

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Thursday 22 November 2007

The **SPEAKER (Hon. J.J. Snelling)** took the chair at 10:30 and read prayers.

DOG AND CAT MANAGEMENT (COUNCIL PLANS OF MANAGEMENT) AMENDMENT BILL

The Hon. R.B. SUCH (Fisher) (10:31): Obtained leave and introduced a bill for an act to amend the Dog and Cat Management Act 1995. Read a first time.

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

That this bill be now read a second time.

People say that cats have nine lives; well, legislation can sometimes have at least two. This is not a reintroduction of the same bill, because that is not allowed under standing orders; it is a new bill, but it canvasses the same area as the one that was sadly rejected last week. I say sadly because I do not think members necessarily had read the detail of the bill. A lot of work went into researching it. I have written to every mayor in South Australia and every CEO of every council.

We interacted with the association of council inspectors (that is not the correct title), the people who do the front-line dog management. We consulted with them and said what should be in the bill, and they then had a look at the original draft and we changed it. I changed it after the minister (through the member for Hartley) said a year or so ago that it did not provide for microchipping, which it did through regulation.

We went through a very long drawn-out process of consultation. We consulted and got information from governments interstate, including the City of Sydney, which is one of the front runners in terms of cat and dog management. A lot of work went into that bill, and I do not think that it got the consideration it deserved. I was very disappointed, for example, that the shadow minister did not even speak to the bill, yet chose to vote against it. I would have thought that, as the shadow minister, you would want to debate an issue before casting a vote.

Today I received a letter back from the minister responsible for the area of dog and cat management, the Hon. Gail Gago. The letter indicates that she is waiting for local government basically to decide what it wants to do (that is paraphrasing her words, but that is the nub of it). My view is that there are some councils that have done something in this area. One of the councils on Kangaroo Island (I am not sure how many there are now) has acted in this regard. The City of Tea Tree Gully has been talking about doing something, and likewise the City of Mitcham and the City of Charles Sturt.

However, the reality is that, if you look at all the councils in the state and in the metropolitan area, not much has happened. They need someone in a leadership role to actually get them to do something about cat management. As I have said before, it is not simply about protecting native fauna, although that is an important aspect; it is also about protecting cats.

Last year, the Animal Welfare League, as I understand from its reported comments in *The Advertiser* a few weeks ago, destroyed 2,500 cats last year. How anyone in the wider community who is concerned about animal welfare could be happy with that I do not know. I heard yesterday that, once again the Animal Welfare League is reporting that it is receiving something like 80 dumped kittens a day. The system is just not working.

It is not just about protecting native fauna; it is not just about the welfare of cats themselves; there is also an aspect which relates to the nuisance caused by cats, which are allowed to wander and roam. People who care about their cats want them looked after. In talking to one of the vets in the Hills area he said that he fully supports what I am doing. When the dog management provisions were brought in, he said that they had a marked reduction in the number of dogs being hit by cars, which he had to try to fix up. The management provisions of the Dog and Cat Management Act have worked—they are not perfect, but they are working. What we need in an adjusted form is provisions which relate to the management of cats.

The member for Newland got a bit carried away last week and talked about cat runs costing thousands of dollars. None of my provisions (nor this one today) state that people must have a cat run. Cat runs are a good idea; in fact, at Minton Farm, which is an animal rescue farm at Cherry Gardens, the person who runs it, Bev Langley, told me that they built one recently out of scrap material for something like \$70. It looks fantastic; she showed me a photograph of it. None of

my bills (neither this one nor the previous one) say anything about people having to spend thousands of dollars on cat runs.

The previous bill was a lot more comprehensive and, I suppose, more specific than this. It set out to put the wood on councils, because they are the groups that will manage any provisions that this parliament passes, to come up with a sensible cat management plan. As with the previous bill, this one requires that any cat management plan has to be approved by the Dog and Cat Management Board, so councils cannot do anything willy-nilly: they have to get the approval of that board.

What does this bill do? Fundamentally, I am trying to get councils, under the leadership of the minister, the Hon. Gail Gago, to do something about this issue. Labor governments—and I have made this point before—in New South Wales, Victoria and the ACT have dealt with this issue. The local government authorities in those areas tell me it is working very well. The City of Sydney has a very progressive policy in relation to the management of cats and dogs, which is way ahead of us. They have lifelong registration for dogs. You register your dog once; that is it. They have provisions for microchipping and desexing cats where people can go to a veterinary service subsidised by the council on the weekend, and it costs people just a few dollars.

We do not have anything like that provision here. Some groups provide a desexing service and support it. I know that a group called CATS, inspired by Christine Pierson and others, does a lot of good work in that regard, as do some of the animal welfare associations. However, if you look closely, you see that local government has been noticeable by its absence in the main when it comes to innovative ways of managing cats. They have done better in relation to dogs, but still some improvement is needed.

So, what does this bill do? It says that, in relation to cats, councils will develop a cat management plan, but it provides for the control of unidentified cats and for public education on measures for the proper control of cats by their owners and for council monitoring of such measures. That is a much more softly softly approach than the previous bill which I think, despite its being defeated last week, was a very good bill. This bill today also requires that on or before 1 July every year the council has to forward to the minister (the minister for the environment, responsible for dog and cat management), the LGA and the Dog and Cat Management Board a report on the operation of the council's plan of management during the preceding financial year—that refers to cat management, and they also have to do the same for dog management—and publish a copy of the report on a website maintained by the council.

This is a very modest request and requirement for councils to develop a plan to deal with unidentified cats and to educate people in relation to proper control of cats. They will be required to monitor those control measures, provide a report to the minister, the LGA and the Dog and Cat Management Board and publish a copy of the report on a website. It is a much more modest request of councils.

Even this morning I have been interacting with Chris Russell from the LGA, saying, 'Let's try to get something happening in relation to cat management.' I am sure that the member for Goyder would attest to the fact that trying to get all councils to sing to the same tune is a bit like getting all politicians to do so, and the same difficulty is involved with academics.

But the argument that has been advanced by people who are lacking in support for any sort of cat measure is that each area needs to have a separate plan and a different approach. Obviously, you can have a somewhat different approach at Roxby Downs to, say, Unley, but I challenge anyone to tell me why cat management in Unley should be different from that in Mitcham or Burnside. I defy anyone on the grounds of logic to tell me why a cat in Burnside is different from a cat in Mitcham. It might have a higher income, but I doubt whether it would have anything else to differentiate it.

So, we have heard some unconvincing arguments. I have said once before in here that when I have argued to the government, 'Why can't you follow the lead of other Labor governments?', the answer has been that the states involved have more people. That is a completely nonsensical, irrelevant argument. South Australia used to lead not only Australia but the world in a lot of things, but sadly we do not seem to have the people around like Hugh Hudson and Don Hopgood. I do not know where the people in question have gone but, hopefully, within the Labor Party and the Labor government people might see themselves as leaders.

The point I make to members is that I have heard people say to me when they come in here, 'I'm a Catholic MP.' I say, 'No, you're not. You are an MP who is a Catholic.' There is a very

big difference. You are not a local government MP in here: you are a member of parliament who may have been in local government, like myself. You are not in here as an agent of the Baptist Church, the Catholic Church, the LGA or Uncle Tom Copley Preservation Society.

You are in here to govern and to make laws for the benefit of the whole population of South Australia; you are not in here as yourself, and that is reinforced in standing orders. We are not allowed to refer to each other by our first names or surnames, because we represent an electorate. Some people do not seem to understand it. I was trying to convey the point to the member for Finniss that, because you have been involved in local government and you might be passionate about it, you do not come in here to be an agent of local government. We have to make laws for the welfare and wellbeing of the whole community.

Clearly, you cannot please everyone; we all know that. You will never please everyone. Some people out there will say, 'We don't want you to do anything about cats.' I have had death threats as a result of putting up these measures. Someone from Rose Park rang up and said, 'I'll kill you if you stop me having 20 cats or however many cats I want.'

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson interjecting:

The Hon. R.B. SUCH: That's all right; it is not the only time I have been threatened. I got threatened when we had the big debate about paedophilia. Someone threatened to put a bullet up an area where the sun rarely shines. It was a .303 that he said he would put in that area. But in politics you are in here to do what is right, not what is popular.

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson interjecting:

The Hon. R.B. SUCH: That is why I commend the Attorney and the Premier for taking on the bikies. That is a very risky strategy, and I hope that no harm comes to those two individuals.

Getting back to this issue: let us legislate for the benefit of the community, which is not only those people who suffer the nuisance of cats but those who care about the welfare of cats that are being destroyed by the thousand each year and those who care about the natural environment. Let us do something about it. You will not please everyone and I suspect that the member for Newland was lobbied by a group out there who are very strong cat fanciers. That is fine. He is entitled (and so are they) to put a point of view. But at the end of the day you have to put it all together and do what is right. It is not always popular in all areas, and never will be, but you have to do what is right.

So, I urge members to look at this proposal, to work with local government and to urge the minister, the Hon. Gail Gago, to provide the leadership and to come up with a measure well before the next election, because this issue is not going to go away—I am going to drum it up right to the next election—and make sure that this issue is dealt with soon and properly so that we can protect, not only wildlife, but cats, and also have a good law for the people of South Australia.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mrs Geraghty.

GAMING MACHINES (HOURS OF OPERATION) AMENDMENT BILL

The Hon. I.F. EVANS (Davenport) (10:46): Obtained leave and introduced a bill for an act to amend the Gaming Machines Act 1992. Read a first time.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS (Davenport) (10:47): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I indicate to the house that this is a private members bill and it requires a conscience vote and, therefore, should not be interpreted as the policy of the state Liberal Party. This bill simply changes the hours of operation for poker machines outside of the casino so that they cannot operate between 3am and 9am. Under the current provisions poker machines can operate for 18 hours in a 24-hour period, and the six-hour break can be made up of one six-hour period, two three-hour periods or three two-hour periods. What that means, of course, is that hotels and clubs can arrange their trading hours so that within suburbs there is always a trading venue open.

A couple of years ago the Premier made a big song and dance about reducing the number of poker machines with a view to reducing problem gambling. I raised, during that debate, this concept, and this legislation now brings to this chamber a debate about the concept of having one uniform closing period of six hours. I do not accept that the reduction in poker machines that has occurred in the past couple of years as a result of the Premier's legislation has successfully achieved what the Premier claimed it would; that is, a reduction in problem gambling.

I argued at the time, and it is still my belief today, that all that legislation did was provide a mechanism to take poker machines from low turnover/low profit venues (mainly regional areas, and in some cases city clubs) and get them placed in what will become, and have become, high turnover/high profit venues. As a result, there is a greater concentration of poker machines in the lower socioeconomic suburbs of South Australia.

I put to the house that, if all poker machines were closed for a uniform six-hour period in pubs and clubs, that would give a clear six-hour break for gamblers who might have a problem. It would also allow 18 hours for people who wish to gamble to do so. The question will be raised: what about the issue of shiftworkers? My answer to that is very simple: shiftworkers generally do not work 18 hours, seven days a week. There are still 18 hours in the day for anyone to go and play the poker machines, if they wish.

I think there is plenty of flexibility within that 18 hours for people to arrange their social time to go and have a flutter on the pokies, if that is what they desire. However, I do believe that a clear six-hour break is a better measure to try to address problem gambling than the measure that was introduced by the Premier and then voted on as a private members' matter.

Some people will say: 'What about the casino?' The casino has an agreement with the government that contains a compensation clause in regard to change of trading conditions, so I have left the casino out of this particular measure. My view is that if we can deal with the clubs and pubs, I doubt whether people from Noarlunga, Gawler and even the inner suburbs, are going to travel late at night (at 3 in the morning) into the casino to gamble. Indeed, I think there would be very few who would do that.

As I stressed: this is a private member's bill; it is not a policy of the state Liberal Party; it requires a conscience vote as far as the Liberal Party members are concerned; and I seek the support of the house. I think this measure will be of significant benefit to those in the community who are involved in betting on gaming machines, because I think that having them open all hours does create some problems. I think having access restricted between 3am and 9am is the minimum of what the gap should be. I know some would argue: why not make it 10 or 11?

The reason I have stuck to six hours is that there is currently a six-hour provision in the act, and I am trying to make it uniform. I also think there will be a simpler administration, because one would only have to worry about the one period. One would not have to worry about trying to supervise which club or hotel is closed, whether it is three lots of two hours, two lots of three hours or one lot of six hours—this makes it uniform. I think this brings an easier and simpler administration to the bureaucracy in relation to administering the act, and I seek the support of the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mrs Geraghty.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ADVERTISING MATERIAL) AMENDMENT BILL

Mr HANNA (Mitchell) (10:53): Obtained leave and introduced a bill for an act to amend the Local Government Act 1999. Read a first time.

Mr HANNA (Mitchell) (10:53): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill contains a very simple proposition. It is a bill to ban junk mail in letterboxes that are marked 'no junk mail' or with a similar message. Importantly, an exception is provided in this proposal for advertising material of a political, religious or charitable nature. Of course, it is possible for regulations to prescribe other matters. For example, regulations might want to go into the detail of people who advertise local garage sales or a lost pet, and that sort of matter. It is directed at the major retailing corporations whose usually poorly paid workers (foot soldiers) deliver catalogues and the like to letterboxes. A lot of people enjoy receiving junk mail, and this would not prevent that. A lot of people like going through all the catalogues and marking out the specials.

I know that the members for Giles and Torrens, in particular, spend an awful lot of time going through catalogues, looking for the specials and going down to the local shops and saving money by buying enormous quantities of whatever it is. The more you buy the more you save, is what I am told. This is really to stop the nuisance for people who really do not want junk mail. There is an increasing amount of the commercial material that I am talking about; it is enough to fill any letterbox: usually once at the end of the weekend and once during the week.

I want to ensure that the 'no junk mail' stickers on the letterboxes of people who do not want junk mail actually have some power. There is a substantial fine of up to \$2,500, but I am sure that that would only be applied in the case of the most persistent offenders. I have provided for an expiation fee of \$200, and that would be administered by local government. So, if people are caught transgressing—either the people who deliver or the corporations who instruct them to deliver—they can be hit with an expiation fee. I doubt that it will lead to very many cases of people being penalised because, once this gets out there, people will be much more careful about depositing material in letterboxes which are marked 'no junk mail'.

This proposal arises directly from representations I have received from constituents. I think it will be quite a popular measure. If anything, a lot of my constituents would prefer it to go further and not have exemptions for political, religious or charitable material. We are really just asking the corporations, and those who deliver for them, to respect those people who have marked 'no junk mail' on their letterbox, and this will give some legislative backing to that request on behalf of householders.

I will briefly go through the clauses of the bill. The first three clauses are formal. The fourth clause is the substantive clause, which sets out the relevant offences for people who deposit advertising material and for those who cause a person to deposit such advertising material. Clause 4(3) provides the exemptions. I have already mentioned that those exemptions include political, religious or charitable material, but I have given other examples that might be prescribed by the regulations. Then there is an evidentiary provision which facilitates the council taking action against people if a member of the public witnesses transgression either in respect of their own letterbox or someone else's. I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mrs Geraghty.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (AUDITOR-GENERAL) AMENDMENT BILL

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 31 May 2007. Page 238.)

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) (11:01): Sections 128 to 130 of the Local Government Act 1999 (which are substituted in this bill put forward by the member for Fisher) deal with the annual audit of a council's financial statements. Currently, registered company auditors audit the annual financial statements of councils under contract to each council, applying the relevant audit and accounting standards. Councils' annual reports, including the audited financial statements, must be available for public inspection and must be submitted for tabling in both houses of parliament.

The task of the external auditor includes providing an audit opinion in respect of the audited financial statements. In forming that audit opinion, the auditor must give due consideration to the adequacy of the council's policies, practices and procedures of internal control under section 125 of the Local Government Act 1999. The council auditor must provide a report to the council and the council's audit committee specifically identifying any irregularity in the council's accounting practices or the management of the council's financial affairs identified during the course of an audit.

Under the present framework for external financial review of councils, there are lines of accountability back to the parliament through the minister responsible for the administration of the Local Government Act. Under the act, the auditor must report to the minister a failure by the council or chief executive officer to rectify within a reasonable time, or in a reasonable manner, any irregularity identified by the auditor during the course of an audit or a breach of the Local Government Act, or another act that comes to the attention of the auditor during the course of an audit, or evidence that, in the opinion of the auditor, indicates or suggests a serious financial irregularity. Sir, can I have clarification of the time? The clock keeps chopping and changing around.

The SPEAKER: Eight minutes—my apologies.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Okay, thank you. Is that a guesstimate?

The SPEAKER: You had 10 minutes at the beginning.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: After receiving the report under section 129(6), the minister may appoint an investigator who may be the Auditor-General. The Public Finance and Audit Act 1987 gives the Treasurer the power to request that the Auditor-General examine the accounts of a council and the efficiency and economy of its activities, or examine accounts relating to a council-funded project and the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of that project. The results of any such examination are reported to the Treasurer and to the presiding members of both houses of parliament.

Under section 273 of the Local Government Act 1999, the minister may take action on the basis of a report to the Auditor-General under the Local Government Act, or the Public Finance and Audit Act, or the report of another investigator appointed by the minister to investigate matters raised by a council auditor. The minister may make recommendations to the council or, if the minister considers a contravention, failure or irregularity has occurred, give directions to the council to rectify it or prevent a recurrence.

If there has been a serious contravention, failure or irregularity, the minister may recommend to the Governor that the council be declared a defaulting council and the Governor may then (by proclamation) declare the council to be a defaulting council and appoint an administrator. All members of the defaulting council are then suspended from office. The minister must report to both houses of parliament on the circumstances giving rise to making of the proclamation. I accept that, historically, it has been very rare for matters to reach the point of investigation or review by the Auditor-General and for a minister to subsequently take formal action.

In introducing his bill, the member for Fisher referred to the Port Adelaide Flower Farm. This was one case in which the Auditor-General was called on by the Treasurer of the day to conduct an examination under section 32 of the Public Finance and Audit Act. However, generally I think it is fair to say that, in South Australia, we have not experienced the problems with local councils for which some other states are renowned.

Recent changes made to the arrangements for local government financial audit by the government recognised that South Australia did not have a clear, up-to-date financial framework to support local government audit and to achieve consistency across councils in financial reporting and had one of the weaker auditor independent regimes for the local government sector.

Amendments made by the Local Government (Finance Management and Rating) Amendment Act 2005 and the Local Government (Financial Management Variation) Regulations 2007 have focused on improving the independence of council external auditors in a range of ways, including a requirement that a council auditor must be rotated after no more than five years and that a council must report both the amounts paid to the auditor and, if applicable, the reasons for terminating an auditor's appointment; prohibiting the council from engaging its auditor to provide any services to the council outside the scope of the auditor's functions under the Local Government Act; and requiring both the council CEO and the presiding member of the council's audit committee to sign a statement to certify the auditor's independence, and requiring the auditor (himself or herself) to sign a further declaration of independence consistent with industry standards.

Model annual financial statements for councils and council subsidiaries developed in accordance with Australian accounting standards have also been prescribed. The member for Fisher points out that it has been difficult to make any kind of financial comparison between councils, and the model statements will go some way towards rectifying this. Also, comparison of each council's finances have been enhanced by the new requirement under local government financial management regulations that council budgets include a summary of operating and capital investment activities prepared on a consistent basis, as well as the requirement that information on standard financial indicators be presented.

In his 2006 annual report the former auditor-general said:

It is relevant to note that there is a sound foundation for effective management and control in the Local Government Act 1999 and the regulations under that act.

He acknowledged that significant improvements to the financial management, auditing and reporting arrangements within local government have been made in the recent amendments prescribed in the Local Government Act 1999 and the Local Government Financial Management Regulations 1999. However, in that report and in evidence before the Economic and Finance Committee in December 2006, the former auditor-general also raised questions about the ability of the current framework for local government audit to provide a positive, comprehensive,

independent assurance of the propriety and lawfulness with which councils are administering public funds under the powers delegated to them by parliament.

As a result of these concerns, the Economic and Finance Committee conducted an inquiry into local government audit and oversight and, as I stated in my submission to the committee in May 2007, I have no in-principle objection to the proposal that the Auditor-General should have a greater role in the audit of local government. On the contrary, I believe that such a role for the Auditor-General would be consistent with the standing of councils as elected governments.

However, it is not necessarily appropriate to subject local government to exactly the same audit requirements as a state government department under the Public Finance and Audit Act. Some work is required to frame reforms that take the nature of local government and its evolving financial management framework into account. In my discussion with the former auditor-general in late 2006, he acknowledged that a range of factors impact on local councils that do not apply to state government departments.

The Economic and Finance Committee reported on its inquiry in June this year with a range of recommendations that need to be taken into account in considering whether this bill introduced in May is in the most effective form. The committee in a footnote on page 34 of its report noted that this bill was before the house and, while expressing agreement with its intent, pointed out that the committee's recommendations enumerate a range of options and improvements that can accompany it.

Those options and improvements relate to fundamental matters such as alternative models for the way in which the Auditor-General could be involved in local government audit, the scope of the audits to be undertaken, and the form of the reports to be produced, all of which affect the costs of any new regime. There are different models of Auditor-General involvement in the local government audit operating in Victoria, Queensland and Tasmania, and the options to be examined for South Australia need to consider at least the two alternatives contained in the recommendations of the Economic and Finance Committee.

The interrelated issues in the form of Auditor-General involvement, audit scope, cost and transitional provisions need to be resolved so that any new reforms will be widely understood and successfully implemented. The local government sector is not opposed to greater involvement of the Auditor-General and, if changes are to be developed and implemented in a considered way, councils and, particularly council members, will appreciate the benefits of the Auditor-General's involvement rather than experiencing it as punitive. Although the government will not be supporting this measure at this time, I welcome its reinforcement of the message to local government that further reforms in this area are warranted.

Time expired.

Mr GRIFFITHS (Goyder) (11:11): I wish to make a brief comment on this and also thank the minister for her contribution. The issue of local government audits is a very emotional one for many people. In my time as a member of the Economic and Finance Committee, in the first 12 months especially, I think we spent far too much time talking about local government in general. However, a lot of time was devoted to the inquiry, which I think was very well spent, and, as the minister commented, we had input from the former auditor-general and came up with some very worthwhile recommendations, and I am pleased to hear that the minister is considering all of those.

The minister has given an excellent précis of how the local government audit process occurs so it is not my intention to repeat that, but I want to comment briefly, because probably I am one of the few people in this place who has had to experience local government audits on a regular basis. I was not directly involved in the preparation of the financial statements and accounts for the last couple of years of my time in local government, but for about 10 years before that I had sole responsibility, and my understanding from the elected members who put me there was that they expected everything was going to be right all the time, and that is what I tried to achieve. I know the experience I had in working with three different audit companies was that they are very thorough in doing their jobs. They try to ensure, as much as humanly possible, that every dollar is correctly allocated as per the budget determined by the elected members, and that only appropriate accounts have been paid and every source of revenue has been allocated to its correct budget line, so that things are right.

I am rather intrigued, because it seems to me there is a lot of discussion about local government auditing. In the comments that I made in the Economic and Finance Committee, I tried to enforce the fact that all councils work within the regulations that are determined by the government—clearly. So, if people are unhappy about audit requirements for local government, it is

actually necessary for the minister and the government to determine what those regulations and audit requirements should be. That is where the report of the Economic and Finance Committee on local government audit and oversight will assist.

My comment during the committee discussions was that councils I have a knowledge of all do the right thing. They have no fear about an external body coming in and auditing their budgets or end of year statements, because there is no misrepresentation. Sometimes minor adjustments need to be made where something has been considered incorrectly, but that is because the auditor picks it up. It is not because funds have been misappropriated or used in the wrong way; it is just that they have been put on the wrong line sometimes, so I do not think that is a real issue.

I commend the fact that, of the 68 councils across the state, numerous audit committees have been put in place and they have tried to get the particular expertise and skill that they need to ensure that the regular control of the budget and finances is undertaken by those committees. No doubt those committees also have a significant involvement in the preparation of the final accounts for audit by the auditor and subsequent presentation to the minister and the government.

I know that in local government, generally, there is a little concern about this issue. I think that all the professional staff who work in the 68 councils these days have the required skills and expertise to ensure that they can undertake any requirements put before them. I understand that the Local Government Association is still uncertain in relation to its position on this bill. The member for Fisher has commented to me that he has had recent discussion with the LGA and that it is looking for comparative costings and what might be involved, if his bill receives support.

The Local Government Association is consulting councils, so I am sure a position from them will be received quite soon in order to allow this bill, and also the recommendations to the minister from the Economic and Finance Committee, to be considered appropriately. I do not think there is great reason for concern in this bill, and we will see what happens in the future.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mrs Geraghty.

SPENT CONVICTIONS BILL

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 31 May 2007. Page 239.)

Ms PORTOLESI (Hartley) (11:16): Today I rise on behalf of the government to oppose the second reading of this bill. The bill provides for minor criminal convictions to become spent upon the offender having completed a prescribed period during which he or she has not reoffended. A minor criminal conviction is defined as any offence, other than an offence in relation to which the convicted person is sentenced to imprisonment for an indeterminate term or for a term exceeding three months, whether or not the sentence is suspended, or is ordered to pay a fine exceeding \$2,500.

