

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Thursday 2 July 2009

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

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS COMMISSION

The Hon. P. CAICA (Colton—Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Forests, Minister for Regional Development) (10:32): I move:

That pursuant to sections 30 and 34 of the Fair Work Act 1994, the nominee of this house to the panel to consult with the Minister for Industrial Relations regarding the reappointment of three members to the Industrial Relations Commission of South Australia be the member for Morphett.

It is my intention to reappoint three members to the Industrial Relations Commission of South Australia, pursuant to sections 30(2) and 34(2) of the Fair Work Act 1994. I am required to confidentially consult with a panel consisting of a range of representatives, which include a representative from the House of Assembly and the Legislative Council, Business SA, SA Unions and the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment. This motion nominates my colleague the member for Morphett as the House of Assembly representative, and I thank the member for his support of this motion.

Motion carried.

HEALTH BUDGET

The Hon. J.D. HILL (Kaurana—Minister for Health, Minister for the Southern Suburbs, Minister Assisting the Premier in the Arts) (10:33): I seek leave to make a ministerial statement.

Leave granted.

The Hon. J.D. HILL: During estimates, I was asked about budget savings initiatives in the health portfolio. The total savings required as part of the 2008-09 budget was \$81 million over three years (2009-10 to 2011-12). The total savings required as part of the 2009-10 budget was an additional \$24.3 million in 2012-13. The total published savings targeted associated with these two budgets is \$105.3 million. However, as part of the creation of the 2012-13 budget, the savings requirement under the 2008-09 budget (2009-10 to 2011-12) was continued into 2012-13, with the 2012-13 base saving requirement being identical to the 2011-12 amount of \$48.6 million.

The \$24.3 million approved/published as part of the 2009-10 budget for 2012-13 represents the growth in this savings target. I would therefore like to clarify that the total cumulative savings target as part of the 2008-09 budget and the 2009-10 budget by 2012-13 is \$153.9 million, not \$105 million as I stated on the night. I hope that is clear to all members.

I would also like to clarify the savings initiative target for SA Ambulance. The target associated with this savings initiative was incorrectly provided in an estimates briefing as \$1.023 million when the actual 2009-10 savings requirement associated with this target was \$400,000. The SA Ambulance Service strategic plan, Defining the Road Ahead 2008-2015, offers a range of strategies to ensure a wider range of services that is more appropriate to individual patient need. Providing the appropriate level of care when and where it is needed will lead to a more efficient service.

APPROPRIATION BILL

Ms THOMPSON (Reynell) (10:35): I bring up the report of Estimates Committee A and move:

That the report be received.

Motion carried.

Ms THOMPSON: I bring up the minutes of proceedings of Estimates Committee A and move:

That the minutes of proceedings be incorporated in the votes and proceedings.

In doing so, I feel it incumbent on me to draw to the attention of the house the fact that unfortunately some members of estimates committees have not yet understood that estimates committees are an important parliamentary process and that the rules of the parliament apply to these hearings as they do at any other time. I am not going to name any person, but I think a cursory reading of the *Hansard* report will indicate the serial offender in both Estimates Committee A and Estimates Committee B.

Motion carried.

Ms BREUER (Giles) (10:36): I bring up the report of Estimates Committee B and move:

That the report be received.

Motion carried.

Ms BREUER: I bring up the minutes of proceedings of Estimates Committee B and move:

That the minutes of proceedings be incorporated in the votes and proceedings.

I fully support what the member for Reynell has said about estimates committees, the procedures and the way they have been operating.

Motion carried.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE (Wright—Minister for Families and Communities, Minister for Northern Suburbs, Minister for Housing, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability) (10:37): I move:

That the proposed expenditures referred to Estimates Committees A and B be agreed to.

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH (Waite—Leader of the Opposition) (10:37): The eighth Rann Labor government budget has been delivered at a most challenging and interesting point in the history of this country and of this state. The world is in the midst of a global financial crisis the consequences of which are yet to be fully realised.

There are concerns that unemployment in South Australia could reach 9.6 per cent in the coming year, according to Access Economics, and that there could be a significant downturn in a range of economic indicators. Conversely, other reports suggest that the downturn in Australia and South Australia could be milder than foreseen. The true picture will not emerge until the full range of the federal government stimulus packages, tax cuts and other spending measures unfold.

Of course, this budget is framed within the context of the bountiful largesse of a sympathetic Labor federal government determined to borrow hundreds of millions of dollars on behalf of the Australian taxpayers, much of which has been handed to state governments to bail themselves out of their own fiscal mismanagement over the past seven to eight years. Such is the case in South Australia. Such is the predicament of the Rann Labor government.

Labor, having wrecked South Australia's finances in the early 1990s through its own fiscal ineptitude, requiring a Liberal government over eight years to put the state back on its feet, has since 2002 enjoyed buoyant national economic times. I made the point in my initial budget response on 16 June that revenue is up from \$8.5 billion in 2002 in Labor's first budget to over \$15 billion projected in 2013.

Bountiful GST and property tax revenues have been received not through the state government's good management but as a consequence of the sound fiscal stewardship of the Howard-Costello Liberal government in Canberra, but that money has not been well spent. As the Auditor-General has observed year after year, 'the state may have developed a culture of expecting growing revenues to continue to support increasing expenses.' That is an understatement—the party is over.

