That water can be used in the economy of the Murray by those irrigators the length and breadth of the Murray. We talk about South Australia at this stage because, obviously, I think that is the part with which we need to deal. The fact is that the water that is coming into the reservoirs in Adelaide should still be in the system and supplying the River Murray. I believe it is a sad indictment of the government that it has not moved to put in the desalination plant to take the pressure off the Murray.

The member for Hammond eloquently described many of the catastrophes that people are facing—family catastrophes. He described the potential for suicide. In a further motion today we will also discuss issues to do with the Murray, but the failure again by the government to do something about it concerns me greatly. The failure by the minister to listen to her own people in her own electorate of Chaffey concerned me greatly when I was up there nearly a fortnight ago. They are desperate. Desperate people do desperate things.

In fact, it is suggested that 1,000 people will attend the demonstration out the front today. It will be interesting to see the member for Chaffey in her capacity as the minister for the Murray out there talking to people. I suspect that she will be nowhere to be seen, quite frankly. We will go out and listen. You need to talk to people and listen to their concerns. The upshot of it is that something earnestly must be done to provide an alternative water source for Adelaide to take the pressure off the Murray.

Quite clearly, no-one in this place wishes more than I do that this drought would end. It is just a disaster for Australia, particularly south-eastern Australia. I support the motion of the member for Hammond.

The Hon. R.B. SUCH (Fisher) (11:57): This is a very unfortunate time for South Australia, particularly those who earn their livelihood from extracting water from the Murray—and obviously people use the water for things other than irrigation. The basic fact is that we have a very severe drought. That does not mean that everyone is off the hook, and that governments are off the hook in terms of what they can or cannot do, but I think we need to put this into a context. First, the reason the Murray is under a lot of pressure—apart from the obvious factor of the drought—is because people have been taking too much water out of the Murray.

You cannot take out more than what is replenished by nature. The situation is man made in the sense that we have created a regime that has ensured that the water in the Murray is basically overallocated. That has been reflected in the stupidity of the Victorian government, first, under former premier Bracks and then under Premier Brumby. To suggest, as they did, that no change was really required—that their irrigators could continue to operate the way they had because that is the way they wanted it—is just irresponsible and ridiculous.

What we have as a consequence of people (particularly upstream) sucking a lot of water out of the Murray is that it has put extra pressure on that very limited and fragile resource. We know that many of the people who hold the irrigation licences upstream (as much as we can ascertain under the secrecy regime we have) are senior people within the coalition and senior people linked to the coalition, mainly through the National Party.

We have many water barons upstream who have very big entitlements, who are big users of water and who are prominent National Party people. No-one wants to say too much about it because it gets a bit embarrassing for certain politicians to identify that, but it is the case. We have also had a tax regime not only under the federal government of the past 11 and a bit years but, sadly, even prior to that which encourages speculators and people to engage in what are euphemistically called managed investment schemes (MISs). The more common parlance would be tax dodging. This is where I have great sympathy and empathy for the traditional farming families and traditional family irrigators who are now suffering the consequence of these big boys and the tax dodgers coming in to suck water out of the Murray.

At the end of the day, their heart and soul is not in horticulture. They are not passionate about horticulture; they are passionate about making a quid. We know that anyone in irrigation or any other enterprise wants to make a dollar, otherwise they do not survive. Many of these people, in fact the overwhelming majority, do have a passion for their industry and horticulture. They take delight in producing good crops of fruit, vegetables and other products. What is happening with this tax dodging arrangement is that, even today, we are still getting new plantings along the Murray—it is hard to believe. Where is the criticism of the people who are planting now? Where is the criticism of the people who overplanted in the past 10 or so years in areas not only adjacent to the Murray but also elsewhere? We saw it in the wine growing areas where areas were planted simply for the benefit of minimising or reducing taxation.

It has had serious consequences—the chickens are coming home to roost for irrigators and also for the environment. It was interesting to see (I think it was either the night before last or last night) the Premier and the Minister for Water Security on the promo talking about the plight of the irrigators (with whom we can all empathise), and the visual on the TV news was overhead sprinklers. I mean, in this day and age, the amount of overhead irrigation that should be used should be an absolute minimum. Of course, smart irrigators use modern electronic water sensor meters and so on.

However, in many cases, especially in the other states, we still have the inappropriate use of irrigation techniques such as open channels and overhead sprays, which waste water. I think it is fair to say that our irrigators have been much more efficient than many of those upstream in the Murray-Darling system. An issue that really concerns me, too—and I have argued this case before—is that we have the law of the jungle when it comes to irrigation licences, whether they be temporary or permanent licences.

The golden rule applies: if you have the gold, you end up getting the licence. It is squeezing the little person, namely, the small family irrigator, as hard as anything who in their desperation seek to hang on to a water licence. Their choice is to hang on to it or sell it and maybe live off the money. However, the big boys (the Macquarie Bank operators and some of the plantation companies) have been buying up water licences, and obviously, in a tight water situation, that has forced up the price of short and long-term allocations. If you have the law of the jungle, it is hard to complain then when the tiger starts to eat you, because that is the system we have. I think we need to revisit that. I know that some academic economists argue that it is the best

system because it will result in increased efficiency in the use of water if it is purely market driven, but I think you need to moderate that, in the sense that you also have to take account of other factors.

We do not have an open market in many areas of our society, and it is probably just as well, otherwise some people would have all the gold while others would only look on. I think the open, free market law of the jungle is really hurting many of our small irrigators at the moment. The other aspect is that we cannot know who owns these licences. We find out through innuendo, rumour and various articles which suggest that the Macquarie Bank has bought them up and even suggestions that Woolworths has bought them up. I do not know whether or not that is true, but that is what people are telling me.

There should be public listing of irrigation holders for the whole length of the Murray-Darling system. We should know quite clearly and openly who owns the entitlements to the water. It is no different from knowing who owns a property. Anyone can find out who owns a house or a farm; why should irrigation licences be any different? The sooner that system is changed—at least in South Australia—the better.

As I said earlier, I have great sympathy for the traditional family farmer and the traditional family irrigator, but I do not want to see any government helping to bail out the tax dodgers or the management investment scheme operators. They took the risk; they take the risk. They keep saying, 'We live in a capitalist society.' Well, you take the risk, you wear the consequences. If it had been a different situation and they had been rolling in dough because everything was hunkey-dory, they would not come rushing saying, 'We are willing to pay a little extra to the community because we have done very well out of this resource.' If you play in a tough game like a capitalist system, you have to wear it when things go tough.

I think that the request for low interest loans or no interest loans to irrigators to help get them through is sensible. I share their passion. I am an amateur horticulturalist and I would not want to see my trees, which I have lovingly cared for for over 30 years, disappear. I can imagine the pain these people are suffering. It is time that we stopped just blaming nature for what has happened to the Murray but also blame the greed of some people and the lack of management in the various states in relation to allocation of water. If we do not tackle those issues quickly, then, sadly, many of the irrigators will go down and so will their crops and their trees, which, in many cases, they have nurtured for 15, 20 or 30 years—and you cannot replace them overnight. I am just getting my first crop of almonds after many years. The Minister for Environment and Conservation and her parrots will probably get their fair share, but it takes a long time to get a return. I have some sympathy with some aspects of this motion.

Mr WILLIAMS (MacKillop) (12:07): This is an important motion and probably no other motion will be debated in this parliament this year that will be as important. We read regularly about the relevance of parliamentary debates, and I read in the daily newspaper here in Adelaide this week that the parliament should spend more of its time debating matters of importance to the state. There is nothing more important to South Australia at the moment than water: where we get our water from, where we get our supply from and how we will go about it.

Interestingly, this motion has been on the *Notice Paper* for some time and, while I think I am the fourth speaker from this side of the house, not one person from the government has stood up to address this matter. That interests me. We have conventions here that we give notice of our debates so that all members know what is coming up so that they can prepare themselves and join the debate. As I said, I am the fourth speaker from this side of the house and not one speaker from the government thinks that this motion is important enough to be addressed. Why is that? Because the government is severely embarrassed about what it has done.

Mrs GERAGHTY: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker: I think that the member opposite is misleading the house. The convention is that in most cases one would listen to the debate from the opposite side and whatever the member who is moving the motion has to say. That is generally the convention in this house, and you are misleading the house.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr WILLIAMS: I might have to call a point of order myself shortly if members continue to call frivolous points of order, because all members here know that that is against the standing orders. The government is severely embarrassed because it has been on notice for a long time that we are facing a desperate situation, yet the government has done nothing. Three years ago the federal government put on the table millions of dollars for projects for waterproofing the North and the extension of the Virginia pipeline. The money to build the pipeline from the Glenelg waste water

treatment plant has been on the table for three years, as has the money for waterproofing the South. Where has the South Australian Labor government been? Nowhere to be seen. It has taken three years for them to be so embarrassed that they have come to the party with a few dollars to put into it. That is how slack this government has been on South Australia's water future.

I had this discussion with the minister the other day while we were examining the Auditor-General's Report. I invite every member to pick up the Waterproofing Adelaide document and look at pages 14 and 15. Look at the graphs which clearly indicate that, when that document was drafted and released back in 2005, we could see that with the continuation of the drought under drought conditions in about 2007-2008 Adelaide's water consumption was going to be greater than its supply. So, we have known that and the government has known that for at least two years, if not three or four years. It is not anything new, yet the minister denied it here in the house. It is plain as day in the document.

The minister might suggest that we did not know that the drought was going to continue, and that has been the downfall of this government, because they hoped and prayed that it would rain and they did nothing, they sat on their hands, just hoping that it would rain. The reality is that we have had a drought across the Murray-Darling Basin and the catchment at least since 2002. This has been going on for five or six years. Again, this government has sat on its hands and done nothing.

Since I have taken over the role of shadow minister for water security, I have made it my business to get around, particularly in metropolitan Adelaide, to see some of the fine work that is being done. Some fantastic work has been done in South Australia and in Adelaide. Unfortunately, very little, if any of it, has been done by the state Labor government. Some terrific work has been done by local government, particularly that by the Salisbury council, and I think that everybody here knows about the aquifer storage and recovery program that is being run by the Salisbury council.

Everybody knows about the water reuse program and involvement that GH Michells, the company at Salisbury, has with that project. It is a fantastic project but why has it not been replicated across metropolitan Adelaide? Where has the state government been? The state government's attitude to stormwater is to get it to the sea as quickly as you can and get it out of the way. All the government is worried about is flood mitigation and it has failed to see the potential.

The federal coalition has agreed to fund a project not unlike what the Salisbury council has done at Parafield at the Adelaide Airport. They have agreed to \$40 million, which is what I think they have said they would put towards it. That would have the potential of saving 50 gegalitres of water a year which is water that today runs out to the sea through the Sturt Creek, Brownhill Creek and the creek on the northern side of the airport. Fifty gegalitres a year is about one-quarter of Adelaide's water.

If you talk to people like Peter Gillan at the CSIRO about the work that he has been doing for a long time and the serious study that has been going on over the past four years, you will see that you can put stormwater into the aquifer, particularly after you have put it through a wetlands cleansing process as has been done at Salisbury, and put it into the aquifer, draw it out again 12 months later, and the water quality is such that you could put it straight into our pipelines (our distribution network). You do not have to have great dams to utilise this water source. The water source is there before our very eyes.

The research is being done in our universities and academic institutions. The government is taking no notice. The government has failed the people of South Australia. Go up along the river and talk to the irrigators—and I will be talking to a few of them in a minute or two—and see how they are going to get along, because those permanent plantings right along the river—billions of dollars worth of trees, crops that produce year in and year out, and give the state an economic benefit of about \$1.5 billion per year—will be lost. Grapevines, orange orchards, other citrus, stone fruit—the trees will be lost.

I spoke to a grower earlier this week. He and his family have invested \$7 million. They were hoping to get their first crop this year. He told me that his almond trees currently have a crop with the potential of \$700,000 if he could water it. He told me that they have borrowed another \$1 million, and they bought some water, but it is not enough to keep them alive, and he is now expecting to lose the lot. He will not pick the crop; it will not save the trees from death. And the government has done nothing.

I have put to this minister that this government made a commitment under the Living Murray project to source 35 gegalitres of water. Currently, I think 13 or 14 gegalitres has already

been found and put aside for the Living Murray project. Why doesn't the government go into the market at the moment and buy the balance of that 21 or 22 gigalitres of water—buy it and make that water available? The government's commitment is not to put it into the Living Murray project for another two years. Why doesn't it buy the water now—it will have to have to buy it at some stage—and utilise what is available out of those licences today to help save some of those permanent plantings?

What did the minister say? Her answer to me in the house the other day was: 'Well, the New South Wales government is not keen for us to go into the market.' The growers on the river are not keen to see their crops die. I am amazed that the state government can stand back and do nothing, when for about \$70 million it can go into the market and buy enough water to at least make sure that those crops survive.

The Hon. R.J. McEwen: How much?

Mr WILLIAMS: About \$70 million, your colleague the minister told me last week.

The Hon. R.J. McEwen interjecting:

Mr WILLIAMS: I was told \$70 million by your minister. The government should buy it, and see if she can save those crops—

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

Mr VENNING (Schubert) (12:18): I rise to support the motion very capably put by the member for Hammond. It goes on from my speech, in the house yesterday, in relation to the problems that we are having. My speech yesterday was about water transfers, and how long it has taken for people to transfer their water, and to get the water to the people who have permanent plantings, and also to get the money. I want to know how the department can find funding to pay water meter readers and inspectors to cruise the River Murray in ski boats on weekends looking for those misusing water and doing the wrong thing but cannot find enough staff to be employed by the department to process water transfers.

The minister spoke to me yesterday after my speech in the house, but the fact remains that there is still a huge backlog of seven or eight weeks on these transfers. In the words of one department employee: they are under-resourced. It is clear that the situation is totally unacceptable. To place even more stress upon those who are already enduring tough times is a slap in the face to farmers and irrigators. Regional South Australians need the Rann government to work with them, not against them, in finding a solution to the problems. I certainly want to pay tribute to all those people who have contacted my office. One in particular is keeping me abreast of the problems they are having.

I note the speech by the member for Finniss was good, as is his wont—a capable public speaker. I think the member for Hammond talked about the history of the Lower Murray irrigators. I was vitally involved with that. To see that happen, it is quite serious. With the Lower Murray irrigators, the actions were started by the previous Liberal government and finished by the previous minister, Mr Hill. With the weather and the seasons being the way they are, it is sad to see that, since we have done these things, what were once lovely green flats are now, in many instances, dead or dying and reverting back to the native sandfire swamps that they used to be. That is very sad indeed. Nobody intended for that to happen, but it has.

We have several options in relation to our problems, and they have already been highlighted by the members for Hammond and Finniss. I, too, went to Professor Cullen's presentation at the NRM committee this morning, and it certainly was a wake-up call to all South Australians. Most of us knew about this, but it was interesting to hear what he had to say. We certainly are now entering a time of great crisis in South Australia, and there is no sense in trying to beat around the bush or over-inflate or underestimate it. We have over allocated our water use for the entire length of the River Murray—not just in South Australia—and that needs to be addressed.

We still do not have a sign-off on the federal government's River Murray initiative, and that is an absolute disgrace. The state Labor government (particularly Victoria) is playing politics with this issue. It is not an easy thing to say but, hopefully, after the federal election we will get some commonsense in relation to this issue, because the \$10 billion is there for immediate use to try to alleviate the problems that we have. As \$3 billion of it has been allocated to buy water back, it should be bought back instantly and put to good use to try to save the river.

As I have said in the house, water trade is bad in South Australia and it is taking far too long. Professor Cullen suggests that the water registries of Victoria and New South Wales are

much better than ours. We on this side of the house have been saying that for some months. He suggests that we either copy the Victorian model or put our scheme under theirs and work together. Better still, why don't we have a national River Murray water registry and deal with one? That is commonsense. Again, that is cooperation between the states, but that is not happening.

What sort of a crisis do we need for something to snap and for these things to happen? It is in the overall best interests of everybody, on all sides of politics, that we do that. I think it was a good wake-up call. I do think Professor Cullen was trying hard this morning not to be political, but I think he was pretty fair, even though a couple of questions were pretty political, particularly when he was asked about desalination and he said that it was just one of many options that we have to have. It is the same water; it is the same river, and we must fight against the holding of water upstream to the detriment of South Australia and, importantly, the health of our river.

We know about the lakes, as the member for Hammond very capably mentioned them in his speech, particularly when he talked about whether the government should or should not build this levee. I think it has been proven by very strong advocacy by both the member for Hammond and Finniss that it is not a good idea. I originally thought it was a good idea, but they have convinced me that it is not, and I think the government has also come to that conclusion. Anyway, it is too late for that option, because we are there now—we have arrived.