The government released a discussion paper on spent conviction legislation in 2004. The government diligently sought the public's view on whether South Australia should enact spent conviction legislation and, if so, what form it should take. The government received many responses to the discussion paper. The majority (albeit slim) of these responses argued in favour of spent conviction legislation. The majority recognised the need to structure the legislation in order to ensure that it cannot be used by habitual or dangerous criminals to conceal a history of serious criminal behaviour where disclosure is in the public interest.

Another common theme was the need to ensure as far as possible consistency with other jurisdictions; and I am sure the member would agree with that. All jurisdictions, except Victoria and South Australia, have spent conviction legislation. At present the scope of the regimes varies across the different jurisdictions. Discrepancies exist between the legislative schemes resulting in inconsistencies, meaning some convictions can become spent under one state's legislation but not under another. This was a problem identified by supporters of the legislation.

A national uniform model for spent convictions has been under examination by the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General (SCAG). However, there have been delays in finalising this matter. In particular, because of the variations in the existing schemes, some fundamental policy questions need to be worked through. Many of these have now been addressed and a model draft bill is being drafted for presentation to ministers soon; although, obviously, that has been suspended while we are in this caretaker period.

Although no commitment to participate in a national scheme has been given at this stage by the state government, we believe that, if South Australia is to pursue such legislation, it should follow the national model, if one can be agreed on. Given recent developments of SCAG in this area, the government believes that it would be premature for the parliament to legislate in this area when the national model is so close. For this reason the government opposes the second reading of the bill.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr Griffiths.

VOLUNTARY EUTHANASIA BILL

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 31 May 2007. Page 240.)

Mrs REDMOND (Heysen) (11:20): I rise to speak today still in two minds about my position on this bill, but I think it is important to put my thoughts on the record in relation to it. I note that the bill has been on the table since 31 May when it was introduced. It does not seem to have had any further debate since then, and it seems to me appropriate that we should at least progress the bill somewhat by the end of the year.

The honourable member has put in place what he described—and I would agree—as a fairly tight regime. First, it needs to be pointed out that he is talking about something which is absolutely voluntary. It does not require or anticipate the participation of any person in voluntary euthanasia—and we will discuss shortly what one might mean by that. Neither the person wanting some relief nor a professional would be required to participate under this bill.

I am aware that a large majority of the community, when asked the simple question whether they support voluntary euthanasia, would say they do, yet this parliament seems to have consistently had a problem addressing the issue and, much to the frustration of many in the community, coming to a reasonable position on it.

The member for Fisher's bill is limited to those who are in the terminal phase of a terminal illness and who are suffering unbearable pain. It requires that two independent medical practitioners assess the patient and two independent witnesses; and those witnesses cannot be people who might ultimately gain any financial advantage from the demise of the person who is making the request.

It anticipates that the request must be from the person who wants to end their life, and, because of the nature of the way it is proposed, that person, basically, needs to be in full possession of their faculties, to be in a position where, if they were getting medical treatment, for instance, they would be able to give informed consent to that treatment. So, it anticipates someone being fully aware and competent to ask for their life to be ended.

It is at that point, I guess, where I have some divergence in how best to progress the issue with what is proposed by the member for Fisher. His bill specifically does not allow for what is called an advance directive, that is, the request for certain things to occur when one gets to a position where you cannot do anything more yourself and you may not have the mental capacity to take a decision for yourself.

I note that, in fact, we already have in this state an act called the Consent to Medical Treatment and Palliative Care Act 1995, and that already allows a limited level of advance directive, and, in particular, I want to refer to the objects of that act, which are in section 3:

...to allow persons of or over the age of 16 years to decide freely for themselves on an informed basis whether or not to undergo medical treatment; and

to allow persons of or over the age of 18 years to make anticipatory decisions about medical treatment—

that is, an advance directive—

and to provide for the administration of emergency medical treatment in certain circumstances...

The bill also provides for:

...medical powers of attorney under which those who desire to do so may appoint agents to make decisions about their medical treatment when they are unable to make such decisions for themselves; and

to allow for the provision of palliative care, in accordance with proper standards, to people who are dying and protect them from medical treatment that is intrusive, burdensome and futile.

In fact, it talks about in the definitions 'life sustaining measures', which are defined as:

...medical treatment that supplants or maintains the operation of vital bodily functions that are temporarily or permanently incapable of independent operation, and includes assisted ventilation, artificial nutrition and hydration and cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

The key provision is in section 7, which provides:

A person over the age of 18 years may, while of sound mind, give a direction under this section about the medical treatment that they want, or do not want, if he or she is at some future time—

- (a) in the terminal phase of a terminal illness, or in a persistent vegetative state; and
- (b) incapable of making decisions about medical treatment when the question of administering the treatment arises.

It then sets out some forms, and says if a person has given such a directive they are then taken to have consented to medical treatment, or interference, in accordance with what their directive says.

So, we already have this provision, and it would have seemed to me to be more logical, in terms of the next incremental step, to simply say, 'Now I want to not just be able to give a direction that says that I do not want to be on a life support system but I want to be able to give a direction that says that I actually want someone to be allowed to give me a needle to end my life if I get to that same point, if I am in a permanent vegetative state,' whereas the member for Fisher's bill actually requires that I be of sound mind, and, in fact, to some extent I think there is a bit of a contradiction in the concept of the bill before us, in as much as, if you have to be in unbearable pain, is that by definition going to prevent you from being in a mentally fit state to reach the conclusions that the bill requires you to reach?

Like most people, I come to this issue from a very personal perspective, and the reason for my particular position on the way I think we should have gone, and that is with a more incremental step, is that my mother passed away with Alzheimer's, just as I was elected to this place; in fact, I did the eulogy at her funeral two weeks before I did my maiden speech, and to this day I regret not having had the ability to thank my parents at my maiden speech because that wound was still so raw. But having watched her pass away with Alzheimer's, and my grandmother before her—and, indeed, I am in the firing line for it unless they have some medical breakthrough in the next few years, but—

Ms Portolesi: Early onset?

Mrs REDMOND: Yes, I have already got early onset; thanks, Grace. But having watched what happened with my mum—she actually because of a fractured hip had surgery and that sent the dementia into a tailspin, and she spent the last three years of her life in a nursing home. But she had a great quality of life really. She was still able to enjoy music, enjoy touch, enjoy sunlight, enjoy having her great-grandchildren placed in her arms—there were a whole lot of things that she could enjoy. But towards the end the Alzheimer's progressed and the strokes affected her brain more and more. She was off with the pixies, in the vernacular, for the last three years; she did not know who I was, or any other member of the family.

But in the last three weeks that was where I think we should have been able to do something more as a family. I am one of five children and we were all gathered at her bedside. In those last three weeks she couldn't eat, she couldn't walk, and she became incontinent—which would have mortified my dear mother. She had no quality of life, and no prospect of improving. When she had the stroke that paralysed her throat so that she couldn't eat any more she was already down to 36 kilos. It strikes me as inhumane in the extreme to then say that this person has to starve to death.

That is effectively what happened. There are actually cases where the RSPCA has prosecuted people for treating their animals in that way, and yet our system insists that we have that circumstance, where she must have been under 30 kilos. Every plate of her skull was visible to us. She was literally just a skeleton with some flesh. She had no quality of life, no capacity to communicate, no capacity to enjoy anything, and yet we require her to starve to death. To me that seems to be wrong. It seems to me, therefore, that we do need to move on this issue.

As I said, I have some hesitation about the particular direction in which the member for Fisher's bill wants to go, but I do support the idea that we do move towards some incremental step to allow us to be more humane in our treatment of people at the end of their lives, when there is no quality of life and no prospect for any improvement for the future. So, with those few words, I indicate my support. As the member for Fisher said, I could move to amend it, and I may well do so, but I do think it is important that we move this debate on, and I support the bill.

Mr VENNING (Schubert) (11:30): Representing Lutherans in my area, this area is very difficult for me, as I also lost both my parents from this. I listen to my electorate. The Lutherans are very strong on this message, but I am certainly very interested to see what this bill will do. I will certainly consider it.

Debate adjourned.

GOULD GROUP

The Hon. R.B. SUCH (Fisher) (11:31): I move:

That this house commends the Gould Group on its environmental work since the Gould League was established in 1909 and, in particular, the formation of National Bird Day.

Time clearly overtook the parliament in probably more ways than one in relation to this motion. I was trying to get it up before National Bird Day, which was held on 29 October. The Gould League, now called the Gould Group, is not as well known in South Australia as it is in some other states. It was founded, as I indicated, in 1909 as a result of the efforts, in particular, of a school teacher, Jesse McMichael, who suggested a bird protection league. Her comment at the time was:

The thoughtless destruction of birdlife would lead to an increase in numbers of insects, which would, if left unchecked, take a disastrous toll on crops of all kinds.

Jesse McMichael had strong support from the Australasian Ornithologists Union, incidentally, with the Prime Minister of the day, Alfred Deakin, who became the first president of the Gould League. The Gould League has more recently become the Gould Group, because it is involved in a whole range of environmental activities which extend beyond what is still an important role of seeking to protect birds. The Gould Group is involved in marine education, waste reduction, recycling, and wildlife education. As a result of those activities, it has won numerous awards both nationally and internationally.

The concept of the Gould League and, in particular, the focus on schools was reflected in the Bird Lovers Pledge 1909. I do not want members to get the wrong idea: we are talking about the feathered variety. The children were asked to sign the pledge which states:

1. I hereby promise that I will protect native birds and will not collect their eggs.
2. I promise that I will endeavour to prevent others from injuring native birds and destroying their eggs.

It is a very simple pledge. Some may be sceptical about children signing pledges, but some years ago I had a chap come into my office, who signed a pledge when he was at primary school never to drink alcohol, and he said that he never has since. I am not sure that it will work for everyone in relation to alcohol or not collecting bird eggs, but we should not underestimate the impact of the early years at school in inculcating positive values.

Members may have even experienced Arbor Day in schools. It is a pity that it was ever phased out. I believe that the state government has brought it back, or is about to, and I commend the government if it does. I remember Stan Evans, the former member for Davenport (the current member's father), saying that he was deeply impressed as a youngster planting an avenue of trees in upper Sturt in year 1 (I think). Even to this day, he still recalls with great affection that time of planting trees at the Upper Sturt Primary School. I think it is important that we recognise that young children are very impressionable, and that things they do and commitments they make can often last a whole lifetime.

Specifically, in relation to the protection of birds, sadly, in Australia many of our native birds have become extinct. I have some statistics. Australia is home to between 600,000 and 700,000 species—which seems a lot, but that is what the Gould Group tells me—many of which are found nowhere else in the world. That is plants and animals; not just birds. About 84 per cent of plants, 83 per cent of mammals, and 45 per cent of birds are endemic; that is, they are found only in Australia.

Sadly, 23 birds are now extinct; six, including the famous orange bellied parrot, are on the critically endangered list; and another 40 birds are on the endangered list. If members want to read about the natural environment and the history of Adelaide, I suggest they have a look at the book which was co-edited by Professor Chris Daniels and Catherine J. Tait, entitled *Adelaide: Nature of a City*. The book details the number of birds which are extinct in the Adelaide area. From memory, I think about 21 native birds in the local Adelaide area are extinct. The challenge is to try to protect those birds.

I remember that, as a child growing up in the Adelaide Hills around Hawthorndene, we used to see blue wrens, robin red breasts and other birds like that quite frequently, but now, living not far away from the area where I grew up, I have never seen either of those in recent years. They are increasingly threatened primarily by loss of habitat but also by feral animals. Ironically, one of the pieces of flora which has helped save them is the blackberry (a pest plant) because cats and other feral creatures cannot get into the blackberries easily to get to the birds or their nests.

The role of the Gould League (now the Gould Group), I believe, is very important in schools. Years ago at Underdale at the South Australian College of Advanced Education we had people in the science area under the leadership of Neville Forde who interestingly is a descendant of former Prime Minister Forde. I think he was the shortest-serving prime minister on record. Neville was a very strong supporter of the Gould League and the Gould Group, as were others there, namely Richard Smith, Brian Brock and Bob Sharrad, many of whom have gone on to do famous things. They instilled in primary school teachers who came under their care a passion for science and the natural environment, and they imparted skills and techniques for analysing and understanding science.

I think it is fair to say that there is a push on at the moment by some people who want to restrict the curriculum purely to mathematics, English and a few other subjects. That is fine, we need those, but I am sure that our school system can cope with teaching young people science and, in particular, teaching them about ecology based on scientific principles. Those key principles, as I have mentioned here from time to time, are interdependence and interrelatedness. If people understand those, they understand why you do not throw rubbish in rivers, why you do not pollute and so on. If you understand those two principles, you are halfway to understanding why global warming is such an important issue and why plant associations are important.

At the Adelaide University, one of the best-known experts in ornithology is Associate Professor David Paton, who continues a family tradition of expertise in studying birdlife, and he is passionate about trying to safeguard what is left of our native bird population. He recently put forward a proposal to the university and the state government in terms of creating more habitat for not only birds but other native fauna. I have not read the reply which came today from the minister for the environment after I wrote to her and the Premier, supporting the very good concept put forward by David Paton.

A lot of people might think, 'So what?' It might be a few parrots here and there and a few other birds. What does it matter? Too often Australians take their natural environment for granted. I make no apology for being critical of the way we collectively have treated our natural environment. We are a lot smarter now, and I must say that I interact with people in the country virtually every week. I have a lot of relatives on farms who are involved in a whole range of horticultural and agricultural practices, and it is pleasing to see amongst the younger generation of farmers a greater recognition of the need to protect native flora and fauna. We cannot undo what happened in the past. Some of it, unfortunately, was the result of ignorance. Some was the result of government policy and some was simply unacceptable greed.

If you talk to visitors to our country, they will tell you how delighted they are to be able to see our wildlife and birdlife. I do not know whether members realise how important birdwatching is as a tourist activity. There is a pecking order, if you pardon the pun, in relation to birdwatchers. I think the top category of birdwatchers are 'twitchers'—they are the very sophisticated birdwatchers—and then it descends in order of sophistication depending on how they watch birds.

Out on the salt pans, people come from around the world to birdwatch. I wrote to the Minister for Tourism recently, asking what the state government is doing to promote this area of tourism, and she is very supportive of it. She sent back brochures and so on to highlight the fact that people come from around the world to have a look at our fantastic birdlife. I know a lot of people go up to Bookmark Biosphere to look at birds. They go to the wetlands and all around the state. Clearly, if you do not have any birds, there is not much point trying to be a birdwatcher and there is not much point in trying to attract tourists. If you have—

Mr Venning interjecting:

The Hon. R.B. SUCH: When you get to my age, that is probably—no! It is important that we recognise the importance of protecting our native birds. This is a simple motion. It would be good if the Gould Group were more widely recognised in South Australia. I think it would be great if more schools took on some of the roles enunciated by the Gould Group because, as I said at the start, impressions at a young age are often lasting and commitments made at an early age are often lasting as well. I commend the motion to the house and I ask members to support it.

Mr KENYON (Newland) (11:43): I rise to indicate briefly that the government supports what is an excellent motion moved by the member for Fisher. The Gould Group has an interesting history, originating as the Gould League based on a pledge centred on not collecting eggs, which goes to show the role that mortality in the young plays in the population of species. So, it was quite a strategic resolution to be protecting the eggs, allowing the birds to reproduce more thoroughly or, at least, to allow their survival rates to increase.

One simple pledge to stop people collecting eggs had a large effect and it is admirable that it has been carried through over time to evolve into the Gould Group, which is moving into some other areas of environmental concern in our society, including waste and aquatic care. It is a good thing to be recognised by this parliament, so I am happy to support the motion.

Motion carried.

SHARED SERVICES

Mr VENNING (Schubert) (11:45): I move:

That this house—

- (a) condemns the Rann government for the potential loss of jobs in regional South Australia through its shared services initiatives;
- (b) recognises that regional South Australia is already under great stress because of drought and irrigation restrictions; and
- (c) calls on the Minister for Regional Development, who is a country member representing the Riverland and leader of the National Party in South Australia, to abolish the initiative and replace it with job creation initiatives for regional South Australia.

I think this is a sad day for this parliament, and I personally am very saddened to move this motion. The government's proposal to axe jobs in regional areas of South Australia, compounding the problems of country people already suffering greatly from the drought, can be considered nothing short of uncompassionate and absolutely heartless.

This planned centralisation of services, to be called Shares Services SA, will be established under the Department of Treasury and Finance and is aimed at saving the government up to \$60 million a year: but at what cost do these savings come and who is paying? The government appears to be cutting costs where it cannot be hurt, and they have not got any consideration for people's lives, which I find completely ludicrous, given the current climate of drought hardship being faced by families in rural and regional areas.

I find it particularly interesting that the government is proposing this shifting of jobs to central Adelaide, when its own Strategic Plan lists one of the targets as being to maintain regional South Australia's share of the population. Its plan states that when people leave rural industries and move to the city, 'Populations in regional towns can lose critical mass and suffer a decline in community services.'

What does the government think is going to happen with this plan—exactly the opposite to what they state their aims are. This crazy strategy flies in the face of what the Rann Labor government has been encouraging and supposedly stands for: regional development. I find it quite ludicrous that when the government is claiming to be acting for the regions it does the complete opposite. What it says and what it actually does are totally contradictory. This government is very strong on rhetoric, but the actuality always reveals a different story.

The government has said that there will be the equivalent of 250 full-time jobs to go from regional South Australia, but as many people work part-time, this figure equates to around 500 people who would no longer have a position of employment in their country towns. Positions coming under the plan's umbrella include the finance, human resources and accounts sections of departments and agencies, including hospitals. However, it is not just the 500 employees who would have to shift under this planned centralisation who would be affected, it is their families and children who will be impacted as well.

There will be an adverse effect on regional employment, and this will have a negative flow-on effect to those communities that come within the realm of the plan. As a town's population decreases, in the words of the government in its Strategic Plan, the towns will 'suffer a decline in community services', not to mention the local businesses such as supermarkets, chemists, hairdressers and contractors that would also suffered a decline in work, with people having to move away in order to remain in their current job.

The state government has said that their shared services plan is about improving efficiencies across the public sector and is not targeting regional areas. Let me just list the areas that will be affected by the proposed plan: the Eyre Peninsula, Whyalla, the Murray Mallee, the South East, Yorke Peninsula, the Mid North, the Far North, Kangaroo Island, the Fleurieu Peninsula and the Riverland. The Barossa Valley, which falls into my electorate, is part of the Mid North region which will be affected if this centralisation goes ahead. If they are not regional areas, then I had better go and check the meaning of 'regional' in my dictionary, because they all seem to be regional areas to me.

I think that, once again, the city-centric attitude of this state government is on full display. People from rural areas are saying loud and clear that they do not want to move; so why should they? Estimates say that maybe one in 10 employees would be prepared to move to Adelaide. So, what does this mean for people not electing to transfer? They will be surplus to requirements. In other words, they will not be needed and their jobs will disappear.

What about the cost of moving to Adelaide? Housing prices are somewhat disparate, and this would make relocation unviable for most. Why can't savings come from the administration of services in the city? That is right, I forgot: according to this government, South Australia stops at Gepps Cross! If we look at the electorates they represent it is not hard to see why their mindset is narrow. Only one regional member of parliament exists on the other side, apart from the minister herself, so that is two. I can assure you that if the plan does go ahead it will put the member for Giles' electorate in jeopardy as well.

Efficiencies and cost savings are the main reasons behind the Shared Services Initiative. I suggest the government has a look at other such plans it has presided over, with similar objectives, and see how successful they have been. Have they forgotten the mess they created with the NRM boards? What savings and efficiencies have been generated through the government's administration of that plan?

I am personally aware of what state Labor has done with its regional headquarters, because my home town is Crystal Brook. It was a large regional centre for both SA Water and Transport SA (the Highways Department). I see the member for Frome is here—it is also his home town. They used to have a combined workforce of, I am guessing, probably 300 to 400 people in their heyday. It was a very efficient outfit. What is there today? I am guessing, but probably 30 or 40. There is nothing left; just the admin people. There is practically nobody out in the workshops at all. Bit by bit the services were taken away.

I recall when I was the member representing Crystal Brook, the meter servicing division was taken away from Crystal Brook. Why would you want to do that? It was brought to Adelaide, and there was an immediate pollution problem with acid cleaning of meters in Adelaide. Why would you not do that in a regional area? No; the bureaucracy knew better, and they moved it and shut the workshop down. It is now a closed workshop. This went on and on and on, and now we see that the workforce is reduced to this level. Certainly, Crystal Brook has suffered very badly because of it. It was a very important key industry of the town, and I believe it was very efficient.

I find it interesting that the member for Giles, when being interviewed about her government shared services proposal, had this to say:

It is not as bleak as it sounds. First of all, nobody will be compulsorily required to move to Adelaide.

If that is the case, what guarantees will a person have if they decide that moving to the city is not for them? According to the member for Giles—and I will quote again from her radio interview:

If you particularly didn't want to move, then the job will be opened up to somebody else interested in moving to Adelaide and then you could move into their job.

Then the comment: 'People don't need to worry too much.' I believe that the member is naive about this, at least publicly. That sounds reassuring to country families, does it not? Maybe someone else will take your offer and then maybe you could have their job. There are not too many hard and fast assurances there.

Governments of both persuasions, here and all over Australia, are strong on their verbal support of regional development. In South Australia, we have set up regional development boards across the state, and they are funded by this government. How futile are their efforts when you consider this: we have a ridiculous situation where we actually have a minister for regional development—who is sitting in the house, and I respect that—and, would you believe it, she actually represents a country electorate. Could it be worse? Yes, it could be: she is actually the

leader of the National Party here in South Australia. What does the National Party say about this initiative? It remains totally silent. It is an absolute disgrace. We are compromised again. Where are they on this? No opinion either way. I think the government is deliberately letting its minister swing on this matter, as it is on the water issue. It pushes her forward on these issues, and they are tough issues, and it is difficult. The government pushes her forward knowing jolly well that it is not causing it any pain.

Why can't the minister—the member for Chaffey—do what the member for Adelaide did on the Victoria Park issue and dissent from the cabinet decision? Why doesn't she do that? After all, she is not a signed member of the Labor Party, but she may as well be. I understand that she used to be many years ago. Maybe she is returning to her natural bent. There is no joy for the people of the Riverland. This is just another occasion when being a minister in this Labor government conflicts with the honourable member's country electorate, and that conflict is certainly causing some concern.

The issue flies in the face of common sense. Adelaide has huge problems: housing shortages, traffic congestion, infrastructure failures and problems, public transport failures—and this morning's traffic congestion was the worst I have ever seen. The list goes on and on; it is long. What does this do? Centralising jobs makes it even worse. Where is the common sense? I want to hear from the members on the other side. Why are you doing this? We are already the most centralised state in the most centralised country in the world. It is a big statement, but it is true. How ridiculous, how short-sighted is this? Some political bureaucrat in a city office makes a recommendation for gain without pain—at least to this government. Most country regions do not suffer the same degree of housing shortages, and most towns could do with an influx of people, not a decline. Most have capacity in their schools to take a few more students, and don't they get a good quality education.

I am sick of governments who verbalise on principles then do the opposite. The government should be doing the opposite: spending money and, in fact, subsidising jobs in regional areas, not axing them. What does it cost to have the regional boards—you might as well get rid of them, too. You might as well get rid of them and save some money, because they are not achieving anything if you do this.

The Hon. K.A. Maywald interjecting:

Mr VENNING: Well, I am saying you may as well. I support them and I have always supported them. I support country jobs. The reason they were created was to do the opposite of what is being done here: to try to maximise the opportunities to keep jobs, families and communities in country towns.

The Hon. K.A. Maywald interjecting:

Mr VENNING: That is what we always try to do.

The Hon. K.A. Maywald: We are doing that.

Mr VENNING: The minister says that she is doing that. Well, what are you doing here? Let's hear what you have to say on this. What is this bill doing? It is blatantly doing the opposite—500 jobs. I am happy to hear what you have to say, minister. I urge the house to support this motion and send the government the message that, as a state, we need and respect the people who live in our regions. Those families who have invested in houses out there have a stake in their community, and you are going to take jobs away from many of them. It is no laughing matter.

The Hon. K.A. Maywald interjecting:

Mr VENNING: I cannot believe it: the timing for this is absolutely appalling. You could not have picked a worse week in the year to do this. It is absolutely appalling. A lot of these farmers forced into off-farm jobs will find that some of them will disappear because they are going to be moved to Adelaide. I cannot believe this can be true. I hope I have this wrong. I am happy to hear the minister's comment about this. I hate to be personal; I hate to attack anybody personally, but this issue is just bad. I urge the house to support this motion and send this government a message to respect those regions and our country people. Particularly at this time, when they need our support, they do not need an issue like this.