However, fortunately for us, as revealed in the recent federal government funding, the decline in the Rann Labor government's revenues has been gracefully offset by a \$2.9 billion handout across the estimates period from the Rudd Labor government using borrowed money, which one day will need to be repaid. These are predominantly special purpose payments across a range of budget lines that constitute new money on top of that already committed in last year's budget.

As a consequence, despite the claimed collapse in revenue so oft repeated by the Premier and the Treasurer in recent weeks, revenue in this budget has risen by over \$1 billion. As a result,

the fact is that the state Labor government has more money to spend this year than last year by a significant margin.

I made four points about the budget in earlier debate in this house. The first point I made is that state Labor has been bailed out by federal Labor. The result over eight years has been poor and now, using borrowed money, state Labor seeks to promise its way into a third term of government.

The second point I made is that, despite the bailout, the integrity of the budget hinges on prudent cost controls over the next four to eight years. This state Labor government has shown itself to be incapable of meeting its own savings targets in the past. Clearly, this pattern of behaviour will not change.

The third point is that the government has downplayed its true debt position. Including the public non-financial corporations sector, that true position is a debt of \$6.7 billion. This is without including the \$1.7 billion of debt proposed for the rail yards hospital, which could bring the debt position to \$8.4 billion. On top of this, unfunded superannuation liabilities in this budget have hit \$10 billion and WorkCover liabilities are between \$1.3 billion and \$1.7 billion, when you include the government's own scheme. All of that means that we have close to \$20 billion in debt and unfunded liability—\$24,000 for every working South Australian.

The fourth point that the opposition has made is that Labor has not delivered on its promises; it makes policy on the run. Year after year, projects are promised in one budget, then cancelled in the next. The Mount Bold reservoir extension, the Upper Spencer Gulf desalination plant, new roads through the city, tramlines, prisons—promised and then gone. What confidence can South Australians have that the current round of promises in this budget, explored in recent days during budget estimates, will not be flushed down the same drain?

Let me turn to the detail of this year's estimates hearings. The past two weeks of inquiry by the opposition have shown again that the Rann government's budgets are not a reliable indicator of government performance or promises. Estimates sessions have shown that, in each year, programs have run over budget, savings have not been met, and promised projects have disappeared from one budget to the next.

In compensating for its failures, Labor's answer is to raise thousands in new fees and charges. The only attempt to tighten its belt is a vague promise to cut \$750 million in outgoings or new income measures some time after the next election. That means public sector job cuts by the thousands. I ask whether the Public Service Association will apply the same rigour to that prospect as it did at the last election.

It also means cuts to government services or new taxes and charges—all yet to be specified. This is a political first: the axe will fall, but people will not be told where or when before the 20 March 2010 state election. The lack of openness and accountability is simply breathtaking.

In addressing the state's most important issue—water—again, this budget fails. The Rann government's response to the water crisis was typical in character: an all bells and whistles launch, and an ad campaign for a policy that kicks in some time around 2050—when the Premier will be 91 years of age.

Members interjecting:

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH: We will all probably be driving gophers with little red flags on the back when state Labor's water plans kick in. Let us examine some of the detail that has emerged in recent days. We know that Labor cannot manage its expenses. Auditor-General reports year after year have shown us that. Despite international economic pressures this year, the Public Service grew by 1,485 positions above budgeted levels—same problem, different year.

According to the state budget papers explored in estimates, from 2001-02 to 2008-09, public sector employment numbers have increased by 16,393. According to the Auditor-General, only 4,400 or so of these positions are nurses, teachers, doctors and police. So, this is the furphy: that all of these increases are for such essential personnel. Well, they are not, and the question is simply: what are the rest doing?

The government now says that it will cut 1,600 public servants 'not directly involved in the delivery of frontline services'. But the government has been unable to guarantee budget estimates that this will result in a net decrease in the total number of employees, because each year, despite cuts occurring on one side of the ledger, there is still uncontrolled growth on the other. The Rann

government's attempt to cap Public Service growth has failed, and appears doomed to be a continued and ongoing failure.

During estimates, the Treasurer admitted that his deficit of \$304 million would be much worse if it was not for the commonwealth money. At least we have that admission. He said:

In very round numbers, that may be a billion in of that education money as capital which allows us to have a better than actual operating balance, but it goes out in capital and it is reflected in the net lending line at the bottom of the papers.

Extra and unexpected federal payments ease the need for the state government to use its own revenue towards programs which would otherwise require more state money. Let's not be under any misapprehension. Schools have had building project work in for state government funding for years. The federal government has come along and is going to conduct and fund a lot of that building. South Australians are not silly. Clearly, this money is saving the state government from having to make investments that it can then divert to other places. To argue that this money is somehow not relevant or not helpful simply beggars belief.

The fact is that this money frees up state government money to reduce the state budget deficit. The government must be held to account that repeatedly referring to budget 'black holes' and 'huge revenue losses' is simply misleading the public.

The budget papers also mysteriously understate South Australia's GST revenue by about \$424 million over the forward estimates, compared to what is provided in the federal budget figures. The Treasurer told budget estimates that this was because South Australia uses a different methodology. Well, I can tell you that Treasury estimates were most interesting, and I would not be surprised to see a sudden windfall in GST revenues turn up before the next election.

The government says that debt will rise to \$3.1 billion, without explaining that this is only half of the picture. The whole-of-government debt, as I mentioned earlier, includes the general government and the public non-financial corporations sector, which includes public entities like SA Water, TransAdelaide and the Housing Trust. The true debt position is a striking \$6.7 billion by 2011-12.