What will happen when the water level drops to the point where saltwater incursion starts from both sides and Adelaide's supply is switched off or, as the member for Finniss said, when blue-green algae comes in? It is already happening at Morgan; I believe the salt levels have doubled in recent weeks. What are we going to do when we cannot pump water from the River Murray?

The Hon. R.J. McEwen: What's your suggestion?

Mr VENNING: How do we cope, minister for primary industries?

The Hon. R.J. McEwen interjecting:

Mr VENNING: Well, there are options. With proper use, Adelaide hopefully has 10 to 12 months in its reservoirs. What about the other two pumping stations on the River Murray: Morgan, which supplies the Iron Triangle, Port Pirie, Whyalla and Port Augusta? What are the options there if we cannot pump the River Murray? There are three reservoirs that I know of in that scheme: Bundaleer, Beetaloo and Baroota. I do not know what position they are in to supply three cities. I very much doubt that they could cope with that, and I do not know what the answer is there. Also, there is the Swan Reach pumping station which, of course, supplies the Barossa Valley. If that was not able to operate, we have options in the Para and Warren reservoirs but, again, what are the logistics of being able to turn around the systems and being able to pump water directly from these? And I think in that instance we would have a problem with filtering water because the filtration plant is at Swan Reach. So, all this, and the government still prevaricates in relation to what it should and should not do. It just hopes it will rain—as do we all—and we now have to go into crisis management.

I agree with Professor Cullen that we have to have several options—not just one, in case one fails. I believe we should have put in a desalination plant at the same time Western Australia did, because theirs is now operating. It should be our final fallback position. In other words, it would supply enough water for Adelaide to drink and emergency supplies—for drinking and basic ablutions, nothing else. That is what we should have put in so that Adelaide will always have enough minimal water to live and carry out ablutions and very little else, but we do not have that. We do not have that fallback position. There is no reason this drought cannot go into a third year or even a fourth.

In fact, if you read the Bible and believe history, back in the days of Joseph and the pharaohs, the famine was seven years, and there are those amongst us who believe that could happen—a seven year famine, not a drought, and that is pretty frightening. A couple of nights ago I picked up the Bible and found the story and read the whole thing entirely from the Bible. It is there for us all to read, and it is historic and actually happened. To read what happened back then is a very sobering thing. The Egyptians prepared themselves, through the wisdom of Joseph, and stored grain in the time of plenty and, when the famine came, they had enough to supply their own needs as well as the needs of those around them. Of course, that is why the Israelites went to Egypt.

We should have been doing the same thing, and we have not been doing that in Australia. Farmers over the years have always stored their hay and grain in barns for these times. We do not

do that any more. It is not encouraged. I have said in the house before that somehow the minister for primary industries ought to be doing things such as encouraging farmers to store the fodder. There used to be tax incentives to do that, but not any more. It is not his fault, but we should be doing things like that. So we should prepare ourselves so that in times of great shortage we have grain stored in our barns. I certainly support the motion and commend the member for Hammond on his representations regarding the River Murray. I certainly feel for him, because it is mainly his electorate that is affected.

Debate adjourned on motion of the Hon. S.W. Key.

MURRAY RIVER, LOWER LAKES

Mr PENGILLY (Finniss) (12:29): I move:

That this house condemns the state government for its environmental treatment of the Lower Lakes of the River Murray and the subsequent effect on communities living around those lakes.

Water, water, water—or, more to the point, the lack of water, and specifically in this case the enormous environmental consequences of what are indeed the social and economic consequences of what is happening on the lower lakes and the lower reaches of the River Murray, part of which is contained within my electorate, and I talk specifically about Goolwa, Hindmarsh Island and Currency Creek. Also, of course, the member for Hammond has part of the lakes and, indeed, the member for MacKillop has some as well.

At this morning's hearing of the Natural Resources Committee, Professor Peter Cullen made specific comment about the devastating effect that is being felt in the Coorong and the Lower Lakes. He said that it may already be too late to save the Coorong. This is an absolute tragedy. The Lower Lakes and the Coorong are so environmentally important to the Murray and they are economically important to the people who live and work in the area.

What has been concerning me for some time—and the opposition has asked questions (to which we have not received satisfactory answers from the Minister for the River Murray)—are the barrages. They are leaking quite severely. The minister has informed me that the government has attempted to fix them, but people on Hindmarsh Island who have a close interest in the activities surrounding the barrages are telling me that they are just a disaster, quite frankly. They are leaking huge amounts of seawater back into the lakes and salinity in the lakes is rising rapidly.

According to Professor Peter Cullen, there will be an enormous die-off of fish the length and breadth of the Murray very soon. I do not want to talk disaster, but, unfortunately, it is about time we faced the reality of what is happening down there. Henry Jones, one of the longstanding fishermen who fishes the lakes, has an incredible wealth of knowledge about the lakes. Gary Hera-Singh is also a fisherman of longstanding. These people have an innate knowledge of the lakes and they are able to give a long-time history and tell us about what is going on down there.

Salinity in the lakes and the movement of the water is causing environmental concern to many people. It is bizarre that one can sit on one of the jetties in Goolwa and catch mullet. That will have a devastating effect. We built these barrages around 1930, specifically to create economic activity. Man changed the environment of the Lower Lakes. Now, as a result of the drought and the lack of water, the freshwater lakes and the whole environmental ecology built up around those lakes, including the incredible bird and fish life, is now under severe stress. Undoubtedly, it will rain again but whether the environment and the ecology has changed forever and a day remains to be seen.

Indeed, my colleague the member for Frome—a former premier of this state—did comment to me some time ago that he thought that, if the barrages did open and seawater did enter in any large amount, it would take 20 to 25 years for the situation to be remedied when the flows recommence. I say to members of both houses that, if they want an insightful trip across the barrages, they should do it. There is no-one better suited to show the way in which things work down there than Mr Phil Hollow who works for the Department for Environment and Heritage. He works at Wyndgate and he knows the area intimately. It is fascinating to do that, and perhaps the Natural Resources Committee of the parliament may see fit to do a trip down there, go across the barrages and travel to Meningie to look at the fascinating array of fish and bird life.

There is no question in my mind that the state government has failed dismally to maintain the water flows into the lakes and, indeed, has failed to deal with the problem of the Coorong, and so on. I believe that what is happening is tantamount to a criminal act. Quite frankly, the Rann government deserves condemnation for allowing this situation to occur to the extent that it has.

Just recently we experienced extremely strong winds from the south-west, and the water all but disappeared from around Goolwa, apart from in the deeper reaches. Many boats were grounded. This will be a consequence of where we are at currently with respect to the lack of water there. Of course, that will have a subsequent effect on the environment and the ecology—the fish, the birds and everything else—not to mention the effect that it is having on the economy and the people who live and work around those lakes.

Some places in that area at Langhorne Creek and Currency Creek have had enormous amounts of money put into them, and industries have developed that have changed the way in which people work and play; and, indeed, they have changed the environment. With respect to the water in Langhorne Creek, on Tuesday I was talking to Lucy Wilson from Bremerton Wines. She seems to think that this year they will probably get a vintage, because they have had nearly four inches of rain over the last two or three weeks, and that will probably get them through. However, they cannot irrigate out of the lakes, because the water is saline. I am led to believe that last year the sodium levels in the grapes were so high that they were almost borderline with respect to exporting the wine. It is just fortunate that we have received the amount of rain that we have in that area, because it will assist that industry.

Environmentally, the situation is now bordering on a disaster. I do not know how the Premier and the Minister for the River Murray can sleep at night. Also, I do not know how members of the Labor Party and the government can sit there and not rise to talk on the Murray and the disaster that is being perpetrated in that regard by the lack of action of the state government to do something about supplying alternative water sources for Adelaide and making provision to allow at least some flow to come down into those lakes to maintain the environment and the ecology of that area. As I said, I think it is a criminal act, and it concerns me greatly.

I know that my constituents who live around the bottom ends of the lake are in despair. They contact me regularly. I have held public meetings in Goolwa about the matter, and these people have raised their grave concerns. Some very active and keen environmentalists who live in my electorate have followed what is going on down there with great interest, and they are extremely sad about what is happening. So much of this could have been avoided if a few people had got their act into gear and done something about it earlier on. Here we are, five years down the track—we have had five years of drought—and we still have no alternatives with respect to the water supply for Adelaide.

We will, no doubt, get bells and whistles announcements in some way, shape or form. We will have good news announcements from the Premier, and perhaps one of these days we may have a desalination plant built (and I have spoken before about that). Building a desalination plant and taking the pressure off the Murray and allowing water to flow down the Murray back into the lakes system and into the Coorong would do such enormous environmental good for the area that it defies comprehension; and it beggars belief that this government has allowed the current situation to go further than natural causes would have allowed it to go. Natural causes is one thing. We cannot do anything about drought, it is a part of the Australian environment. It always has been and it always will be.

We will have good years and bad years, and we just have to live with that. That is just a way of life. Unfortunately, we have this situation in South Australia at the moment. We have always lived with drought. We live with wet years and good years, and it is called an average. However, the irrigators have never not had water, and this is the problem. They have built their economies and environments around the fact that they have always had this water. So, now they are in despair over their own businesses, their families and their lives.

They are in despair over the environment of the lakes, the lake system and the Murray. The Natural Resources Committee of the parliament is a good committee. It puts up good recommendations which are poo-pooed by the minister in another a place, and that concerns me. It is a good, active committee, which looks across a broad spectrum of the parliamentary process. I was most interested to see Peter Cullen at that committee this morning and have the opportunity to listen to him.

I would like to see the committee visit the lakes. I will arrange the day. The committee should just see what is happening environmentally and ecologically in those lakes. It is absolutely critical. If other members of the parliament were able to go down with them—make it a day out, just see what is happening, talk to people and look at the effects—I am sure that the members of the government who are sitting in the second and third rows particularly may start prompting the

cabinet to do something more about getting on with trying to heal and fix up some of the damage that is happening in the Murray, and particularly in the lower lakes.

I hope that my motion will be supported. Again, I condemn the government for its lack of action, and I look forward to hearing other speakers.

Dr McFETRIDGE (Morphett) (12:42): I will not keep the house long, but I do rise to support this motion most firmly. The first major conference I attended as a member of parliament in 2002 was the Australian National Conference on Large Dams.

Members interjecting:

Dr McFETRIDGE: That conference was held at the Stamford Grand down at the bay. One of the keynote speakers spoke on the health of the River Murray, and he said, 'It's not a river: it is a series of long lakes.' It has been very poorly managed over many years and now we are more than paying for that mismanagement, and we are continuing to see mismanagement under this government. I speak on this motion because, about 10 years ago, my family had a farm at Wellington. We owned a lot of property just south of Wellington.

We had about the last four kilometres of the river on our eastern boundary and we had the top of the lake on the western boundary. We had one of the last private flood irrigation allotments on the river. Unfortunately, the licence had been sold off up river. It had been sold off to some almond growers in Waikerie, I believe. This land, which was actually on the southern end, was about one metre below sea level and on the northern end about .6 of a metre below sea level.

The salt accumulation there was really quite an amazing disaster to see. Fortunately, we were able to recover with some salt-tolerant crops, and we grazed it quite heavily before that with cattle. We were able to restore it to not quite pristine condition but, certainly, it was a much better block than when we first went onto it. The highland irrigation licence had also been sold off, and so the sand, because of the treatment it had received, was drifting badly. We were able to rehabilitate some of that.

This is just a reflection of what happens to properties around there if the water is taken off them and if they are not managed properly. A mention was made by the member for Finnis about the movement of water down there. We had levees around the lake and the river on the flood irrigation side that were about 2.5 to 3 metres above the normal lake-pool level when no wind was blowing. When the south-westerlies came in you could see that lake rise nearly to the top of those levees. It would rise over two metres on the Wellington side of the lake, and you would have boats on their keels at Goolwa—and that was when the lake was about a metre lower. I think it is about 0.6 of a metre now. It is a disaster waiting to happen. It needs to be managed. The only person who will be able to manage that is someone who is much higher qualified and much more powerful than anyone in this place.

I visited the area a few weeks ago. I went to see what the lake was doing and to look at where we had the farm just to compare and contrast it with now and refresh my memory. I went to Milang and Clayton. I spoke to a few locals at Clayton. They were very concerned. I was alarmed to see the level of the lake. We had been looking at buying a property between Milang and Clayton. It had 380 acres of leasehold on the lakeside, which flooded sometimes, but it is as dry as a bone now. Remembering the condition of the property we used to own at Wellington and comparing it with now, it is as plain as the nose on my face that it is a disaster waiting to happen, with the lake dropping as we speak.

We all know that there is a huge evaporation rate from that lake. As the shadow minister for transport, I went to look at the ferries. The thing that alarmed me was that the approach and the departure from the ferries are very steep. In fact, while we were waiting on the Adelaide side to go across, a bus driver on the other side had been instructed to turn around because the bus could not get on to the ferry. When I drove our sedan onto the ferry, it was much steeper than I remembered and the departure was also much steeper.

I spoke to a truckie from Milang not long ago, as he was departing the ferry at Wellington. His truck had a tri-axle back and, because the load shifted to the very back axle, some of the springs broke. He was of the belief that it will not be very long before the ferry at Wellington will be out of action for heavy vehicles and, in my opinion, it may be out of the action for even smaller vehicles unless something is done about the approach and departure ramps.

We crossed the river using the ferry at Jerois and the situation was exactly the same because obviously it is all part of the same pool. I hope the Department of Transport is doing

something about this. I hope it is monitoring it. The traffic volumes are not huge, but they are vital to the local community at Jervois if they have to drive to Murray Bridge. For instance, if they had business in Tailem Bend, they would have to use the Swanport Bridge, which is a fair trek for them. Certainly, if you are one of the property owners on the western side of the river in the Langhorne Creek area having to truck all your freight and produce across to the Eastern States or receive goods, it will be much more expensive than it ever was—and there is already a lot of hardship in the area.

The dairy communities are obviously suffering very badly. I have friends with dairies down there. They are considering selling up. I think there are about 20,000 dairy cows between Mannum and the lakes. Many of those dairy cows have already gone, as a result of some of the structural changes to the swamps—and it is a good thing that the swamps have been changed. It is a pity that the dairies have suffered so much. With this impending issue of the lake continuing to drop, then we will have to deal with a further crisis.

What is the solution? I do not have an immediate answer to that because I do not have the technical knowledge to manage that, but I do know that we cannot fill up a dam four times the size of Mount Bold by sucking more water out the Murray. That is not the answer to it. I think the answer is to look at the amount of water which is kept in the catchment—and I do not mean just in the large dams such as Dartmouth, I mean in the smaller dams throughout the catchment. We should let the river run. I know historically that people have been able to walk across the river. I have photographs of families with their horses and buggies having picnics in the river bed.

Nowadays, if we want to use the river, we should be allowing the river to run and not continue to extract at the rate we are. How you manage that and maintain the economies is a very difficult issue, but it is one which we will have to face if the drought does not break and the inflows do not return to what they have been in the past.

What I expect from this government is to make sure that any strategies they put in place are ones that can be reversed. As to the weir at Wellington, having lived there—I know people at Nalpa station and on the other side—it will be a very difficult logistical exercise. The engineering cost alone will be very expensive. When I heard the Premier say that it would cost \$20 million, my immediate reaction was that you would have to put a zero on the end of that, because I know that the river by our place at Wellington was 75 metres deep, and it is very deep going into the lake. Obviously, it shallows out, but the mud is something like 20 to 30 metres deep. It is incredibly deep there, so a number of engineering solutions will have to be worked on.

I hope that the people who are living around those lakes and who are suffering are not going to be put in a position where their suffering has no end and those communities end up being ghost communities. It is a tragedy. It is a natural tragedy in many ways but, as I said, it has been exacerbated by the fact that we do not have a river, we have a series of long lakes, and we need to make sure that we learn lessons from the current situation and manage it far more carefully. I support the motion.

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (12:51): I rise to support the motion moved by the member for Finnis and to speak about the lack of environmental thought where the Lower Murray and lakes are concerned. That is no better illustrated than when Premier Rann made the announcement on 6 November last year saying, 'We'll just build a weir at Wellington for \$20 million.' That is only about 2 per cent of the eventual cost of such a structure, and the fact that there is no solid base to build it on means that it would have to be constantly maintained.

In regard to the weir, when I asked a question of Professor Peter Cullen this morning, it was interesting that he indicated that, if it ever did get built, it may only hold back unusable water—and that is my position. It is all right to sacrifice tens of thousands of people below Wellington, but for what reason? If there is no reason and you would have to end up building a desalination plant at Murray Bridge off-takes to feed Adelaide with water, it would be absolutely crazy to put a structure down there.

Apart from the fact that the EIS has only just been commenced in the past couple of weeks, which is outrageous in itself, I hope the government is doing the engineering studies to see what will happen as water levels continue to fall lower and the water quality suffers and looking at the effects not just below the proposed weir but above it. It would be the biggest white elephant that this government ever built, if it went ahead, and it would just render—

An honourable member interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: If the minister wants to speak to the motion, that's fine.