Mr GRIFFITHS (Goyder) (11:58): I commend the member for Schubert for bringing this motion to the house. My understanding is that this is part of the reforms that were introduced as part of the September 2006 budget brought down by the Treasurer last year. A lot of people from the regions have spoken to me, all very concerned about what their future will be. I have had a look

at the website; I have read the regular electronic newsletters that are posted by the executive officer in charge of the department; I have looked at the regional impact statement that was prepared as part of that, and it paints a depressing figure for the people who live in the regions. Approximately 2,300 people will be affected by this reform and 256 full-time equivalent jobs will be taken from the regions, so the number is probably closer to the figure of 500 mentioned by the member for Schubert.

I think it is important to record some of the areas that will be affected by this proposal. The Adelaide Hills will lose 10.5 full-time equivalents; the Barossa area, 7.9; Eyre and Western, 56.3; the Far North, 23; the Fleurieu and Kangaroo Island, 22.5; Limestone Coast, 44.5; Murray and Mallee, 53.9; and, in the area that I have the great privilege of representing, Yorke and Mid North, 37.6.

I know that this matter has been discussed at council meetings which I attended recently. My most recent attendance was at a meeting of the Copper Coast council at which councillor Graham Hancock spoke passionately about this, and he will ensure that that council writes a letter of representation to the minister to see what can be done. On Friday of last week, I attended the Copper Coast community development forum where again the matter was raised. People around the table did not fully understand it yet. They had a look of shock horror on their face when they realised that the region (which they try to serve) would lose 38 jobs.

A lot of regional comment has been made on the radio and in the newspapers. I have been interviewed by the *Yorke Peninsula Country Times* and *The Plains Producer*, and I have been pleased to provide them with the information so that the community understands what is happening. All across the state, every member of the opposition who represents a regional area has been contacted about this.

I know that our leader has been outspoken on the matter and has issued media releases. People are asking us what we can do. Our great frustration is that it does not appear that we in opposition can do very much. I come from a rational perspective and I understand that it is important for the Public Service to have efficiencies in its work, but the dilemma is that this is more than just numbers—these are real people. I know many of these people in my area. I know people who work within the health system on Yorke Peninsula and who undertake jobs in payroll. Suddenly, their position will be gone.

They do not work full-time. That is the only job they have. They are involved in other activities with their families. Their position will be gone. It will affect the ability of those families to stay in the community which I serve. Last week, I asked questions of minister Wright when we were considering the Auditor-General's Report. I objected to a word that he had used in an answer during question time the previous week. He said that these numbers were 'in scope'.

I tried to enforce to him that we were not just talking about numbers being 'in scope', but people. It is people who contribute to sporting clubs, schools and the community. They make their town a better place in which to live because they use their skills to help them run many of the community groups. If those people are forced to move from those communities so they can protect an income, that will be a sad loss for all our areas.

I have also noted a few things from some of the radio commentaries, too. My recollection is—and I will apologise, if I am wrong—that minister McEwen (who represents the Mount Gambier area) has talked on radio about whether there was an opportunity for his community to attract a cluster of operations as part of the shared services to keep jobs in his area. I have read the media précis of both the member for Stuart and the member for Giles when they commented on this matter.

The member for Stuart was exactly right. The sort of comments that he made are the ones that I am also receiving from people who are concerned about it. It was a surprise to me when I read that the member for Giles said that no-one would forcibly lose their job. They might not be forced to give up their job, but they might have to move to Adelaide to keep it, too. If they do not want to move to Adelaide, what will they do?

It is interesting that the member for Colton, namely, the Minister for Employment, Training and Further Education, was in here yesterday talking about the success of the SA Works program, that 27,000 people have been involved in that over the past 12 months and it has created opportunities for 7,900 people to go into jobs. That is wonderful. Much of that focus happens in the regional areas. That is where the government is demonstrating that it is putting resources into the regions, but this decision will gut that.

It has come at the worst possible time, too. The drought was been growing for over five years. You can see it in everyone's faces—it is in their eyes. It affects the psyche in every possible way. It is creating disharmony within families. It is making people become very competitive in how they do business. It is forcing people to put off staff. They would love to keep them as they have been loyal to them for many years, but the revenue is not coming through the door to justify their continued employment. It is making it terrible for the community.

I know that all of us in this place recognise the terrible effect of the drought—there is no doubt about that—but add the impact of the drought and the impact of the shared services decision together. Five hundred jobs might not sound a lot, but it is 500 people; and 256 full-time equivalent positions might not sound a lot, but it is a hell of a lot when a community needs every person pulling together.

I am very frustrated with this decision by the government. My understanding is that the first move will occur in the first quarter of 2008. This is when people will have to rationalise their position. I know that the government has attempted to have a lot of consultation with staff who might be affected. That is reflected in the newsletters that are available on the website and the regional impact statement. You might consult with people, but they are shell-shocked by it.

They have worked within the Public Service for many years and they have tried to do good things within their community. The people who live in the regions do not want to move to Adelaide to keep a job. They do not want to buy very expensive property in the outer suburban areas and then be forced to travel an hour on the train to reach their job in the CBD. They want to stay in the communities that they know and love and contribute to those communities for many years to come.

I condemn this decision by the government. I commend the member for Schubert for bringing the motion to the house.

Ms BREUER (Giles) (12:05): For heaven's sake, what absolute nonsense I have been listening to from the other side of the house today. The figures that they are quoting are very interesting, as is the doom and gloom that they predict. I am sick to death of hearing gloom from the member for Schubert and the member for Flinders—and today from the member for Goyder. We are talking about some of the most affluent areas of the state. We are not talking about the whole workforce, we are talking about 0.11 per cent of the regional labour force in South Australia.

I have listened to them today talking about how unpopular the Labor government is in regional South Australia etc. I would like to know how unpopular we are considering the amount of money that is being spent by the Liberal Party on the campaign for Grey—it is absolutely mindboggling. Members opposite say that is a federal electorate, not a state electorate, but, hey, we are all Labor. I have never seen so much money get pumped into a country electorate as is being pumped into Grey at the moment during this federal campaign.

We must be pretty popular in the electorate and some polling must have been done for them to be sinking that amount of money into the electorate. Today there are four pages of ads for Rowan Ramsey in every regional newspaper. There have been ads every week for probably the past three months in every newspaper in the electorate of Grey. They have spent an incredible amount of money on advertising on television in the electorate of Grey. Rowan Ramsey ads are played every night on regional television in the electorate of Grey. This week we have Rowan Ramsey and the former member Barry Wakelin—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Giles, members have indicated they are having problems hearing you.

Mr VENNING: I have a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Can I ask you to rule on relevance? What the Liberal Party is spending in this election campaign has nothing to do with this motion.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Ms BREUER: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I am sorry but earlier in the week I could not be heard. I am sorry if I blasted your eardrums, but we have been blasted for the last three months in Grey with the propaganda that is coming from the Liberal Party, and it absolutely surprises me. My point of relevance is: if we are so unpopular, why is the Liberal Party spending so much money in Grey? Rowan Ramsey this week is up in the APY lands chasing around the Electoral Commission aeroplane. That is surely desperation, trying to get some Aboriginal votes for his campaign. So people up there must be looking to Labor in that part of the state, and I think it proves the point that there is no issue with the state Labor government out there.

We are talking about 250 FTEs in regional South Australia. In my part of the state we are talking about 56 FTEs. I do not particularly like seeing jobs being pulled out of country areas, and I have already stated that. I do not like it very much. But the fact of life is that it is happening, and it is not as though it will break our parts of the state. We are all doing fairly well at the moment in most of our areas. I know a lot of our areas are affected by drought, but in the towns where these people are based they are not doing too badly at all. No-one will be forced out of their job; no-one will be forced to move to Adelaide. It is just not going to happen.

If they do decide they want to go to Adelaide, they will get very good support. They will get their relocation costs paid for, storage costs paid for, reimbursement for conveyancing fees if they sell and buy a house, and they will get all their utilities reconnected. That will be covered, so there is not a big issue if they decide to move to Adelaide. If I were one of those people I would not want to move to Adelaide. I do not particularly like living in Adelaide. In fact, I do not like the time I have to spend here now because of this job. So, I do not blame them if they do not want to go, but they will not be forced out of their jobs. Through natural attrition they will be found other jobs. They will be found other jobs through redeployment. Other jobs will be found for these people. Other people may decide that they want to move to Adelaide and take those jobs and they will be able to move into their jobs.

It is not like there are no jobs at all out there for them, the way things are going in some of our areas; for example, the electorate of Goyder. I love the member for Goyder's area. It is a particularly good area and, when I go there now, it never ceases to astound me how much is happening there. I spent a lot of my childhood around the Kadina, Wallaroo and Moonta area, and we used to go down there coming from Whyalla, which was booming at the time, and think, 'Poor old Kadina, Wallaroo and Moonta. They are just dying.' When I go there now, I wish my grandparents were alive to see it. They would not believe the boom that is going on there. You cannot tell me that people in that area who do perhaps lose their job because of shared services will not be able to find another job there. There is just an incredible amount of work and employment going on in those areas.

Mr Griffiths interjecting:

Ms BREUER: Well, I would like to know how many people in those areas are going to lose their job. I do not think we are talking about hundreds of jobs; we are talking about a few jobs. It is not good in the country when we lose jobs and we do not like it particularly, but people are not going to be left on the shelf and we are not talking about a major impact on our workforce out there.

For heaven's sake, look at what we have got. We are going ahead in South Australia. There are areas of South Australia that are doing extremely well, and the mining industry is covering those areas. We have all sorts of jobs out there. We have building going on; we have everything going on out there. It is not doom and gloom. From listening to the member for Flinders talk, I do not know why she bothers to live where she does if it is so bad. She goes on and on every time she gets on her feet about how miserable it is down there. I tell you what: if you go down to Port Lincoln you will see some of the richest people in Australia living there. It is an extremely affluent area. But she whinges and whines on her feet all the time and I think, 'Just emigrate! Just go somewhere else if it is that bad.' It is absolutely ridiculous listening to the member for Flinders and her whingeing, whining and carping. I tell you what: I think that part of the state would be a lot better off with a new member with a bit of drive and who does not whinge.

So, I have listened to what people are saying on the other side and, yes, it is not good when we lose jobs from our country areas, but we are not losing a major part of our workforce. It is not going to happen. We will find that there are plenty of other jobs there. Rowan Ramsey, the candidate for Grey, said at a public forum the other day when we questioned him about someone who had to sign a workplace agreement and would be getting \$10 an hour and losing lots of her benefits, 'Well, she can go and find another job.' We were pretty horrified at that but, if that is the ethos of the Liberal Party, what are they whingeing about—they will be able to find another job. So, this is absolute nonsense. I am sick of this doom and gloom and carry on. We will save \$60 million out of this. It is happening all over Australia. It is a fact of life. Stop whingeing about it because it is going to happen. We will find some other solution, as we always do in country areas.

The Hon. G.M. GUNN (Stuart) (12:13): We have listened to a rather interesting explanation of apology on behalf of the government. The honourable member for Giles did not really want to talk about the issue for a start. She went off on some irrelevant thing in relation to the federal election and indicated that the candidate is in the Pit lands. That is not correct. She has not even got her facts right there.

But let me bring her back to the issue before the house—that is, people have had an expectation that they will be able to continue to live in Burra, Port Augusta and Booleroo Centre, and in other places where people have contacted me. They have had a clear expectation that they would be able to maintain the jobs they have had for many years. The member pointed out that people do not want to come to Adelaide but, if their job is abolished and they are trained in that particular area, there may not be other opportunities in those small rural communities for them to get similar employment. But why should we pull everything out of rural South Australia and centralise it in Adelaide because Sir Humphrey Appleby, or other bureaucrats, do not like decisions being made at a local level? That is what it is all about. And this is just the beginning.

If the government gets its way with the new proposals for the health system in rural South Australia, there will be even more job losses. I say to the member for Giles: tell me how many people will lose their jobs at the Port Augusta Hospital? Is it five, 10 or 22? Where will they get future employment? Why should people who want to live in those rural areas be forced to go to Adelaide against their will? A constituent from Burra who is employed at Clare wrote to me. They have lived most of their life there and they have a nice house. If they have to sell up and transfer in order to have a job based at Hindmarsh Square, the cost of replacing their housing will be astronomical. It does not affect Sir Humphrey Appleby, who sits in the Health Commission and who is the highest-paid public servant, but it will certainly affect my constituents who will be drafted off to Adelaide. The member for Giles talks about how well people are doing; well, it is no thanks whatsoever to this state government.

Mr Bignell interjecting:

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: It is all right for the member for Mawson. It is no thanks to the state government. The honourable member's electorate is benefiting from the great boom at Roxby Downs—which the Premier tried to stop. One talks about being hypocritical—

Mr Kenyon interjecting:

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: The honourable member is an apologist; we know all about him. I am proud to say that I am the only person left in this house who voted for the Roxby Downs Indenture Bill. I well recall the Star Force in the corridors of this building when Norm Foster was going to support the indenture bill. It is an absolute nonsense for the honourable member to claim any credit for that. We were told that Roxby Downs was 'a mirage in the desert'; and there are other great quotes from former premier Bannon. The Premier wrote a book about how bad it was after he came back from overseas with then premier Dunstan. The motion put forward by the member for Schubert is not only timely but also appropriate. It is sticking up for people in rural areas.

The honourable member talked about campaign spending. At the last state election I challenged the member for Giles to tell the people of South Australia how much the ALP spent on its failed candidate in the electorate of Stuart. Was it \$300,000? The Labor Party not only spent money but the government established a special office and gave him a motor car and a couple of staff.

The Hon. P.F. Conlon interjecting:

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: Well, I am reminding the honourable member about her hypocrisy in having a go at the Liberal Party for explaining, most appropriately, its policies to the people of the electorate of Grey. Obviously, she does not like it. She is a bit wounded by it. I understand she is trying to run the campaign for the Labor Party. No wonder they are not doing anything—it's because she is the campaign manager.

I commend the member for bringing this matter to the house because my constituents are most upset that they will be drafted to Adelaide. People have been coming to me from the Public Service, and often they are people who would not want to be associated with this side of politics. It is the first time for a long time that I find myself agreeing with the Public Service Association. I support the motion. I sincerely hope that the house will bring into effect a sensible policy which will protect regional jobs and not transfer them to Adelaide.

The Hon. R.J. McEWEN (Mount Gambier—Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, Minister for Forests) (12:20): So much huff and so much puff. It is the want of nobody to find themselves as a backbencher in opposition, and so they put all of these notices on the *Notice Paper* and come in here and speak to them, but not with any conviction—

Members interjecting:

The Hon. R.J. McEWEN: Not with any conviction, because the one thing they have not done today in this debate—

Mr VENNING: Point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker: I think the minister is imputing improper motives.

Members interjecting:

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Members interjecting:

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

The Hon. R.J. McEWEN: Madam Deputy Speaker, they—

Mr VENNING: I dissent to your ruling, because I believe he is imputing improper motives on a member of parliament, and I move that your ruling be dissented upon.

The Hon. R.J. McEwen interjecting:

Mr Venning: You're wrong and so is the Clerk.

Members interjecting:

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The reason I did not uphold the point of order was that the remarks of the minister were general in nature and in proper debating points.

The Hon. R.J. McEWEN: The reason why I say that I do not believe those opposite speak with conviction is because the same people went to the last election with a platform that said they were going to cut 4,000 Public Service jobs, and I have not heard any of them today give any indication as to how they intended to implement that policy. I would love to hear from them in terms of an alternative strategy to save 4,000 public servants—a position they took to the last election. And how did they justify it? They said that you need to do things more efficiently. What is shared services about? Doing things more efficiently. I put a challenge on the record now for them to justify the policy they took to the last election, and at least as part of a motion, which says they do not like shared services, please tell all South Australians how they intended, without shared services, and without other strategies of this nature, to honour their commitment to cut 4,000 jobs, because, if they cannot, this motion comes without any conviction.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I call the member for Hammond.

The Hon. R.J. McEwen: Might get an answer now; this is the first one.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (12:23): If the minister has finished. This state Labor government obviously does not take the views of its regional members into consideration when they make any decisions throughout this state. It has been proved with the lack of water security management and proved in relation to what they are doing as far as looking after people in regional communities is concerned, when we are in the grips of the worst drought we have seen in history. They are quite happy to see families split up when they are having terrible times in the Riverland. There might be a wife or a husband or a partner working in a government office supporting the vineyard, supporting the orchard, or whatever, and the next thing they will lose their job and take the double whammy. I will be very interested if the Minister for Regional Development decides to—

The Hon. K.A. Maywald interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: The Minister for Regional Development likes to interject a lot; I would like her to get up and give her views on how she wants to cut the guts out of the seat of Chaffey. She does not look after her constituents, and that has been proven. But it is obvious that the Premier has deemed the country members irrelevant in his party, because the Labor Party obviously does not know that the boundaries of South Australia exist beyond Glen Osmond and Gepps Cross. It is obviously an accountant that has worked this out. It will split up the families and we will take up to \$164 million out of the regional economy.

The minister for primary industries is making a lot of comments about Public Service jobs. I would like to reiterate on the record the 12,000 Public Service jobs that this government has put on since 2002, and 10,000 of these jobs were totally unbudgeted. So, they are quite happy—

The Hon. K.A. Maywald interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: If the Minister for Regional Development wants to make a contribution, I challenge her to make a proper contribution after I have made mine.

The Hon. R.J. McEwen interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: The primary industries minister appears not to realise that he has finished his official contribution, as he seems to keep going. What does this unbudgeted 10,000 public servants cost the state a year? Is it \$500 million, \$600 million, \$650 million? It is totally outrageous! They probably do not even know what they are doing.

As far as jobs in regional communities are concerned, people feel bullied; they are frightened to speak out, but they are coming to MPs on this side. I want to make a couple of points in my contribution on this. Where are the redundancies to be offered to these people who will leave their jobs? They will not move to Adelaide; they want to stay in their local area. People in Murray Bridge with partners want to stay and work locally. This is the Labor Party which supposedly champions workers' rights. The members will get up and carry on, as we have seen in this federal campaign.

They have campaigned about WorkChoices; they have just gone to town. If they get back in—we have seen our ads—'They'll be back'—those union thugs. Where are the union thugs looking after workers now? I challenge members on the other side. Where are they? Why aren't the unions looking after these people? Because they just do not care. No redundancies will be offered to any of these people—none, zip. If there is, I would like to hear about it. Let us see if someone can pull that up. I think regional members of cabinet on the other side should be utterly ashamed of what this government is putting onto regional communities in South Australia.

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders) (12:27): I just heard the member for Giles attack the people of Eyre Peninsula, particularly Port Lincoln, so I put on record what her own people think about the shared services proposal. An article hot off the press from *The Port Lincoln Times* today states:

With 6.1 full-time equivalent jobs set to be pulled from the Port Lincoln Health Services in the first half of next year, Public Service Association general secretary Jan McMahon visited yesterday to speak to those who may be left jobless.

A further 1.37 full-time equivalents [jobs] have been earmarked from the Eyre Peninsula Natural Resources Management Board while Lower Eyre Health Service is facing 2.78 job cuts.

Across Eyre Peninsula and West Coast 56.3 [full-time equivalents] will be pulled and relocated to Adelaide as part of the State Government's shared services reform aimed at saving \$60 million.

'It could be 12 people because often people work part time,' Ms McMahon said about the 6.15 FTEs from the Port Lincoln Hospital yesterday.

It is a significant amount of people when you look at the 56.3 FTEs in the Eyre Peninsula and West Coast.

That might equate to over 100 jobs in this district; these are jobs that support people in this district.

Health is going to be hit hard across regional South Australia with job losses.'

Ms McMahon said she had visited many regions in South Australia and found many people did not want to move and follow their jobs to Adelaide.

Already some people had left jobs to move to other agencies that would not be affected by the reform, but some skills would be wasted as 'there's no way' everybody could find jobs.

Ms McMahon spent Tuesday and Wednesday talking to association members and Port Lincoln and would be taking their concerns to the State Government, with hopes that it would reconsider the move.

And I urge them to do so.

The jobs are in accounts payable and receivable, and payroll.

The fact is that there is no way that these clerical positions will be filled. It will affect mostly women. These women often have two or three small jobs that they put together to make a decent income for themselves and their families, and now those jobs will be hit. How are they going to pay the rent and find employment in our country regions? We need the skills in the work that is mainly done by men: diesel mechanics, for instance. These people are not going to be able to do those kinds of jobs. We need them in the mining areas; we do not need them being removed from positions that have been there for many years.

The member for Giles suggested that I was whingeing about this, but I am not whingeing. We are feeling it right across Eyre Peninsula. Eyre Peninsula is 55,000 square kilometres through to the Western Australian border. It is not Port Lincoln. Port Lincoln may have a group of very wealthy people at the top but below those people there is a huge number of people who are less

than advantaged, and to wipe off Eyre Peninsula, as so often happens in this place, as if it were just the domain of the wealthy people at Port Lincoln, really makes me mad.

The policy we put to the last election proposed to cut 4,000 public servants. That number of public servants from the 10,000 unbudgeted public servants that have been put in place in the city (not the country areas) has nothing to do with these long-term positions which, as I said, are mostly for women and mostly small, part-time jobs in the country areas. I urge, as Jan McMahon has asked, that this government reconsider the jobs that it is going to remove from the country areas.

I use a multiplier of one in six for jobs removed from country areas, and I do that because a job lost in the country cannot so easily be replaced. If you lose a job in the city, there is an opportunity to find another job in the city. You do not have to relocate your family or leave your friends. You do not have to leave your spouse and the other people who have jobs in the country to go to the city.

I feel so angry, because I think this will mean that about 1,500 jobs in the country will be affected, not the few jobs that they are talking about. It does not sound like very many but, if you say one to six, it takes into account the flow-ons. It means that the people concerned have to find houses in the city; it means that they leave a house empty in the country. It means that I have already lost two schoolteachers from one of my school communities, reducing the job options.

If I lose a family with children, that can often mean in these small country schools that that school will be without those extra two or three children and, in turn, that will mean that one or possibly two teachers, as in the case of one of my small schools, are no longer required, thus reducing the subject options. The parents then have to consider whether they will send their children away to school in Adelaide to give them the opportunities that people in the city take for granted. I need every job I can get in the country towns in the electorate of Flinders or we will lose more of the 72 schools that I have there and we will lose more of the families that support those small businesses.

The country stores need every bit of business that they can get, or they fold. I have bought Vegemite and margarine in Coles at cheaper prices than my little stores in the country can buy it for, and I have taken it up in the boot of my car so that these small businesses can survive a little longer in the country regions. If they fold, then again it means that the quality of life for the people in the country is reduced.

This government should be looking at how it is going to get more businesses and more people back into the country regions, not taking out long-term existing jobs that are there supporting our community and our volunteers who are manning our ambulances, emergency services and other community services and also those who are raising funds for our hospitals and schools. Every one of these people who goes means that the pressure is put back on the few who are remaining, and those few who are remaining are beginning to burn out. I know that, because I see them in my office. My staff and I are feeling a bit the same way. The pressure that this government is putting on rural communities I think is unforgivable.

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) (12:35): I rise to contribute to this debate on the basis of my role as Minister for Regional Development and also as the member for Chaffey in the Riverland. I think it is important to note some of the inaccuracies that have been put on the record by opposition members to try to distort what shared services reform is all about. What the opposition is tending to do over and over again at the moment is to put misleading information out there into the public arena to try to make the maximum political gain it can by hurting communities under stress, and I think it is unconscionable.

Let me correct the record: the shared services reform is not about targeting the regions, it is a whole of government initiative stretching across the entire Public Service. It is inaccurate to suggest that the government is putting pressure on drought-affected communities and, in fact, it is quite the opposite. We are investing enormous amounts of resources in supporting drought-affected communities. No-one knows that better than a former premier of this state, Dean Brown, who is working very closely with us to ensure that we can maximise all the opportunities to support our regional communities during this time of drought.

The shared services initiative represents approximately 0.11 per cent of the regional labour force in South Australia. Let me make that clear: 0.11 per cent. The transitioning of the staff will be a gradual process, commencing late February 2008. The gradual reduction of workforce numbers

will be managed through natural attrition, redeployment of excess staff and reducing contract staff usage.

The government would hope to maximise the number of regional staff who will take up new positions in shared services, but where it is clear that employees do not wish to relocate a range of options can be explored in conjunction with the relevant agency. This may include the restructuring of duties and seeking expressions of interest from other suitably skilled employees who wish to relocate. Any workforce reduction will be conducted in line with the government's policy of no forced redundancies for ongoing employees.

I again refer to the matter raised by the member for Mount Gambier in relation to the opposition's policy, coming into the 2006 election, to cut 4,000 Public Service jobs. We have just heard from the member for Flinders, who said they were going to be all in the city; nowhere else, just in the city. We have also heard that she has a one in six ratio multiplier effect, which means that there were 24,000 jobs that the Liberal Party were focusing on in their policy prior to the last election.

What the opposition fails to understand is that this particular initiative is about redirecting resources into frontline services, doing what we need to do to do the hard yards to make sure that this government continues to invest in improving services to South Australians, whether they be regional or in the city. In the regions in particular, the kind of services that are being improved are substantial.