Budget papers show that at June 2001, the general government unfunded liability stood at \$3.2 billion. Under Labor, the unfunded superannuation liability has blown out now to \$9.8 billion. This was explained away in budget estimates by throwaway lines like, 'Well, it's all the discount rate.' No. 'It is all to do with accounting standards.' Not so.

This budget passes on the hardship of fiscal mismanagement to families and small businesses, to pensioners and carers. Hundreds of fees and charges have been increased by between 4 per cent and 36 per cent, all above the inflation rate of 3 per cent. Land tax has increased by 292 per cent. All delivered by state Labor, which has turned South Australia into the highest taxed state in the country. The Commonwealth Grants Commission figures are in the budget papers.

The Rann Labor legacy is that South Australia is now the highest taxed state in the nation. It was not always that way. We prided ourselves on having lower costs, but not now. The foundations have been moved by Labor and we are now the highest taxed state in the country. The number of land tax payers alone has almost trebled under Rann Labor, increasing from 69,000 to 188,000. Since the previous state Liberal government left office, water bills have increased by 72 per cent.

On the state's most pressing need, water, the Rann Labor government has also failed, with no substantial commitment to stormwater capture and reuse evident in this budget. At the next election this will be one of the key differences between Liberal and Labor.

Having done little of substance over eight years, this budget makes significant promises for infrastructure building over the coming years. Labor cannot be trusted to deliver on its budget promises. The Rann Labor government has a track record of making significant infrastructure announcements at budget time, only to abandon the project in the following budget.

Let me remind the house that in the 2007-08 budget, South Australia was promised a Mount Bold reservoir expansion. One year later, in the 2008-09 budget, the project was abandoned. South Australia was promised a desalination plant to provide drinking water in the Upper Spencer Gulf in the 2007-08 budget. A year later, in the 2008-09 budget, the project was omitted, and after this budget the revelation was made that the project had been axed. We were

promised an underpass along South Road beneath Port Road and Grange Road in the 2005-06 budget.

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The Attorney-General will come to order.

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH: Now the project has vanished. Last year we were promised tramlines to West Lakes, Semaphore and Port Adelaide, but the projects have vanished from this year's budget, and there is no mention of quantum. Last year, South Australia was promised new prisons and secure facilities. This budget abandons these projects. Will the \$1.7 billion rail yards hospital, or the rail projects announced in this budget, ever be delivered? Will they vanish in next year's budget? The pattern of achievement is poor.

Budget estimates have shown that the Rann Labor government has forgotten regional communities. There is only one Labor MP in the current government who represents the country. That is why a tram to the Entertainment Centre is a higher priority than regional roads and regional infrastructure.

Compared to other states, the Rann government's WorkCover scheme has the highest rate of premiums charged to employers, the lowest funding ratio, the highest future debt liability, and the worst rate of serious injury. It is a testament to the failure of this government. Premier Rann has promised lower industry premiums and better scheme performance, but has failed to deliver. For businesses that choose to leave the scheme and self-insure, there is a huge impost of exit fees.

The Rann government's poor management of workers compensation is hurting workers, it is hurting businesses and it is costing jobs. The government has \$467 million in contingency funds, as well as another \$415 million in what we discovered during estimates is the accrual appropriation excess funds account. The Auditor-General states that this fund could be used 'as a source of cash to reduce employee entitlement liabilities and fund capital expenditure'—an interesting revelation. Strangely, the budget says almost nothing about this fund. The state Liberals will scrutinise these funds to ensure that they are not used by Labor to fund election promises not revealed to the people of South Australia.

Transport was an interesting estimates session. Welcome to the land of the one-page plan! The Minister for Transport wants a tram down Rundle Mall. Infrastructure projects announced last year will now be funded by the federal government because the state government has squandered all its GST and windfall revenue; it has run out of money.

The Northern Connector has been exposed during estimates as a sham. It is a multimillion dollar project, but we are told that it will start in 2016 only if the commonwealth government funds it. The minister said 'the feds are interested'. That is good; I am glad they are interested but it is two terms away. Those gophers will look good going down the Northern Connector when the Premier is 91.

The department's transport plan has been revealed as a one-page sham. No planning has been completed for the O-Bahn. I think the minister said that the government has nine or 11 options on what it might do. On the basis of what was detailed in budget estimates to the house, it will be a \$61 million paint job to create new bus lanes. I do not think the government has a clue what it wants to do with the O-Bahn. They looked startled, actually, that it had even dropped out, raising questions about whether the government is following its own strategic guidelines. We did not see that anywhere in the State Strategic Plan or in infrastructure plans; it just dropped out of the sky.

All this raises questions about whether the government is serious about its own strategic guidance. With much fanfare we had the State of the State Report. Do members remember that in 2002? Then we had the State Strategic Plan, and various infrastructure plans followed. All the glossy brochures are stacked up high in our offices—those that have not been burnt. Projects, which seem to bob up out of nowhere, were not in the State Strategic Plan, while other worthy projects that are the State Strategic Plan and the infrastructure plans languish unattended. Why have strategic plans if you will not use them, if you are going to dream up things on the run?