The Hon. R.J. McEwen: That's right. Bang the old drum.

Mr PEDERICK: Yes, I will bang the drum, because I am responsible for my constituents and I will bang the drum as hard as I can.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr PEDERICK: Thank you, Mr Speaker, for your protection. I will move on to another subject: the leaking barrages. Yes, they are operated through the Murray-Darling Basin Commission but it is SA Water that operates them. What do we have down there? People banging in stocks—bits of PVC, bits of poly pipe and triangular shaped wedges trying to hold the log shut. This is almost Stone Age stuff. The government should be lobbying the federal government if it does not have the funds to completely refurbish the barrages; it should lobby the Murray-Darling Basin Commission, and get on with the job.

There are people around the lakes who are talking about spending half a million dollars to put in private desalination plants, because their livelihoods are just dissolving in front of them. I am well aware of the fact that there is a drought, but it seems that everyone on the Labor side, including the water security minister, who masquerades as a National Party member when it suits, does not seem to realise that the drought has been right throughout this basin for five years. For five years there has been a drought in the Murray-Darling Basin, and that is where the catchment is.

The Hon. K.A. Maywald: Who is responsible for the drought?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member is out of her place.

Mr PEDERICK: Thank you, Mr Speaker, for your protection. I am pleased that you can act. The leaking barrage is causing major distress in the Lower Lakes. We have salinity ingress (not only from there), salinity from ground water, and salinity from upstream causing major issues in the Lower Lakes. There is a psychological effect from the proposed weir. I wonder if the so-called water security minister has talked to local GPs in the area, who have had to put up with people who are close to suicidal because of the proposal to build a weir at Wellington.

There are major issues with the vineyard industry at Langhorne Creek, which is looking for water, and other industries down there. A program that was going to be instigated, which had controlled flows through the barrages, never eventuated. It was held up through bureaucratic bungling. At the time when it was first discussed there were enough flows on certain days to flush the barrages.

I will close now, because I have noticed the time. I just want to make people aware of what is happening in the Lower Lakes and in the Lower Murray as far as the dairy industry is concerned. Dairy herds are being sold off. Dairying in the Lower Murray and Lower Lakes will probably never recover, apart from the fact that the government has spent only half of the money allocated for the Lower Murray rehabilitation plan. People are parking herds interstate and selling them.

The Hon. K.A. Maywald interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: No; it is not dishonest, minister; you might want to check your numbers. I will close in saying that one constituent indicated that they would rather shoot the stock, because they are so proud of it, than march it off to the meatworks. It is terrible that this is happening. It is all right to say that, yes, they have been allocated 22 per cent and they have 6 per cent more water, but the access issues in the Lower Lakes are just frightening. I commend the motion.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mrs Geraghty.

TOBACCO PRODUCTS REGULATION (INDIRECT ORDERS) AMENDMENT BILL

Received from the Legislative Council and read a first time.

[Sitting suspended from 12:58 to 14:00]

ANIMAL WELFARE REGULATIONS

The Hon. G.M. GUNN (Stuart): Presented a petition signed by 624 residents of South Australia, requesting the house to urge the government to disallow the regulation change to raise the weight of calves to 200kg and to remove clause 44(5) of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Bill 2007.

PAPERS

The following papers were laid on the table:

By the Minister for Health (Hon. J.D. Hill)—

Balaklava and Riverton Health Service Incorporated—Report 2006-07
 Chiropractic and Osteopathy Board of South Australia—Report 2006-07
 Eastern Eyre Health and Aged Care Incorporated—Report 2006-07
 Eudunda and Kapunda Health Service Incorporated—Report 2006-07
 Mid North Health—Report 2006-07
 Occupational Therapy Board of South Australia—Report 2006-07
 Physiotherapy Board of South Australia—Report 2006-07
 Podiatry Board of South Australia—Report 2006-07
 Quorn Health Services Incorporated—Report 2006-07
 Repatriation General Hospital Incorporated—Report 2006-07
 SA Ambulance Service—Report 2006-07 (erratum)
 Waikerie Health Services Incorporated—Report 2006-07

By the Minister Assisting the Premier in the Arts (Hon. J.D. Hill)—

History Trust of South Australia—Report 2006-07
 Libraries Board of South Australia—Report 2006-07
 State Theatre Company of South Australia—Report 2006-07
 Windmill Performing Arts Company—Report 2006-07

By the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries (Hon. R.J. McEwen), for the Minister for the River Murray (Hon. K.A. Maywald)—

Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation, Department of—Report 2006-07
 Murray-Darling Basin Commission—Report 2006-07.

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I draw to honourable members' attention the presence in the chamber today of members of the Tea Tree Gully VIEW Club (guests of the member for Florey), and students from Trinity South College (guests of the member for Light).

QUESTION TIME

MURRAY RIVER IRRIGATORS

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH (Waite—Leader of the Opposition) (14:03): My question is to the Premier. Why will he not, on behalf of the state government, write a cheque today to establish a fund to provide loans to irrigators in South Australia to purchase temporary water on the open market?

In October this year the state Liberals called for low cost loans in its 10-point plan to help River Murray farmers and irrigators. Yesterday the Premier committed the state Labor government to a new policy of support for a plan to provide loan funds to irrigators to purchase water on the open market, a very significant step. In his statement to the house yesterday, made in the context of a federal election campaign, the Premier called on the Prime Minister (but not Mr Rudd) to commit funds to such a scheme. The federal government is in caretaker mode and it is uncertain exactly when a federal government may be in a position to act. But the state government has strong tax revenues and is in a position to act now. Irrigators have rallied on the steps of parliament today calling for the Premier to immediately help them.

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

The SPEAKER: Order! I know what the point of order is. The Leader of the Opposition has gone beyond what is necessary to explain the question. The Minister for Water Security.

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD (Chaffey—Minister for the River Murray, Minister for Water Security, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Small Business, Minister Assisting the Minister for Industry and Trade) (14:04): Thank you, Mr Speaker. The question that the Leader of the Opposition asks is one that needs to be answered in this place, and it needs to be answered in the context of what has already been achieved. What this state government has been doing over the last—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order, members on my left! The Minister for Water Security.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD: Since the drought really started to bite hard in 2006 when we saw a significant reduction in inflows into the River Murray system, the South Australian government has—

Mrs REDMOND: I have a point of order, sir. The member for Mount Gambier just called the entire opposition hypocrites and he suggested that that is not unparliamentary. I believe it is unparliamentary and that he should be asked to withdraw.

The SPEAKER: If the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries did call the opposition—or anyone in the chamber—hypocrites, I direct him to withdraw.

The Hon. R.J. McEWEN: I withdraw.

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD: Given that it looked as though 2006 was going to be an extremely difficult year, the South Australian government established a senior water security advisory group and a senior water security task force. We established drought response teams within each of the departments. What we did through that process was to deal with all the immediate issues—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order, members on my left!

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! Members on both sides will come to order. The minister has the call.

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD: Thank you, sir. Through that process we have been dealing one-on-one with a range of different issues across the Murray-Darling Basin region. We appointed coordinators—above Lock 1, Neil Andrew, and, below Lock 1, Dean Brown—to work directly with those communities to establish a range of networks within those regions to get information out and to get advice from irrigators and communities about what needs to be done to support the communities. Within that framework we have been able to deal with many of the issues that have been facing irrigators during 2006-07. What has happened is that we have seen a continuation of the drought this year. The South Australian government has issued about \$70 million worth of drought support.

Mr Williams interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! I apologise to the minister for interrupting her. I warn the member for MacKillop.

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD: We have announced \$70 million in drought relief packages. Many of the provisions are available to irrigators but, specifically, we have waived the fees on transfers for water licences for irrigators. We have waived NRM fees and we have ensured that they have had significant access to workshops and primary industries expertise and to working with industry groups to establish mechanisms by which information can be passed on to irrigators as to how they may better deal with the issues they are facing on their properties because of the low irrigation allocations.

Also, we have had to set aside the Murray-Darling sharing arrangements. We had to renegotiate them for the first time since the agreement was established. Those water-sharing arrangements do not cater for the current low amounts of water available in the system, and had the old water-sharing arrangements been maintained South Australia would be 100 gigalitres worse off now—100,000 megalitres worse off—which equates to over 16 per cent of the allocation to irrigators. We have had to negotiate a better deal to get more water into the system to enable us to have some allocation for irrigators. It is a very tight environment in which we work.

Only a portion of the water that falls into New South Wales is actually calculated in the Southern Murray-Darling Basin for distribution under the Murray-Darling Basin Commission Rules. The tributaries in New South Wales belong to New South Wales; the tributaries in Victoria belong to Victoria. They have access to other water that they can allocate to their irrigators. Unfortunately, our irrigators only have available to them water that is shared amongst the Murray-Darling Basin

partners through the Murray-Darling Basin infrastructure. That means there is disparity between states as to how much water is available for irrigators in different regions, but do not think for a moment that anyone is doing it easy. It is particularly difficult out there right across the entire Murray-Darling Basin region.

I intend to go through a document which has been handed out to irrigators out the front who are absolutely desperate to see a way forward. It is a 10-point plan to absolutely nowhere. No. 1 is 'Leasing water. Establish a market mechanism for the lease of water licences...'. It is there. It already exists. No. 2 is 'Financial assistance. Review Rural Adjustment Schemes with the view to providing repayable low cost loans to permanent growers for the purchase of water.' That is an interesting one, because the rural adjustment scheme was a federal scheme, and we support the opposition in that. It is just a pity that the opposition did not support the irrigators. The support for the regional adjustment schemes does not exist with the federal coalition. The federal coalition government has rejected outright any revisiting of the rural adjustment schemes.

Through our senior drought advisor to the Premier, we have worked with the irrigation community—with the South Australian Murray Irrigators—to develop a scheme that we can put forward to the federal government to say, 'Hey, you have \$10 billion dollars. You have allocated \$10 billion to improving water supply and underpinning security of supply to irrigation communities.' That is what it is about. The \$10 billion is about reducing overallocation, dealing with the leaky channels, better infrastructure delivery and saving the water and getting the Murray-Darling Basin back to a more sustainable level. That is what the \$10 billion plan is all about, and we support it 100 per cent. In fact, this government—Premier Rann—led the way to get an independent authority established.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister has the call.

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD: The South Australian government led the charge to have an independent authority to head up the national management of the Murray-Darling Basin in Australia. We need to ensure that this process does not just hand the management from one lot of politicians to another lot of politicians who have the same communities of interest and the same pressures. New South Wales and Victoria will always have the numbers. South Australia is at the end of the line, so we fought the charge.

Our Premier, Mike Rann, got Premier Beattie on side in Queensland, and we delivered a change in the federal government's position to ensure that there was an independent authority. We worked with New South Wales, and the New South Wales government has supported us. And guess what: Victoria has not. Victoria has stood outside this and said, 'Blow you, Joe. We're all right. We've got what we need over here, and we're not giving up any of it.' That is the Victorians' attitude towards water.

We want a national plan: we have been pushing for a national plan. We led the charge with the debate this year. We have been leading it for years. We were the first jurisdiction to appoint an Independent Commissioner to the Murray-Darling Basin. We put John Scanlon up there in January last year, and we have been pushing for more water for the environment and more water for a sustainable River Murray for decades. Members opposite know that, because they have also been doing it. When some of them were in government, they were pushing for that as well.

We had a bipartisan approach to water, and we went to Canberra, both sides pushing for an improved system for the River Murray. The Living Murray was achieved: we achieved the first step towards that with the Living Murray initiative. South Australia has invested in projects in Victoria, we are investing in projects in South Australia and we will invest in projects in New South Wales that will deliver water for sustainable water into the River Murray.

If you get water into the River Murray, gravity sends it down our way, in case members opposite do not understand that. The importance of getting the river fixed up in the jurisdictions where it has been overallocated cannot be understated. If members opposite think we have to fix it by taking water from our irrigators here in South Australia, then they have another think coming. That is what the opposition's alternative plan is. They want us to take water from irrigators here, and we will not do that.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

Ms Chapman: Give her a bucket.

The SPEAKER: I warn the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. If she speaks—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! Any member who yells out while the Speaker is on his feet will be named.

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD: No. 4 in this plan to nowhere is to fast-track desalination. Well, guess what: that is already occurring. This government is committed to desalination—not one, but two plants. We are committed to the BHP plant to take the Upper Spencer Gulf off the River Murray, and we have also committed to desalination for Adelaide. There will be more on that in the not too distant future. The next one—

Mr Pengilly interjecting:

The SPEAKER: I warn the member for Finnis! The Minister for Water Security.

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! I do not require the help of the Attorney-General, either. The Minister for Water Security.

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD: No. 5 states:

Support to Families. Proactively work with the federal government to provide matching state funding and resources for counselling services...

Well, where have you been? We are already doing that and have been doing that since this drought hit. In fact, this government led the charge to get the River Murray corridor EC declared—an irrigation district that normally would not qualify under the existing rules. We worked hard with the federal government to get those rules changed to ensure that the River Murray corridor could be EC declared. That work is already being undertaken. No. 6 is: 'Government jobs in the regions'. I can assure members that government jobs in the regions have been increasing dramatically since we have been improving services in the regions. We have a number of—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD: —service delivery projects where we are focussing our effort to make sure that we have got people out there delivering the services and not in back rooms doing the back-room grunt. We are committed to ensuring that we can save money in the back room to deliver services out in the front room. Now, the other thing is taxation relief. Here is a doozy! No. 7 states:

Taxation Relief. Explore the possibilities of temporary relief from state government taxes and charges, including relief from the Natural Resources Management Levy, Zero Waste Levy, River Murray Levy...payroll tax [and other taxes].

I can assure members that this is the only government that has given relief in payroll tax since I have been in this parliament. Since I have been in this parliament only one government has delivered payroll tax relief. The River Murray Levy, I assume, is the Natural Resources Management Levy. We have already waived that. We have waived that for the portion that people are not using. We have provided for a waiver on that levy. The stamp duties and the fees associated with the trade of water into this state have also been waived. We have waived those fees. We are already doing what this nonsense paper says. No. 8 states:

Buying back over-allocated water licences. Take action to ensure the federal government's \$10 billion rescue package and new governance arrangements for the River Murray are put to buying back over-allocated... licences.

We are the government that led that. This government led the push to get water purchase onto the agenda. Up until January this year the federal government strongly opposed the purchase of water. It still opposes it. The federal government will only say that it will go into the market to purchase water as a last resort after all infrastructure projects have been completed. So, we are talking 10 years down the track before it will make a concerted effort. We need you to be putting pressure on your colleagues federally to get them to get into that marketplace and purchase water.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD: The only jurisdiction that has been out there until just recently when we actually got the Murray-Darling Basin Commission to approve the purchase of water in the system was South Australia. We have been out there buying water in the system, and we have been putting it towards the Living Murray. Now, Lake Bonney, this is a laugh! No. 9 states:

Develop a long-term management plan for Lake Bonney.

Where have you been? You have been fighting with us to get Lake Bonney blocked off, and getting Lake Bonney blocked off saves 28 gigalitres of water for irrigators' allocations. You fought that. You said you didn't want it. Our irrigators needed it.

Mr PENGILLY: I rise on a point of order, Mr Speaker. I understand that someone apart from the media is taking photos in the gallery. I draw it to your attention.

The SPEAKER: Yes.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! I explain to members of the public in the gallery that only press photographers are allowed to photograph from the gallery. Members of the public are not to take photographs from the gallery. The Minister for Water Security.

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD: Members of the opposition went to the Riverland and actively campaigned against the closure of Lake Bonney. The closure of Lake Bonney and the other wetlands was necessary to ensure that we can maximise the amount of water that we have available to allocate to irrigators. Where are they? They have all gone quiet now. You went up there when it suited you, when the papers were running and they were giving us a hard time, and you supported that cause. Now you're jumping on the other cause. It is just not good enough! The last one states:

Lagoons and Backwaters. Assess the impact of the planned closures of lagoons and backwaters along the River Murray and keep communities informed about rehabilitation initiatives.

Well, whoopee! That is exactly what we have been doing. This is a plan that shows no initiatives, has nothing new in it and is just fabricating to a community that is hurting. You are pretending to do something that is already being done. It is an absolute nonsense and you should be ashamed of yourself. One other matter—standing on the steps out the front today, the Leader of the Opposition said that we were investing in a project in Victoria to deliver water to Melbourne. Complete and outright lie. It is not a fact—

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH: Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There is a question coming on that and she will have an opportunity to answer, but that must be withdrawn.

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD: It was in your question.

The SPEAKER: Order! In order to assist the chair to keep order, I ask the minister to withdraw the remark.

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD: I will withdraw the term 'lie' and I will say that the reference to the \$4.1 million for sending water to Melbourne is untrue.