We have increased jobs in regional development right across the regions. We have just completed the appointment of five decentralised Department of Trade and Economic Development officers out into the regions. We have employed seven food industry development officers. We have employed small business development officers out in the regions. These are frontline services that are actually out there providing the services that our communities demand. We have increased the number of teachers, we have increased the number of police, we have increased the services in our country health system and we have increased the funding, substantially, every single year in country health to deliver services. We have invested in the establishment of the regional hospitals. We also have the establishment of trade schools, one of those being in the Riverland.

These are all about redirecting the funding from state government, from taxpayers' money, ensuring that the duplication is minimised and the service outcomes for regions are maximised. We understand, as a state, that we have to do things differently in the future. We have to ensure that the taxpayers' dollar is well invested and that the services that are provided to our communities are what the communities want in regard to service delivery.

I think that, yes, there are some difficult decisions that are made and, yes, there are some difficult issues that have to be dealt with in relation to managing the Public Service, but the shared services initiative is a good one and it will make substantial savings right across the state. It is not targeted just at regional areas; it is targeted right across the public sector workforce. It is an important initiative that will enable this government to have a better and more targeted approach to spending taxpayers' money in the delivery of services to our regional communities and, indeed, to all South Australians.

Mr PISONI (Unley) (12:40): I rise to speak in favour of this motion. I would like to bring a city point of view to this argument. We see a government here that is fixed on centralising. At the same time, we have a government that tells us that by 2050 we will have two million people in the state of South Australia. That figure has since been revised by the Minister for Population and the Treasurer, and the date has been brought forward to 2030.

At the same time, we have been told that our urban boundaries for the City of Adelaide have only about three years growth in them. Then we had minister Gago from the other place telling the council that part of the reason for selling off the land at Glenside was to manage the urban growth boundary. I say to members who sit in those inner suburban Labor seats that this is an unnecessary pressure on urban consolidation in our inner suburbs.

We have minister Gago telling us that we need to sell our open land (our open space) in the inner suburbs to deal with our urban consolidation and then we have a government that is centralising its services—it is pulling them out from our country areas, where we have plenty of land for sale. It is a little bit like North Korea—Phnom Penh. Once you get out of the square mile of Adelaide, it all starts to deteriorate. All the resources are put in the middle, because that is where the tourists come and that is where the business leaders come.

The Premier can then stand on his soapbox and say, 'Look at Adelaide. Look at these buildings. We've got public servants over here and public servants over there.' We are seeing a huge development on Victoria Square for a government instrumentality—more centralisation of government services. What is that going to do for the inner suburbs? It is a threat to our open space and it is a threat to our lifestyle. Already we are losing private open space in our inner suburbs.

Minister Gago is now telling us that we have to sell off any additional open space that we have in the inner suburbs to deal with the urban growth boundary. To me, it would make sense to utilise our country towns and cities and encourage people to spread out in this huge state. Can you imagine a population of two million on the transport system we have now? Can you imagine it, member for Hammond? We will have trains breaking down every week, buses that do not turn up, trams that do not stop because they are full; yet we have a government that is intent on centralising.

This is completely different from the views that they had when they were in opposition. The then member for Napier, Ms Hurley, before she was pushed out by the current member for Napier—

Mrs Geraghty: I have a point of order.

Mr PISONI: He experiences the pressures of urban consolidation as he drives from Springfield all the way out to Smithfield to his electorate—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Unley, take your seat.

Mrs GERAGHTY: Madam Deputy Speaker, the member for Unley has clearly made an incorrect statement and therefore has misled the house.

Mr Williams: It's a debate.

Mrs GERAGHTY: You still have to have some basis of truth in what you say, and the member for Unley has misled the house regarding the statement he made about the member for Napier being pushed out. He must retract that statement.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. If the member for Napier wishes to take offence, he can make a personal explanation. The member for Unley.

Mr PISONI: We have a very sensitive member for Napier. Perhaps if he lived in his electorate, he would have some understanding of the services that will suffer in his electorate. The point is that the centralisation of government services and moving more of the population of South Australia into Adelaide will put greater pressure on urban consolidation and the open space in our suburbs. Labor members holding seats in the inner suburbs are stamped all over this policy of increasing urban consolidation in Adelaide. They are the ones who are supporting this policy to centralise government services, and hence centralise the private sector services that feed off those government services. They will have to come into Adelaide. Adelaide will be a bigger place. We already have pressures on the urban boundaries. Consequently, we will see more pressure on urban consolidation and more pressure on our open space.

Getting back to what the former member for Napier said, I refer to a question she asked of the Hon. Mr Lucas during estimates in 1996. She said:

I am concerned about the lack of open space in some highly urbanised inner areas and wonder whether the minister shares this concern over the open space being swallowed up by further development.

That was a Labor member of parliament 10 years ago, but now we have minister Gago in the other place telling us that we have to sell our inner suburban open space to deal with the pressures on our urban boundaries. This is a consequence for metropolitan Adelaide, particularly those in the inner suburbs, of this centralisation policy of this government. I support the motion.

Mr WILLIAMS (MacKillop) (12:47): I rise to support the motion and I congratulate the member for Schubert for bringing it to the house. Interestingly, there have been many contributions from this side of the house supporting this motion. There have been two contributions from the other side from rural-based members supporting the government's position. I find that quite amazing. I find it quite amazing that government members who live outside metropolitan Adelaide would be supporting this because of the impact it will have in their constituencies. I find that remarkable because, by and large, those same people, over the years that I have been in here, have been constantly calling for more people to be employed, more public servants to be employed and more jobs to be created in those constituencies, whether it be in the private or public sector.

We have heard quite a bit of nonsense spoken this morning. A few moments ago, we heard from the minister. The minister is one of those with a country constituency and who is out there in the federal constituency saying what a vote for a National Party candidate in Saturday's federal election will do for rural and regional South Australia. It is a very different story from what she is putting to the house this morning. She is saying that the National Party will be out there fighting for the electorate. Here this morning she is an apologist for a centralist government. She is an apologist for a government that wants to draw all the money that it spends on employment via the tax that it raises into the city; that is, back into the bureaucracy where it can control it and concentrate power. That is what this is about. The member did say that this is not specifically targeted at rural communities, and I accept that.

However, I think the point the opposition is making is that the impact of this in rural communities is vastly different from the impact in metropolitan Adelaide. It is not unique to South Australia, but one of the reasons communities outside major cities tend to suffer is they pay the same rate of tax but the rate of expenditure per capita (per taxpayer) is much less. That is excusable, and there are good reasons why we concentrate more tax expenditure in our capital cities—where we have the seat of government and our administrative centre. That is understandable, but I think it is incumbent on governments to understand the impact that has on rural communities, no more so than in South Australia.

South Australia is the most urbanised community in the world. More South Australians live in metropolitan Adelaide as a percentage of the total population of this jurisdiction than any jurisdiction, on my understanding, on the planet. Why is that? Because South Australia happens to be very good at sucking in those taxes and forgetting to spend some of it in the communities where the taxes are generated. That is what is happening here today.

We have the two rural non-Labor Party members of this government (the member for Mount Gambier and the member for Chaffey) both arguing that this is all right and the opposition members are all hypocrites because we went to the polls last election with the policy of cutting some numbers in the public sector. We did go with that policy, and the only difference between us and the current Treasurer and government is we were honest enough to tell the people of South Australia that that was the target we had set. We were honest enough to say that is what we wanted to do.

The Treasurer has been struggling to do it since he was returned to the treasury bench but, because he is incompetent, he has not been able to achieve it. But his target is to do that, just as Kevin Rudd has publicly stated that he wants to cut Public Service numbers in the federal sphere if he is elected prime minister—and for the exact same reason the Liberal Party opposition at the time of the last election argued that case. It is about efficiency and redirecting resources. It is not about cutting public servants: it is about redirecting resources. The same number of people would be employed because the same number of dollars would be expended. It is just about where you spend them and what you get for those dollars. That is why this sort of program, so-called shared services—

Mrs Geraghty interjecting:

Mr WILLIAMS: Yes, I know. I have a problem. If you can help me out, I will accept any help you give me. This is why the shared services program will have an incredible impact on regional South Australia—because the dollars that are taken out in taxes from regional South Australia that are currently being spent on government services and employment of government employees in regional South Australia will not be spent back in regional South Australia on some other program, in spite of what the member for Chaffey (the minister) said.

We will not be spending that money back in the regions. She said we have just employed seven FIDOs (Food Industry Development Officers) in regional South Australia. Well, hello, minister, why have we employed seven, because we used to have 15? We used to have 15, and the government in the last budget cut them and replaced the 15 with seven. In my mind that is not an increase in expenditure and front-line services. She said we have an increase in the health budget in country areas every year under this government. That, in real terms, is just not right. In recent weeks the Treasurer has admitted that the health inflator is running at about 9 per cent. He is always talking about the problem of meeting health expenses. The increase in the health budget in country South Australia has been well below 9 per cent during the life of this government. There has been a real cut in health expenditure in regional and rural South Australia under this government.

The most amazing thing is that I have a letter written by the member for Mount Gambier when he was an Independent. He wrote the letter to Dean Brown (whose name has already been mentioned in this morning's debate) when Dean Brown was the minister for human services. The letter written in 1998 states:

Too often the immediate reaction to any pressure to be more efficient is to rationalise and that means withdrawal of all services and consolidate centrally. The view is that remote regional offices are a barrier to proper management and coordination. Such a myth must be dispelled. We have the technology to operate efficiently, irrespective of time and place...For the sake of regional South Australia we need to move more public servants out of Adelaide, not the reverse.

That is what the member for Mount Gambier used to think before he got the white car and the increased salary. At the same time he was quoted in *The Border Watch* as saying.

The state government has got to accept that it is responsible for rural communities to remain viable. I am fed up with seeing bureaucrats always taking the soft option and always ripping something out of rural areas first and protecting their own little metropolitan empires.

I happen to agree totally with what the member for Mount Gambier said on this subject in 1998 when he was a true Independent, and what I know he believes in his heart. He knows that this is a mess; he knows this is bringing a mess to rural and regional South Australia. I have always supported my constituency.

Mr BIGNELL (Mawson) (12:57): I rise today to ask opposition members why they come in here, time after time, and sell their regions short. Some great things are happening in the regions. In Whyalla there is an increase in jobs and an increase in housing. Someone said earlier that we are a centralised city-state; and to a degree we are. Whyalla, which once had a population of 33,000, our second biggest city, has shrunk over the years as a result of losing the shipbuilding industry but, thanks to this government and the great work it has done in mining and other industries, we are seeing the regions grow and prosper.

I have spoken to a lot of people on the West Coast who are investing in Whyalla, Port Lincoln, Tumby Bay and Ceduna. The regions are going very well, indeed. As a government we are proud to support the regions. We do not govern just for the metropolitan area of Adelaide. We are out and about. We take the community cabinet to all the regions in South Australia. We listen to what the community wants, and we are there for them. We enact support for them, and we are seeing the populations in the South-East, as well as on the West Coast, grow. There are some really good economic indicators out there that things are thriving in our regions—and will continue to do so.

We are here to support regional South Australia. I do not think it does the regions any good when their local representatives come in here and put down the regions. There are wonderful success stories out there. These people are doing a fantastic job. Our hearts are with those who are relying on rain at this time of drought. It is terribly sad to see the heartbreak that is happening in the country. As a government we are there to stand side by side with these people in order to help them through these difficult times. It is not an easy time for anyone.

As a state we are suffering with them because the regions are the backbone of our economy. When we have droughts and our production falls, we all suffer in South Australia. We appreciate the enormous wealth that comes into this state's coffers from regional South Australia. We do put back into the regions. We are very proud of our regions. Some of our opposition members in here should have that same level of pride in the areas which they represent. There are fantastic stories. I think that putting down their own regions is not a good thing to do.

Mr VENNING (Schubert) (12:59): I move:

That the motion be now put.

Mr Bignell: I am still speaking.

Mr VENNING: I object.

Mr Bignell: You can object all you like; you have had your chance your speak.

Mr VENNING: Madam Deputy Speaker, I have moved that the motion be now put. It is a procedural motion and must be abided by.

The CHAIR: Member for Schubert, the motion to put the question can only be put once a member has concluded their remarks. The member for Mawson is still on his feet.

Mr VENNING: I sought advice, madam, and that was not the advice that I was given.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Clerk has advised me of the same thing. It is the convention that things are put when a member resumes their seat. However, you have moved it while a member is on their feet, so I am now advised that I am obliged to hear your motion. The question is that the motion be now put.

The house divided on the motion:

AYES (12)

Chapman, V.A.	Evans, I.F.	Griffiths, S.P.
Gunn, G.M.	Hanna, K.	Kerin, R.G.
Pederick, A.S.	Penfold, E.M.	Pisoni, D.G.
Redmond, I.M.	Venning, I.H. (teller)	Williams, M.R.

NOES (26)

Atkinson, M.J.	Bedford, F.E.	Bignell, L.W.
Breuer, L.R.	Caica, P.	Ciccarello, V.
Conlon, P.F.	Foley, K.O.	Fox, C.C.
Geraghty, R.K. (teller)	Hill, J.D.	Kenyon, T.R.
Key, S.W.	Lomax-Smith, J.D.	Maywald, K.A.
McEwen, R.J.	O'Brien, M.F.	Portolesi, G.
Rankine, J.M.	Rann, M.D.	Simmons, L.A.
Stevens, L.	Thompson, M.G.	Weatherill, J.W.
White, P.L.	Wright, M.J.	

PAIRS (2)

Hamilton-Smith, M.L.J.	Piccolo, T.
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Majority of 14 for the noes.

Motion thus negated.

Debate adjourned.

[Sitting suspended from 13:07 to 14:00]

DISABILITY FUNDING

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL (Cheltenham—Minister for Families and Communities, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation, Minister for Housing, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability, Minister Assisting the Premier in Cabinet Business and Public Sector Management) (14:00): Presented a petition signed by 940 residents of South Australia requesting the house to urge the government to urgently provide continued funding to Gemma Elizabeth Tapscott and other disabled people to maintain independence and quality of life.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The SPEAKER: I direct that the written answer to a question, as detailed in the schedule I now table, be distributed and printed in *Hansard*: No. 148.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT PATRONAGE

148 Dr McFETRIDGE (Morphett) (31 July 2007).

- How will the target for total passenger patronage be met when the cost of fares has increased by 8 per cent in 2007-08 and 10 per cent in the 2006-07 budget?
- How will lack of public transport passenger patronage meet with the Minister's Transport Plan and the State Strategic Plan targets?
- What initiatives does the department intend to introduce to improve public transport patronage?
- Will public transport services to hills and rural areas be increased in 2007-08?

The Hon. P.F. CONLON (Elder—Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Minister for Energy): I provide the following information:

The Rann Labor Government will invest more than half a billion dollars in transport infrastructure over the next four years including a major commitment to revitalise the State's public transport system.

Our vision for public transport will deliver \$115 million over the next four years to revitalise our rail network.

This massive project will involve concrete re-sleepering 64.5 kilometers of rail track on the Belair and Noarlunga lines to deliver faster and more comfortable services which in turn will allow greater frequency of services.

The Budget also provides \$30 million in 2010-11 for the purchase of 36 new buses.

Further infrastructure initiatives, which will improve public transport patronage include:

OAKLANDS PARK

The \$7 million transport interchange at Oaklands Park was announced as part of the State Infrastructure Plan. The project will result in the delivery of a modern, efficient interchange with facilities that are fully accessible for people with disabilities, the mobility impaired, and families with prams.

MAWSON TRANSPORT HUB

The Mawson Public Transport Interchange project was a State Government funded transport initiative completed in March 2006. It provides integrated bus and passenger train interconnection and services. It also provides a drop off area and car park with direct access for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists from Elder Smith Road, Mawson Lakes Town Centre, the University of South Australia and Technology Park.

TRAMLINE EXTENSION PROJECT

Construction of the \$31 million tramline extension from Victoria Square to the University of South Australia City West Campus as the first stage of the State Government's vision to integrate light rail services as an important part of Adelaide's public transport network.

PURCHASE OF NEW FLEXITY CLASS TRAMS AND GLENELG TRAM INFRASTRUCTURE UPGRADE

The investment in the tramline extension project comes on top of the State Government's \$83.9 million investment to supply eleven new trams and upgrade the light rail infrastructure.

The Government invests approximately \$270 million annually in providing public transport within metropolitan Adelaide.

To overcome public transport's decade of decline under the previous government, the Rann Labor Government has committed \$10 million over the 2006-07 to 2009-2010 to boost public transport capacity around peak periods and to address the overcrowding on some services.

In addition to investment in new services, the government's ongoing commitment to the provision of an affordable and effective public transport system also involves the continual review and redesign of these services to ensure they meet the continually changing needs of the majority of the community. This enables the best use to be made of available buses and drivers to provide the commuters and taxpayers, who fund the public transport network, with the most cost effective and efficient service available for the dollars invested.

The effects of this dual approach of investment and review are well illustrated by the February changes to services in the Adelaide Hills. A review of these services highlighted several poorly patronised services and many overcrowded services in the Hills area. Many services were adjusted and the Government invested an additional \$520,000 per annum recurrent to provide for more services and ensure the needs of the majority of the community continued to be met in this rapidly expanding region.

In the five months since the commencement of these changes patronage has grown 5.3 per cent as compared with the same time in June 2006.

In the five years since the Rann Labor Government came to office, public transport patronage has grown by 8.2 per cent or just under 5 million additional trips.

OMBUDSMAN'S REPORT

The SPEAKER: I lay on the table the report of the Ombudsman for 2006-07.

Ordered to be published.

PAPERS

The following papers were laid on the table:

By the Treasurer (Hon. K.O. Foley)—

Venture Capital Board—Report 2006-07

By the Minister for Transport (Hon. P.F. Conlon)—

Development Act 1993, Administration of—Report 2006-07

TransAdelaide—Report 2006-07

By the Minister for Infrastructure (Hon. P.F. Conlon)—

Land Management Corporation—Report 2006-07

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

Legal Services Commission of South Australia—Report 2006-07

State Electoral Office—South Australia—Report 2006-07

Law Society of South Australia—Claims against the Legal Practitioners Guarantee Fund—
Report 2006-07

Coronial Inquiry into the death in custody of John Trenorden—Report on actions taken—
November 2007

By the Minister for Justice (Hon. M.J. Atkinson)—

Justice, Department of—Report 2006-07

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

Health, Department of—Report 2006-07

Public and Environmental Health Council—Report 2006-07

Abortion Reporting Committee, South Australian—Report 2006-07

Psychological Board, South Australian—Report 2006-07

South Australian—Victorian Border Groundwaters Agreement Review Committee—
Report 2006-07

South Eastern Water Conservation and Drainage Board—Report 2006-07

Public & Environmental Health for South Australia, State of—Report 2006-07 (erratum)

Water Well Drilling Committee—Report 2006-07

Gene Technology Activities—Report 2006

Inquiry into the Medical Board of South Australia—Response to the Statutory Authorities
Review Committee Report

Hospitals and Health Services—Reports 2006-07

Barossa Health

Bordertown Memorial Hospital Inc.

Ceduna District Health Services Inc.

Ceduna Koonibba Aboriginal Health Service Inc.

Cooper Pedy Hospital & Health Services Inc.

Gawler Health Service

Hawker Memorial Hospital Inc.

Kangaroo Island Health Service Inc.

Kingston Soldiers' Memorial Hospital Inc.

Leigh Creek Health Services Inc.

Lower Eyre Health Services Inc.

Lower North Health

Loxton Hospital Complex Incorporated

Mallee Health Service Inc.

Meningie & Districts Memorial Hospital & Health Services Inc.

Mid-West Health Inc.

Millicent & District Hospital & Health Services Inc.
Mount Gambier & Districts Health Service Inc.
Mt. Barker & District Health Services Inc.
Murray Bridge Soldiers' Memorial Hospital Inc.
Naracoorte Health Service Inc.
Northern Adelaide Hills Health Service Inc.
Northern Yorke Peninsula Health Service Inc.
Penola War Memorial Hospital Inc.
Pika Wiya Health Service Inc.
Port Augusta Hospital & Regional Health Services Inc.
Port Broughton District Hospital & Health Services Inc.
Port Lincoln Health Services Inc.
Port Pirie Regional Health Service Inc.
Renmark Paringa District Hospital Inc.
Riverland Regional Health Service Inc.
South Coast District Hospital Inc.
Southern Flinders Health Inc.
Strathalbyn & District Health Service
Tailem Bend District Hospital
The Mannum District Hospital Inc.
The Whyalla Hospital & Health Services Inc.
Yorke Peninsula Health Service Inc.

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

Adelaide Festival Centre—Report 2006-07
Carrick Hill Trust—Report 2006-07
Youth Arts Board, South Australian—Carclew Youth Arts—Report 2006-07

By the Minister for Families and Communities (Hon. J.W. Weatherill)—

Office for the Ageing—Report 2006-07

By the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation (Hon. J W Weatherill)—

Aboriginal Lands Trust—
Report 2004-05
Report 2006-07

By the Minister for Housing (Hon. J.W. Weatherill)—

HomeStart Finance—Report 2006-07
Aboriginal Housing Authority, South Australian—Report 2006-07
Community Housing Authority, South Australian—Report 2006-07
Housing Trust, South Australian—Report 2006-07

By the Minister for the River Murray (Hon. K.A. Maywald)—

Save the River Murray Fund—Report 2006-07

By the Minister for Water Security (Hon. K.A. Maywald)—

SA Water—Report 2006-07

By the Minister for Employment, Training and Further Education (Hon. P. Caica)—

Construction Industry Training Board—Report 2006-07

By the Minister for Science and Information Economy (Hon. P. Caica)—

Playford Centre—Report 2006-07

By the Minister for Gambling (Hon. P. Caica)—

Independent Gambling Authority—Report 2006-07

SAVE THE RIVER MURRAY FUND ANNUAL REPORT

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) (14:07): I seek leave to make a ministerial statement.

Leave granted.

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD: Earlier I tabled the 2006-07 Save the River Murray Fund annual report. The Save the River Murray levy was introduced in October 2003 and is charged to all SA Water customers across South Australia, both residential and non-residential. It is a broad-based levy paid into a special fund to support projects in three priority areas:

- improving the environmental health of the Murray River system;
- maintaining acceptable water quality for irrigation in South Australia; and
- improving water quality for urban water supplies.

The South Australian portion of the Murray-Darling Basin contributes significantly to the state's economy, contains sites of international significance and has recreational and aesthetic values that are enjoyed and cherished by people across the state.

The fund contributes to a wide range of projects for the River Murray in South Australia and, more broadly, in the Murray-Darling Basin. The state contributed \$21.6 million to the Murray-Darling Basin Commission in 2006-07, and \$3.7 million of this total was sourced from the Save the River Murray Fund.

In 2006-07, \$21.1 million was raised and \$15.8 million was spent on 22 projects, including acquiring water for environmental flows, salinity management, securing water rights and water allocation planning, protecting the environment and community capacity building.

Through the fund, South Australia has now recovered about 14.5 gigalitres towards its 35 gigalitre target for the Living Murray initiative first step of returning 500 gigalitres to the river by 2009; that is 40 per cent of our first step state water recovery target.

As indicated in the annual report, at the end of June 2007, there was \$12.5 million in the fund. Of this, \$10.5 million is already committed to interstate water recovery projects under the Living Murray initiative; these are the Goulburn-Murray Water Recovery Project and the Murray-Darling Basin Commission project to purchase water from willing sellers, which will deliver 145 gigalitres and 20 gigalitres—that is, 145 billion litres and 20 billion litres—for the environment. The remaining \$2 million is allocated to projects that are coming online this year.

While the current drought and low flows are causing significant problems in managing the river, all South Australians can be proud of the worthwhile and long-lasting contribution they are making toward restoring the river's health. The fund is an important initiative in strategic planning for the future of the Murray and, once the river begins to recover from the widespread drought in the Murray-Darling Basin, we will see more and more benefits of this prudent planning and management.

STATUTORY OFFICERS COMMITTEE

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON (Croydon—Attorney-General, Minister for Justice, Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (14:09): I bring up the annual report of the committee, 2006-07.

Report received.

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Mr RAU (Enfield) (14:10): I bring up the 15th report of the committee on the Upper South-East Dryland Salinity and Flood Management Act 2002, being the annual report for July 2006 to June 2007.

Report received and ordered to be published.

QUESTION TIME

LAND MANAGEMENT CORPORATION

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH (Waite—Leader of the Opposition) (14:11): Does the Premier, without reservation, fully support the actions of the Minister for Infrastructure in all matters raised in

a special report to parliament yesterday by the Auditor-General concerning the Port Adelaide waterfront development?

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) (14:12): The Minister for Infrastructure is someone whom you would know is not only a distinguished and senior minister but an officer of the court. As you would know, an officer of the court has additional considerations in relation to ethical obligations and probity. There are other officers of the court here, or would-be officers of the court, including the Minister for Families and Communities, and a couple of others have legal qualifications. The key thing is that the minister sought and received legal advice at the highest level.