I turn to education. While last year the Minister for Education was unaware of the need to fund support costs for new computers supplied under the Digital Education Revolution—things such as electricity, new cabling and licensing—this budget shows that she has taken the Liberal opposition's practical advice and sourced an extra \$37.8 million from Canberra to make the program workable. Again, last year's budget denials have been reversed in this year's budget.

The minister failed to explain the reason for this government's failure to rein in rampant truancy of 5,000 students per day, 2,000 being habitual truants. Despite the Premier's claims going back to 2003 that his government would do something about this, they have not even made a small dent. After seven years in government they are still 'consulting' with a view to changing the act. It just reinforces the view of those on this side of the chamber that the last eight years have been eight years of inaction, with all these things promised for the future if only the people of South Australia are silly enough to give them another term; I do not think they will be that silly.

In relation to corrections, we have wasted \$10.5 million on prison projects now cancelled. We were told that these projects would be PPPs and, according to the Rann government's mantra, 'won't cost the taxpayer anything'; of course, we found out in estimates that they have. During budget estimates, the government would not confirm how much it will be paying the consortia which had bid for the PPP on prisons and which have now been told to pack up and go home.

The message to any consortia that might bid for the rail yards hospital PPP has not been lost. As the Romans would have observed, *festina lente*: make haste slowly. Is there any guarantee that any sunken costs for the rail yards PPP will be covered if the project is cancelled or seriously cut back? There is no guarantee, and there is significant risk for any private consortia seeking to invest in that proposal.

On the arts, we have seen the Premier flounder over slashed funding in the arts portfolio—a portfolio for which he claims a personal passion. He is a fair-weather friend to the arts. On health, the Minister for Infrastructure called the debate on whether to rebuild the Royal Adelaide Hospital 'brain dead'. It is an insult to the community. The lost USB key—and we still have no detail on exactly what information is on it—has put the entire project at risk; until we know, the project's commercial security is compromised.

The key bit of information about the lost USB, in my view, is whether the information related to the public sector comparator is on the device. If it was, key information about what it would cost the government to build the hospital has been lost, thus putting at risk any commercial PPP bid.

Mr Williams: The real risk is that it has been found by somebody outside government.

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH: Well, there we go. The minister refuses to answer questions from the opposition regarding the USB, including questions about the delays in the public revelation of that information. They are spending \$15 million transferring the renal unit from the QEH to the Royal Adelaide Hospital only to knock it down to build the rail yards hospital. How much money has been spent on the hospital project so far? We do not know but, at \$1.7 billion, this is the biggest infrastructure project the state has seen. We have wasted \$10.5 billion on prisons projects that were valued at a total of \$517 million. Who knows what the government has wasted or will waste on the Royal Adelaide Hospital PPP?

The secret reports about the rail yards' contamination clouds the question cloud the question of costs and long-term liability. The opposition is of the view that the government has a tiger by the tail with this entire rail yards hospital project, with doubts about its funding, doubts about its viability and doubts about who will build it and when—so many doubts that it would not surprise us at all, should the government be re-elected, if the first casualty of the cuts commission is this entire project.

Wouldn't it be an absolute affront to the people of South Australia if this government, having argued to an election that we should have a new hospital and that renewal of the hospital at its existing site could not be done, turned around after the election, cancelled its own project plans, bemoaning the global financial crisis, and did exactly what the opposition is proposing, thus saving hundreds of millions of dollars and perhaps up to \$1 billion? Wouldn't it be an absolute affront?

The planning department was not consulted on the site for the new hospital, so who did decide on where it would be located and when? This proposal has never been put to the people for a decision by them at an election. It is time for the government to reveal the truth about this hastily concocted feelgood plan that is now backfiring on it and all South Australians.

On water, Mount Bold, although the centrepiece of the 2007-08 water strategy, is now, according to the Premier's new water plan, not needed until 2050. This 2050 is a magical time, and all sorts of things will happen. I do not know where members opposite will be in 2050—perhaps in Puglia, perhaps in Italy or perhaps the Attorney will be locked in a library somewhere reading whatever he reads. However, 2050 is a long way away, and if promises of action in 2050—action

now for the future—are what we are taking to the next election, I think people will be sleeping through February and sleeping through March.

If you are voting for the first time in 2010, you can expect the Rann government's water plan to be delivered when you are up for retirement. It is a wonderful thing, isn't it? According to the Premier's past media releases, water restrictions will be lifted as soon as the new desal expansion to 100 gigalitres is complete. Maybe they will be lifted in 2050; we will have to explore that.

According to the Premier's water plan released last week, the plant will not be complete until the end of 2012, and permanent water restrictions will not be lifted at all— one minute they are on, one minute they are off; maybe they will be on for 2050, maybe they will be off for 2050. What are people to think of this government's decisions?

On stormwater, the report in April of the Centre for Economic Studies on local government's involvement in stormwater listed projects, in operation, under construction or with approved funding, that have a projected output of almost 21 gigalitres. It is interesting to see the government trying to claim ownership and credit for these projects that have been delivered by local government, having done nothing itself.

The government has bemoaned and dismissed our \$400 million plan to capture stormwater at 13 sites throughout the west of the city and come up with something that is very underwhelming. In its recently announced Water for Good report, the government's target for stormwater harvesting is 20 gigalitres by 2013, which is less than current plans and current projections. We are actually going backwards. It is going to flush of stormwater back up into the hills. We will not worry about increasing what is already there.