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH: Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There is no need for qualification. Standing orders require—

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH: —for the substance to be withdrawn.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will come to order! The Leader of the Opposition took exception to the word 'lie'. The minister has withdrawn it and replaced what she was saying. That is quite acceptable. The Minister for Water Security.

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD: Thank you, sir. The investment in the project in Victoria is about getting water back for the environment. It is ring-fenced under the Living Murray initiative. It is a project that all jurisdictions, including the commonwealth—your colleagues—have also invested in that returns water from the environment—

Members interjecting:

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD: Sorry, that is, water for the environment. It is irresponsible—

Mr Pederick interjecting:

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

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD: It is irresponsible to mislead the public to the extent that the opposition continues to do so at the expense of those communities who are doing it tough. They need our support; they need your support; and they need you working with us to work on the federal government to get some of that \$10 billion into a plan that can help irrigators through this very difficult time. You should be helping them, not trying to help your own political causes by trying to undermine the effort of this government, Dean Brown and the South Australian Murray Irrigators.

Honourable members: Hear, Hear!

The SPEAKER: Order!

MURRAY RIVER IRRIGATORS

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH (Waite—Leader of the Opposition) (14:22): I have a supplementary question, Mr Speaker.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH: I have a supplementary question to the Premier. Given that he has committed his government to the establishment of a loan scheme to help irrigators, and noting the seriousness of the crisis besetting the Riverland, will he take charge of the water portfolio and provide leadership through this crisis?

The Hon. M.D. RANN (Ramsay—Premier, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Social Inclusion, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Sustainability and Climate Change) (14:22): Can I just say this: let us just make it very clear that the Leader of the Opposition and the Liberal Party do not give a damn about Murray irrigators, and that is the difference because—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. M.D. RANN: —let us just remember that, earlier in the year, they wanted a total surrender to what the federal government wanted. They did not want the independent commission. That is what we fought for and let us remember—

The Hon. I.F. Evans interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The member for Davenport will come to order!

The Hon. M.D. RANN: The fact is that, in exchange for South Australia handing over its powers to the federal government over the River Murray, a promise was made to the nation by the Prime Minister that \$10 billion be made available for a rescue package—and not one single cent has been spent. I will tell you about the scheme being proposed by Dean Brown, because the difference between Dean Brown and you is that Dean Brown is more concerned about the state, the irrigators and the people affected by the drought, rather than playing party politics in an election campaign. I want to ask a question of the Leader of the Opposition: why did he not—

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH: Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier will take his seat. It is not necessary for the Leader of the Opposition to scream his point of order over the Premier, I will sit the Premier down. The Leader of the Opposition has a point of order.

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH: My point of order is simply that standing orders are very clear. The opposition asks the questions: the government answers them, Mr Speaker.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Members interjecting:

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

The Hon. M.D. RANN: Last week I wrote to the Prime Minister and Kevin Rudd and, as I revealed to the house yesterday, I asked that a proportion of that \$10 billion be spent and committed to a loan scheme developed by Dean Brown to assist Riverland irrigators. It is very interesting. While I was contacting John Howard and Kevin Rudd, we saw the Leader of the Opposition meet John Howard (we were told), but did he even raise the issue of the drought or the

irrigators with the Prime Minister? No, because that is the difference—Dean Brown puts state before party, and all you want to do is play games.

MOUNTFORD, REV. J.

Mrs GERAGHTY (Torrens) (14:25): Can the Premier advise the house whether there has been any development in relation to the Mountford case?

The Hon. M.D. RANN (Ramsay—Premier, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Social Inclusion, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Sustainability and Climate Change) (14:25): In August this year charges were dropped against the former St Peters College chaplain, the Reverend John Mountford, who had been extradited to Adelaide from Thailand last year on alleged child sex charges. The case was dropped when the victim of the alleged crime decided that he could not go through with the court trial for the sake of his family and his health. On leaving the country, Mountford made some outrageous comments about the victim, including calling him 'scumbag lowlife'. That was hardly the comment that you would expect from a Christian.

I said back in August, and I say it again about John Mountford, this is supposed to be a man of prayer, but you wonder who and what he really preys upon. I would like to see this man cross-examined in a court of law and, following this despicable outburst by Mountford, the alleged victim has written to me, thanking me for my public support of him. Subsequent to that, the victim has contacted my office asking that I read the contents of this letter to the parliament so that the public has the opportunity of having explained to them fully the reasons why he could not go through with the court trial.

Following legal advice and formal confirmation from the victim's solicitor, I have decided to accede to his request. The letter reads:

Dear Premier

I am the victim of St Peter's College Chaplain John Mountford. I wish to thank you for your public support for his prosecution for the sexual abuse he inflicted upon me while I was a student at the college in the early 1990s. I also wish to thank, through you, the Director of Public Prosecutions, Mr Stephen Pallaras, QC, and his staff, particularly Mr Adam Kimber, Ms Emma Wildman and Ms Caroline Steel and the SA Police Paedophile Task Force, especially Ms Ingrid Olfacias, Ms Melanie Jones and Mr Scott Bowen.

You all have shown great faith in me and I appreciate everything you tried to do to bring Reverend Mountford to justice, including his extradition from Thailand and subsequent prosecution in the District Court. Thank you all for never doubting that the abuse took place. As you would be aware, the criminal proceedings placed me and my family, especially my mother, father and grandmother, under great stress through intrusive questioning by his defence lawyers about our personal lives and motives for wanting Reverend Mountford brought to trial.

In the end, I decided to withdraw my complaint against Reverend Mountford to protect my family from any further anxiety or distress I could not guarantee them that I would survive the trial, given my deteriorating mental health. I now wish to move on with my life, which has been dramatically affected by the abuse I suffered as a young boy and pupil at one of South Australia's so-called 'best' schools. Reverend Mountford last week publicly attacked me which I find despicable, considering that I am a victim of his depraved conduct. I assure you, Reverend Mountford is a paedophile who had a history of preying on young naive boys such as me for his own personal pleasure and gratification.

I know for certain that I was not the only student he abused at St Peters College and that there are others he groomed and took advantage of. I unashamedly admit that my life went totally off the rails throughout my adolescence and young adulthood as a result of the abuse I suffered. I have had enormous difficulty in forming and maintaining relationships. One's first sexual experience should be special, not something forced upon you against your will. I turned to drugs to suppress memories; resorted to petty crime to survive and inflicted great pain on my family as I became unstable and depressed.

I am now proud to say that I recently admitted myself into a private drug rehabilitation program which I successfully completed and am now 12 weeks drug-free. Before my life became a downward spiral I, like other young people had aspirations. Mine was to be a commercial pilot and work for Qantas. Instead, I became deeply depressed whenever I recalled the events of what happened to me. I still feel dirty and ashamed and have attempted suicide on more than one occasion.

My decision to withdraw my complaint came after a discussion with my mother, who has been a pillar of support. In February, just days before the trial against Mountford was due to start, I could not cope with the thought of confronting him in court. I felt like I was going to be put on trial, not him, and it all became too much to me. I took an overdose of pills and spent several days unconscious in the intensive care unit at the Royal Adelaide Hospital.

More recently, my mother told me that she would rather have me alive than see me take my life because of what I was facing from Reverend Mountford's lawyers. An examination of the court transcript will show you they have been relentless in trying to find incriminating information about me, including using private detectives. My family made a decision that we did not need a trial to know Reverend Mountford is guilty of abusing me and is a paedophile. Obviously without the trial proceeding there will always be unanswered questions about Reverend Mountford and his tenure at St Peters College.

For example, why the school condoned an openly and practising homosexual living on its grounds with a 27-year-old Balinese man; why they didn't investigate why one of his students was in a psychiatric hospital when he was sacked for sexually abusing another boy; and how former Archbishop Ian George and the school helped him leave the country so quickly, choosing not to report the incident to police until weeks later.

I hope that this letter helps to reassure you that there are many of us who deeply appreciate what you have done for those who have suffered at the hands of paedophiles like Reverend Mountford.

The alleged victim has signed a letter that came earlier in the year, and, through his lawyers has indicated that he is prepared for his name to be made public. I do not believe it is my role to do so. I just received information from his lawyers prior to coming into question time that he was, in fact, happy for his name to be made public, given the circumstances of the extraordinary attack made after the trial was aborted by Mr Mountford on this young person.

GOULBURN-MURRAY WATER RECOVERY PROJECT

Mr WILLIAMS (MacKillop) (14:33): My question is to the Premier. Why has your government spent \$4.1 million of South Australian taxpayers' money on a Victorian water recovery package with water destined for Melbourne from the same area? On 13 November, during questioning on the Auditor-General's Report, it was revealed that the South Australian government has invested state taxpayers' money in the Goulburn-Murray water recovery package. This same water resource is from that which the Victorian government is planning to pipe 75 gigalitres per year over the Great Divide and into Melbourne.

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD (Chaffey—Minister for the River Murray, Minister for Water Security, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Small Business, Minister Assisting the Minister for Industry and Trade) (14:33): Dear, oh, dear! I answered this question yesterday. I referred to this question in my previous answer, but for the benefit for the member for MacKillop I will go through it again. There is a project entitled the Living Murray. The Living Murray aims to return 500 gigalitres to the River Murray by 2009. It has been signed up to by New South Wales, Victoria, the ACT, the commonwealth and South Australia. There are five partners in the Living Murray.

Mr Williams interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! I have warned the member for MacKillop once. He asked his question: the minister is giving a straightforward answer. He is welcome to have another question if he is not satisfied with the answer. But, until such time, he is to sit there in silence

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD: The Living Murray project process is that jurisdictions are required to put forward water saving projects to enable them to reach targets that each jurisdiction has to achieve under the 500 gigalitre plan. South Australia has a target of 35 gigalitres; Victoria's is about 214 gigalitres.

In Victoria they have put forward a project that has been assessed by the Murray-Darling Basin Commission. It is in the Goulburn-Murray Valley area. It involves a reallocation of water through sales water to take water out of production, and it also involves the decommissioning of Lake Mokoan. That project was assessed through the Murray-Darling Basin Commission. It was ticked off by all the partners, including the state of South Australia and also the federal government.

Then what happens under the Living Murray initiative is that each jurisdiction has the opportunity to invest in those projects, and that water saving can then be, I guess, accrued towards the 500 gigalitre goal. South Australia has the opportunity to invest up to 13 per cent in projects interstate. Many of the projects to deliver water savings in the River Murray system will necessitate investment upstream. South Australia has a fabulous track—

Mr Williams interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for MacKillop a second time. He is on his last call. The Minister for Water Security.

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD: The member for MacKillop again puts forward to this house an untruth. The \$4.1 million is going to a project that is delivering water savings to the Living Murray initiative. If he wants verification of that go and speak to his Liberal Party colleagues who are also investing in that project. It is supported by the Murray-Darling Basin Commission and the water is going into the Living Murray account for the environment. It is going into the River Murray account, ring-fenced, it is within the cap, it is water that is staying in the environment. Obviously, the member for MacKillop does not live on the River Murray. He has no understanding of River

Murray issues, and he has no understanding of what is happening in the Living Murray initiative. It is perhaps about time that he took the time to educate himself.

GOULBURN-MURRAY WATER RECOVERY PROJECT

Mr WILLIAMS (MacKillop) (14:37): Does the minister deny that the Victorian government is planning to build a pipeline across the Great Divide to pump 75 gigalitres a year out of the Goulburn Valley, out of the Murray-Darling Basin, into Melbourne to supplement the water resources in that city?

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD (Chaffey—Minister for the River Murray, Minister for Water Security, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Small Business, Minister Assisting the Minister for Industry and Trade) (14:37): As I said to the previous question, the project that the South Australian government is investing in is not sending water to Melbourne, full stop. There is no way you can link the two projects.

Mr WILLIAMS: Sir, I have a point of order. Once again, the opposition asks the questions and the government is supposed to answer them, and the question was: does the Minister deny that the Victorian government is going to take 75 gigalitres a year?

The SPEAKER: Order, member for MacKillop! We all heard your question; it is not necessary to repeat it. The Minister for Water Security.

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD: The project that the South Australian government is investing in is delivering water savings to the Living Murray initiative. Any other project that is delivering water into Melbourne is a question for the Victorian government. It is not the project that the South Australian government is investing in, full stop.

WATER SECURITY, AUSTRALIA

Ms CHAPMAN (Bragg—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:38): My question is to the Minister for Water Security. Can the minister advise which federal party she believes has the best policy for the options of Australia's water security? Yesterday, the minister told a press conference that, while the Premier had criticised the federal government for its water policies, she had major concerns about the silence from the federal opposition. The how-to-vote card for Ms Maywald's SA Nationals in the seat of Barker shows the Nationals' Deb Thiele listing the Liberal Party candidate second and the Labor Party candidate—wait for it—last, on the how-to-vote card.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister is not responsible to the house for any of those issues raised by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

AIR WARFARE DESTROYER

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH (Waite—Leader of the Opposition) (14:39): My question is to the Premier. Did he check with Kevin Rudd or Labor's defence spokesperson to see if they agreed with him before he called in parliament on 25 September '07 for the federal government's committing in writing to a fourth air warfare destroyer? Labor's spokesperson has publicly disagreed with the Premier when he stated on 8 November '07 that federal Labor would not support a fourth air warfare destroyer. Mr Fitzgibbon went further and suggested publicly that justification must be established, and the cost of the total project better known, and that the project would be reviewed if a federal Labor government was elected.

The Hon. K.O. FOLEY (Port Adelaide—Deputy Premier, Treasurer, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Federal/State Relations) (14:40): Talking about didn't check! I recall being there when the USS *Lassen*, the American Arleigh Burke class air warfare destroyer, was here. I am going to get to that, but you are going to sizzle a bit before I get to the answer, sunshine! I went down and saw the USS *Lassen* Arleigh Burke class destroyer, the Gibbs & Cox design, competing against the Spaniards. (We had a Spanish ship in earlier.) He could not help himself, this alternative premier who practices every morning in front of the mirror. He races down to Outer Harbor and calls on the government—the Premier and myself—to back him and to back the American design because that was the better option for Australia.

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson: He must have had inside information.

The Hon. K.O. FOLEY: That is what many people in the media thought. They thought he could not have done this unless he had inside information.

Mr Hamilton-Smith interjecting:

The Hon. K.O. FOLEY: Here he goes! He is still calling for the American design. This government has conducted itself professionally with the federal government the whole way through the air warfare destroyer contract, and the Leader of the Opposition right at the eleventh hour, because he wants a headline, he cannot help himself, calls for the American design. I pick up my mobile phone, I ring Senator Nick Minchin (with whom I have had a very good working relationship regarding the air warfare destroyer), and I said, 'Nick.' 'Kevin, how are you?' 'Good, thanks. I've got Martin Hamilton-Smith—'

Mr Hamilton-Smith interjecting:

The Hon. K.O. FOLEY: Ah! He says, 'Be careful.' That is good. That is factual.

Mr Hamilton-Smith interjecting:

The Hon. K.O. FOLEY: Yeah, right, sunshine. I made the point to Senator Minchin that—

Mr Hamilton-Smith interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. K.O. FOLEY: I made the point to Senator Minchin that I did not think it was particularly productive or helpful for the commonwealth or the state to have a Liberal Leader of the Opposition barracking for one design against another, and Senator Minchin agreed. He thought that was unwise. My recollection of the conversation was that Senator Minchin was none too happy that the Leader of the Opposition had weighed into this issue in the manner that he did.

Mr Hamilton-Smith interjecting:

The Hon. K.O. FOLEY: You think so, do you? Right. Trust me on this one, sir. Senator Minchin was none too happy that the honourable member had used the opportunity of the *Lassen* being in Adelaide to barrack for one side over another, because there was a competitive tender process underway. But that is his form. He will say anything to get a headline. Whether he wrecks or damages due process does not bother him, because he is a Kamikaze when it comes to public policy in this state.

On the issue of the fourth air warfare destroyer, the reason we have an option, and we hope the commonwealth takes up the option for a fourth air warfare destroyer, is simply because they chose the Spanish design. Had they chosen the American design—a heavier ship with more missiles and a costlier program—there would have been no need for a fourth ship. So if we had gone with the preference of the Leader of the Opposition, we would not be here arguing for a fourth ship.

Mr Hamilton-Smith interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr Hamilton-Smith interjecting:

The Hon. K.O. FOLEY: I have just been told by—

Mr Hamilton-Smith interjecting:

The Hon. K.O. FOLEY: So you have been told that there was a fourth—

Mr Hamilton-Smith: We seem to know more about it than you do.

The Hon. K.O. FOLEY: Yes, well, I do not think you are right.