The Hon. P.F. Conlon: I received it; I didn't seek it.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: He didn't seek it; he received it. He received independent legal advice, which is also, I understand, supported by crown law. You might act because you do not have the same considerations of habeas corpus and other—

The Hon. K.O. Foley: Ultra vires.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: You might want to act in an ultra vires way, but at least the ministers of this government seek high-level legal advice and follow that legal advice. Can I just say this—

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. M.D. RANN: No, I am quite happy to be involved in a series of interlocutories with members opposite, but if the minister acted ultra vires, if the minister made a decision to ignore his high-level legal advice, you would have a leg to stand on. But the minister—an officer of the court—received advice from other officers of the court and acted ad idem with them.

ADELAIDE INTERNATIONAL GUITAR FESTIVAL

Ms SIMMONS (Morialta) (14:13): Can the Premier tell the chamber about the Guinness world—

Members interjecting:

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

Ms SIMMONS: Thank you, sir.

Members interjecting:

Ms SIMMONS: I am just waiting for quiet. Don't forget I used to be a headmistress. Can the Premier tell the chamber about the Guinness world record attempt to take place tomorrow evening, and what this attempt marks the beginning of?

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) (14:14): On the eve of a federal election we are dealing with these kinds of issues, because the arts is important in this election campaign. I am pleased that tomorrow night I will open the International Guitar Festival. Tomorrow night, as the honourable member has mentioned, there will be an attempt to break the Guinness world record for the biggest guitar band. It will mark the opening of Adelaide's very own inaugural International Guitar Festival in which, of course, we have involved the New York Guitar Festival. I should say, because I do not want to be accused of any conflicts of interest, that I once played air guitar for Glenn Shorrock. It was following a Clipsal 500—

The Hon. S.W. Key: Little River Band?

The Hon. M.D. RANN: No, it was not for Little River Band: it was more a solo performance of *Sunshine of My Life*—and I know that Glenn Shorrock appreciated the assistance I gave him. Going back to the Guinness world record for the biggest guitar band, the current record—held by India—is for 1,730 guitars playing at once. We will try to hit 2,000, but I want to make it nigh on impossible for anyone else to beat our record. Can members imagine—and I ask the Leader of the Opposition, who I know is a great supporter of the arts to consider this—and if you look at the member for MacKillop, it is quite clear that he is making an artistic statement today, and I salute him. It looks like a scene from *Purple Haze!*

I ask all members of parliament to consider this. Can they imagine 2,000 guitarists playing *Smoke on the Water* together at Elder Park? I can, and I just cannot wait. I am using the parliament of South Australia to call on all those guitar enthusiasts in the chamber—and I know there is a number of them—and in the galleries, if any of those young people are young guitar players or maybe even ukulele players, please be involved: download the tune for practice and register to be part of the fun at www.adelaideguitarfestival.com.au.

Members can also pick up a registration form from a BASS outlet or, on the day, from 4pm at Elder Park—so do not forget your guitar. A band called Special Patrol will then play a free concert until 6.40pm to help us celebrate. The Adelaide International Guitar Festival, the first of Adelaide's many festivals over summer and autumn, opens tomorrow night and runs to 2 December. It will feature more than 70 artists performing in 40 concerts over 10 magnificent days and nights of musical treats. It is the largest of its kind in the world—and I am told even larger than its sister festival in New York City—with a superb line-up of local, national and international talent.

Many of those acts will take part in collaborations that have not been seen anywhere else in the world. The festival will showcase the broad range of guitar genres—is that right, Chloe—including rock and jazz, blues and classical, flamenco, experimental, gospel and world music. As part of the extensive program, there will be five outdoor concerts in Elder Park featuring multiple artist line-ups and the very best guitar music that the world has to offer:

- the first of these, the Rips & Riffs concert, will cover the rich history of Australian surf music, and it will feature The Atlantics, Richard Clapton and champion surfer Beau Young—that will be of particular interest, I think, to the Deputy Premier;
- On the Verge—the 21st Century Guitar will take a look at where guitar music is heading, with guitarists David Linley, Kaki King and Vernon Reid;
- the line-up for the concert Slideshow—Masters of the Slide Guitar is a rollcall of the world's best, including Bob Brozman, Cindy Cashdollar and Lucky Oceans;
- Culture of Kings—a Blues Story will showcase where rock music was born and feature Grammy Award winner John Hammond Jr (who has shared the stage with John Lee Hooker, Howlin' Wolf, G-Love and Muddy Waters), plus Australia's queen of the blues, Fiona Boyes; and
- the penultimate—I know that certainly members on this side of the house will be there and I suspect the member for MacKillop—audiences will be able to unleash their the inner rock star at the concert Kiss the Sky—A Tribute to the Music of Jimi Hendrix, which will serve as the electric finale to this year's guitar festival. (I often play Jimi Hendrix music in the car prior to giving a major speech.)

Children aged 12 and under are admitted to Elder Park performances for free, with a paying adult. Each night of the festival will culminate in a late-night session by selected artists and musicians in the Wah-Bar. There will also be a free foyer program of music with a good mix of local and interstate artists to build a festival atmosphere. This will be complemented by visual art displays featuring the art of Reg Mombasa, a photographic exhibition with shots of Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen and Johnny Cash, and a display taking us on a historic journey through the evolution of the guitar over the past century. There are films, artists' talks, forum discussions, master classes, seminars and workshops aimed at making as many of the artists as possible accessible to interested audiences.

We have the star of Jefferson Airplane, for those of us who remember. Certainly the minister for Health remembers this. I have been to parties at his place in the 1980s where Jefferson Airplane and the music of San Francisco in the late 1960s featured. Also, there will be the person who taught Bob Marley to play the guitar, so I look forward to seeing him. I know that in this government some of us are more WOMAD and others more—

The Hon. K.O. Foley: Bruce Springsteen-like.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: —more Bruce Springsteen-like or, in the case of the Minister for Infrastructure, The Seekers.

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I draw to honourable members' attention the presence in the gallery of students from Emmaus Catholic School (guests of the member for Mawson).

QUESTION TIME

LAND MANAGEMENT CORPORATION

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH (Waite—Leader of the Opposition) (14:21): My question is to the Minister for Infrastructure. Why has he failed to ensure that the Land Management Corporation, which reports to him, has in place proper risk management processes? In his special report to parliament yesterday, the Auditor-General warned that the corporation was not following appropriate risk management policies. The Auditor-General identified instances where:

- a risk assessment was performed after the joint venture agreement was executed;
- the risk management assessment for a project had not been qualified and, as a consequence, monitoring of high to medium residual risks could not be performed;
- a risk assessment for the appointment of a contractor for engineering services could not be located; and
- the risk assessment for the multimillion dollar Port Adelaide waterfront redevelopment project, in which the LMC is a joint partner, had not been performed.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON (Elder—Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Minister for Energy) (14:22): Once again, the Leader of the Opposition, in making comment in his question, misleads the house—perhaps unintentionally. He says that I failed to do anything about that.

Mr Hamilton-Smith interjecting:

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: They are tedious. They really are.

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH: I have a point of order, Mr Speaker. Yesterday, without prompting, you called me to order in regard to a matter of misleading. The Minister for Infrastructure has just said I was misleading. I ask you to get him to withdraw, as you did yesterday.

The SPEAKER: Order! I was distracted and discussing something with the Opposition Whip. I did not hear the comment. If the Minister for Infrastructure did accuse a member of being misleading, he must withdraw. The Minister for Infrastructure.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: What I did say was perhaps he was doing it unintentionally, which of course is not an allegation that attracts the same opprobrium. The truth is—

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH: Mr Speaker, you asked him to withdraw. He must withdraw.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! From what I understand, the Minister for Infrastructure has clarified what he said. I did not hear the comment myself but the Minister for Infrastructure has made it clear that he was not accusing the opposition of deliberately misleading the house, and that is certainly sufficient. The Deputy Premier.

The Hon. K.O. FOLEY: I rise on a further point of order, sir. I believe upholding the good office of the Speaker to be paramount in the chamber. The leader said, quite audibly to many on this side, that there is one set of rules for this side of the house and another set of rules for that side of the house. That is a direct reflection on you as Speaker, and I ask him to withdraw.

The SPEAKER: Order! I did not hear the remark of the Leader of the Opposition. I do warn all members that any criticisms of the chair have to be made by substantive motion; and I do direct them. If the Leader of the Opposition is aggrieved, I invite him either to do so or approach the chair.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: I come back to the point. The Leader of the Opposition said that I failed to do anything about the matters contained in the Auditor-General's Report. Of course, the reason the Leader of the Opposition is mistaken is that a number of matters were drawn to my attention regarding the LMC. It is not the bombshell he would suggest. A number of matters were drawn to my attention, and I remember writing to the LMC on 30 June about some matters in regard to abiding by proper process; that does not mean the LMC has done anything at all wrong. What the Auditor-General has said is that some processes should be improved. I spoke to the chair of the LMC, which is a body corporate with a very good board. He told me about the excellent efforts of a person—I cannot remember the name of the individual, nor would I recognise him—who has been working on improving the processes.

I remind the Leader of the Opposition, before he gets off on another extravagant witch-hunt, that the LMC has been a tremendous asset to both this government and previous governments over many years. It has returned a great deal. This is the Leader of the Opposition who was claiming that I had media out of here yesterday so there would not be any scrutiny of this matter. Of course, that would be using my Jedi mind powers, wouldn't it: 'Nothing to see folks, go to another chamber; nothing to see here.' What I needed to do, also, was to use my Jedi mind powers on the Hon. Ann Bressington yesterday: 'I have a speech for you which will get their attention.' That is plainly ridiculous.

I hope that the Leader of the Opposition will ask another question today about the matter he asked about yesterday, because I would love to answer it in front of the media. There is absolutely no doubt that his attempt to lambaste me failed—that is right, Mr Speaker, I was blasted by a lamb. I ask the member—please—to ask a question about this contract that he alleges should not have been signed that way. The legal advice is very strong, and I will tell—

Mr Hamilton-Smith interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: Okay, the government's brief. I remind the Leader of the Opposition that the first advice was sought by the LMC of a private commercial firm—and a very serious commercial firm. I invite him to go out of this place and suggest that they dodged the advice. The first advice was supported entirely by the Crown Solicitor. Let me explain what happened with that, since the Leader of the Opposition wants to talk about it.

What happened is that in 2001 the then Liberal government sought an expression of interest for the development of Newport Quays. The matters that later became contained in that PDA (which are the subject of this legal advice) were raised by the eventual successful tenderer at the time and were always part of its bid. Before we get any complaints about that original obligation: it was always part of the bid and, subsequently, it became part of the development agreement.

The development agreement imposed major risks on the developer in terms of remediation—quite wise, we think. We are not complaining about it because remediation is a major risk of the project. They sought throughout, and eventually got, an ability to be able to control that risk.

What happened was that about two years ago the LMC tendered for the project management on remediation. It is about a \$151,000 contract. I remind you it is a \$15 billion development. My understanding of the reason they tendered was because they did not believe Newport Quays would be in the least bit interested in a \$151,000 contract—because I do remind the Leader of the Opposition that, under our very successful management of this project, the cheapest apartment on sale there is now, I think, \$400,000, and there are more than 40 million-dollar apartments in the current release. So, obviously the reason Newport Quays was seeking this was because they wanted to be able to control, to the extent possible, the management of the risk of remediation.

When they insisted upon it, not me but the corporation sought legal advice, and the legal advice was that they should, in fact, be awarded the contract, that they did have, if you like, the right of first refusal. The LMC then made sure that its cost was at least as good as the best one of the three tenderers in the truncated tender process. They sent a minute to me saying, 'This is what we should do on legal advice.' And I have to tell the Leader of the Opposition: every time the corporation sends something to me saying, 'This is what we should do, on legal advice' I am going to—

Mr Hamilton-Smith: The A-G says that that advice was flawed.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: The A-G says the advice was flawed—which was why the LMC then sought further advice from the Crown Solicitor, who emphatically supports the original advice.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will not speak over me. The member for West Torrens will take his seat. The Leader of the Opposition has 40 minutes to ask all the questions he wants. It

is not necessary for him to speak over the Minister for Infrastructure while he is answering his question. The Minister for Infrastructure.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: Especially, sir, as I am in fragile health; listen to that voice. He's such a cad! What the suggestion is of the Leader of the Opposition—and I am not going to name the firm—is that the LMC should have ignored the advice of a major commercial firm and ignored the advice of the Crown Solicitor. I have got to tell you that you would probably have a story then, wouldn't you, if I said, 'No, I'm not doing that.' Basically, what crown law advice suggests is that, if I had not taken the advice of the LMC, there is a very strong likelihood that the government would now be locked in legal conflict with the developer. That is what you suggest we should have done. So, I am quite happy to talk about this with the media here because there is nothing in it. There is absolutely nothing in it, and your attempts to lambaste me have failed once again.

PUBLIC HOUSING

Mr O'BRIEN (Napier) (14:33): My question is to the Minister for Housing. Should public housing tenants be concerned by the federal government's planned changes to the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement funding arrangements?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL (Cheltenham—Minister for Families and Communities, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation, Minister for Housing, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability, Minister Assisting the Premier in Cabinet Business and Public Sector Management) (14:33): Absolutely, and the member for Napier and his electors have absolutely much to fear by the re-election of a Howard government. In July this year the Howard government minister Mal Brough decided, effectively, that there would be an end to the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement, which is due to be renegotiated in July 2008. That is a radical departure. There is a 50-year history of a Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement. He wants to take the money that goes into that agreement and, basically, tender it out. So it would no longer go to the states to run their public housing system, but, rather, he wants to hand that over. What will that mean for our public housing tenants? There can only be two outcomes.

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: I will be coming to that in a minute. Either there will be an increase in rents, which will be an appalling thing for public housing tenants, or there will have to be a sell-off of even further parts of the public housing stock. We have already been forced to sell off housing to meet our bills because of the 36 per cent reduction in moneys coming into the state since Mr Howard became Prime Minister, and nationally he has slashed \$3.1 billion from the system. Not only do we have those massive pressures from falling contributions from the commonwealth, we have also been obliged to target our housing to those in highest need. That means that we get less rent, because those on Centrelink pensions now comprise 85 per cent of our tenants.

The way in which we have had to grapple with that is to engage in an affordable homes program, where we are selling off more homes to try to get the trust into a viable state in a way which creates affordable housing outcomes. We have had a glimpse of the future through the eyes of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. She said yesterday in her grievance that 3,385 properties were sold during the last financial year. Now, members just need to think about that for a moment—3,385 properties from the public housing system during the last financial year. She said that she was quoting from the Auditor-General's Report.

Well, in fact, that was over the last five years. Maybe she has actually had a glimpse into the future under John Howard, and has realised that the rate of sale of public housing stock will dramatically accelerate over the next period of time. Make no mistake about it, this next federal election is a referendum on the future of the public housing system. For those people who value our public housing system, they have only one viable choice; that is, to ensure that the Howard government is not elected on Saturday.

LAND MANAGEMENT CORPORATION

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH (Waite—Leader of the Opposition) (14:37): My question is to the Minister for Infrastructure. Was there a conflict of interest involving developers when decisions were made by the LMC to award the remediation project management business to Newport Quays Management Pty Ltd? In his special report to parliament yesterday, the Auditor-General confirmed that a director of the developer and an employee of the consortium for the Port Adelaide waterfront redevelopment participated in LMC's remediation subcommittee, which considered proposals

lodged in response to the corporation's invitation to submit a proposal for project management services. The Auditor-General states:

The corporation should have considered the possibility of a conflict of interest arising from the involvement of the consortium's representatives on the remediation subcommittee which evaluated tenders. This should have been done before proceeding to appoint the consortium as remediation project managers.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON (Elder—Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Minister for Energy) (14:38): There is absolutely no doubt that the Auditor-General does not agree with awarding the contract in the way it was done. Crown law advice is that, had it not been awarded to the developer, the state would have very likely faced litigation as a result of the original agreement. I point out to the member again: the matters that went into that original agreement were first put to the government when it was his government. I ask the member again: does he honestly suggest that we should have ignored the legal advice? Does he honestly suggest that that is a sound way for a minister to operate, to ignore the advice of the board based on legal advice? Does he honestly suggest that that is the case? I am sure that if he reflects, he does not.

In terms of the matters raised about process, I have had discussions with the chair of the board. What I would invite the member to do, if he is slightly interested in the truth, it is to take a briefing from the chief executive of the LMC and the chairman of the board on the matters raised and how they have been addressed. I am absolutely satisfied that the corporation has addressed matters raised by the Auditor-General in a serious fashion. I urge the Leader of the Opposition, if he does want to know the truth, to accept a briefing from the chief executive and the chairman of the board. I will urge them to make themselves available at the earliest possible moment.

ALDINGA GP PLUS HEALTH CARE CENTRE

Mr BIGNELL (Mawson) (14:40): My question is to the Minister for Health. What has been the impact of the government's first GP Plus health care centre located in Aldinga, and is it helping local families to access health care?

The Hon. J.D. HILL (Kaurana—Minister for Health, Minister for the Southern Suburbs, Minister Assisting the Premier in the Arts) (14:40): I thank the member for Mawson for his question and acknowledge his great interest in the GP Plus health care centre at Aldinga. As part of the government's Health Care Plan, members would know that we are building GP Plus health care centres to deliver more health services to local communities. This is very much a direct outcome of the Generational Health Review (GHR) which said that government needs to put a greater emphasis on primary health care and prevention.

The first GP Plus health care centre is located at Aldinga and it has now celebrated its first year in operation. Because it is the first of its kind, we have looked at it very closely. We have monitored it very closely and, although it is a relatively small centre, it has already had a big impact. I am advised that about 30 families visit the centre to see a GP on any given night of the week. Many of these people would otherwise have ended up at the emergency department (ED) of the Noarlunga Hospital, if this service had not been provided.

I advise the house that, for the first 12 months, there has been a 16 per cent reduction in attendances at Noarlunga ED from the Aldinga area compared to the previous year. That is, a 16 per cent reduction (over the course of one year) in attendance by people in the Aldinga area to the ED at Noarlunga because they now have a viable service which is a GP service providing a bulk billed, after hours service at Aldinga.

During that same period, of course, the population of the Aldinga area has grown very strongly. The Aldinga GP Plus health care centre has GPs available from 6pm until 10pm Monday to Friday, 1pm until 8pm on Saturdays and 10am until 6pm on Sundays. There have been more than 12,500 visits to the Aldinga GP Plus in that time with more than half (about 6,900) going to see a GP. The other visits have accessed a range of health services, including antenatal care, diabetes management, immunisation, mental health services and podiatry. In all, there are 12 different services available, with more to come, including a new program for people suffering from chronic asthma.

One of the new services at the centre is the health assessment clinic which is run on Saturday mornings. It is run by the Flinders University Medical School and Southern Health. Importantly, this is a clinic where medical students, under supervision, provide health assessments and advice. I am told that recently a Spanish couple attended the clinic and were delighted when a Spanish-speaking student was able to carry out the entire consultation in the Spanish language.

I am also told that, if the GP Plus health care clinic is ever quiet, the clinic calls the Noarlunga emergency department and suggest that if they have any people from the Aldinga area who can be seen properly by a GP to invite them to come down to the GP Plus centre so that they will not have to wait as long, which is an excellent service.

Local residents have been literally voting with their feet. I am also advised that the Woodville GP Plus health care centre, which has been open for less time, is seeing an equivalent number of people, and no doubt it is having an impact on that area. As members know, we have an ambition to build 10 of these. One is currently planned for the Elizabeth area, and that is under design. Similarly, another is planned for the Marion area.

I am very pleased to say that, if Kevin Rudd is elected as prime minister on Saturday, superclinics which are built on the same model will be established at Modbury, Noarlunga and Playford North, so that would mean a greater provision of services, taking pressure off our hospitals and providing services closer to where people live in accord with the GHR, that is, to provide greater primary health care and greater prevention services. That is an area where state government traditionally has not ventured, but this government is very pleased to be taking those steps.

LAND MANAGEMENT CORPORATION

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH (Waite—Leader of the Opposition) (14:44): Did the Minister for Infrastructure or any member of his staff communicate with or meet representatives of Newport Quays Management Pty Ltd or the company's owners to discuss the remediation works business raised by the Auditor-General in his special report yesterday before the minister made a decision to waive and cancel the open tender process in favour of NQPM?

The Hon. P.F. CONLON (Elder—Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Minister for Energy) (14:44): Can I assure—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: What the Leader of the Opposition is trying to imply is that we did a dirty deal and then somehow got legal advice to support it. That is the implication and it is utterly and completely false. I will just explain again to the Leader of the Opposition that he will not win by making up stories. If members opposite want to compare the standards of integrity exercised by this government with theirs, I will simply refer to the water contract or the TAB—the water contract, with bids coming in late and the tape going missing from the camera.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: I will answer the question. The decision to do that was based upon a minute of advice from the corporation after it took legal advice.

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH: I rise on a point of order. The question was very clear about whether the minister had meetings. He could just say yes or no.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The minister is not debating. He is free to answer the question.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: You are an unmitigated grub to suggest this. I hope you have one iota of proof. I have met with the proponents of it, as have the Premier and the Treasurer, on many occasions. I will explain to the Leader of the Opposition that we are talking about a \$151,000 remediation contract, not a \$1.5 billion contract. If we were going to do something dodgy for them we would probably make it a little bit bigger. I have met with them, but I have absolutely no recollection and I believe I have never spoken with them about the remediation contract. It is not a matter I would speak to them about, and it is just a grubby slur. It is nothing but a grubby slur.

The process is this, and I will explain it to members opposite again: the Liberal government sought tenders—or, more accurately, they were probably called expressions of interest or something like that—for developing this land. The ultimately successful bid was from Newport Quays. The matters that created this legal obligation were in its bid (I am advised) from day one, and they subsequently became embodied in a planning development agreement (PDA), and the LMC went out and let a tender for the management of remediation.

Then Newport Quays came and said, 'Hang on, we have got the right of first refusal on that.' The LMC took legal advice and the legal advice was, as I understand it—I have read crown

law's; I have not seen that one; I have relied on the minute from the agency—that it should be given the contract. They advised me of that and I did it. I have acted absolutely properly.

If I had got a minute from them saying, 'The legal advice is that we should do this,' and had not done it, then I think there would be an issue to raise. But to come with no evidence whatsoever, not a shred of evidence—it is beyond the difference of a legal opinion—and make the slur that someone in our government has done a deal with them is absolutely below contempt. There is not a shred of evidence.

Understand this: I do not believe I have ever discussed a remediation contract with them—I cannot imagine why I would. When we meet with developers we talk about plans for development worth hundreds of millions of dollars. This is an outstanding success story and your slur is utterly below contempt.

NEWPORT QUAYS

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH (Waite—Leader of the Opposition) (14:49): My question is for the Minister for Infrastructure. Did he and the Treasurer attend a function held on 31 January 2006 at the Newport Quays sales and information centre? The opposition has been advised that the developers of the Port Adelaide waterfront and Newport Quays management invited guests to a several hundred dollar per head cocktail party. Those who attended have advised the opposition that they were asked to write cheques to the Australian Labor Party to pay for the tickets.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Infrastructure.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON (Elder—Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Minister for Energy) (14:50): Have I been to a function hosted by Newport Quays? Yes, I have. I think it would be peculiar if I did not go. If somehow the implication is that they were acting this way in order to secure a \$151,000 remediation contract, again, you are just beneath contempt, you are an utter grub. You have a Prime Minister who takes people into the government lodge—what's it called?

The Hon. K.O. Foley: Kirribilli.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: Kirribilli—at five grand a head. If you want to complain about something, you might want to complain about that. I can tell you that if I am invited to a function by the developers of Newport Quays, I will probably go. When they ask me for a meeting, I will probably meet them. I point out that the chair, as I understand it, of this consortium is Roger Cook, a man appointed by your government many times, a man of the highest integrity. You slur not only me; you slur the company. The sad thing is that you do it with no reason and no evidence. You have failed utterly to make an argument to the people of South Australia, so you do what your side does: you resort to grubby slurs that are beneath contempt.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I draw to honourable members' attention the presence in the gallery today of students from Booleroo Centre District School, who are guests of the member for Stuart.

QUESTION TIME

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Dr McFETRIDGE (Morphett) (14:52): Is the Minister for Transport's vision for public transport in Adelaide 'standing room only'? This morning, TransAdelaide manager, Bill Watson, told ABC Radio that he prefers to stand rather than sit when on public transport. Mr Watson revealed to a commuter yesterday that TransAdelaide was trialling a refit of trains where seats would be taken out to fit more people in. My office has also been contacted with complaints about the lack of seating on the new trams.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. P.F. CONLON (Elder—Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Minister for Energy) (14:52): Given that we know that the opposition gets its questions from the

media, it is not all that hard to anticipate what will be asked. In anticipation of yet another silly question from the opposition, we put together—in fact, as I understand it, it was not even a person from TransAdelaide, it was a completely independent person—a comparison of around the world seating versus standing capacity.

I think I have 24 here from Germany, Sweden, Finland, the United States—the 3100 class, 3000 class and the 2100 class are the first three in capacity for seating versus standing. So, we actually have as good as it gets anywhere in the world. If the opposition were honest about the answer from Bill Watson, what he would have said is that they trialled it on one car.