The budget makes it official: the Rann government is not interested in the clean, green, long-term option of stormwater harvesting that the state Liberals have been championing. But it's all right, things may change by 2050. Who knows what will be happening by 2050. Water industry experts, Professor Mike Young and Salisbury council's Colin Pitman, have said publicly that the government's stormwater targets are too low and the time frames are too long, and those gentlemen are correct.

On the Parklands and Victoria Park, the Treasurer said during estimates that it cost 'between \$700,000 and \$1 million' to put up and take down the temporary grandstands. Remember that this is the Treasurer who, during a previous budget estimates session, said, 'We're going to build this permanent grandstand', and he challenged me and the opposition about whether or not would we support it. Well, guess what? We called his bluff. We said, 'Go ahead; we'll support the legislation,' and what did he do then? He turned completely to water before 2050 and backflipped, and we all know why: his good friend, the member for Adelaide, pulled up stumps.

It is now costing us up to \$1 million to put up and pull down the Kevin Foley memorial grandstand. The Treasurer also revealed that there were no longer any plans to leave the stands up for other events, and that construction of the stands would start before Christmas every year. Suddenly, this idea mooted by the Premier of putting up these grandstands for a longer period of time has disappeared (for now) until March 2010. Guess what? I wonder what will happen in the Parklands after March 2010, because this is a budget for an election. It is not a budget that is being honest with the people of South Australia about the government's true plans for them. Those plans are all being kept secret until after 20 March 2010.

The annual expense of this exercise for the Kevin Foley memorial grandstand and the folly of the government's compromise deal that followed the decision to cancel a permanent structure tell a story about this government. Each and every year we spend a million dollars of the taxpayers' money—a million dollars that could be spent on the disabled, the mentally ill, corrections or the aged—and we make Victoria Park look like a building site for five months.

In summary, the state finds itself under this state Labor government after eight years with nothing much having been achieved. We now have a budget full of promises, funded by Canberra, using borrowed money—our money—and an uncertain fiscal future. The budget has all the hallmarks of a budget designed to coast the government through to the next election, after which the real decisions and the real budget pain will emerge.

The Rann government's budget strategy is unreliable; it is not fully disclosed and open. This government's record shows that it cannot control its own expenses nor maintain its promises from year to year. After eight years, I ask the question: what is the legacy of this two-term Rann

Labor government? The answer is this: opportunities missed, burdens left for future taxpayers and money wasted on advertising in a mirage of false achievement.

In the end, despite millions of dollars of government-funded advertising, a mountain of glossy brochures and an abundance of spin designed to create the impression of progress, the Rann Labor government has achieved little of long-lasting substance over the past eight years. But, it's all right, everything will be fine by 2050. All the signs are that, if re-elected, this pattern of inaction will continue. It is a legacy of a worldwide economic boom that, under this government, South Australia failed to catch.

Mr RAU (Enfield) (11:11): I gather that we are now on the third reading of the budget, and that is an exciting thing because it means that the first reading, the second reading and, most importantly, the estimates process are behind us. I would just like to make a brief contribution in relation to this matter. Unfortunately, for those members who have heard me on this subject before, there will be much in what I am about to say which will be in the nature of repetition, but never mind.

The process of estimates is something that all of us, I think, find excruciating. I got to the point where I was inviting the member for Giles, who was chairing my committee, to name me so that I could be evicted from the building and then not have to return. Unfortunately, she refused to favour me with being named unless she could do so on the basis that everyone was named, including her. I tried on another day, when I was momentarily in the chair, threatening people who were misbehaving a little bit that I would name myself unless they stopped misbehaving, and, unfortunately, they improved.

On another occasion I invited the member for Giles to name me as an example to the member for Unley of what might happen to him if he kept going the way he was going—again, to no avail; and I remained in the parliament day in, day out, wishing, hoping, begging to be named, but it did not happen. I can tell members—

The SPEAKER: Order! The cameraman in the gallery should know the terms and conditions under which he is allowed to film from the gallery, which includes filming only the honourable member on his feet. The member for Enfield.

Mr RAU: He does not need to worry about that, either. Anyway, where was I?

Members interjecting:

Mr RAU: That's right. What I would like to do today is make, hopefully, a couple of constructive suggestions—as I said, some of these are in the nature of repetition, but nevertheless—as to how the budget, and, in particular the estimates process, might be improved. The first and most obvious improvement that I suggest to members—and I think this is entirely consistent with the reports given by the member for Giles and the member for Reynell—is that the chairs of the estimates committees should have the capacity to name a disorderly member of an estimates committee without having to recall the parliament.

That would have enabled me to have been named on at least three or four days and saved me a tremendous amount of trouble, and it certainly might have meant the member for Unley spent a bit of time enjoying the cafés of his electorate rather than entertaining—or not—the rest of us. That is my first modest suggestion. On a scale of reform between one and 10, I would put that at number one. It would be a small, little thing, but it would be really nice if we could do it.

The whole problem with estimates, really, is that it is somewhere between an experience (speaking in popular culture terms) of *Groundhog Day* (as the member for Morphett said a while ago) or, if you want to be a bit more theatrical about it, *Waiting for Godot*. Either way, it is tedious, repetitive, unhelpful, and enormously wasting of time—time of the parliament, time of the ministers, time of the public servants. How much time goes into preparing those volumes and volumes of questions that might be asked, or might not be asked, or might be answered, or might not be answered? Spare a thought, members of the opposition, for the government backbenchers who have to sit there like those clowns that appear at the Adelaide Show that you put the ping pong balls into. They get to do that for days on end.