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. K.O. FOLEY: Sir, the Leader of the Opposition talks nonsense. There was not a fourth ship on the table with the US Arleigh Burke design, because of the cost and the size. The Spanish design is a small smaller ship and a less expensive ship that gives the commonwealth government the opportunity, should it take it up, to get a fourth ship. Kevin Rudd, of course, has already committed to the next generation of submarines being built here in Adelaide.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: I have a point of order, sir. The opposition has taken many points of order but they themselves will not respect standing orders. The interjections are endless.

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

The Hon. K.O. FOLEY: The shadow defence minister has said what any fiscally responsible shadow defence minister would say during an election campaign; that is, he is not in a position to make a decision on a fourth air warfare destroyer with two weeks to go to an election.

Mr Hamilton-Smith interjecting:

The Hon. K.O. FOLEY: He did not rule it out. He said that it would be lunacy—or words to that effect—to make a decision in the last two weeks of an election campaign when he does not have access to the full briefing on the program and the full financial implications of a fourth ship. That is an eminently sensible, fiscally conservative and prudent decision to make, unlike the Leader of the Opposition and unlike John Howard who will spend their way back into power. Being a good government is about having fiscally responsible policies.

Mr Hamilton-Smith interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. K.O. FOLEY: There's a funny thing about the alternate premier. Do members remember when he was a minister—he spent three months as a minister. When we came to office—

Ms CHAPMAN: I have a point of order, sir. The Deputy Premier is clearly impugning a member of the house and debating the matter.

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Deputy Premier not to respond to interjections. I call the member for Hammond.

WATER SECURITY

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (14:47): My question is to the Minister for Water Security. What volume of water is the government planning to transfer to the Adelaide Hills storages from the River Murray by the end of December, and will the minister confirm that SA Water has recently resumed pumping extra water from the river to the Adelaide Hills storages?

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD (Chaffey—Minister for the River Murray, Minister for Water Security, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Small Business, Minister Assisting the Minister for Industry and Trade) (14:47): SA Water has an allocation this year to take 90 gigalitres of water from the River Murray. The most recent information I have is that around 39 or 40 gigalitres has been pumped. It is the usual pumping pattern to pump in advance of the summer months to ensure that we have enough water to carry us through the summer. Some 90 gigalitres is available to pump throughout the year, and there is a pumping profile to deliver that to the Adelaide Hills from the River Murray. I can provide details of that pumping profile to the honourable member.

ROYAL ADELAIDE HOSPITAL

Ms CHAPMAN (Bragg—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:48): My question is to the Minister for Health. What protocols or procedures are now in place to protect the Royal Adelaide Hospital from being used by an employee to commit a fraudulent act? The opposition is aware that a staff member is now under police investigation for an internal fraud of in excess of \$100,000 at the Royal Adelaide Hospital. In particular, that staff member set up bank accounts using the Royal Adelaide Hospital letterhead with its ABN and then approached suppliers and drug companies, seeking funds to sponsor training events and other employee activities. Further, the handling of this matter by the hospital resulted in others being unfairly left under a cloud of suspicion while it was established that there were no protocols in place to prevent this happening.

The SPEAKER: Order! This matter is presently before the courts and should not—

Ms CHAPMAN: Perhaps the explanation was not clear enough. The fraud is against drug companies, which is irrelevant to the issue of protocols.

The SPEAKER: Order! The deputy leader will take her seat. Any matter before the courts should not be addressed in the parliament. I do not know whether or not it is before the courts. I invite the Minister for Health to answer.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. J.D. HILL (Kaurna—Minister for Health, Minister for the Southern Suburbs, Minister Assisting the Premier in the Arts) (14:49): I will have a close look at the statement that the deputy leader made and, if there is information that I can properly provide to the house, I will do so.

HOSPITAL WAITING LISTS

Ms CHAPMAN (Bragg—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:50): My question is again to the Minister for Health. What is to happen to the 900 people on the waiting list for outpatient appointments for plastic or reconstructive surgery at the Royal Adelaide Hospital? On 31 October 2007, a letter was forwarded to the Central Northern Adelaide Health Service, advising that the Department of Health had issued new guidelines on excluded elective surgery procedures. Patients waiting on outpatient appointments as at 5 November 2007 are to be advised that they will have to go back to their general practitioner with the advice that the procedure is no longer available.

The Hon. J.D. HILL (Kaurna—Minister for Health, Minister for the Southern Suburbs, Minister Assisting the Premier in the Arts) (14:50): As members will know, our hospitals principally do two things: they deal with elective surgery and they deal with emergency situations. Both, as everyone in this place (and everyone in South Australia) would know, are growing in volume because our population is ageing and because the level of complexity associated with the illnesses of people who are getting older is much more complex. That is, essentially, what is happening in our hospital system.

Our job as a government is to try to make the available dollars go as far as we possibly can. We do that by ensuring that the clinicians who work in our hospitals have good support to make proper decisions based on clinical needs. Over the course of time that I have been health minister, I have been pleased to see an increase in the amount of money that we are investing in both sides of the equation: elective surgery and the emergency departments. For example, our target is 38,000 elective surgical procedures in our hospitals this year. That is an increase of some 3,000 or 4,000 over the time when the Liberal Party was in government.

We are also putting up on a website the waiting time for procedures hospital by hospital, procedure by procedure, right across the Adelaide area so that people can choose, through their doctors, which hospital they can go to so they can try to reduce the amount of time that they wait. In addition, I can say to the house that 96 per cent of elective surgical procedures in South Australia are provided within 12 months. That means that only 4 per cent of people wait longer than 12 months. We would like to see everyone receive their procedures within that period of time. That is why I am particularly pleased that the Labor Party at a national level has committed itself to an extensive program of funding of elective surgery, which will help us get through the procedures that have been waiting for some time. That will help enormously in South Australia.

The other thing that I announced a day or two ago, I think (which is what the member is referring to), is that, in future, the hospitals (and this is on advice from the clinicians) will not be conducting elective surgery that is non-medically based—in other words, a whole series of cosmetic surgical procedures, which in the past people may have expected hospitals to perform. We have to do this, because we have to make sure that the dollars we have and the services, the doctors, nurses and operating theatres, are reserved for those who have clinical need, and I do not think that anyone could rationally oppose that policy.

IMMUNISATION CLINIC GENERAL PRACTICE

Ms CHAPMAN (Bragg—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:53): My question is again to the Minister for Health. Why is the Immunisation Clinic General Practice at the Women's and Children's Hospital being closed at Christmas? The clinic is a private bulk billing facility, with immunisation as a major focus. The service is still being promoted on the hospital website.

The Hon. J.D. HILL (Kaurna—Minister for Health, Minister for the Southern Suburbs, Minister Assisting the Premier in the Arts) (14:54): There is a private clinic at the Women's and Children's Hospital. I understand that it has been there for a number of years. It is a private clinic, it is not a public clinic: it is not run by the state, so we are not closing a private clinic. The clinic provided two sorts of services. One was immunisation. Those services have now been transferred to the hospital generally, so the hospital will provide them through a public system rather than through a private system.

The other services provided through the clinic were services to the people who worked in the hospital, which was very convenient for them, I agree, but not all of us have our own doctor

(perhaps the Premier does) in our workplace. There are plenty of other doctors available to people who work at the Women's and Children's Hospital. The reason it is closing is because it cannot run at a profit, given its current scale. There is not sufficient room in the hospital for it to expand and, as a result, a decision has been made for it to close.

WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

Ms CHAPMAN (Bragg—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:55): My question is again to the Minister for Health. Will the minister advise how many cases of breast cancer have been diagnosed amongst the female workforce at the Women's and Children's Hospital over the past five years, and has the government commenced any investigation into the high incidence of breast cancer reported at this site? The ABC headquarters in Queensland—as many members would know—was closed after a breast cancer cluster was identified comprising 16 women with an incidence 11 times greater than in the general community.

The opposition has been informed by a member of the nursing staff that there has been a very high incidence of breast cancer amongst the workforce at the Women's and Children's Hospital and, further, that a number of these women are quite young and premenopausal. Last year, as the minister may be aware, the Women's and Children's Hospital issued a report identifying a high risk to patients and the workforce as a result of the state of the buildings at the hospital.

The Hon. J.D. HILL (Kaurna—Minister for Health, Minister for the Southern Suburbs, Minister Assisting the Premier in the Arts) (14:56): Of all the questions the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has asked me that is the most despicable. To take a couple of facts and put them together in such a way as to insinuate that the buildings of the hospital are responsible for breast cancer is outrageous, dishonest, despicable and absolutely designed to try to get political attention to a lost cause—her lost cause. I do not know how many people at the Women's and Children's Hospital have contracted breast cancer; it has not been brought to my attention. It is terrible when any woman gets breast cancer. I am advised that one woman in eight is likely to get breast cancer in our community.

No doubt in any group of women a number of them will have breast cancer, but to draw the conclusion that the deputy leader is drawing, to make the inference that she is making that it is somehow associated with the buildings at the Women's and Children's Hospital, is absolutely baseless.

Ms Chapman interjecting:

The Hon. J.D. HILL: You can yell as much as you like. You are wrong, you are dishonest, you are a disgrace.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Hartley.

YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Ms PORTOLESI (Hartley) (14:57): My question is to the Minister for Youth. What steps is the government taking to encourage the participation of young South Australians in helping to implement targets in the State Strategic Plan?

The Hon. P. CAICA (Colton—Minister for Employment, Training and Further Education, Minister for Science and Information Economy, Minister for Youth, Minister for Gambling) (14:57): I thank the youthful member for her very important question. I am pleased to inform members about two significant initiatives: first, our statewide youth consultations on the South Australian Strategic Plan; and, secondly, a Festival of Forums, which involves working with young people in the public sector to explore their views about implementing our Strategic Plan objectives.

The Office for Youth in partnership with the Community Engagement Board began consulting with young people about the targets in our State Strategic Plan in October. The first consultation was conducted in Mount Gambier and is a forerunner to further statewide consultations. Over 60 young people from the South-East were involved in a broad community demographic that included young people aged 12 to 25, Youth Advisory Committee members, 10 young Aboriginal people, 10 young people who had become disengaged from learning and 10 young people from some of the smaller communities. The topics about which these young

people were consulted included: employment, public transport, personal safety, health, voting and volunteering.

I am pleased to report that four young people have subsequently volunteered to help facilitate broader community consultation that is being organised by the Community Engagement Board later this month in Mount Gambier and Naracoorte. The Office for Youth has supported these young people by assisting them in developing skills and confidence in the areas of public speaking and facilitation. The consultations will be followed up by a survey that is being sent out to all schools and interested parties within the South-East region, with the gathered information to be fed back into the relevant agencies.

I would also like to mention—and, indeed, invite all members to involve themselves in—the Office for Youth's Festival of Forums which will run for three days from Tuesday 4 September at the Adelaide Convention Centre. This is a free event for public sector employees, and so far there have been almost 1,200 registrations.

Six local, national and international keynote speakers will explore our Strategic Plan objectives from a youth perspective. There will also be presentations and panel discussions involving a wide variety of organisations who work regularly with young South Australians. Our young people have much to contribute and I applaud their commitment to becoming involved in helping make things work for the betterment of all South Australians.

MODBURY HOSPITAL

Ms CHAPMAN (Bragg—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (15:00): My question again is to the Minister for Health. Will the minister assure the house that there will be no loss of accreditation of the Modbury Hospital for the training of surgeons? On 2 October, a consulting surgeon at Modbury Hospital wrote to the minister advising 'that there will be a number of significant consequences' as a result of the more major and complex surgery being shifted to other hospitals, including resignation of surgical consulting staff, adverse effect on the training of medical students and loss of accreditation.

The Hon. J.D. HILL (Kurna—Minister for Health, Minister for the Southern Suburbs, Minister Assisting the Premier in the Arts) (15:00): The Health Care Plan that the government is implementing in health in South Australia has made a number of changes across our hospital system. Some of them are in train and some will occur in the future. I have to say that the changes at Modbury are relatively minor. They principally deal with obstetrics and longer stay paediatric patients, which are the minority of patients dealt with at the hospital.

The issue to do with training and accreditation is a matter of ongoing discussion across the system, particularly for training. In health in South Australia, we are moving to have a multisited training system, rather than individual doctors being trained in only one workplace. Typically, in the future, we would see trainee doctors spend some time in a variety of workplaces, which could include GP surgeries, GP Plus health care centres, a hospital such as Modbury and a hospital such as the RAH. All these issues need to be worked through and they are being worked through. I am very confident that we will be able to sort out any of the problems that any individual surgeon sees.

SCHOOLIES WEEK

The Hon. P.L. WHITE (Taylor) (15:02): My question is to the Minister for the Status of Women. Will the minister update the house about what action is being taken to alert young people about keeping safe during Schoolies Week and in the lead-up to the festive season?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE (Wright—Minister for State/Local Government Relations, Minister for the Status of Women, Minister for Volunteers, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister Assisting in Early Childhood Development) (15:02): As we probably all know, in about a week's time an estimated 10,000 school leavers will be making their pilgrimage to Victor Harbor. The Schoolies Festival will be held from Friday 23 November to Sunday 25 November, and the government is doing its bit to try to ensure that what has increasingly become a rite of passage for young people is a safe and positive experience. We have all seen those worrying images from the Gold Coast when school leavers make their way there. We are doing our best to try to prevent those sorts of scenes occurring in South Australia. In line with previous years, various parts of Victor Harbor and Granite Island have been declared dry zones, and that will take effect from 8 o'clock on the Friday morning and be in place until 10pm on the Sunday.

For several years now, the organiser of the event, Encounter Youth, has worked in partnership with key agencies, including the Office of the Liquor and Gambling Commissioner,

Drug & Alcohol Services, SAPOL, ambulance services and young volunteers from Red Cross's Save a Mate. We all know that older people (sometimes known as toolies) often flock to this event and we want to ensure that naive or unsuspecting teenagers are not exploited or endangered by these people and left with a bitter experience, as opposed to an enjoyable one.

Drink spiking is a serious issue and one this government has taken seriously. It is estimated that approximately 3,000 to 4,000 drink spiking incidents occur a year across Australia, although it is acknowledged that this is highly underreported. Of those incidents, four out of five are women and over half of them are under 24 years of age, with a third resulting in sexual assault. Amendments to the Criminal Law Consolidation Act earlier this year mean that anyone convicted will face a maximum penalty of three years' imprisonment, and I understand someone appeared in court on Monday charged with drink spiking.

It just goes to show that these laws are having some impact. It is important to understand that these penalties also apply to prank spiking—when someone does it as a prank or a lark. This year, to help raise awareness amongst schoolies about the dangers of drink spiking, colourful coasters and drink umbrellas bearing anti-drink spiking messages will be distributed. We are also issuing warnings to those who think they can get around the liquor laws by getting an adult to buy them alcohol. There is a penalty of up to \$5,000 for any minor caught getting a 'toolie' to buy them alcohol. That penalty applies to both minors and any foolish adults involved in this sort of behaviour.

The Office of the Liquor and Gambling Commissioner has placed advertisements warning of these penalties in the free schoolies magazine which will be handed out at the event. The warnings will also be on display on posters and leaflets during the event. For the second year in a row, staff from the Office of the Liquor and Gambling Commissioner will also work with SAPOL to host a barbecue event at the beachside and Victor Harbor caravan parks next weekend and they will use this as an opportunity to reinforce the safety messages as well as providing information about alcohol and the law.

My colleague the Minister for Mental Health and Substance Abuse, the Hon. Gail Gago, and her department have also been involved in the efforts to make Schoolies Week run smoothly. She has been spreading the safe partying message with me today and she reminds us that, whilst every effort is made to try to protect young people from any type of harm at this event, they need to be alerted of the risks by their parents. Parents are best placed to make sure their children understand the risks of binge drinking and encouraging them to stay within the law.

Students planning to be in Victor Harbor for the festival should work out a clear plan to stay safe. They and their parents should know where they will be staying and who they will be mixing with. To make things easier, they can buy pre-sale festival tickets which entitle them to a free RAA sponsored bus from Adelaide to Victor Harbor and back, and these tickets also entitle students to unlimited local bus travel and entry into the supervised alcohol and drug-free entertainment area on Warland Reserve.

While young ones take this time to let their hair down and celebrate their achievements throughout the year, we want to remind them to look after themselves and their friends. We want them to have fun but, most importantly, we want them to stay safe.

GRIEVANCE DEBATE

WATER SECURITY

Mr PENGILLY (Finniss) (15:07): I think that today was the start of a revolution by the citizens of South Australia from what we saw on the steps of Parliament House at about 1.30pm. I did not think I would ever see the day in South Australia when we would have our citizens protesting on the steps about the lack of water in this mighty state and the lack of action by the incumbent government in doing anything at all about supplying additional water for the good people of South Australia.

Today you saw residents of the Riverland who have been completely ignored by their local member. They have had nothing done by the state government and have been forced to come to Adelaide after some three hours' drive to raise their concerns about the lack of action by the Rann government. We have a 'no-action Rann' with a 'no-action plan'. What you have seen from these people is an indication that something is chronically wrong in South Australia. When have South Australians had to come to this place to raise their concerns about having no water? I am unsure

whether that has ever happened in the history of the state but I very much think not. I could not believe it.