One of the problems that we do have is making our carriages disability compliant. My understanding is that one of the principal reasons that they have sought to trial this is to remove some seating to make way for wheelchairs. It is a trial of one car. It is, again, utterly irresponsible and dishonest to suggest that we have a plan to make everyone stand up, but one gets used to that sort of thing.

Of these comparisons around the world, we have the best percentage of sitting against standing. The truth is that more people are standing on public transport because more people are catching public transport than they ever did under the previous government. There has been something like a 10 per cent increase in patronage. This is breaking news for comrade McFetridge: it's a success!

If Duncan McFetridge wants to catch public transport in modern cities around the world, he will find a lot of people standing. I have more breaking news for comrade McFetridge: this state is going places, experiencing the greatest economic growth it has ever seen, and we are becoming one of the most modern cities in the world. We are no longer a quiet, sleepy place. We are growing and succeeding, and I do not have a problem with that. I tell members who does have a problem with that—those on the other side who cannot bear success. No; you are utterly wrong again: we still have the best percentage of seating against standing. You are completely wrong.

GOVERNMENT ICT

Mr GRIFFITHS (Goyder) (14:55): My question is also to the Minister for Infrastructure. What are the implications for the whole of government ICT program now that the government's chief information officer, Mr Grantly Mailes, who has had complete control of the program, has resigned?

The Hon. P.F. CONLON (Elder—Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Minister for Energy) (14:55): It would be really good to get a question that did not have some rubbishy comment in it. 'Complete control' is simply wrong. An extremely high level group is set up—steering group, I think it is called. I think the Treasurer is on it.

The Hon. K.O. Foley: The Under Treasurer.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: The Under Treasurer is on it, sorry, the chief executive of transport and a number of others. No doubt, he is the most senior executive officer in the ICT procurement. He has done a lot of work on that. That work will continue. I have to tell the opposition spokesperson that we have employees, not prisoners. One of the risks you do have when you seek someone who is highly skilled in an area that is in high demand is that they do go somewhere else. I would personally prefer he did not. What I can say is that it is an employment contract, not a prison sentence. We will carry on, and that very high level team will carry on. I do not believe that there is any risk at all to our procurement program. It has already had some outstanding successes, dramatic reductions in unit costs—

The Hon. K.O. Foley: Savings of \$25 million a year.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: Thirty, wasn't it? It has already had success: it will continue to have success. We have a way forward, and I think we lead the nation in it.

WATER SECURITY

Mr VENNING (Schubert) (14:57): My question is to the Minister for Water Security. What are the contingency plans in the event that we are unable to pump the River Murray to provide water to Adelaide, the northern cities, the Barossa Valley, and other areas served by the Mannum-Adelaide pipeline, the Morgan-Whyalla pipeline and the Swan Reach system?

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 (14:57): I am really pleased that the opposition has finally realised that a lot of contingency planning is being undertaken at the national level regarding supplies of water in the River Murray and, indeed, the renegotiation of the sharing arrangements for the Murray-Darling Basin.

The 7 November meeting called by the Prime Minister was a summit on drought and it set in place a strategy whereby the jurisdictions of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and the commonwealth would work together to establish contingency planning in the event that low flows continued. South Australia has been asked to undertake a number of contingencies as a consequence of that process. One is the establishment of a weir at Wellington. That has been required by the senior officials group of the drought summit established by the Prime Minister and first ministers. It was a call to undertake the approval processes in case a weir was required. In the event that low flows continue, a weir may be required at Wellington. We do not want to build a weir at Wellington, but should we be required to do so to protect water supplies in South Australia, we will do so.

The other thing that we have undertaken as a consequence of the contingency planning at the national level is a commitment to drop the level of all the pumping capacities of all pumps below Lock 1, which include the Swan Reach, Tailem Bend, Mannum and Murray Bridge offtakes. We are able to drop those pumps to access water at a lower level which enables us to continue supply to 90 per cent of South Australians who access water below Lock 1.

The other thing that we are doing is managing the algal blooms. We are renegotiating the flow regimes into South Australia. We have managed to negotiate for significant dilution flows to enable us to manage the salinity impacts, and we are also undertaking significant other contingency plans in partnership at a national level with the New South Wales, Victorian and commonwealth senior officials, first ministers and the Prime Minister regarding 2008 and 2009 should the drought continue through next year.

It pleases me that the opposition has finally caught up with this process. It is only 12 months ago that we started this process and there have been four reports already that have gone to the Prime Minister and first ministers. I suggest that members opposite read those reports, and I look forward to the next report of the senior officials group, which is imminent.

WORKCHOICES

The Hon. S.W. KEY (Ashford) (15:00): My question is to the Minister for Industrial Relations. Minister, as you know, I have had some experience in both the retail and hospitality industries so I would be interested to know whether there has been any recent information regarding the impact of WorkChoices on workers in these industries.

The Hon. M.J. WRIGHT (Lee—Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Finance, Minister for Government Enterprises, Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing) (15:00): I thank the member for her question. I know she has a passionate interest in this area. The independent report into WorkChoices conducted by the South Australian Industrial Relations Commission found that under the federal government's industrial relations laws there was a heightened sense of insecurity and disempowerment, compounded by loss of other protections to employment conditions.

The Prime Minister came out attacking this independent report, stating that it contained no evidence to support the conclusions that it made. But I can inform the house of yet another independent report backing up the findings made by our own state Industrial Relations Commission. Research conducted by the Victorian Workplace Rights Advocate into two of our biggest industries (retail and hospitality) has found that 80 per cent of hospitality workers and 46 per cent of retail workers in Victoria had lost protection from unfair dismissal and this was causing increased levels of fear. Retail and hospitality workers have traditionally been amongst the most vulnerable workers in our community, and stripping away the right of unfair dismissal has only served to exacerbate this vulnerability.

The Hon. I.F. Evans interjecting:

The Hon. M.J. WRIGHT: It is good to hear from the member for Davenport. I know he is not a supporter of WorkChoices. The report continues to state that, not only is WorkChoices instilling fear into retail and hospitality workers, but it is also driving down wages. It must be remembered that a high percentage of workers in the retail and hospitality industries are young people with limited experience in the workforce. It is unrealistic to suggest that vulnerable young

workers in these industries are in any position to bargain effectively with their employers, especially in the climate of fear created by WorkChoices.

The South Australian Industrial Relations Commission and the Victorian Workplace Rights Advocate are not the only ones stating that workers are worse off under WorkChoices. Even Tony Abbott, the federal health minister (not for much longer) has also recently stated that workers have lost protections under the new industrial relations regime. It is clear from the growing mountain of evidence that working families are suffering under John Howard's WorkChoices, but, thankfully, they do not have to wait much longer.

FEDERAL ELECTION

Mr WILLIAMS (MacKillop) (15:03): My question is to the Premier. Now that the federal Liberal government has committed to pay for half the cost of a desalination plant for Adelaide (which your government says will cost \$1.4 billion) and federal Labor has stated that it will contribute no more than \$100 million towards such a project in South Australia, will you be urging South Australians to vote for the federal coalition on Saturday so that water restrictions might be lifted in Adelaide?

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) (15:04): I am happy to answer this question, because there is a mention of 'a possibility', 'might' and 'if' in Turnbull's announcement (and we understand he is concerned about his own seat). I am glad the member has asked me this question because we have tallied up the firm commitments. We remember the \$10 billion water plan from John Howard. Not one single cent has been spent on the River Murray. However, during the election campaign, and before, we have counted up federal Labor and federal Liberal commitments and, so far, on my tally, it is a \$260 million commitment from federal Labor and a \$10 million commitment from John Howard—or, really, I guess it is from Mr Costello.

Let me just say one final thing. Members opposite have introduced the federal campaign into this parliament. Remember this: if people think that Mr Costello is arrogant now, just imagine what he would be like if he were Prime Minister. One of the contestants for the prime ministership, Kevin Rudd, has a plan for Australia; the other has a retirement plan to put in Peter Costello—and that is the difference.

AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR PLANT FUNCTIONAL GENOMICS

Mrs GERAGHTY (Torrens) (15:05): My question is to the Minister for Science and Information Economy. What assistance is the government providing to support leading-edge research being conducted through the Australian Centre for Plant Functional Genomics?

The Hon. P. CAICA (Colton—Minister for Employment, Training and Further Education, Minister for Science and Information Economy, Minister for Youth, Minister for Gambling) (15:05): As our state deals with the difficulties of a drought, it is timely to focus on what the government is doing to support research in abiotic stress in South Australia's core crops of wheat and barley. The state government's substantial financial support for the Australian Centre for Plant Functional Genomics, which has research nodes—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. P. CAICA: This centre has research nodes in Adelaide, Victoria and Queensland. It is assisting that organisation to make crucial inroads into maintaining and improving crop yields. The ACPFG, with a staff of over 100, is an iconic member of the science and research community in South Australia.

The Hon. I.F. Evans interjecting:

The Hon. P. CAICA: No-one has tried to kill it off, Iain, and that is just ridiculous; it is something which, I think, gets bipartisan support. All administrative and funding responsibilities are assigned to Bio Innovation SA; and I congratulate Bio Innovation SA on its outstanding achievement in winning the fostering creativity and innovation category at the inaugural Premier's Awards, which I spoke about the other day.

The centre is strategically vital for our state in maintaining our international leadership in plant biotechnology. Last year an independent international review of the ACPFG concluded that

the centre is on track to become one of the best research centres in the world for cereal genomics. ACPFG's research and development activities are aimed at developing the tolerance of cropping plants to multiple stresses, such as low water availability, high salt, temperature variation and mineral deficiency. In 2002, in recognition of the crucial need for a facility of this type, the state government approved funding of \$12 million to establish and support the centre. Some \$5 million of that funding was used for the construction of the plant genomics centre building at the Waite; and \$7 million over five years underpinned research and operational support.

I draw members' attention to additional state government funding approved for 2007-08, which will provide \$1.75 million per annum from January 2008 to December 2012 (totalling \$8.75 million over five years). Within the first funding period from 2003 to 2007 the ACPFG will have received a cash operating budget totalling \$45 million and in-kind contributions of \$23 million. The Grains and Research Development Corporation and the Australian Research Council have agreed to continue to fund the ACPFG, with the expectation that the headquarters and more than \$75 million worth of research and development expenditure stays here in South Australia. This is a very good news story.

WATER SECURITY

Mr WILLIAMS (MacKillop) (15:09): Why is the Minister for Water Security sending out conflicting messages about the government's involvement in the water trading market? Yesterday, the minister told a mining and water conference that the government was active in the water trading market. Last week she told the house that the government would not be purchasing water because 'both the commonwealth, New South Wales and others have said that they are not keen on the South Australian government getting involved in the water market directly'.

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) (15:10): Once again, the opposition has failed to keep themselves informed about what is happening. We have a target under the Living Murray initiative to purchase water from the marketplace to meet our objective of 35 gigalitres by 2009, towards the nationwide target of 500 gigalitres into the Living Murray. That water is being purchased by government and is actually unable to be used for irrigation purposes.

The other question that was asked was about purchase of water from New South Wales and Victoria. We are not purchasing water from the New South Wales or Victorian governments. The New South Wales and Victorian governments, under the Living Murray, have made it quite clear that their preference is for any purchases for the Living Murray to be made through the Murray-Darling Basin Commission. In fact, in May this year the Murray-Darling Basin ministerial councillors at last signed off on a program to purchase water from willing sellers, and, indeed, a tender went out into the marketplace and 20 gigalitres of water was put up for purchase.

That tender closed ahead of time because it was oversubscribed early in the piece. So there are lots of willing sellers out there and there is a need to purchase water from the system to deal with overallocation. That process is occurring. South Australia will be a contributor to that program through the Murray-Darling Basin Commission. As for going into the market directly to purchase water, the New South Wales and Victorian governments have both indicated that they would prefer that not to occur.

WOMEN'S INFORMATION SERVICE

Ms PORTOLESI (Hartley) (15:12): My question is to the Minister for the Status of Women. Can the minister please tell us about the outstanding work being undertaken by the Women's Information Service?

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) (15:12): I thank the member for Hartley for her question. As members would know, the Rann Labor government has a very strong commitment to putting gender equity and women's issues firmly on the agenda here in South Australia. This is very strongly reflected in South Australia's Strategic Plan, with specific targets for women—

Members interjecting:

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Here we have the member for Bragg yelling across the chamber, once again, totally disrupting the business of the house. What she fails to highlight,

however, is that their side of the house in relation to women have no targets, have no plans, have no strategies, and provide no support for women. You only have to look at their side of the chamber to see how much support they have had for women. However, I should point out that their percentages went up at the last state election because they lost so many seats, so three out of their little quota was a far greater percentage. You only have to look at the percentage of women on federal government boards, on John Howard's government boards and committees.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! Members on their feet, I ask them to leave the chamber please, quietly. I cannot hear what the minister is saying. The discussion across both sides of the chamber must cease. The minister has the call.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Thank you, sir. We have targets and commitments to having 50 per cent of women on South Australian government boards and committees. We have a target of 50 per cent women chairing those boards. And we have a target of 50 per cent women members of parliament. As I pointed out, we are doing our bit on this side of the house; their side of the house is not doing so well at all.

The member for Bragg came in here yesterday, cut the lunch of the member for Unley, cut the lunch of the member for Finniss, as they were grilling me through the Auditor-General's Report—came in, cut their lunch; but what were your numbers? When you were in government, 32 per cent. She had the gall to come in here and complain about an in excess of 10 per cent increase in the number of women. She has got the gall to come in here and complain, when the number of women on federal government boards and committees, John Howard's boards and committees, are in the low 20 per cents. Private sector boards and committees of the top 200 countries in the nation—8 per cent. Here in South Australia—43 per cent and rising.

We are committed to increasing opportunities for women across the entire spectrum, promoting women into positions of power and seniority and also providing advice and support to women who need it: those who are dealing with the consequences of drought, young women and babies, women dealing with domestic violence or family breakdown, and women who from time to time just need a bit of support or some information and advice.

The government has implemented a range of services to provide support for women, including a universal home visiting program, wonderful children's centres, expanding the role of the Women's Information Service, providing information and referral and support services for women across South Australia in their own communities—

Ms Thompson interjecting:

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: We are taking it out to regional areas, the suburbs and country regions. The service provides advice to women seeking information about a range of issues including relationships, parenting, mental health, education, employment and domestic violence.

Ms Chapman: Seven ministers.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: You have no idea. They are still way above the numbers you had—in excess of a 10 per cent increase, in fact. It is about 20 per cent of your federal colleagues. We are not doing too bad—a good news story. I thank the member for Bragg for raising the issue yesterday because it gives me the opportunity to highlight how well we are doing here in South Australia.

Recently, as part of the community cabinet held on Kangaroo Island, I met with a number of women from the local area—something that I do on a regular basis when we have these community cabinets out in regional areas. Amongst the issues talked about were the impacts of the drought on country families and the associated depression and other problems that can arise in those circumstances.

Following on from that gathering, the Women's Information Service participated in the Women's Health Expo on the island, organised by the Kangaroo Island Community Health Service and the Women's Health Advisory Service. Information was provided to women about several matters, including legal issues, domestic violence and problems in the workplace. As I highlighted yesterday, and as we heard from the Minister for Industrial Relations, there are plenty of those problems arising in our workplace as a result of the Howard government's WorkChoices legislation.

As a result of the popularity of the presence of the Women's Information Service, I am pleased to advise that in early 2008 we will be setting up a women's information hub at the

Kingscote library. This is just another example of how the government's services are connected with women all over South Australia to ensure that they have access to information and to provide support to women in regional areas who are experiencing many difficulties as a result of the drought. The Women's Information Service staff have also been visiting other areas to provide information where they live including the Paskeville Field Days on Yorke Peninsula and the Mount Gambier Show.

We are all very aware that women provide a critical role in supporting their families and their local communities. I am very proud of the role the Women's Information Service is playing in providing information to the women of South Australia, and I am very proud of what the South Australian government is doing in promoting women into positions where they can influence the policy direction of this state.

GRIEVANCE DEBATE

ECONOMIC AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

Mr GRIFFITHS (Goyder) (15:19): I wish to reflect for a few minutes on the Economic and Finance Committee. I make particular reference to the very colourful contribution that was made by the member for West Torrens on 12 September when he presented to the house the annual report for the 2006-07 financial year. I made a brief comment immediately after that and there were some interjections from this side and I think the word 'Churchillian' was used. I managed to get it on the record because the member for West Torrens' reflections on our efforts over the past 12 months were a little different from my memory of what actually occurred.

An honourable member interjecting:

Mr GRIFFITHS: I think the way he described it actually. On being elected to parliament last year, I aspired to a role on the Economic and Finance Committee because I believed all the propaganda. I thought that the committee was all powerful.

Ms Fox interjecting:

Mr GRIFFITHS: They have. Since the member for Mawson complained about it, the quality of the morning tea has improved. It is obvious to me now that it is not. It is a committee that is controlled by the numbers, very strongly, and I will talk later about some of the motions that we have put forward. I note that the presiding member has returned to the house.

I must admit that when I nominated (within our party) to sit on the Economic and Finance Committee I thought we would be sitting nearly every week. It has come as a bit of a disappointment to me that we only sat for 18 hours in the 2006—

Mr Koutsantonis: Is that right?

Mr GRIFFITHS: Yes.

Mr Koutsantonis interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr GRIFFITHS: I do not say that.

Mr Koutsantonis interjecting:

Mr GRIFFITHS: No. We only sat for 18 hours in that financial year. I do note the effort that goes into reading the agenda papers for that, and I acknowledge that. The member for West Torrens is questioning me on the fact that I have actually made excuses about the travel time. I have not; not at all. For me it takes about an hour and 45 minutes to get to Adelaide. I am in Adelaide a couple of times every week anyway, so I actually do not care. I put on the record that next week is the very first time, that I can recollect, that the Economic and Finance Committee has sat outside a sitting week in parliament.

Mr Koutsantonis: You agreed.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Yes. I am glad it is sitting next week.

Mr Koutsantonis interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for West Torrens is out of his seat.

Mr GRIFFITHS: It is interesting to me that we do receive additional remuneration for taking on these roles: I think for members it is 12 per cent and for the presiding member it is 17 per

cent. I am pleased that the committee has decided to sit next week because important issues need to be discussed. We are having the Auditor-General attend our meeting so that we can have some informal discussions with him.

I reflect upon the fact that at the last two meetings some quite important motions, I think, were proposed by opposition members for investigations to be undertaken but which were not supported. The first one was from the member for MacKillop, which was that the real cost of supplying water to the Upper Eyre Peninsula, including the cost to the water consumers, as a result of low water quality and expected costs of an alternative supply be investigated. That was defeated, again along party lines.

The second one was the relative advantages and disadvantages of using private-public partnerships or similar procurement devices for government infrastructure developments. We put up a strong argument for that. We felt very strongly that the level of infrastructure investment that is occurring in this state which is intended to be or has already been funded by public-private partnerships are deserving of an investigation; not only to determine cost but if it was the way for the state to go in the future when it comes to investment opportunities. The member for MacKillop provided some very good terms of reference for that. All three members of the opposition spoke in support of it but unfortunately it was defeated.

The one that we considered last week was a motion that I myself proposed, which referred to Public Service numbers in 2002, and consideration of a few issues which I want to get on the public record, namely:

- (a) the level of internal controls in place from 2002 within individual departments designed to ensure that additional staff are engaged only when a direct budget allocation exists. The argument I put for that was that, since 2002, 12,000 public servants have been engaged by the state, and of those only 2,000 form part of the budget statements. We have raised questions continually on this and we thought that was an issue worthy of investigation.
- (b) the number of public servants engaged within individual departments for each financial year above the allocation for that year.
- (c) the degree of reporting by individual departments to responsible ministers on the number of, and remuneration level of, additional staff engaged. We wanted to see if there was a direct correlation from departments back to the ministers, so the ministers knew if they were in fact employing significantly more people than they are authorised to do in their budgets.
- (d) the long-term financial implications to the state for the financial position of the state government due to the unbudgeted growth in this; given that these people cost, on average, \$65,000, that is \$650 million per year.

Time expired.

AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR AWARDS

The Hon. S.W. KEY (Ashford) (15:24): Last night, with the Deputy Leader of the Opposition (the member for Bragg), I had the privilege of attending the Australian of the Year Awards, South Australian chapter. I notice that a very quiet achiever in this house, the member for Norwood, is on the committee. I take time to commend her for her work with something that I was not aware of, and I think there is probably a number of activities that members of this house contribute to that we are not aware of. So, congratulations to the member for Norwood on being involved in this program.

I did have some cynicism in the past, not so much recently, about the worth of some of the award programs. Like many members in this house, on many occasions we have the honour of attending award ceremonies, but sometimes we wonder about their worth.

I am pleased to say that this particular program is obviously worthwhile. The calibre of the people nominated is extremely pleasing. In the local hero category, South Australian finalists included Samantha Krollig, a rural community builder; Ted Pawelski, a community worker; Nouha Jaber, an Arabic community worker; and also someone who is very well-known to many of us in this house, Jim Douglas, a coastal community activist. I was very pleased to see that Jim—whom I know best out of these four local hero nominations—has been recognised for the fantastic work

that he has been doing over a number of years, particularly for those of us in the Henley Beach area.

The member for Schubert would know of the work of this group; in fact, the member for Schubert is an activist himself, as am I and a number of others in the western suburbs, and certainly those who live on the coastal area. It was interesting to note that Samantha Krollig was actually identified as the local hero for 2008. That really identified the work that she has done as a regional person to try to make sure there is support, particularly for young parents in her area.

The South Australian finalists for the Young Australian of the Year included Anna McInerney, 16, an amazing fund-raiser; Erin Riddell, 21, a social activist who is particularly involved in the Australian Youth Climate Change Coalition as well as Oxfam and World Vision; and Victoria Saint, 23, a health advocate who has been involved in the United Nations Development Fund, the People's Health Movement and a number of other organisations within South Australia.

We were treated by the fourth South Australian finalist in the Young Australian of the Year category, Niki Vasilakis, 25, a musician. It is interesting to note that Niki took up the violin at the age of four because her parents suspected that she had ADHD. So, she used her daily practice to temper her over-energetic behaviour. I thought that was a very interesting aspect to this now internationally famous musician.

There were four nominees in the Senior Australian of the Year category: Margaret Flower, development pioneer; Rodney Fox, a shark expert who had suffered a violent attack by a shark and turned that dramatic experience into making sure that more information is available to study sharks, conservation and underwater work; Professor Rob Morrison, OAM, is a science communicator; and Joy Tatnell, a refugee supporter—amongst other things—for Red Cross and Lifeline.

In the Australian of the Year category, South Australian finalists included Michael Angelakis; Dr Paul Downton; Scott Hicks; and Brenton Whittaker. It was very pleasing to hear that Scott Hicks has been identified as the South Australian of the Year.

BARLEY CONTRACTS

Mr VENNING (Schubert) (15:29): I rise today to highlight a problem of barley contract washouts. This is a new but very serious problem, and I think most members would be aware of it. I think it is appropriate that we reflect on the problem now, considering parliament's actions and what can be done and because the harvest is now over half finished. I declare again that I am a barley grower, or at least my family is. I refer to the shocking situation where farmers, who are now on a deregulated grain market, particularly barley at this time, have been savagely caught after forward selling their barley—contracted to traders—and who, in many cases, are not able to fill those contracts because of drought. But worse—much worse—they now have to buy barley at a hugely inflated price to 'wash out' these contracts and, even worse than that, many banks will not finance these wash outs.

Most farmers presold their grain in June/July when the crops looked quite good and the weather forecaster was saying that there would be reasonable follow-up rains in spring. The advice then was, 'If you can get \$200 a tonne for feed barley, forward sell.' They should have also been told to ensure that they only commit a quarter or one-third of an average crop just in case. Many were not told, reminded, or forgot about this. It has not rained at all in much of South Australia since and the price of barley has soared to \$460 per tonne, and panic has set in. Farmers were told to bale out as quickly as they could and wash out their contracts, often with an additional \$40 per tonne penalty (see the fine print). In other words, you had to buy barley for \$460 a tonne to fill your contract for \$200 a tonne. You do not have to be Einstein to work out the dilemma.

When the government decided to deregulate the barley industry, the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries (Hon. Rory McEwen) assured parliament that farmers would be provided with the necessary information and education to trade in an unregulated market without the single desk. That is why I am making this speech now. At the time of the second reading of the bill, minister McEwen said:

To facilitate the transition to an open market, the government will underwrite an education and training program for barley growers in South Australia. In addition to explaining the changes to barley marketing and introducing growers to price and other risk management tools, the program may include Victorian barley growers presenting 'case studies' of Victoria's transition to an open barley market.

I stand here now and ask the minister and the government what education and training programs were undertaken. I do not know of any. I know some meetings were called but they did not happen.

I could not ask the minister during question time but I ask him now via this grievance: what was done—and I ask that in a fair manner?