Aside from being able to boot people out, another standing order that I think might be considered is that a cardboard effigy of the member, if they are a government member, should be sufficient. So, you could have a photograph of, say, me sitting in the chair, and that should be sufficient to count for me being there, because that is the level of contribution that I am likely to

make, and it is also reflective of the importance of my involvement in the process. That may or may not find favour with other members.

Another thing, on a perhaps slightly more serious note (and this one is getting a bit bigger on the reform scale—I think we are up to about six or seven out of 10 now) is: why can we not learn from what we see on the television every night with those lovely senators in Canberra? They sit at big tables. They are like the American Senate. They do not have this nonsense where you sit in a nice little communal-type huddle around a desk. They have a great big long table with the senators spread out, and then they have a tiny little chair with a spotlight on a poor individual in front of them and they all harass this individual with questions. Apparently, it is very effective, because it is on the news every night.

We have our own senate. It is not called the senate: it is called 'the other place'.

Ms Portolesi: The place that dares not speak its name.

Mr RAU: The place that dare not speak its name—the other place. Surely, the other place is the ideal place for this to be going on. After all, they have the time to do it. They are there for eight years, each one of them. We are here for only four years. I cannot afford any more of my life spent in estimates, because my parliamentary life is very small. Theirs is huge. The proportion of their life that would be consumed in estimates is minuscule compared to mine, or anyone else in this chamber.

So, for that reason, if for no other—a basic question of equity—give them the opportunity. As John Kennedy said (badly quoting him), let them come to Berlin. Let the upper house come to estimates. Let estimates come to the upper house. Does Mohammed go to the mountain or the mountain go to Mohammed? I do not care, as long as estimates wind up up there. That is the place for them. It is a fantastic place for them. They are 22 of the wisest, most thoughtful, considerate people you could find anywhere in the state. After all, they are chosen for that reason from amongst the whole of the population of South Australia.

Mrs Redmond: And they are honourable.

Mr RAU: They are honourable! They are honourable from the day they enter the chamber, unlike me. I have been here for several years and I have yet to become even vaguely honourable. And it is the same for the honourable member—I have to call her 'honourable' in this context, but the member for Heysen also is not honourable. So, there is another good reason we should not be dealing with this. We are not honourable. They are. They are honourable, from the moment they get there. There are fewer of them, they are elected by everyone and everyone thinks they are honourable. They are the perfect vehicle for estimates.

I know I have persuaded almost everyone here of these points but, just to rub it in even more—

Mr Pederick: Is he still in order?

Mr RAU: Of course I am in order. Just to rub it in even more, another point I would like to make is this: the members of the place that dare not speak its name have already created amongst themselves a committee. I do not know its name, but I think it is called the budget review committee or something like that; but, for the purposes of this contribution I am making, I would call it The Hon. Rob Lucas Committee—or, the Lucas Committee, for short. It is my understanding that the Lucas Committee has taken it upon itself to behave more or less as the Senate behaves in relation to estimates processes in the commonwealth parliament. Speaking for myself, I do not have a problem with that. If that is what they are doing, that is fine—and, even if I did have a problem with it, they are not going to pay any attention to me, anyway.

Mrs Redmond: That is right, because you are still not honourable.

Mr RAU: Because I am not honourable. I am not one of them. I am not a member of the honourable house. I am a member of this house. So, they are doing that now, whether we like it or not. They will continue to do it, whether we like it or not. The question I ask rhetorically is this: if they are already doing it, why do we need to do it, too? They are already doing it! They are having fun. They are calling people. They are doing this sort of Senator McCarthy thing that goes down a treat on TV. Let them continue to do it, but why do we have to do it as well? I plead with all sensible people in this building, and I know there are plenty of you: why do we have to do it, too?

God knows that it is hard enough being a member of parliament, Mr Speaker. There are difficult things that confront all of us from day to day, but to have us doing, in a very poor way, what

the honourable house does so well with the Lucas Committee seems to me not only unnecessarily repetitive but also as reflecting poorly on us because we cannot possibly do as well as they do. When you have experts in the field, when you have the AFL people out on the ground, why send out the Mini League? It is so embarrassing. It is embarrassing for the Mini League, it is embarrassing for the AFL people and it is just not right. For all of those very cogent reasons, I would like to say that I am very pleased that we are at the third reading stage of the budget.

I have a dream. I have been to the mountain top, and I have seen the Promised Land. Mr Speaker, I may not get there with you, but I have seen the Promised Land. I have a dream, when members of the House of Assembly, whether they be government or opposition, never have to go to estimates, when members of the upper house, whether they be government, opposition or Independent, always get to go to estimates. I have a dream that one day young children around South Australia will be able to aspire to get in their school buses and drive to the other place to see estimates. I have a dream. I do not know whether my dream will ever be realised in my lifetime, Mr Speaker; it may be in yours. As I said, I may not get there with you.

The Hon. A. Koutsantonis: But let us begin.

Mr RAU: But let us begin. Let us start from this place, at this time—

Mr Pederick: And move forward.

Mr RAU: —and move forward.

The Hon. A. Koutsantonis: And the trumpet summons us again.

Mr RAU: As the member for West Torrens says, 'And the trumpet summons us again.' It does; it is summoning us. I can hear its call now.