Furthermore, I cannot believe that those in the electorate of Chaffey—the electorate named after those great Chaffey brothers who developed irrigation in the Riverland—are being totally duded by their own member. The electorate was named after those Chaffey brothers.

An honourable member interjecting:

Mr PENGILLY: How they came down! Come out the front and see what happened on the steps of Parliament House and the joyous acclaim that the minister got when she presented to the group. In fairness to the minister, she did at least front up—I will give her that. But I think it is about time that she fronted up to her own people a bit more regularly. I cannot believe the situation that this state is in, particularly the people of the Riverland and the irrigators. I think it is an appalling state when this happens, and I speak figuratively.

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson interjecting:

Mr PENGILLY: The fact of the matter is that this state has been in drought for five years along with much of south-eastern Australia. It has been five years and we have had absolutely no action from the Rann government on anything to do with topping up the water supplies of the state.

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson interjecting:

Mr PENGILLY: If the Attorney wants to have a crack he can have a gripe after me—that is fine. My heartfelt sorrow goes out to the people of the Riverland for what is occurring up there, the fact that their trees are dying, the fact that everything is dying on them—22 per cent water. I understand the fact that there is no water coming down the Murray, but we have to look at why it is occurring. You have to have a look at where the water is flowing—straight past them, straight down to being pumped up into the reservoirs of Adelaide. What a ridiculous situation! People are losing their livelihoods. They are passionate about their own patch; they are passionate about their futures, and they are seeing nothing for it.

They are getting absolutely nothing out of their minister; they are getting even less out of the Premier. This state government is an absolute disgrace; it cannot even defend its own position. All you can get is upstart interjections from the other side, which make no sense at all. I have no doubt that, when you turn on the tap down at Croydon, you get water; that is for sure. You want to try making a living up in the Riverland on a fruit block, or try growing grapes, or whatever else you choose to grow.

The Riverland has been built around the Chaffey brothers and the irrigation system that they put in, and they have been absolutely duded by a total lack of action from a pathetically inadequate minister, a pathetically inadequate Premier, and a pathetically inadequate government. They should be held to account for it.

It is an extremely sad day when members on this side of the house should have to stand up and present for another member of parliament when their electorate is being left behind and being left in the lurch like it is. I think that it is a total disgrace. What have we got? A national socialist minister, in my view, duding her own electorate.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: On a point of order, the member for Finnis has just referred to the minister as a national socialist member; that is, a Nazi member—a member of the national socialist German workers' party of Adolf Hitler. It is unparliamentary, and I ask him to withdraw.

Mr Venning interjecting:

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! That is not unparliamentary; however, the member might like to focus on accuracy.

Mr PENGILLY: Madam Deputy Speaker, thank you for your ruling. I would like to continue my remarks, and point out once again the disaster that has been perpetrated across the state of South Australia and in the Riverland, the lack of inflows, and the lack of decency, compassion and common sense to assist the people of South Australia and the people of the Riverland, in particular irrigators, who are absolutely crying out for help, crying out for assistance, and crying out for a bit of decent compassion from the state government, and to be treated decently like every other citizen in the state. It is not happening. It is a disgrace that it is not happening, and I find it absolutely appalling, as I said before. I think that one of these days—

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

GILES ELECTORATE

Ms BREUER (Giles) (15:14): I have been privileged in the last few weeks to attend a number of very special events in my electorate. For example, on 20 October I was very pleased to attend a dinner for the 50 years of surf life saving in Whyalla. Life savers have played an important role in our community for 50 years, and it was a very good night. I was very pleased to see many people from the past, who came back to Whyalla to attend the dinner for this event. A couple of old school friends were there. I have been pleased that the lifesaving association in Whyalla has worked for so many years with so many young people. It has been a wonderful organisation in our community, and we thank them very much for the work that they have done.

On 31 October I also attended a function at Whyalla Special School, which happened for a few hours, and which involved all the other primary schools in Whyalla. It was a joint exercise between them, the police, the ambulance, the fire service and the counselling service. The theme of the day was about keeping ourselves safer. Young primary schoolchildren were able to come in and meet with police and ambulance people, and build up trust with them, and they talked about how they were able to keep themselves safe with Stranger Danger and Family Danger within their families. I thought it was a great little exercise and I congratulate all those who were involved in it.

Also, on 2 November I attended the ten-year anniversary of Mission Australia in Whyalla. They have played a very important part in our community also for a number of years and are still continuing to do that. Their work is varied, particularly looking after people with mental health issues, but with young people also, and they have played a major role in people's lives. So, my congratulations to them. It was interesting to see so many people there who work in our community. It was very well attended by people from a cross-section of our community and I think it showed the respect that they hold in our city.

On 2 November I also went to the Quorn Area School for its Food and Fun Fair, which was a great success, and I was very pleased to see so many parents there at this. Sometimes you go along to a school event and there is a bit of a lack of parental involvement in it, but particularly at the Quorn Area School I think everybody in town who had children involved in the school was there, including parents and grandparents. Great food was prepared by the students, and certainly it was a great night for everyone. So, my congratulations to the Quorn Area School.

On 4 November I attended the 25th birthday celebrations of the DPI in Whyalla. The DPI has played a major role in our community, and I remember when they first started. There were very few facilities and services for people with disabilities in our community, as was the case in the rest of the state. There was a similar situation; we did not care very much about people with disabilities in those days. But the DPI formed in Whyalla 25 years ago. Since then they have had some major achievements.

They have certainly made our community aware of issues for people with disabilities. They run a very successful home there, particularly for elderly people, although there are some people with disabilities living at Amaroo Lodge, which does a wonderful job and fulfils a great need in our community. They have made sure that we have had vehicles that are able to travel around and pick up people with disabilities and take them to medical appointments, etc. So, I was very pleased to go along to the DPI celebration and, again, I thank them on behalf of our community for the work that they have done.

Also, on 27 October I attended a wonderful day at Colebrook, just outside of Quorn, and that certainly was one of the highlights for me. The Colebrook Home was first established in 1924 at Oodnadatta by the United Aborigines Missions, and its purpose was integrating Aboriginal children into mainstream white society, which was part of the government policy of assimilation. It housed many children over the years. Now, of course, many of these children represent the stolen generation, and it was a wonderful day to see so many of them there. These people all became what they call brothers and sisters, and there is a very strong family feeling there, a very strong affiliation. They still care about each other and they have produced some incredible leaders from Colebrook.

Colebrook Home was started off in Oodnadatta. It then went to Quorn. It then was moved down to Adelaide, and eventually it was closed, thank goodness, as its very chequered history was based largely upon the past practices of injustices inflicted upon Aboriginal people. After the Colebrook Home closed in Adelaide in due course the former residents of Colebrook actually bought the Colebrook Home at Quorn, the original building that was there. And what they were doing on this day was opening up a dormitory that had been rebuilt, the girls' dormitory, which they use to house school groups, and other people come in. There is very much a cultural awareness

there, and they find out about not just Aboriginal culture but also the history of the stolen generation and what happened. Wonderful leaders have emerged from that, people like Lowitja O'Donoghue, George Tongerie, Maud Tongerie, Faith Thomas, Clara Coulthard, to name a few.

Time expired.

MURRAY RIVER

Mr VENNING (Schubert) (15:20): Today is the day when the people of South Australia are reacting to our state's critical water situation. The people of the Murray, the rural communities, the irrigators, are here today at Parliament House asking us to help them survive this water crisis. The livelihoods, the lifestyles, the families and the communities are at stake, all because of a situation we all knew was going to happen since 2002.

It is the government inaction that needs scrutiny and criticism. We cannot do anything about the weather but we can plan and act to live with the weather that we receive and protect ourselves and our communities. The Minister for Water Security, the National Party member for Chaffey, needs to come under greater scrutiny and attract more criticism. How can she sit over there with the likes of the state Labor government as the National Party member representing the Riverland, the area affected by this, and she blames the federal coalition government, and the relevant minister is a member of her own party? This raises many questions.

The federal government has put up \$10 billion towards this problem and Labor state governments have not been able to agree to set up a basin management committee to spend it. Former premier Bracks did not agree, and our Premier should have prevailed upon his political mate to step into line for the sake of all our states. Minister Maywald, the member for Chaffey, should never have allowed the water situation to get to this position. She is in a unique position, both as the local member and the water minister in the Labor government, to ensure we never got to this situation. After all, she gave this government the numbers to govern. It is an ideal time for a payback. She has not used that.

They should have got their hands on the \$3 billion of the \$10 billion promised by the federal government and bought water for our embattled Riverland industries and the communities. They still have not done it. Water should have been quarantined to save our permanent citrus plantings. Some of these trees were planted many decades ago. For many of the current citrus growers, the trees were planted by their fathers.

Saving the lakes is a very important issue as well, including the fishery. We were told today we are about to see a huge fish die-off, which could start as early as next week, and that would be a terrible situation, making it even worse. The minister is full of rhetoric about what she has done. She has lots of excuses. None will solve the problem. How does the National Party candidate for Barker (Deb Thiele), as the deputy leader said today in question time, justify her party's position and that of her state party leader? I wonder who the minister will vote for at the federal election, Howard or Rudd. You do wonder. I wonder what federal minister McGauran thinks about this. He would be pinching himself saying, 'How can this happen? We are running out of water.' And the government has not made a decision, not even now after all this.

I also wish to talk about the impact of the state's worsening seasonal conditions on the tourism industry in the area, and I represent some of it—the boating industry, food operations and small business. This crisis is also having a vast impact on South Australia's economy, employment rate and the housing market, and I think it is important to raise these topics in relation to last week's urgency motion so a full understanding of the extent of the drought, along with what the state government should be doing, can be gained.

Recreational boating in the Murray-Darling Basin, particularly downstream of Lock 1 at Blanchetown, is facing devastation. In the last reaches of the River Murray, from Blanchetown to the Murray Mouth, incorporating the lower lakes Alexandrina and Albert, the water levels have never been so low—up to one metre below the normal pool level since the placement of locks and weirs. It is ridiculous that water levels in that part of the lower River Murray will drop a further metre by April. Heaven forbid!

In this stretch of the river, forward houseboat and charter bookings have never been worse. General boating is way down as people anticipate no water at all. Day trippers and holiday numbers are down. All the snags that were deep below the surface are now presenting a serious hazard. Marinas, slips and ramps are becoming unusable. I have received news that a handful of marinas on this lowest reach of the river are now facing a choice of extensive dredging or closing their businesses. Predictions are that the water levels will fall further, and the currently disastrous

situation for the recreational boating community is worsening. This is overflowing—no pun intended—to the tourism and leisure sectors, with immense impact on many regional sectors.

We are entering a very critical time. We are sitting for one more week before we come back in February. We will be in an absolutely crisis situation if we do not get a massive rain. The government hopes it will rain, madam, and all I can say is we on this side hope it rains also, because that is the only way we will solve the problem. Our hearts go out to all those people who are affected, and I thank those who came here today to represent their argument and their people, and certainly we are with them.

Time expired.

VOLUNTARY EUTHANASIA

The Hon. S.W. KEY (Ashford) (15:25): Each year the South Australian Voluntary Euthanasia Society convenes a demonstration on the steps of Parliament House to commemorate the life and death of voluntary euthanasia law reformer Shirley Nolan OBE and all the people who have been forced to die at their own hand when facing unbearable suffering. Yesterday supporters were there again campaigning to make South Australian members of parliament listen to the fact that voluntary euthanasia is something that they support.

I was concerned when I read the history of this legislation in South Australia. In 1995 a voluntary euthanasia bill was introduced in the House of Assembly by Labor member John Quirke. This legislation was rejected without debate, 31 votes to 13. Following this, there was a parliamentary select committee that eventually led to what is a very important piece of legislation, the Consent to Medical Treatment and Palliative Care Act 1995.

Before my time in the parliament, the Hon. Anne Levy in 1996 introduced a voluntary euthanasia bill in the Legislative Council. Although there were significant contributions during the second reading debate, I understand the bill was referred to a select committee. The debate continued, and the Hon. Sandra Kanck in the Legislative Council proposed a referendum on voluntary euthanasia. Because of the election that saw me and many of my colleagues come into the parliament, the bill lapsed.

The Hon. Anne Levy retired and the Hon. Carolyn Pickles in the Legislative Council moved that a select committee—and later the Social Development Committee—be established to consider submissions and take presentations from community organisations. Sadly, in 1999 the Social Development Committee tabled its report with 11 recommendations and, basically, the bill lapsed.

In 2000 the Dignity in Dying Bill was introduced in both houses in November by the Hons Sandra Kanck and Bob Such. We know that in March 2001, the bill was voted into the committee stage in the Legislative Council (10 votes to nine) but it was dismantled by a strategy that was put in place to vote against the objects of the act 12 votes to nine. In 2002 the Dignity in Dying Bill was introduced in the legislative Council by the Hon. Sandra Kanck; and this bill was defeated 13 votes to eight in 2004. In 2003 the Dignity in Dying Bill 2002 was introduced in the lower house by the Hon. Dr Bob Such. It was withdrawn in 2005 because of the impending election. In 2006 the Voluntary Euthanasia Bill was introduced by the Hon. Bob Such and, as members know, it is still on the *Notice Paper*.

I again raise this issue because one would think that this is an issue which does not have the support of the community. I was reassured as a member of SAVES to see that the five yearly News poll on voluntary euthanasia showed increasing support for voluntary euthanasia all around Australia, with the strongest support in South Australia with 81 per cent in the metropolitan area and 84 per cent support in non-metropolitan areas.

I say to my colleagues in this house: how can this continue when it is obvious that people support responsible voluntary legislation provisions. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the work done by the volunteers and workers associated with SAVES (South Australian Voluntary Euthanasia Society), particularly Frances Coombe and Mary Gallnor.

MURRAY-DARLING BASIN

Mr HANNA (Mitchell) (15:30): I was inspired this morning when I attended a meeting of the Natural Resources Committee of the parliament. Professor Peter Cullen addressed the committee. He is a great thinker in relation to water issues in Australia. He was particularly addressing issues surrounding the Murray-Darling Basin. Professor Cullen made the statement that Adelaide is facing a real water scarcity, which is of particular concern to people in my own little

patch of earth down in the Marion/Reynella area. What we have seen in terms of garden restrictions so far is nothing compared to what we potentially face if the drought continues and if inadequate measures are taken to address it.

I note that salinity testing is regularly done at Morgan on the River Murray and, as I understand it, salinity there has doubled in the last six months. If this continues, the quality of water reaching Adelaide from the Murray will be getting near to being too salty to drink, and we will be in diabolical strife. Our storage is down—and I am not talking about all the dams and lakes along the River Murray; they are in trouble, but the dams that supply Adelaide residents with water also are down. So, we do not have any fallback position at the moment.

The government has committed to looking at a desalination plant. If we need one, will we get one quickly enough? I have stressed the need for even more rebates for water devices, including rainwater tanks, so as to reduce demand from external supplies; in other words, to capture the rainwater, which we will get at least some of the time.

The other issue that Professor Cullen raised for Adelaide is the use of groundwater. At the moment, we use some of our groundwater for parks and that sort of thing. The future will probably bring the use of groundwater for domestic purposes as well. I note the brilliant scheme for the St Elizabeth's Anglican Church car park at Oaklands Park, in my electorate, whereby groundwater is used for watering, taking pressure off the water that comes out of the taps.

I note that there is much more that we can do in terms of lowering water demand. Queensland, in the closest comparison, still has about three times less water used per person in the urban environment than in Adelaide. So, even though we have taken some steps to reduce water use in South Australia, we have a long way to go. Rebates for rainwater devices, and so on, will help.

Even more important is a radical reform of water pricing. I have been calling for this for some time. The government needs to take control of the water pricing policy of SA Water. Whether it should ever have been privatised is a moot point now. The government can, and should, control water pricing, remove the supply charge, which forms the bulk of my water bill and the water bill of many Adelaide residents, and make it more of a user-pays system with a direct relationship to the amount of water used, and we will find people policing themselves. We will not need extra inspectors going up and down the streets looking at the garden hose; we will have people policing themselves and reducing what they use in the shower, the kitchen and the toilet, because it will cost them too much: it will cost them hundreds of dollars extra per year, if we have an appropriate pricing policy.

This same principle needs to be adopted across the whole of the Murray-Darling Basin. We need, first of all, an appropriate water register. In fact, I would go a step further and say that we need something like a Murray-Darling water bank, so that we have a facility for buying entitlements and water off irrigators up and down the river, to be used for environmental purposes to the extent that it is considered necessary by an independent judgment, and to facilitate trading of water entitlements up and down the river. The market will then tend to move people into more productive and efficient uses of water when it comes to considering crops.