What we see now is a train wreck. Many farmers will go down hundreds of thousands of dollars. I know of eight who owe between \$500,000 to \$1 million. A small farmer who first alerted me to the problem six weeks ago, who planted 500 acres of barley and who sold 500 tonnes, will go down \$130,000, plus penalties. That is staggering. He is a first-time seller. He received poor advice. Another large farmer could lose \$1 million to \$1.2 million. Every country MP in this house will know of farming families and constituents who are severely affected. Some will lose their farms over what we did. It is a fact, and I will repeat: some will lose—

Mr Pederick: What they did.

Mr VENNING: What they did, in that case. Obviously many of these unfortunate people will fail and default on their contracts, but what then does the trader do who, in most cases, has on sold that grain and has committed to that. They, too, will be in trouble. As I said, if we had to deregulate, we should not have been so hasty. We should have had a moratorium of at least a year and, in that time, had meetings to educate farmers about the pitfalls and dangers inherent in operating in an unprotected environment or, at the very minimum, come through with the education and training which the government avowed to underwrite.

In hindsight, it would have been an excellent year to reveal to all players what can happen in an extreme situation, with the vagaries of drought and market pressures. I very much regret that the house has done what it has done. I must declare again that I am a barley grower and my family did some forward selling but, by the grace of God, my family is not greatly affected and will deliver on our contracts.

That does not stop me hurting for my industry colleagues and farming friends, especially when much of it could have been avoided. Yes, in full, open deregulated systems the buyer and seller have to beware. It is a risk, a punt, a gamble on the market and must be managed and safeguarded by hedging, etc., and done with all the downsides in mind. We have gone from many years of having a protected market scheme, and many farmers are poorly equipped to manage the new scenarios. We needed to put in a longer transition period. If the government can assist, it should.

VIRGINIA FLOODS

The Hon. P.L. WHITE (Taylor) (15:35): I rise today to remind the house that it is two years since the most recent flood event in Virginia, which was a particularly catastrophic event for those who live in that area. In recent weeks I have attended a number of functions to commemorate that event and also to celebrate what has been achieved, in a lot of ways, for residents and growers of the Virginia area who were affected by that natural disaster.

There was a flood recovery program conclusion celebration, which was attended also by Rory McEwen in his capacity as Minister for Regional Development. A number of people were intimately involved in the coordination of the recovery effort. Ronnie Faggotter was appointed as the state recovery officer, and she and Mary Ireland, a very talented community development officer, have done a lot of work over the last two years helping the Virginia community not only to recover but also to advance from that day in November 2005.

The celebration also covered industry recovery and what has been put in place by PIRSA and other departments working through the Virginia Horticulture Centre, which has done much to aid growers in developing plans for the future and improving upon practices—not only replacing practices and replacing crops, but also improving on what they had before.

Of course, there are some whose businesses and homes did not survive the event, but, for the most part, people have been very impressed with the recovery effort that has been led by minister McEwen and minister Jay Weatherill working with the Department for Families and Community Services. Indeed, last week I attended an event for the Virginia Community Safety and Health Awareness Expo, which also was a wrapping-up, if you like, of that department's involvement in the recovery effort.

I represented the Minister for Emergency Services (Hon. Carmel Zollo) at that event which saw the launch of a DVD called *Virginia Flood Safety*, which contains information on what you can do before, during and after a flood. It is a particularly good 10 minute DVD, produced in English with subtitles in Greek, Italian, Khmer and Vietnamese, who are the people who make up a large proportion of the community in Virginia. This program is aimed at addressing the fact that many

people in the Virginia area were not prepared for the flood event. So it is about preparing and then recovering— what you do in a flood event, what services are available, and how you go about things (from the emergency response end to the clean-up end and the recovery stage).

I commend both departments that were involved for the way they responded to the incident and their delivery of a good outcome for the community. I also pay tribute to Mary Ireland, who has worked in the community. I went to Mary early in the piece and asked if one of the outcomes of the Virginia flood incident could be that we provide some English language classes for Vietnamese people. That has been successful, and I had the pleasure of giving out certificates from the first round of those classes.

Time expired.

MOUNT BARKER HOSPITAL

Mr GOLDSWORTHY (Kavel) (15:40): I want to raise a serious issue in relation to Mount Barker Hospital and associated health care services, which has been a matter of concern in my electorate of Kavel for quite some time. Earlier in the week I asked a question of the Minister for Health about operating theatre procedures at Mount Barker Hospital. The issue was raised initially by a local medical practitioner in the district, who had written to the Minister for Health about a number of concerns; and the minister has initiated an investigation.

I asked the minister earlier in the week why it will take up to six weeks for the investigation to be carried out and, secondly, what guarantees the minister will make to ensure the safety of the operating theatres is not compromised (or words to that effect). The minister did not actually answer the question but, rather, launched into a tirade and attack on me and implied that I was saying there was an issue in relation to the length of time of the investigation. I am quite happy to say that I think six weeks is a long time to carry out an investigation.

The minister also said that it is the responsibility of the board of the hospital to ensure that these issues are addressed. I contest that assertion of the minister. The board has a responsibility for the overall management of the hospital, but the ultimate responsibility—and I have said this publicly; and it was published in an article in the local paper—lies with the minister. It works up through the line of responsibility, through the administration, Country Health, and the like, but the ultimate responsibility lies with the Minister for Health (Hon. John Hill). He can make any and every attempt to divert that responsibility from himself, but I am saying that the responsibility is his. The finger of responsibility points directly at the minister for these issues. The local doctor knew that was the case, identified that was the situation, and wrote directly to the minister requesting a satisfactory response to his inquiry and the issues he raised.

The doctor raised his concerns about not only the number of doctors in the operating theatre for certain procedures but also the adequate training of nursing staff in the operating theatres. I understand that a response has been received from the health service that there are no unqualified staff in the operating theatres, but that does not mean that they are not underqualified; and I think that is the issue the doctor was raising. Some of the nursing staff who attend the theatres are underqualified.

Having asked the minister for a response in the house, the minister launched into a tirade and attack on me because I asked the question. He did not satisfactorily answer the question. He said that a review was being undertaken by a certain doctor and he will await the report. That is all well and good; we know that is happening. However, he failed to answer the question. I will await the outcome of that investigation with some interest and I look forward to receiving a copy of the report of the investigation. If not, I will look to act under freedom of information to access that information.

Time expired.

DIVISION COUNT

Mr VENNING (Schubert) (15:45): I seek leave to make a personal explanation.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member claims to be misrepresented?

Mr VENNING: No; I just want to clarify a situation in relation to a division before lunch.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: You wish to correct the record?

Mr VENNING: No; I don't think I can do that. I can just explain what happened.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: So it is for clarification.

Leave granted.

Mr VENNING: During the division just before lunch, right on 1 o'clock, I was in charge of the numbers on this side of the house, and there were three members who were excluded from the count, because I had given the pairs. They were the members for Kavel, Morphett and Finnis. They were all paired out. They were actually present in the house but they were paired out from the chamber. Because of a technicality in relation to—well, one was that one of the members came back. The Government Whip did give me correct advice; it was after 1 o'clock. The member involved with a pair did arrive, so it did put our pairing arrangement out. So, I just wish to tell the house that I apologise for that. It was because of a technicality. These members were present in the house, and should have voted. If it had not been right on 1 o'clock the confusion would not have happened. I do apologise. I do not want to see the record of these members besmirched by missing a division, when they didn't, technically.

GRIEVANCE DEBATE

WILLUNGA PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mr BIGNELL (Mawson) (15:47): It has been hard to get a word out today. The member for Schubert jumped up earlier before the lunch break, when I was on my feet and talking, and he has just done it again. Tomorrow I have the honour of going with the education minister, Jane Lomax-Smith, to open the redeveloped Willunga Primary School, in the seat of Mawson. It is a \$5.1 million redevelopment. It has been ongoing over the past year or so. It is a fantastic new school for our area. I would like to thank the education minister and all the staff who have been involved in this project over the past year.

Not only is it a great place and a great space for children to learn in and for teachers to teach in but it is also environmentally friendly. The redevelopment was built using the principles of ecologically sustainable development, and includes a new administration building, with a reception area, two classrooms and an outdoor area. The classroom windows face north, letting in more natural light, and the rooms include window shades and insulation to make the rooms cooler in summer and warmer in winter. Solar panels will provide electricity for the school's new buildings, while four new rainwater tanks collect water for the school to use in the new toilet blocks.

So I think this is a great way of not only having more sustainable development but teaching our children who are the people who are the leaders of tomorrow. But they are also today's leaders in many ways because at school they pick up all these great messages about health and about environmental sustainability and they take them home and teach us, the parents, to turn off the lights and to use power and water more frugally, for a better future, that they will inherit. Willunga Primary School has always offered a high standard of education, and now its classrooms match the quality of the teaching inside.

One of the great things about being a local member is getting around and visiting the schools and having the schools come in here and visit as well. Today I had 53 students from the Emmaus Catholic School in Woodcroft, and their behaviour was exemplary, with a group that size, in getting around the corridors and into the two chambers and Old Parliament House. They are a credit to themselves and to their school. On Tuesday, I had a different group of 47 students from Emmaus Catholic School. They have also been to the Australian Electoral Commission this week, so what an exciting week it is for them, in the week of the federal election, getting to see first-hand not only Parliament House but also how the Electoral Commission works.

It is a great time, and I am sure that many members will be busy going to school graduations. Tonight I have the Tatchilla Lutheran College valedictory service, and I am looking forward to that. It was a great night last year, to hear the speeches and the ambitions of all these students. They get up as they finish their final year of school and talk about their hopes for the future, and they play some great music as well that they have been taught at the school.

In a couple of weeks' time, as many other members in this place will probably do as well, I will be going to seven or eight grade 7 graduations, and these are fantastic nights to, again, hear the aims and aspirations of these grade 7 children as they finish their primary school and are about to embark on that next step into secondary school. It is a really wonderful thing. It is a great thing about this job, to see that our future is in safe hands, with these grade 7s, and these other senior students, who are also having their graduation nights over the next week or so.

The redevelopment of Willunga Primary School is a \$5.1 million project. We got some money from the federal government as well. The state government provided \$4.12 million and the

federal government provided \$1 million. Just up the road is Willunga High School about which I have written to the minister quite a few times. She has been down to visit the school. It is not in the best state of repair after a backlog of several decades of maintenance, so I was very pleased in the budget this year that the minister has made available the funds to do a feasibility study, and we are hoping that Willunga High School will also be upgraded to match its brand new primary school just down the road.

It is part of a large amount of money that is being spent on capital works in our schools, and I congratulate the minister for the huge contribution in this year's and last year's budget as part of the Education Works program to reshape the face of public education in South Australia. Kids and teachers in our public schools love to have great facilities and we are providing them.

MOTOR VEHICLES (MISCELLANEOUS) AMENDMENT BILL

The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH (Adelaide—Minister for Education and Children's Services, Minister for Tourism, Minister for the City of Adelaide) (15:51): I move:

That standing orders be so far suspended as to enable me to move a motion for the rescission of the vote on the third reading of the Motor Vehicles (Miscellaneous) Amendment Bill.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I have counted the house and, as an absolute majority of the whole numbers of the members of the house is not present, ring the bells.

An absolute majority of the whole numbers of members being present:

The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH: I have decided to move this motion to allow the rescission to amend a typographical error in clause 6 of the Motor Vehicles (Miscellaneous) Amendment Bill 2007. It is a change from one to 12. It is a typographical error that the opposition knows about and we all missed in the re-presentation of the bill in this house.

Motion carried.

The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH: I move:

That the vote taken on the third reading of the bill on 21 November be rescinded.

Motion carried.

In committee.

Clauses 1 to 5 passed.

Clause 6.

The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH: I move:

Page 4, line 15—Delete '1' and substitute: 12.

Amendment carried; clause as amended passed.

Remaining clauses (7 to 18) and title passed.

Bill reported with amendment.

Bill read a third time and passed.

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT

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) (15:56): I seek leave to make a ministerial statement.

Leave granted.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: In the chamber on Tuesday 20 November, during the examination of the Auditor-General's Report, the Leader of the Opposition asked me a question about the level of savings made as a result of a number of business units from the Department for Administrative and Information Services being integrated into the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. On advice I responded. The answer was in part inaccurate. The correct answer should read, 'Savings of \$1.192 million per annum ongoing.'

EDUCATION (COMPULSORY EDUCATION AGE) AMENDMENT BILL

The Legislative Council agreed to the bill without any amendment.

CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES (POSSESSION OF PRESCRIBED EQUIPMENT) AMENDMENT BILL

The Legislative Council agreed to the bill without any amendment.

LIQUOR LICENSING (CERTIFICATES OF APPROVAL) AMENDMENT BILL

The Legislative Council agreed to the bill without any amendment.

PRIVATE PARKING AREAS (PENALTIES) AMENDMENT BILL

The Legislative Council agreed to the bill without any amendment.

STATUTES AMENDMENT (YOUNG OFFENDERS) BILL

The Legislative Council agreed to the bill without any amendment.

CRIMINAL LAW (SENTENCING) (VICTIMS OF CRIME) AMENDMENT BILL

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 24 October 2007. Page 1303.)

Mr GRIFFITHS (Goyder) (15:59): I will make a brief contribution to this bill, which was introduced on 24 October, and I commend the government and the Attorney-General for its introduction. I also commend the shadow minister for the very detailed briefing paper that she provided to us.

I do not have a great knowledge of the law, and I am the first to admit that. Most that I have learnt is from dealing with people and issues and watching television and movies, but the one thing that is obvious to me is that there has to be an opportunity for victims and witnesses to make statements without fear of intimidation, and to actually have the courage to make those statements, first when they lay charges and, secondly, when the case appears in court and they have to actually defend their statements, quite often with the perpetrator of the crime watching them.

It must be very intimidating for those people, so I think that any bill that actually introduces options to give them some degree of confidence in the fact that there will not be that physical intimidation—they can give their impact statements via CCTV or by audiovisual recording—is a great move forward.

I also took particular notice of the community impact statement option, which I understand is being included. Unfortunately, a significant amount of vandalism and malicious destruction occurs across too many parts of our community. It especially affects public buildings and many facilities owned by the community at large. I will briefly recount to members a relatively small incident, but to the people who were affected by it, it was a major issue.

About four months ago, the Maitland Rifle Club, of which I am a patron and event sponsor, was broken into. A week after the break-in, I was shown by devastated club members photos of the utter destruction in that building. It is a jointly owned facility. It is not owned by any one person; it has been built up by generations of people who consider rifle shooting to be a valid recreational sport for them and for other enthusiasts, and they took great pride in what they had.

There were a lot of trophies on display and there were kitchen facilities. They found that the generators had been stolen, the walls had been kicked in, the windows had been smashed, trophies had been stolen, although two days later they were thrown back over the fence. This had a terrible effect on the members of this club, because they took great pride in the place. They intended to hold a prize shoot-off within about three weeks, so they wanted to make sure that they presented their facilities in the best possible way but, after this level of damage, it made it very difficult, but they worked hard and they got things up again.

From a brief reading of the paper and my understanding of the intention of the bill, I consider that it is a positive step forward. It will allow the community at large to have a greater opportunity to ensure that they can give evidence to the proper authorities and that that evidence will be listened to, and that the people who actually perpetrate these crimes will be accountable to some degree.

The great fear in the community at large is that too many people get away with things and that physical intimidation sometimes makes it difficult to have the courage to report crimes. We all see and hear of things sometimes, and we wish that people took different actions, but sometimes it is very hard, because not everybody has the courage to stand up in front of others and state what

they have actually seen or heard because of fear for their own personal safety. As I understand it, the introduction of this bill will improve that situation. I think it is a commendable way forward, and I am pleased to offer my support for it.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY (Kavel) (16:03): I, too, am pleased to make a brief contribution on this piece of legislation. I understand that this bill was introduced by the government on 24 October. It extends to circumstances in which victims can have an impact on sentencing along four specific lines. The first gives victims of crime advocates the legal right to make victim impact submissions at the sentencing hearing in cases that result in the death or total permanent incapacity of the victim; that is, in effect, where the victim is unable or unavailable to make such a submission because of death or injury. The second provision amends the legislation to give the prosecution the ability to obtain and present community impact statements during sentencing submissions, informing the court of the impact of the crime on the community.

The third point makes it clear in the legislation that the victim impact statement can be given in person or via CCT (closed-circuit television), audio or audiovisual recording. I will make some comments in general terms on that third point. It is not necessarily related to victim impact statements and the like. My family had an experience some months ago where my daughter was requested to attend court as a witness on a particular case.

It took some time before this whole matter came before the court. It took some 18 months from when the police received the report of the alleged criminal activity to when the matter came before the court. My wife and I, not having heard anything about it, thought that the police were not going to proceed with the prosecution and take the matter to court. We had basically forgotten about it, and so had my daughter, who had put it out of her mind. At the time, it was a traumatic experience for her and some of her school friends.

As I said, we had basically forgotten about it and my daughter had put it out of her mind until, one day out of the blue, the police rang my wife and said that they wanted to continue pursuing the issue and would like my daughter to come into the police station to give a statement and proceed the matter to court. It is difficult for a 14 to 15 year old girl to try to recall specific details of an alleged activity 18 months after the event. To the credit of her and her school friends, they did their very best and the matter was brought before the court.

That brings me to the specific issue I want to raise in relation to how the courts and the police prosecution dealt with the matter. I have to give full credit to the way the woman police prosecutor dealt with the sensitivities of the issue. My daughter was extremely nervous about attending court and giving evidence. The police prosecutor applied to the court and it was agreed that a screen would be set up between the accused and the area where the witness would sit, so that my daughter did not have to look at the accused. A screen was put between her and the accused and all she could see was the defence lawyer, the prosecutor, the magistrate and my wife and I.

I think that is important. I am using that as an example. This legislation is important for victims of crimes. Obviously an accused has to be brought before the court, there has to be a successful prosecution and a person has to be convicted of the crime before a person can be a victim of crime. I believe that this is a worthy step in amending the legislation. I think that the courts are considerate and have some compassion in the way witnesses and also victims are dealt with in the course of the justice system.

I highlight that as an example. My family and I have had nothing to do with the courts or the judiciary system, which is fortunate, apart from that specific example when my daughter was required to attend the court. Making the legislation clear that the victim impact statement can be given via closed-circuit television, audio or audiovisual recording. Obviously that assists the victim in giving their evidence and they do not necessarily have to face the convicted criminal in the court.

There would be cases where, during the course of the trial, the victim has been further traumatised by that process, and they have basically had enough. You often see people on television coming out of the court after being through that process and it has been quite traumatic and they are just happy that it has all been dealt with and is finished, the conviction has been made and the penalty handed down. For them to go through another process of having to give a victim impact statement in front of the convicted criminal would add to the trauma, so I think this is a good measure and I commend the government for making that clear.

The fourth aspect of the bill also amends the sentencing act to make restitution orders, and that is an order that an offender return misappropriated property to the victim or the owner, which is enforceable in the same way as any other pecuniary order, and that obviously makes absolute

sense. There has been an indication that the opposition supports this bill, and I have been pleased to make a contribution.

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (16:11): I also rise today to make a few comments in regard to the Criminal Law (Sentencing) (Victims of Crime) Amendment Bill. As well as the need to protect the community, sentencing has the combined effect of acting as a general deterrent to would-be criminals and serving as part of the healing process for victims. The safety of the community is the paramount concern and we rely on the knowledge and judgment of the legal professionals of the Full Court in establishing sentencing guidelines with an appropriate range of penalties. Penalties should relate to the seriousness of the offence and take into account the offender's past record and general behaviour when out in the community. Excessive punishments may result from emotional responses. The onus is ultimately on the sentencing judge to balance victim impact statements with penalty guidelines and general sentencing standards while being mindful of community expectations.

Some of the government's reactions to sentencing decisions seem to be less about balance and effect and more about appearances and pandering to public outcry. To argue that the sentence acts as a general deterrent is to accept that citizens are influenced or affected by these decisions. At the same time, acceding to public outcry could be akin to giving in to the screaming child at the supermarket checkout. It encourages the community, or that part of it with a particular interest in the case, to believe they only have to raise a hue and cry and the government will do anything to please them.

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson: I will be pleased to read this out on radio.

Mr PEDERICK: Absolutely. Unfortunately, the government does have a tendency to play to the audience rather than stick to the script. Imagine the chaos if football umpires yielded to the protests from the crowd at a perceived wrong or unjust decision. Often in the discussions prior to sentencing, the defence will suggest all sorts of reasons and extenuating circumstances explaining why someone is not responsible for their own actions and should be shown leniency. The victim's impact statement also can pluck at the heartstrings of all involved. It is not unreasonable to think that both pleas might be overstated, thereby drawing heavily on the uniquely human capacity to make value judgments based on reason.

Declaring a prisoner to be a dangerous offender is a power to be yielded with great care, given this government's propensity to respond to public outcry—which is another power to be exercised carefully, otherwise it might encourage vindictiveness rather than forgiveness among the general community.

Reimbursements of victims' costs incurred in presenting a victim impact statement is a fair request. Avoiding this by having them done through closed circuit TV can reduce the impact and value of that process. It can reduce its effectiveness on the offender, as well as dilute the therapeutic value to the victim. They look for contrition in the face of their tormentor to help them find forgiveness. The value of a face-to-face encounter should not be diminished just to save money. I also acknowledge that some victims will want to use closed-circuit television or audio-visual aids because the last thing they want to do is face the perpetrator of a crime against them and put themselves through more anguish.

Similarly, the requirement for the offender to be present at the reading of victim impact statements seems to me a vital part of the process. It is not easy to switch off and ignore the real effects of your actions if you do not hear them described and see the anguish it causes victims. Further, the requirement to have a response from offenders will also bring the antisocial consequences of their misdemeanours into sharp focus in their mind. By allowing victim impact statements from neighbours and the general community, as well as direct victims, it will acknowledge that there are many who suffer loss of amenity and peace in their community. That suffering is not always obvious, but it is always there. I commend the bill to the house.

Mrs REDMOND (Heysen) (16:16): I rise to support the bill. I indicate that I am the lead speaker for the opposition in relation to this bill. I note that the member for Kavel has given a comprehensive outline of what the bill seeks to do. It is clear that we all are at one or, as the Premier might prefer to say, *ad idem* in relation to the need for victims to be heard in the court processes.

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson interjecting:

Mrs REDMOND: I note the Attorney says that the Premier was fairly good today with his Latin except for *habeas corpus*, although I suspect he referred to *interlocutories* when he was

meaning to refer to interrogatories, but we will leave that for another day in the new year. The Criminal Law (Sentencing) Act already contains provision for the consideration of victim impact statements. Primarily, this bill seeks to expand on the provisions that are already in existence.

Under the current law it is the case that victim impact statements are provided to the trial court. Of course, the trial court is not necessarily always the court which is sentencing the offender. That word has changed so we will now be referring to the sentencing court in terms of where the victim impact statement fits into the system. The current provisions, which appear in section 7A of the Criminal Law (Sentencing) Act, provide for victim impact statements to be given only in the case of indictable offences. In fact, as a result of this change, among other things, prescribed summary offences will be included in the circumstances where a victim impact statement might be used.

In relation to victim impact statements, one of the problems has been that the offender has not necessarily been there when a victim impact statement has been read. I welcome the provisions in this bill which will ensure that, if it is an individual, the individual offender will be present and, if it is a corporate offender, an appropriate representative of that corporate entity will be present in court. So, when the victim impact statement is read they must at least be present.

In some sense, one can always drag a horse to water but one cannot always make it drink, and one cannot force someone to pay attention. However, some judges—in particular Judge Barrett—have been fairly regularly making a point of seeking a response to the victim impact statement from the offender after it has been read.

So I am sure that the consequence of someone deciding that they were not going to listen to a victim impact statement—particularly if they were asked for a response and failed to give a reasonable response—would be that that would be taken into account in the sentencing process as well. I have no doubt about the importance of victims being heard in this way.

Indeed, when we were working on the juvenile justice select committee and taking evidence, it became apparent that, for a lot of the time, victims, particularly victims of break-ins, and so on, felt that they had been particularly targeted, and often through the process of family conferencing one of the benefits of the process was that they came to realise, through direct contact with the victim, that they had not been targeted at all, that their house was chosen not because it had been selected and targeted but because it happened to be the house that was convenient. Most of these crimes were opportunistic, and the young offenders, that we were dealing with, could no sooner find their way back to a house than launch a rocket. They just chose that house because it was there, it was convenient, and the person was often very relieved to find out that they had not, indeed, been targeted.

So, just from that simple example it becomes apparent that victims can often gain a great deal of peace of mind from knowing that their place was not targeted. In saying that, I speak from experience in terms of my lack of peace of mind after I was subjected to several burglaries in my house in Sydney. I reckon it took me a good year after the first time my house was burgled before I felt confident and comfortable coming in my own front door again, and just on a year after I was burgled again, so I spent another year feeling uncomfortable. So I do know from experience just what it is like to be a victim of crime, even though it was not personally directed at me, and I am sure that I would have felt better had I had the experience of having the offender indicate that my house was not being specially targeted.