Mr Pederick: That's the bells.

Mr RAU: Ask not for whom the bell tolls because, hopefully, the bell tolls for estimates. I want to conclude on this point: I do have a dream. If all of us work together in a sort of ecumenical spirit, we can do this. We can do it. It worked in America, where President Obama, with that sort of can-do approach, has achieved great things; we can do it too.

I say again: why have two lots of committees in two chambers doing exactly the same thing? Why? If we have a standing committee or a select committee in either house, and the other house wants to start doing the same business they are doing, it does not happen: it is disorderly, it is inappropriate. Why is it appropriate now to have a subcommittee of this chamber doing what a committee of that chamber is doing all the time? Why is it appropriate? The answer is that it is inappropriate. With the greatest respect, it is disorderly and, I would like to think, unconstitutional. If someone would like to offer me the opportunity to write an opinion to say that, I probably will, and I hope the member for Heysen will support that; maybe that is what we need to get over this hump.

Anyway, as I said, I have a dream that one day this tedious process will be over and, hopefully, the next parliament will see the Lucas Committee, or whatever it will be called by then, doing all this work as it sees fit and enabling us to get on with the very important duties we have in this chamber.

Mrs REDMOND (Heysen) (11:26): I love Thursday mornings in this place! I was feeling somewhat bereft that, because we were not having private members' time this morning but doing the Appropriation Bill, I would not have the normal joy I have on Thursday mornings of hearing the contributions of the member for Enfield. I love the way he delivers things; in fact, I was about to start my speech by saying that I am sure that every member on the other side will agree with the comments I am going to open with (they might not agree with the ones I make at the end). I think the member for Enfield must have looked at the notes I jotted down about the matters I wanted to raise, but he delivers them ever so much more eloquently than anyone else ever could.

It is entirely appropriate that I, as the shadow minister for ageing, be the person to speak next on this side. As was obvious from the leader's contribution a short time ago, most of the things that matter in this budget have been put off so far into the future that it does not matter. However, before getting onto the actual budget, I too want to make some comments, as I said, not as eloquently as the member for Enfield, and put on the record some things that, once again, concern me about the budget estimates process.

I have made the comment more than once during the week that I make no objection to the idea that a duly elected government has the right to decide how it will spend its money and what its

priorities will be. I am sure that members on the government benches would agree with that. So, then, why do we go through this farcical process every year? I just want to run through some of the things I think are odd.

The very first one is that, as the member for Enfield said, it makes no sense to me that the members of the other place, those honourable members who are all honourable from the moment they are elected, are excluded from the process. It particularly makes no sense, given that we can have ministers in the other place, and they have to come in and participate in the process but, if we have shadow ministers in the other place, they are specifically kept out of the process.

Personally, as a consequence of that, it meant that I had to do extra work in here because I had to do work for people who have a far better grasp of their shadow portfolios than I will ever have. I had to come in and run their matters for them because they are kept out. So, at the very least, I think we should be able to look at allowing people who have shadow portfolio roles, as a first step perhaps, to ask questions.

I know the member for Enfield wants to get all the way to the mountain top, but I think every journey begins with a single step, and, maybe, in the first instance, we can just start that little incremental step of allowing the shadow ministers at least to come into estimates and lead the questioning on their own estimates. However, overall, I agree with the member for Enfield. Why on earth would the upper house not be the appropriate place for us to conduct our estimates?

Then we get onto the issue of the timetabling of estimates. The timetabling seems to me to be perverse to say the least. My main portfolio, of course, is that of being the shadow attorney-general and, for the Attorney-General's portfolio, I have 45 minutes. I want to put it on the record that I thank the Attorney-General that this year he did not make opening statements and he just allowed me to ask questions. However, there have been previous occasions where, in a limited time of 45 minutes, there has been both an opening statement and Dorothy Dix questions from the government benches, to the point where I am lucky if I get six questions on that whole portfolio.

Yet, this week, for instance, in committee B, I think, the government allowed two hours for local/state government relations. There is just no rhyme or reason in terms of how those timetables are allocated other than that the minimum amount of time is given to the portfolios that require the most questioning and the maximum amount of time is then spread out into the portfolios where there are virtually no programs to ask questions about.

I move on to the more mundane administrative matters that are concerned with budget estimates. We are all required to sign in and out of budget estimates and that, again, seems to me to be a nonsense. For a start, the standing orders of this place make it clear that we are all here all the time, and I know that every member of this place, whether I can see them right at the moment or not is actually listening avidly to all of this because even if someone has gone back to his office, he will be listening to every contribution by every member.

Why is it necessary in budget estimates to have this antiquated sign in/sign out on a piece of paper that applies to the point where everyone has to be admitted into a committee and excused from a committee, when the reality is that obviously the people who attended estimates have to be there and they are members of parliament in any event?

That brings me to the idea that perhaps we should not restrict estimates to members of parliament. I happened to attend my first ever Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conference recently. It was on principles of democracy and it was in Sydney. I did not actually expect to be going, but I ended up going to this conference. Of course the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association involves members from all around the world and it turned out to be a fascinating conference. There were people from the island of Montserrat, from Manitoba and Saskatchewan; there was more than one chap from the UK; there were people from Pakistan, from India, from Malaysia, from Mauritius, from Bougainville—

The Hon. S.W. Key: Were there many women there?