The state government cannot do it all by itself, but it can take further initiatives—even if we have to adopt the Victorian water register and blend with it, for a start. Even if we cannot do it nationally, we can do our bit.

Time expired.

GAWLER RAILWAY STATION RESTORATION

Mr PICCOLO (Light) (15:35): Today I would like to pay tribute to one of the service clubs in my electorate, namely, the Lions Club of Gawler. This hardworking service club (and its members) this year capped off its 40th year in Gawler. I am a member of the club, but I must confess that all the comments I am about to make are about not me but other members. I am a new member to the club and, at this stage, my contribution has unfortunately been minimal. As I said, the Lions Club of Gawler last week celebrated its 40th year of operations in Gawler and its service to the Gawler community. The Lions Club celebrates 60 years in Australia and 90 years worldwide.

Mr Hanna: A roaring success!

Mr PICCOLO: That was the headline I used in my stories for the newspapers. Obviously great minds think alike. I actually said that the Lions Club of Gawler roared ahead during 2007. On

Sunday 11 November the Minister for Volunteers (Hon. Jennifer Rankine MP) officially opened the first stage of the Gawler railway station restoration project, which was a culmination of a seven-year partnership between TransAdelaide and the Lions Club of Gawler.

The project has involved the renovation of the stationmaster's quarters and the relocation and the housing of the Dolly Grey locomotive. The stationmaster's quarters now house the Gawler Community Gallery. In her speech, the minister quite rightly praised and recognised the tireless efforts of the Gawler community to bring this project to fruition under the leadership of the Lions Club of Gawler. The minister acknowledged the various participants and community groups that worked together to ensure the project was a success.

I would like to acknowledge some of the partners in this project. In addition to the Lions Club of Gawler, there was Heritage SA, the Gawler council and Employment Directions, which supervised the work-for-the-dole scheme. I would also like to mention Scott's Transport, Nick's Cranes, Sanders Bros, Harwood & Van Pelt and Ahrens Engineering. These groups contributed \$50,000 worth of sponsorship to make this project happen. Much of the funding for the project has come from the weekly market run by the Lions Club in the car park by the railway station.

The launch of this stage of the restoration of this railway station also marked the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the steam train to Gawler. In officially launching the project, the minister stated that these days no-one takes for granted the important work that volunteers do in our communities. The project has been well led by Lion Pat Mells and his team. Pat is the head of the project team. Just to put it in perspective, the current station was built in 1872 on pastoral land, and it has appeared in numerous films and television shows, including the classic *Shiralee* and the popular *McLeod's Daughters*.

Ms Bedford interjecting:

Mr PICCOLO: That's correct. I mentioned that this project was a partnership. I would also like to mention the role played by the Rotary Club of Gawler, and particularly Mr Gary Gailey, the coordinator of the TransAdelaide Adopt a Station Program. Mr Gailey went around to community groups asking them to adopt railway stations as a way of not only preserving them but also maintaining these buildings as important community assets.

The success of this project—first, in terms of its restoration; and, secondly, making a space available for community groups to use—is a great example of how the three tiers of government can work together along with service groups and other community members. I would also like to mention that the railway station is a fine specimen of Victorian railway architecture, I am told. The buildings were completed in 1879 and replaced the original limestone structure built in 1857. The building cost £4,200 to build—a project which today would have cost multimillions of dollars.

The original station was a rather imposing structure. Like most country railway stations it comprised a waiting room, offices, sheds and a two-storey stationmaster's residence. As I said, I pay tribute to the Lions Club which is an important service club in our district and which has contributed not only to this project but numerous other projects which help bring our community to life.

LIQUOR LICENSING (CERTIFICATES OF APPROVAL) AMENDMENT BILL

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 18 October 2007. Page 1181.)

Mr PISONI (Unley) (15:40): The opposition supports the bill. It is an overdue remedy to the costly and administrative burdensome situation which has existed whereby applicants were obliged to have both planning and building consent to obtain a certificate of approval from the Liquor and Gaming Commission, which could lead to businesses having additional holding costs while they wait for building consent on top of their planning approval.

In almost all applications for development approval, building consent is dealt with after planning consent is obtained. With the specific reference in this case to licensed premises, the costs involved in obtaining building consent can be significant and take weeks or even months to obtain. The previous unnecessary costs and red tape incurred by licensee applications is highlighted by the wait of six weeks and excessive costs of about \$30,000 suffered by the Norwood Football Club in what was known as the Redlegs case.

That was a classic example of overkill associated with the licensed applicant needing both planning and building approval to obtain their certificate of approval from the Commissioner. It was

as a result of this case and the recommendations of His Honour Judge Beazley that this amendment bill has, to a certain extent, flowed. It is clear that stakeholders, enforcement and licensing bodies are in agreement with the bill, and the AHA, in particular, is of the view that the amendment is somewhat overdue.

Holders of liquor licences in South Australia, whether they are hotels or other licensed clubs, play a significant economic and social role in the viability of the state as creators of employment opportunity. For example, hotels in South Australia employ 24,000 people. They are contributors to the tax base, promoters of the important tourism industry and contributors to charity. In South Australia, for example, the estimates by the AHA of the dollar amount spent or given to charities by the hotel business community is about \$9 million, and, in the case of licensed clubs, they also support many ethnic, social and community organisations.

Of interest, in relation to this particular bill, hotels in South Australia pay about \$10 million annually in local government rates and about \$32 million in payroll tax. The removal of the unnecessary administrative cost burden will assist in these positive contributions within a framework of responsible liquor and gaming regulation, and the Liberal Party supports this. Importantly, these changes do not obviate the community consultation at planning stage which remains constant, and, if the plan is altered in any significant way, a new certificate of approval would be required.

It is encouraging to see the government moving on the issue of red tape in this area, given its loud promotion of its intention to do away with unnecessary and burdensome compliance rules. No matter how small, in the case of certificates of approval, the burden for applications has been quite large, and the Liberal Party supports any reduction in financial or regulatory imposition which impedes the ability of the business community to operate efficiently for the benefit of the general community, trading revenues, wages and employment.

We see the positive effect of deregulation of the labour market and the cutting of red tape burden for employers promoted in the policy of the federal Liberal government and the subsequent benefits—higher wages, greatest business confidence and the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years. The Rann government has been the beneficiary of this reform and it is good to see it following the Howard's government lead.

Of course, when referring to reductions in red tape, the Premier in particular is fond of referring to the 2006 KPMG study of Adelaide's business cost competitiveness, claiming credit for Adelaide's favourable rating compared to Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne. However, an examination of the report reveals that the major cost advantages of operating a business in Adelaide are the lower property acquisition (real estate costs)—not really a Rann government red tape initiative—and lower salaries. So, the competitive advantage that we have stems from having more competitive labour costs than Sydney and Melbourne and more affordable real estate than Brisbane. Hopefully, the Competitiveness Council can build on these advantages that South Australia has always had and a strong national economic framework created by the Howard government. Certainly, Business SA has proposed many ways in which it feels the council could initiate real improvements and efficiencies and suggests that their performance should be monitored.

The members of the Competitiveness Council from the private sector are well qualified, although it would be interesting to know how often they meet. However, being chaired by a government minister (currently the Treasurer) raises questions relating to its independence. I think that a representative from the body representing the largest cross-section of business in the state, Business SA, would be worthy of a position on the council, which deals with reducing red tape in business and making the state more attractive to do business in. Perhaps now that the Treasurer is the chairman of that council we may, in fact, see an invitation to Business SA to rejoin.

Perhaps their views might differ from the chairman's and they may be less focused on promoting the strategic plan. While the Premier claims payroll tax relief of \$300 million as a reduction in red tape burden, the Auditor-General's Report shows it as increasing by \$18 million over the forward estimates. Obviously because of the low threshold and wages growth we will see ever more businesses caught in the payroll tax web, which some would argue is red tape, smoke and mirrors.

Tax reform by the state government is overdue in what has become a changing economy, as we shift from an economy of manufacturing and farm products to that of education, technology and service industries. The opposition would encourage fixing any shortcomings in legislation to smooth out red tape bumps and save business costs, as does this bill. As a party supportive of

business, we see the need for balance in the role of government to provide sound regulation that safeguards the community without unfairly penalising business—in this case, those seeking liquor licensing certificates of approval—and help the state to prosper and grow.

Mr VENNING (Schubert) (15:47): I rise to support my shadow minister and I congratulate him on his speech to the house and his preparation of the argument for the Liberal Party, which, of course, supports the bill. The objective of this bill is to amend the Liquor Licensing Act to permit a certificate of approval to be granted by the commissioner upon the applicant satisfying the licensing authority that he or she has obtained planning consent as opposed to planning and building consent which is development approval. The bill will remedy the difficulty and, to a certain extent, the overkill associated with a licensed applicant needing both planning and building approval to obtain a certificate of approval. This is basically a streamlining measure which will reduce costs and red tape, and we must all welcome and applaud that.

The AHA, the LGA and the Law Society have all been supportive and have expressed the desire for this bill to be passed. In particular, the AHA is of the view that this amendment is somewhat overdue, and I agree. As a member representing one of our state's wine regions, I feel compelled to stand to support this legislation and place my comments on the record because we now have some wonderful facilities throughout the state, particularly in the wonderful Barossa Valley in my electorate, and of course it is all built around the wonderful wine industry of which the licensing situation is a critical part.

We have some beautiful new cellar door sales outlets and all of them are licensed, depending on their ownership and who is running them. Also, we have new restaurants and new licensed B&Bs and bistros. If members have not been to the Orlando visitors centre, it is a magnificent facility. I had an interstate visitor last week, and he travels the world looking at wine centres and he said how wonderful it is. It is all built around this wonderful wine industry of which I am a great supporter and ambassador.

I am very pleased that we are streamlining the process, because we all get bogged down in red tape and bureaucracy, and it is extremely frustrating. We need to reduce red tape and the bureaucratic process, and the total approval process—not just this one. It can often mean money to the Treasury. It gets its money earlier because approvals are granted and fees are paid.

I want to applaud legislation like this. I have been coming here for many years, and with some legislation you just wonder why the heck we are doing it. In this instance, I have to say that it is good legislation because it will expedite process, cut the red tape, it will cut the frustration of all the stakeholders involved, and it will encourage more people to get in the entertainment industry, because that is what it is. I again congratulate the shadow minister. The Liberal Party supports the bill.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE (Wright—Minister for State/Local Government Relations, Minister for the Status of Women, Minister for Volunteers, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister Assisting in Early Childhood Development) (15:51): I thank the opposition for its contribution. Yes, whilst this is a tiny piece of legislation in content, it is big in reducing red tape for those people wanting to obtain a liquor licence, build new premises, or move the licence across. I acknowledge the opposition's appreciation in reducing this red tape and in acknowledging that, when legislation is passed, it is often done with the very best of intentions but it can sometimes have unintended consequences.

I am sure that, in 2000, when the Liberal Party was in power and passed legislation to incorporate both planning and building consent, its aim was not to impose an additional financial burden on business in South Australia. But, that has been the consequence of it, so I appreciate opposition support in fixing this legislation.

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

PRIVATE PARKING AREAS (PENALTIES) AMENDMENT BILL

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 18 October 2007. Page 1183.)

Mr PISONI (Unley) (15:53): I indicate that the opposition will be supporting this bill. There was some confusion as to whether it was the responsibility of the shadow minister for consumer affairs or local government; however, I am representing the opposition as the spokesperson for consumer affairs, so I will be the lead speaker.

The intent of this bill is to increase maximum penalties under the Private Parking Areas Act 1986 from \$200 to \$1,250. The regulations will, in turn, be varied so that the expiation fee for someone without a disabled permit parking in a disabled person's parking space will be brought into line with the same offence committed in a public area under the Road Traffic Act 1961. The introduction of uniformity in maximum penalties and expiation fees is a positive and logical step, which we support. The amendment will rectify the considerable inconsistency which currently exists between fines and maximum penalties for the same offence between the Private Parking Areas Act and the Road Traffic Act.

It is my understanding that the Local Government Association has also pursued this issue with the state government, mainly in an attempt to eliminate the discrepancy between expiation fees for illegally parking in a disabled zone under the Road Traffic Act (\$218) and the Private Parking Areas Act (\$75). The association is obviously happy that this amendment will address its requests.

Authorised officers of local councils and South Australia Police officers can issue an expiation notice for offences relating to disabled parking prescribed under the Private Parking Areas Act and Australian road rules.

I will point out at this stage that this does not mean that the notorious Damian Lester, with his Adelaide city parking fine company, will be able to run around slapping fines on people in parking areas that are privately owned but give the appearance of being public parking areas.

A parking ticket can be handed to you, or secured under a windscreen wiper blade of your vehicle, or you can be sent a ticket in the mail. As was the case prior to this amendment, individuals who are issued a ticket have the right to dispute the notice, and then elect to be prosecuted. It is generally accepted, when addressing the issue of maximum penalties, as can be imposed via the court process, that there is a balance needed to ensure that expiation fees are set at such a level that offenders who feel that they have in fact breached those parking conditions will pay the fine rather than contesting it, as the consequences for losing the appeal with the court case may be somewhat higher than the fine itself.

In South Australia disabled parking permits are available to those in our community who are unable to use public transport because of permanent physical impairment or whose speed of movement is severely restricted because of that impairment. Permits are also available to those organisations providing transport, to a minimum of four people, who have disabilities placing them in the above categories. For those who are temporarily afflicted with a disability a temporary disabled parking permit can be issued for six months, and for a maximum of one year.

There is no doubt that those in our society who use disabled car parks without a permit and valid cause are not only a source of frustration and discomfort to those who are disabled and have a need for limited spaces available but their selfish and inconsiderate behaviour is the cause of much annoyance to the majority of law abiding and responsible users of both public and private parking areas. That is obviously something that is a worldwide view.

People do not regard people in a very high light when they see a perfectly able person parking in a disabled car park to save them walking a few extra metres to the end of the car park. We all know that that happens at the expense of spaces for the disabled. I am pleased that the member for Mawson is paying attention because he would relate to this, and I can mention the *Seinfeld* program, where George's father's car was smashed to pieces because Kramer parked it in a disabled car park. So it is a worldwide feeling that people have about—

Mr Bignell: I missed *Seinfeld*. That was in the same timeslot as me, 7pm, after the sports news.

Mr PISONI: Well, you should have watched it before the repeats, at 7.30, and you can get it on DVD. So it is a worldwide phenomenon and a worldwide feeling that people have. People see that as not being just, not being fair. In fact, in my own experience it could be argued that the general public, which includes, of course, many thousands of carers, are as outraged by those who show a lack of respect and consideration to those with a disability as the disabled themselves.

When looking into the issues of disabled parking more broadly, it is quite amazing to find how far some individuals are prepared to go in order to abuse the system that was set up in order to create a more caring society. In one case, interstate, a rather dodgy character had acquired a disabled sticker on the basis of leg and back injuries, but it was reported by fellow workers, who tired of him claiming disabled car parking status yet openly going for a jog at every lunchtime.

It is, I think, encouraging to see that there is community understanding of the frustration and community backlash. I have a very close friend who has been in a wheelchair for the last 21 years, and there is still a lack of understanding about mobility and other difficulties that people have when they are restricted to a wheelchair. A classic example is when you make a restaurant booking and you say at the time of booking, 'We will require one less chair'—or one fewer chair: I will have to check with the Attorney-General which is correct in that instance. You can count them so I imagine it is one fewer chair.

Ms Fox interjecting:

Mr PISONI: I thank the member for Bright. What happens is that, automatically, if the restaurant has not had a lot of experience with people in wheelchairs they think, 'Oh, my God, we have someone in a wheelchair, they must dribble and scream involuntarily, let's put them at the back of the restaurant.' So you arrive for your meal, all dressed up, and, suddenly, you find your table right at the back of the restaurant and everyone in the restaurant has to get up so you can get through with the wheelchair. However, I think more restaurants are understanding the need for access for people in wheelchairs.

Putting that aside, a survey commissioned by a large car insurance provider of 5,000 Australian drivers last year showed that while only 32 per cent of drivers surveyed did not admit to speeding, 82 per cent believed that it was a serious taboo to park in a disabled parking space without a permit. Eleven per cent of those surveyed admitted to the offence, and feeling bad about doing it. Hopefully, the increased uniformity of expiation fees and maximum penalties allowed by this amendment will assist them to be brought to an understanding of the legal as well as social implications of their selfish actions.

This particular survey could very well be of interest to the Treasurer, given his well-documented low opinion of female drivers. It shows that, nationwide, 51 per cent of ladies regularly clock speeds above the legal speed limit compared to only 48 per cent of men. There was some suggestion by the Treasurer that women drive slowly, but this survey tells us they drive faster. My wife would argue that is because they are given a lot more to do in the house than the man, so they have less time to get things done, whereas men tend to be in a daze doing their own thing. They have the leisure time to be slow, but women do not have the time to be slow. They have so much to fit into their day because a lot of men do not pull their weight around the house. So women have two jobs to do.