One of the other interesting little bits that really has not been the subject of much discussion in relation to this bill is a minor change to the procedural provisions which appear at the moment in the Criminal Law (Sentencing) Act at section 6, and the bill adds a new provision. Section 6 provides that:

For the purpose of determining sentence, a court—

- (a) is not bound by the rules of evidence; and
- (b) may inform itself on matters relevant to the determination as it thinks fit.

What is added to that by virtue of the very first amendment in the bill is a third provision, and it is that the court:

- (c) must act according to equity, good conscience and the substantial merits of the case without regard to technicalities and legal forms.

That is a very familiar phrase. 'Equity, good conscience and substantial merits of the case' is a phrase which generally has been found in the area of administrative law. So there is quite a body of

case law that is developed about that phrase and its use, but I do think it is appropriate in areas like this, where we are dealing with victims, to ensure that the sentencing process has sufficient flexibility to enable people to be heard and have their message understood.

I note that a couple of people have already mentioned the fact that there will be able to be evidence by victims via CCTV, audio or audio-visual means, and there are a couple of circumstances, of course, where that may really be in the interests of the victims. If, for instance, they feel very threatened or uncomfortable with the idea of perhaps being confronted by, or even looked at, by someone who has physically attacked them, they may feel much more comfortable in being able to give their evidence in that way. Equally, it may be the case that people find it inconvenient to travel vast distances to attend court in order to give their evidence, and, therefore, there is some element of convenience for them in being able to do it long distance via technology. I will make a couple of comments in relation to that.

I note that the Commissioner for Victims Rights mentioned in his submissions to the government that he had had a number of requests for the costs of attending the court to be borne on behalf of victims. I think there is some legitimacy in that request. As I understand it, at present it is possible for a victim to make a request, and there is some discretionary money available. So that, presumably, Michael O'Connell, the Commissioner for Victims Rights, in an appropriate circumstance, if the victim really did desperately want to come to court, could allow some level of discretionary payment towards the costs of attending court.

As I understand the bill, particularly from the explanation that was given by the officers who briefed me on it—and I thank them for their briefing—the fact is that that particular provision probably already applies at the moment and all that we are doing with this particular part of the bill is clarifying to ensure that there can be no mistake, that it is possible to use CCTV, audio link up, or audiovisual link up.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I draw the attention of the camera operator in the gallery to the agreement by which the process is allowed to operate. Only members on their feet may be filmed.

Mrs REDMOND: I will quickly go through the other issues covered by the bill; that is, giving victims of crime advocates the legal right to make victim impact statements and submissions. As I read the bill, it is not absolutely restricted to circumstances where people are simply unable, because of death or injury, to make a statement. The primary direction of the bill is that, where someone has been killed or so significantly injured that they cannot make a statement themselves, a victim impact statement can be made.

Equally, there will be circumstances where someone just feels inadequate to make a statement on their own behalf, but clearly has suffered a significant impact from the criminal activity and, therefore, should be allowed to have a voice other than themselves to take a victim impact statement.

I suspect that there will be a mix of legal practitioners and non-practitioners who will present those sorts of impact statements to courts from time to time. Where possible, my personal view is that it is probably somewhat therapeutic if not cathartic for victims to be able to present their own impact statement. I guess it is a bit like having someone who does not know a person making a speech about them at their funeral. It never has as much impact as if the speech is made by someone who actually knew the deceased. I suspect the same thing applies in relation to victim impact statements.

I remember representing a young man in the Youth Court one day. What turned him around finally was the fact that his mother cried; that was the turning point. He had just gone down a worse and worse path, but eventually, when he saw that he made his mother cry, he realised that it was the wrong path. He did get off it, and was a much improved young person after that. The idea of community impact statements is also, I think, one of some benefit to the community because, at the moment, a victim impact statement is of necessity restricted to the actual individual victim of a crime, whereas we all recognise that some crimes by their very nature impact on neighbourhoods and communities.

Indeed, this bill recognises both of those types of impact and allows for both sorts of victim impact statements to be delivered. There are some circumstances where that can happen, and I note that you can have a neighbourhood impact statement about the effect of the offence or of offences of the same kind on people living or working in the location in which the offence was

committed and/or you can have a social impact statement about the effect of the offence or of offences of the same kind in the community generally or particular sections of it.

Generally, whilst the intention is that the court must have that statement read out, provision is made for a court to satisfy itself that it is not necessary to read out a statement because it would be inappropriate or unduly time consuming. I can imagine that, given that these sorts of impact statements might be developed by academics, for instance, about the social impact of certain behaviours, they could be extensive and far too technical and time consuming for a court to take them into account by having them read out. No doubt, the court could still take them into account by the sentencing judge or whoever it might be reading the appropriate information and taking that into account.

The other thing to note about those is that the defendant is entitled to make submissions in relation to the victim impact statement and, whilst I have already mentioned the fact that certain judges already invite the defendant to respond, the potential for a defendant to make submissions is, I think, one where it is really just ensuring that there is procedural fairness basically that both sides get to be heard in relation to the matter.

The last aspect, which is somewhat technical, is the amendment to the sentencing act in relation to restitution orders because, at the moment, if you go to court and get an order for compensation in relation to a wrong that has been done to you by way of a criminal offence, then that compensation is recoverable in the same way as any other pecuniary penalty imposed by a court. But as things stand, if you have a restitution order with a court which is actually ordering the offender to give back whatever it was the offender has taken, there is no potential at the moment for that to be pursued, if that item is destroyed or there is a failure by the defendant to give the item back.

So, it is really correcting a technical inconsistency so that, if there is a restitution order and a subsequent failure to deliver up the appropriate item, then there is to be a mechanism to allow a person (a sheriff's officer or other authorised officer) to go into the premises of the defendant and take the item, if that is what is available. Alternatively, there will be the ability to create a valuation of the item so that, for instance, if the defendant decided to destroy the item before it could be delivered, there would be an ability to get a valuation and turn it into a pecuniary penalty, recoverable the same as any other pecuniary penalty.

I seem to recall that shortly after we had the hoon driving legislation, there was a case down in Mount Gambier of a driver whose car was to be taken and, basically, he destroyed the car before it could be taken. I seem to recall that there was some amendment that was to be passed to overcome that difficulty to ensure that people could not frustrate justice and the justice system by destroying the item before it could be returned in accordance with the court order. I thought, at the time, and I still think that there is probably provision for contempt of court proceedings but that adds a longer and more complicated process, so it seems to me that it is reasonable to amend the act so that it is more straightforward to do what the court intended.

In closing, I indicate that, whilst we support the bill, I think that there is one issue that has not been addressed and that is the issue of the further recommendation of the Commissioner for Victims Rights that I have already mentioned. He said, 'I have had several requests to cover the costs of victims coming to court, to read or listen to their impact statements being read and, in one sense, this CCTV and audiovisual option is just the cheap alternative,' as one of the earlier speakers indicated.

I would encourage judges generally to see what response an offender makes to the victim impact statement because, as I said, whilst you cannot force them to listen, I am sure that they would be minded to listen and to make some sort of appropriate response if it were generally expected that it might have an adverse impact on the way that the judge looks at them in terms of sentencing, if they fail to respond appropriately.

I think that, generally speaking, whilst we need to keep in mind the idea of keeping balance in our justice system, it is a good idea for us to ensure that victims are heard and that the appropriate place for them to be heard, other than as witnesses in the trial, will be in terms of the court having a full understanding of what impact the events have had on the victim in order to assess in part what the appropriate penalty might be, bearing in mind that the court still has to take into account all the other things which it is compelled to do under section 10 of the Criminal Law (Sentencing) Act. With those few words, I conclude my remarks.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON (Croydon—Attorney-General, Minister for Justice, Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (16:38): I would like to thank the opposition for its support of this

meritorious bill and its contribution. In light of Judge Shaw's sentencing today I am sure the media will find the member for Hammond's remarks most enlightening.

Bill read a second time.

In committee.

Clause 1 passed.

Clauses 2 to 6 passed.

Clause 7.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: I move:

Page 5, line 15—Delete 'provided to' and substitute: made available for inspection by.

In consulting on an earlier draft of the bill, I received a comment from the judges that, with the expansion of the right to give a victim impact statement and an expansion in the types of victim impact statement that can be made, provision should be made to ensure that the offender had the right to make full answer and defence to any assertions made in the statement.

This necessarily involves, among other things, some advance notice of the contents of the statement. As a result, a clause was drafted, now in the bill, that required a copy of the statement to be provided to the offender. After the bill was introduced I received a representation from the Director of Public Prosecutions that this went too far. It is said that some offenders keep these documents as trophies of their handiwork.

There should be a way of balancing the objective of fairness to the offender without compromising the integrity of the victim. This amendment is designed to do that. The effect of the amendment is that the offender, or his or her counsel, can have access to the statement but has no right to a copy of it.

Mrs REDMOND: I appreciate what the Attorney has explained. I do have some hesitation about this amendment, but what I suggest is that perhaps we explore it between the chambers, because, quite frankly, it had not crossed my mind that there might be offenders who would treat a victim impact statement as a trophy. I accept the need to protect the victim from that activity, but I wonder whether there is a way to ensure, for instance, that counsel could have a copy for the purposes of making a response without allowing the offender to have a copy.

It seems to me that whilst having access to something—making something available for inspection—is partly what we want to achieve, given the sorts of victim impact statements and the length of them, the interpretation of that amended section could be such that it places an unreasonable burden on defence counsel either if they have to spend hours taking substantive notes of the victim impact statement or they are unable to get enough time and detail to enable them to make a comprehensive response.

I must admit that until the Attorney gave his explanation I had been thinking it was more or less a technical amendment, but it seems to me that there is a potential problem, where there is no harm to be done by the counsel having a copy of the document, maybe on the proviso that it is not given or copied to the defendant in person, and there could be significant benefits. I know, from previous lengthy discovery processes in various cases, that it is unreasonably burdensome to have to spend days (literally) in someone else's office taking extensive notes on boring documents so that you have a comprehensive note when, in fact, there would be no harm to anybody in copying the document.

If, for instance, you had an extensive victim impact statement, an extensive neighbourhood impact statement and an extensive community impact statement, all of which are now contemplated by this bill in its amended form, it seems to me that there is a potential for an unreasonably burdensome outcome in terms of the practitioner who may be representing the defendant who has, after all, an obligation to ensure that they put the best case that they can on the defendant's behalf.

I wonder whether we might be able to come up with a new form of words between the houses. If the government is not minded to negotiate on the point, it may be that we will move an amendment on the issue when the matter proceeds in the other place in due course. In the meantime, I will not oppose the proposed amendment, but I will encourage members to think a little bit longer about what the potential impact might be of the wording that is now suggested.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: I am happy to take the member for Heysen's comments on board and we will consider them between the houses.

Amendment carried; clause as amended passed.

Clause 8 and title passed.

Bill reported with amendments.

Bill read a third time and passed.

ELECTRICITY (FEED-IN SCHEME—RESIDENTIAL SOLAR SYSTEMS) AMENDMENT BILL

The Legislative Council insisted on its amendments to which the House of Assembly had disagreed.

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

A quorum having been formed:

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

VALEDICTORIES

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: I move:

That the house at its rising adjourn until Tuesday 12 February 2008.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON (Elder—Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Minister for Energy) (16:50): I seek the indulgence of the house to give the customary thanks at the end of a sitting year. It is probably an illustration of my advancing years that the year seems to have gone by so quickly. I do not know how it feels for others, but I cannot believe that it is nearly December. I wish to thank all the staff, and I congratulate the clerk and the deputy clerk of the house; they have done very well for themselves. I would like to thank the table staff, the catering staff, the attendants and Hansard. Some of us have styles that would test—

Mr Williams interjecting:

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: I'm not talking about myself, but some of us certainly have styles that would test Hansard. I think the Premier's pronunciation of Latin would often be a challenge. I did particularly try to understand the name of the fellow he claims wrote *The Art of War*. Of course, the member for Morphett certainly has slowed a little, but still challenges them.

I thank the library staff and acknowledge, in particular, that Maralyn Nitschke, who has been there for a very long time, is retiring next week. Unfortunately, I will not be here to attend the morning tea because I have obligations, I think, on Kangaroo Island or somewhere such as that. I thank her for the work she has done. The library does do a marvellous job. It is amazing. If people have not taken use of the capacity to ask the library a question and get an answer, they really probably do not appreciate the research capacities that we have. I wish Maralyn all the very best in the future.

Sir, can I thank you? I think you have done a wonderful job as Speaker. It would be rude of me to reflect otherwise, of course, but I think that you have done a very good job as Speaker, even though you have been a little hard on me sometimes, but probably not without some small provocation on my part. I thank the building services staff, the finance manager and staff and parliamentary counsel. I say this each year: I believe that we have the best parliamentary counsel in Australia. They do an outstanding job. They make the government's—and others—desires into very sound laws and they do very well. If anyone ever wants to understand the quality of the work they do in South Australia laws, I invite them to read some commonwealth statutes and compare the clarity and the succinctness.

I thank the government publishers, the police security, our drivers, our electoral staff, ministerial staff, those who clean our offices and place of work for us and all those others who work very hard to make our jobs easier. I also thank the families of elected members. I think they pay a large price for our participation in the democratic process. I particularly thank my beautiful wife, Tania, who has presented me with another beautiful daughter this year—each more beautiful than the next. It is a marvellous thing. I do know that people cannot do this job without the support of their family and spouses.

Mr Williams: Wait until they are 15 and bring home boys!

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: He interjected, 'Wait until they bring home boys'. I have to say that my eldest daughter is now nearly three and I pity the boys. I move:

That the time for moving the adjournment of the house be extended beyond 5pm.

Motion carried.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: As I say, I do not know where she gets it from, but my three year old daughter is headstrong. She knows everything already and she has strong opinion. I can only say that I think she gets it from her mother! I thank the opposition for their frequent cooperation on things. It is not well-known that we often do, apart from the theatre that occurs in here, talk to each other about issues. I recognise that there are members of the opposition who will come to a minister with an issue and discuss it, and we will sort things out. It does happen: it is not often recognised.

In particular the father of the house, the member for Stuart, is very good at getting his way no matter who is in government. I think it is an extraordinary skill he has. He has a very good capacity to get things out of ministers, regardless of to which party they belong. I thank all our electorate officers, especially those for ministers. One of the downsides of being a minister is that you do not get into your electorate office as often. They deal with our constituents and they do a very good job. Certainly mine do and I know that is the case for most people in here.

I should thank the members of the fourth estate, although some days I am into the sure why. The truth is that they are conduit between us and the public, and I think, by and large, they mean well. I am not sure about that *Sunday Mail* with that 'Fix it Pat' stuff. I think it is a little unfair but, fortunately, I am not an overly sensitive person. I thank my new manager of government business for the house. He has come in; he has been thrown into it. I think he deals with people courteously and effectively. If there is anyone I have left out, I do apologise. I wish everyone and their families the very best. It is unbelievable that Christmas is approaching and it is unbelievably close. I do hope that everyone takes a break from what is often a far too confrontational and difficult business to spend some time in a cheerful, happy and, in my case, I hope peaceful way. I am really hoping that nothing blows up or burns down. I have had some moments, I can tell you.

I recall getting a message at 6 in the morning on New Year's day to tell me that Moomba had had a massive explosion and fire. I thought it was one of my idiot mates on his way home until all the other messages came. So I really do hope for a peaceful season and that we get in a little bit of fishing somewhere along the way. I know my wife has a very long list of jobs for me to do at home when I finally make an appearance. I will leave it at that. Thank you to everyone, and I wish everyone the very best for the break at the end of the year, although I know that will not occur for a little while.

Ms CHAPMAN (Bragg—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (17:00): I join the Minister for Transport and Manager of Government Business in wishing all those present and who are working in Parliament House a joyous and peaceful forthcoming Christmas and holiday season. I assume that giving the message at this point indicates that the optional sitting week in December is clearly off and that we are shortly to adjourn until February.

That just leaves us to acknowledge you, Mr Speaker, for the work that you do, and thank you for the management of this house. Your duties extend beyond the house and there is much business that needs to be undertaken with the receiving of, correspondence with and support of other dignitaries and parliamentary personnel who come and go in this place, and we thank you for that. I acknowledged the Deputy Speaker last year and I will do so again. She is often left with the onerous task of attending to committees, and I think she does it very well. I am probably the most difficult person to appear before her, and she does a tremendous job, often in a difficult situation.

To the Clerk of the house, we formally welcome Malcolm Lehman and look forward to his continuing advice. His tutoring advice to you, Mr Speaker, I am sure is appreciated, and we recognise the fact that he has had a long career already in Parliament House, and I expect that experience will stand him in good stead. Our Deputy Clerk, Rick Crump, of course, has joined us as well and he has also had a career in Parliament House. We appreciate the advice he is already offering to the opposition, and I am sure that is recognised. The head of the Legislative Council, Mrs Jan Davis, often has to convene and deal with issues relating to joint sittings of both houses, and I recognise the outstanding 40-year plus service that she has given to the parliament, in particular the Legislative Council, but also to us.

To the staff under the head of Dr Coral Stanley as the Parliamentary Librarian, I thank you. I wish to say that not only is an outstanding service provided by the library but also I urge members

to use the service more than they currently do. It is an excellent research facility and an excellent opportunity to be able to access other library reserves around the country, and I thank them for their continued work. Mr Philip Spencer has joined us relatively recently as the head of Hansard, and he and his team work, effectively, around the clock in providing some sense in a transcript of what we produce in this house. That is a very difficult task from time to time, and I wish to thank them also. John Neldner is Finance Manager and looks after a small but robust team of workers. We thank them for their services. Denis Hixon, Building Services Manager, and his team forever have a team of people out there sawing, banging holes and doing repairs, and ensuring that the conveniences here are maintained at a top standard.

Creon Grantham ensures that we are well refreshed, well watered and well fed, and Creon and his team provide for us, at all sorts of odd hours, food and refreshment, and we thank them for that. In addition to that, which I think is unsung, is the work done to ensure that many of the guests who are welcomed to Parliament House are catered for at a very high standard. I convey to them the appreciation that we often receive, and also compliments to the chef. Lorraine Tonglee and other managers in the PNSG are also a hard-working team and I recognise their work and the prompt response that is required from time to time. We all now live in an age of heavy reliance on information systems, and their operation and continued operation is critical to what we do. So their prompt response has been appreciated.

I thank Perry Brook, who is such a darling to keep working as head attendant here and keeping all of the young bucks under control. We, of course, have wonderful people such as Joy also, and other members of the team who are terrific in providing documents and responding to requests—often, because of our own inefficiency, we are asking for them yesterday. So we thank them for that.

To the Government Whip, the deputy and their staff, and the Opposition Whip and deputy, thank you for your service in keeping the house in order. I am sure if it was left to the minister for government business and myself it would be in chaos, so I recognise that and thank them for that work. Our new member for Hammond who has joined us in parliament has stepped up to this role very well, and I particularly acknowledge that this year—not to reflect on the others, but to say that he has done fantastic and tremendous work for us, and we really appreciate that. I hope that the government representatives recognise the importance of the work he has done. Of course, the Whip is a man of experience, and he and his staff have made life and the management of this parliament flow without interference or interruption. I also acknowledge Manuel Chrisan, the new parliamentary adviser in the minister's office. He is someone we have to deal with quite often and, whilst we thank his predecessor, and I did so last year, I think Manuel is stepping into the breach pretty well, and we appreciate his liaison skills.

I particularly mention our chief staff member, Leslee Robb, who has suffered ill-health in recent times. Helen Dwyer has stepped into the breach. Leslee has received the good wishes of members of the opposition, and other members in the parliament have extended their best wishes for her recovery.

Parliamentary counsel have a difficult job to be creative and to provide something that can sensibly be interpreted by all the lawyers who are waiting out there to interpret what we pass in here. Overall, whilst I am not overly enamoured of the new practice of having little examples at the bottom of paragraphs in the legislation, obviously I am in the minority because it seems to be a practice that is developing around the country. I can certainly live with it, but the work parliamentary counsel does is, in essence, very important.

Some of us have the privilege of having drivers assigned to us, and I thank them for making sure we get to places on time. From my point of view, Patrick has been fantastic. I think we all recognise how important it is, especially for the ministers who have extremely busy schedules, to ensure that they are able to attend the many functions and undertake government business.

Staff in our electoral offices are at the coalface, dealing with the direct human contact of our constituents. I thank Lyn, Janet, Di and Sarah (who have been working in my office most recently) for their continued work. They are representative of the team out there in the field and at the coalface.

I extend my best wishes and compliments of the season to all my colleagues on both sides of the house. It is very difficult to work here when one has a young family. A number of members—yourself included, Mr Speaker—have the responsibility and pleasure of having a young family, but it does carry an extra load when it comes to the hours of employment that need to be undertaken

when public life is taken on. Currently, I do not have that extra responsibility. Fortunately, mine grew up and then I moved them out, but for many members in the house it is onerous.

Our own leader has a young child living in the household, and other family responsibilities that he and his wife undertake. We want them to have a chance to make sure that, in due course, when each of us retires (whether of their own volition or involuntarily) they will not reflect on their time in public office and say that they wished they had had the chance to spend more time with their family. So I do appreciate the pressures on them.

I propose to come back a transformed person in February next year. In a matter of weeks I will be elevated to the status of grandmother—and I am looking forward to that. I will transform into a gentle, kind, quietly-spoken granny, and I will ensure that everyone knows about what I am sure will be the most important grandchild ever born. Mr Speaker, with those few words I extend to you personally a very Merry Christmas and a joyful and peaceful holiday period.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON (Elder—Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Minister for Energy) (17:11): I did forget to thank the whips and deputy whips who do a very good job. I acknowledge that we more senior members often make their job more difficult. I am grateful for the cooperation extended to me from both sides.

Mr VENNING (Schubert) (17:11): I will respond briefly to the minister's remarks and also the remarks of my deputy leader. I also give my best wishes and thanks to the Government Whip. I have appreciated the trust—until today—that we have shared, but I am sure we will work hard to get that back on track; give us a week and it will all be fixed. Seriously, having been in this place for some years, you do not appreciate what is involved in the role of whip until you are the whip yourself, and you do need an element of trust across the house. I appreciate the cooperation I have received from the member for Torrens and, particularly, key ministers. We have established good ground rules and they are working well.

I agree with the sentiments expressed by the deputy leader. This is a community within itself and we rely on everyone in here. We depend on you and we thank you for what you do for us. I enjoy the company of almost everyone in this place—not absolutely everyone, but almost. There are always exceptions. Mr Speaker, may I commend you as a younger Speaker. I am sorry for causing you some angst sometimes. You do not yet have any grey hairs, so it can't be too bad. I wish everyone the compliments of the season and look forward to next year.

Mrs GERAGHTY (Torrens) (17:13): I extend seasons greetings to all members of this chamber, particularly to the people who work in this building. I guess sometimes we are challenging, but we thank them so much for their cooperation and assistance. I might say it is a pleasure to work with the Opposition Whip and his deputy. There have been some very interesting moments. Unfortunately, I must pick up the Opposition Whip on his comments about trust. It is not a matter of trust going awry; rather, it is a matter of being able to watch the clock and be good timekeepers. On that note, I say Merry Christmas and happy new year to all.

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (17:14): I wish everyone in this place a Merry Christmas. I acknowledge the deputy leader's kind words. Working with the Opposition Whip has been another year of learning. Even though we differ on barley marketing and several other things, we seem to be professional enough to be able to work together. I also acknowledge the Government Whip and deputy whip on the other side. We worked together very well last year in my learning year, and I always appreciate the assistance I get from the other side. With the Minister for Transport, when I have had to chat to him about what the hell is going on because I cannot find a whip for whatever reason, we have managed to sort something out. It is certainly good to have a dialogue. We all do not want to be here any longer than we need to be.

An honourable member: Are you going to retire?

Mr PEDERICK: No; I am not retiring. It would shock my wife far too much if I made a statement like that tonight. It is good to see that, although we do have a go at each other across the chamber, we can work together to get the business done. I wish everyone a Merry Christmas, and let's get on with it next year.

The SPEAKER: I would like to add my thanks, particularly to all the members of this chamber. I particularly thank them for cooperating with me and, on the whole, making my life fairly straightforward. It is particularly good to have the Deputy Premier, the Minister for Infrastructure, and the member for MacKillop, who are such strong examples—

Mr Venning: And the deputy leader.

The SPEAKER: —and the deputy leader—to their fellow members on parliamentary behaviour. In all seriousness, I thank all members for assisting me in sharing the proceedings of the house. I would like to thank and congratulate the clerks, Mr Lehman and Mr Crump, on their appointments. I thank them for their assistance and advice over the past 12 months. I also thank the Serjeant at Arms, Mr Paul Collett, and the table staff, Rachel and David, for their hard work in keeping records of all the proceedings of the place. Finally, I would like to thank the whips, because I am very familiar with how difficult and time consuming their jobs are when the house is sitting. I thank all members and all staff of the place, and wish them a very happy and holy Christmas.

Motion carried.

MOTOR VEHICLES (MISCELLANEOUS) AMENDMENT BILL

The Legislative Council agreed to the bill without any amendment.

At 17:18 the house adjourned until Tuesday 12 February 2008 at 11:00.