The Hon. J.M. Rankine: Never mind the tea-towel. The real test of whether a man shares domestic duties is the last time he cleaned the toilet. When was the last time you picked up a toilet brush?

Mr PISONI: Every morning. But I think that's too much information, minister.

Members interjecting:

Mr PISONI: There is a high percentage of metrosexuals living in Unley, I have been told. It is a small statistical difference in one survey, but the Treasurer may wish to keep it in mind. Personally, I consider women to be, generally speaking, accomplished and considerably good road users. However, as an MP who lives in my small suburban electorate, I spend less time on the road than my colleagues on this side of the house who have large rural electorates and those opposite who choose to live quite distantly from their constituents and consequently spend much more time travelling if they choose to visit them.

Of note is that when these survey figures were broken down further, it was revealed that South Australians were even more unimpressed by those who improperly use disabled parking spaces, with 86 per cent saying that they had never parked in a disabled car parking space. So, very few people will be affected by these changes. Only the small number of selfish people who deliberately disobey the laws will not be able to do that under the private parking areas act. I believe we should take comfort from the obvious negativity displayed by South Australians towards the anti-social habit of misusing disabled parking spaces and, hopefully, if this attitude prevails, there will be less need to impose the fees and penalties for breaches which are subject to this bill.

Mr VENNING (Schubert) (16:05): I rise to support the bill and most of what my colleague said during his speech. It was the interjection that came from the other side that I had difficulty with. I am open and frank in my life but I do not discuss those matters in the house. But I did hear what the minister said, and I thoroughly agree. There is nothing worse than going to the small room and glimpsing that, but we all have to do our own thing, particularly in this place.

Anyway, I again congratulate the shadow minister for putting the case, not only to the government but also very strongly to our party, and winning the day after a lengthy heated discussion. After much discussion the shadow minister carried the day, and it is good for young MPs who have been here only a short time to get that experience. He put a very good case and spoke strongly and passionately on the matter, and we have come out supporting the bill.

I think parking problems are a problem of the new age. As Adelaide grows, the public transport system has not grown with it and we are now the most car-aligned city in Australia, if not the world. Our parking spaces are at a premium: you can never get a car park. You can even buy a permanent car park in the city. I believe that the highest price has been up to \$10,000 per annum for a car park, although the more common figure is between \$3,000 and \$4,000 per annum for a car park. City car parking stations are generally full and casual parks around the city are almost non-existent, unless one walks a long way.

Mrs Geraghty interjecting:

Mr VENNING: I did say in the house yesterday that we do not have freebies, but we do have privileges. I think one privilege we do enjoy is the car parking. Certainly, when I retire one of the things I will miss most is the ability to park the car 24 hours a day under cover. Car parking spaces are at a premium and we enjoy the privilege of not having that problem; and some of us do forget how lucky we are. City car parking stations are full and one often has to walk a fair distance from casual parks. Suburban shopping centre car parks are huge and often one has to walk a mile to the shop.

We are even seeing minibus services circulating the large car parks, not so much in Adelaide but certainly in other capital cities of Australia. It is becoming very common. It is all about being a car-centric city, which is sad, indeed. The problem needs to be solved by the government addressing the public transport situation, particularly its availability. I would like to catch public transport from West Beach into the city, but the bus service runs only every three-quarters of an hour, which is not often enough. If I could get to the beloved trams at Glenelg, I certainly would; and that needs to be addressed. There is nothing beautiful about a car park. They are a necessity but they would not get anything for being beautiful or adding to the city.

A lot of the misdemeanours to which the shadow minister has alluded occur in suburban car parks. That is where the anxiety is, particularly in relation to disabled car parks. We all have seen a disabled car park close to the door of a shop and seen able-bodied people whiz in and park their car, jump out and run away. I fully support penalties for those sorts of people because it is not fair when a person who really needs that car park has to park further back and walk. Even though I am usually against penalties on most things, I think in this case it is certainly justified.

We have an environment of anxiety and frustration, with people pushing and shoving for their rights and convenience. There must be some car parking etiquette, and disabled reserved parks are one of the problems we have. We all have been annoyed when we have seen this abuse. I am happy that this legislation brings in uniform practice in relation to car parking penalties.

These penalties should be shown in car parking stations. Car parking etiquette, the rules and the fines should be shown on a wall, so if anyone who breaches the rules, questions are not asked because you have been warned and you run the risk of picking up a hefty fine; and in this instance they are fairly hefty. I support the bill, and I thank the shadow minister, who is getting good at this.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE (Wright—Minister for State/Local Government Relations, Minister for the Status of Women, Minister for Volunteers, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister Assisting in Early Childhood Development) (16:11): I thank the opposition for its support for this sensible piece of legislation and I thank members for their comments today. We all become frustrated when we see people abuse disabled car parking because we know the people for whom it is allocated. They are entitled to use them and it is about their having a quality of life in our community that equates to what all able-bodied people enjoy.

In saying that we have to be cautious in not giving licence to people to openly attack anyone they see using a disabled car park because disabilities are not always visibly obvious. For example, someone may have a severe breathing disorder and, as a consequence, they are entitled to a disabled car park. It is not only those with a mobility disability (such as those in a wheelchair) who are entitled to use those car parks. I add that word of caution when expressing our frustration at people who abuse those situations.

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

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

MURRAY RIVER DROUGHT MANAGEMENT

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (16:14): I wish to read into *Hansard* a letter from a constituent who is a dairy farmer. Members will note that I have not edited the letter. The letter is in relation to the severe drought the family is living through and the demise of their dairy farming operations. The letter states:

Adrian, this is a copy of a letter I have sent out to others in the community. I just thought you need to know what is happening here on the Narrung Peninsula, since your visit to us back in July of this year. I am not after sympathy, because we are survivors, but there are others out there who are not coping that well with their lot. There are many, many stories of hardship out there that politicians need to be aware of. It is strange that the most important element people need is water, yet with all the political campaigning at the moment, no-one has tackled the main issue that the river could possibly run dry and our nation will have a natural disaster at hand. If there is no substantial rain in the Murray-Darling catchment in the next couple of months, Dartmouth and Hume Dams will be close to dry and then what?

Well, the time is approaching. We are on our last week of dairying. The cows have been sold and they will be trucked out over the next couple of weeks. Our once mighty River Murray which flows into the Lower Lakes, Alexandrina and Albert at the end of its journey, is in major trouble. Our Lake (Albert) is receding at a fast rate. We have dredged out as far as we can to get water but it will not be far enough in the near future. We are talking days not weeks. With our predicted hot days and southerly wind season approaching, we will see our water levels drop to what the experts predict, half a metre below sea level.

Who would have thought that the Narrung Peninsular which was heralded as one of the major dairying regions in South Australia would be brought to its knees like it has? Our family has been dairying here for nearly 50 years and irrigating for nearly 40 years. We have built our herd from 100 cows to 700. We were in the top 10 per cent in Australia for milk quality, averaging 8,000 litres milk per annum [per cow]—over 20 per cent higher than the national average. We received the Genetics Australia award for Dairy Business Enterprise of the Year in 2000, we have embraced the latest technology for dairying and irrigation, we have our own weather station, monitoring the vagaries of weather, salinity, wind, evaporation...all this using the worst quality water in the river system, water every else has used and no-one else wants.

What can I say, the Government has admitted mismanagement of the river, they have admitted overallocation of water...They say they are concerned, they have been warned, yet no-one listened. They still talk about a weir at the end of the Murray to hold back water if we don't get rain in the next few months. A weir will not solve the problem. The river needs to flow. If the river is not able to flush the salt and rubbish out of its system, it will die.

If you can imagine putting all the food and associated toxins in your mouth and letting it go right through your system only to be blocked off at the end...what do you think would happen? It's not a good ending, it would be a cancer that will not stop, it will build back up your system slowly poisoning all the vital organs in its path. It will be a slow dreadful death. We have many locks along the river now, we don't need another one.

The real problem is overallocation or overutilisation of the river's resources. Back in the 1980s we were told to use our water licences or lose them, so many who did not use their water allocation used it for expansion of their irrigation or sold it to be used elsewhere. In our own situation we only used 80 per cent of our allocation, the other 20 per cent remained unused and we considered it our contribution back to the environment. We could have sold it for someone else to use, but elected not to do so.

It concerns me also that the water issue has affected so many farmers and their communities along the river with such devastating consequences, yet the bureaucrats of all persuasions don't have any idea what to do. Are they playing politics or are they just going to sit back and let this catastrophe happen. At the end of the day, ordinary Australians will be the losers not just the producers, but the consumers. Farming in Australia could possibly be a thing of the past and we will be reliant on food import. These products will not have the same stringent quality assurance that is demanded and expected from Australian farmers.

It is already too late for many of us along the river system. If these low river flow conditions continue, I cannot see that we will be irrigating again here for many years without a flood of biblical proportions, and we will see the end of dairying on our peninsular, possibly forever. Farmers on the Narrung Peninsular do not have access to any other water, be it mains or underground, so, if dairying and irrigation were to cease, there will be millions of dollars of stranded assets just sitting in the paddocks going to waste. Such a huge shame, not to mention families who have had to make huge agonising decisions on their future, to stay or go; sons, daughters moving on because the businesses cannot afford to keep their dreams alive. Each farmer has made their own decision to either close down, relocate or try and hang in there hoping the water situation will improve.

This problem has been exacerbated by the drought, but the river was in trouble before the drought took effect. As irrigators with a water allocation, we have been told that we can lease our water out and still receive a reasonable income from the lease, but what thought has been put into that statement? Where will the water go? It will be water that will not come down here. Catch twenty two.

There needs to be questions asked as to where the water traded is going—both now and in the past. How can we expect the water to flow properly if we have traded the water away upstream. A stock take of all water usage needs to be done. The water that is being purchased by the Government needs to be put in a Bank, where all and

sundry can see that that water is never used or sold again. In other words all water saved has to be accounted for. Cut back the entire river allocation usage.

As I said it may be too late for many of us at the end of the river, yet we are still prepared to fight for the life of the River. We have a huge fight in front of us, for the life of the river. It cannot be one region against another or one state against another, or rural against city. We have a moral responsibility to all fight for the life of the River. Yet the future will see wars fought over water.

That is the end of the letter from the constituent, and I commend them for sending it. It just goes to show some of the heartache that is being felt in the Lower Murray and lake system.

BRIGHTON SURF LIFESAVING CLUB

Ms FOX (Bright) (16:22): I rise today to speak on a slightly happier event, that is, the opening of the Brighton Surf Lifesaving Club on 3 November—the new \$2.3 million club in Brighton. I was very lucky to attend this event. I think it shows how much the state government supports our surf lifesaving community when not only does the local member turn up but also the Minister for Emergency Services (Hon. Carmel Zollo), the Premier and the Treasurer. They all came to the opening of this outstanding club.

In itself that is testament to the commitment of surf lifesavers in our community, and particularly to the very hard work that has been done by the members of the Brighton Surf Lifesaving Club in establishing this facility. As I said, it is a new \$2.4 million facility, and \$1.3 million of that money was provided by the state government from the Community and Emergency Services Fund. The remainder came from the City of Holdfast Bay and the club. Thank you to both those groups.

I would particularly like to mention the club at this point, because the Brighton Surf Lifesaving Club is not a particularly wealthy organisation. Members of the club really went out of their way to raise a huge amount of money towards the new club. One of the ways they did that was with the inaugural and subsequent Brighton Jetty Classic Swim. This swim takes place at the beginning of February every year and, of course, I have participated in this swim. Yes, I did not come last: I came fifth to last!

Mr Pederick interjecting:

Ms FOX: I was not wearing anything racy at the time, thank you, member for Hammond.

Mr Piccolo interjecting:

Ms FOX: I was certainly wearing something, member for Light.

Mr Bignell: Angus didn't turn up?

Ms FOX: No, Angus was not there. He was fully clothed somewhere else.

Mr Pederick: We're thankful for small mercies!

Ms FOX: Indeed. I am sorry. I stopped. I had a mental image. I am thinking, 'The Hon. Mr Redford—bathers!' I think we're all enjoying that moment! I would also like to talk about some of the extra moneys the state government is spending along the coastline of South Australia, which is very dear to my heart. Not only do I live in the heart of my electorate at Brighton but the electorate of Bright contains four surf lifesaving clubs: Somerton Park, Brighton, Seacliff and Christies Beach.

This year, the state government is spending \$312,000 on shark patrols—that is not only weekend patrols but also weekday patrols. The original intention of the weekday patrols, which this government started in the summer of 2005-06, was to cover the school holidays. However, last year we committed the patrols over the entire summer, and this year we are doing the same. Also, of course, patrols are carried out by the Westpac Rescue helicopter. I think that, on the whole, people can generally feel fairly safe when they are at the beach. People in surf lifesaving are doing a really good job in keeping our beaches safe.

I have some figures which show how safe they are keeping us. Since 1907 Australian lifesavers have saved more than 530,000 lives. That is a lot of lives. In the last year alone, South Australian surf lifesavers rescued 488 people and provided assistance or preventative actions for another 13,000 people. Going to the beach is an integral part of Australian culture, and it is a part we all enjoy. But we will not enjoy it if we are not safe. Safety at the beach is one of the most important things.

Last summer I had the great misfortune to watch some very drunken people wandering into the water at night time at Seacliff. People who do stuff like that are just idiots because they are

costing the community and the government money. I really wish people would not get drunk and wander into the water. It is a very foolish thing to do. I congratulate the Brighton Surf Lifesaving Club on its marvellous new facility. It is very flash. I urge as many people as possible to take a look at it. Visit the beach this summer, but be safe—slip, slop, slap and swim.

CHILDREN IN CARE

Mr PICCOLO (Light) (16:26): I would like to speak briefly about an issue which has grabbed some attention in the media recently, namely, children in care, particularly children in the care of the government. These children are clearly at risk in terms of their mental and physical wellbeing. These vulnerable children are often at the lowest point in their lives because the parents are either unable or unwilling to nurture and to provide the proper care of these children.

It is really disheartening to see almost a media campaign against the resources which we, as a society, put into protecting and nurturing these children. While as a society we might like to make some judgments about the parents of these children, I think we should never begrudge the resources we spend as a society—particularly the role of the state—to protect and raise these children. These children need our care.

These children need the protection of society to ensure they get the opportunity to have a fulfilling life. Are the children in alternative care being cared for in the most optimum situation? No, they are not. Having said that, we have two options. We can either complain, whine and blame the government, or we can do what all civilised societies do and take ownership of the problem we have before us. Unfortunately, many people have decided to make some political capital out of this issue and grandstand. These children, through no fault of their own, are often on the receiving end of misguided and ill-informed opinion.

As I said, I think that as a community we need to do something about this issue because it is a growing problem, as has been indicated in this house. I would like to contrast some of the comment in the media with what is happening in my electorate. A Christian churches forum in my electorate has taken on the challenge to care for those children who are put into alternative care within our community. The churches are working to ensure that those children in our community who, for whatever reason, are not being cared for by their parents are cared for in our community. I would like to acknowledge the contribution made by some of these churches in our community.

I acknowledge Full Gospel Outreach, the Playford AOG Church, All Souls Church, the Salvation Army, the Gawler Baptist Church, the Hewett Community Church of Christ, Immanuel Lutheran, the Church of the Nazarene, the Anglican Parishes, the Uniting Church and Zion Lutheran. Rather than say, 'It is a problem and just go to the media,' these churches are working together to resolve this problem; to do the right thing, the Christian thing and support these young people. They are doing it in partnership. Importantly, these churches are working together in partnership with the state government to ensure that we do look after the most vulnerable in our community. It is important that these children obtain the appropriate alternative care if they are to prosper in our society in the long term.

Again I congratulate those churches for what they are doing in our community. It is an example of the volunteering spirit of our community. Talking about volunteers, I acknowledge the great work of Sheila Willox, the Coordinator of Volunteers for the town of Gawler. On Monday night, Sheila was acknowledged for her great work with volunteers at the Barossa and Light Region SA Great Awards for her achievement in volunteering. Our communities are the richer for the contribution made by people such as Sheila who work tirelessly to ensure that everyone has a role to play in society and that everyone has a place in society. By 'a place in society', I mean that they are wanted and they make a contribution. The award is due recognition of the wonderful work she performs in our community.

Again, I highlight today (as I did in an earlier speech) the wonderful work done by our volunteers, and rather than use this place as a place to whine, complain and raise problems, I would like to use this time to acknowledge the wonderful contribution made by volunteers in resolving problems. It would be good to see some members on the other side spending some of their time and resources resolving issues rather than complaining about them.

Motion carried.

At 16:32 the house adjourned until Tuesday 20 November 2007 at 11:00.