Mrs REDMOND: There were many, many women and from many jurisdictions. I always had the view that the nature of these conferences was really focused on trying to provide assistance from what we might think of as more developed democracies to some of the lesser democracies and thereby help them in developing their parliamentary processes, because clearly the development of a strong democracy involves more than just giving people the right to vote and holding an election every little while.

I went with somewhat limited expectations and I have to tell you that I was really surprised and pleased with the level of discussion and the interchange of ideas that occurred, and one of the interesting sessions that we had was on budget estimates. In that conference, I found out, for instance, that the New South Wales parliament actually conducts its budget estimates very much the way the Senate does in the federal sphere: that is, its upper house conducts them and although the minister comes along for the first session, most of the ones that occur a couple of months later are just with the senior departmental people, and they are a much more effective mechanism.

Indeed, I was somewhat embarrassed to find that South Australia is apparently well-known, at least throughout the Australian jurisdictions, as having the most useless estimates process in the country. It did not surprise me, but it was embarrassing.

One of the interesting things that I found was that because the Norfolk Island parliament is understandably so tiny—it only has nine members—to conduct its budget estimates, it actually has community representatives attend and ask questions, and I thought, 'Now, there's an idea? Why don't we let members of the community come in?' One of the many things that I think the member for Enfield might want to consider in his regular contribution on the estimates matters next year is the idea of maybe allowing members of the community in.

I will just mention, by the way, that this conference that I attended is so important that there were members from Montserrat and Norfolk Island—both tiny little islands of less than 40 square miles—and another tiny little island the name of which may be familiar to some people: Saint Helena. If anyone knows any Napoleonic history you might be familiar with that island. Furthermore, that island which is also a tiny little place of less than 40 square miles, is in the South Atlantic, and Tony Green, the member from there who attended the conference only got home 2½ weeks after the conference finished because St Helena does not have an airstrip. He had to get to Cape Town and catch a ship to get himself home.

Mr Pengilly: Sounds familiar!

Mrs REDMOND: The member for Finniss who travels to an island as well—probably a bigger island—says that it sounds familiar. There are some things to consider, as I was saying, about the timetable, about the sign in/sign out situation, and then there are the omnibus questions. We regularly have ministers in this place bring in bills and, especially if they are bringing in a bill on behalf of someone else, they will read the first sentence of the second reading speech and then say, 'Mr Speaker (or Madam Deputy Speaker), I seek leave to insert the remainder into *Hansard* without reading it.' That is a daily occurrence and no one bats an eyelid, and yet with the omnibus questions, which are identical in every portfolio, for every minister, we have to read them again and again. It makes no sense; it is just time wasting.

Then, as the member for Enfield raised, there is this issue of how much it costs. We should consider not just the ministerial time but also that of the CEOs and senior departmental executives and the amount of time they put into the preparation of estimates. I was talking to one of them yesterday over a cup of tea in the members' lounge, and they told me how they had been burning the midnight oil. Hundreds—thousands—of hours are spent preparing for estimates, all on the basis that someone might ask a question and the minister might not know the answer. That is just a nonsense, because the minister will take it on notice anyway, yet people come down here and have to spend hours waiting for their part of estimates to be brought on.

Mr Goldsworthy: They have folders this thick.

Mrs REDMOND: As the member for Kavel said, they have folders several inches thick for each one of the departments and agencies. I would love to do a cost benefit analysis of estimates, because I have a very clear impression as to where I think the cost might be—and it is extraordinarily high when you look at the salaries paid to the people involved who come here for the estimates. I am not blaming them; they have to go through this process. I know from my dealings with people before I came into this place what a stressful time coming into budget estimates is for them, and then how long it all takes to be sitting here on the off-chance that we might ask a question. There must be a better way.

However, it is not just the CEOs and the departmental officers. Think about the ministerial staff who are also involved in preparing for estimates. I know that yesterday in the last set of estimates that I did, which was with the Minister for Police, very senior police officers and administrators from the police department were here. I know that the minister's adviser had prepared an opening statement for the minister and questions for the government members to ask but, before we came in here, the minister offered me a deal whereby he would not make an

opening statement, there would be no Dorothy Dixier questions, and I could just get on with asking questions albeit for a more limited time. I accepted that deal but that means that the ministerial adviser had spent a lot of her valuable time having to prepare for all of that. Then, of course, we also have the media and the parliamentary staff who have to spend an enormous amount of time, shifting around the chamber and that sort of thing.

It seems to me that the only people who could possibly benefit from the process that we have at the moment are those members who are on a committee when they do not have to ask any questions and they can catch up on their reading. I do not get to do that but I did note that a number of members through the week caught up considerably on their reading. I know that the member for Enfield seemed to catch up a lot; I think he must be the most widely read man in this parliament. He is surely the greatest statement by the Labor Party that it is going to waste its precious few resources. He is the standout performer on that side of the house, yet he is in the back corner. What can he do except make himself a better educated man? He reads an enormous amount, and I have no doubt that he appreciates budget estimates as much as he appreciates the rest of his parliamentary time, because he gets such an opportunity to catch up on his reading. He will simply become a better performer. As I said when I started, the member for Enfield is an enormous talent—the standout talent on that side—yet, for the whole time I have been in this chamber, his talents have been ignored. In fact, his talents have been stamped upon and wasted—

An honourable member: Squashed.

Mrs REDMOND: Squashed might be a better description. In the time I have left, I will get onto the budget. First, can I say that this government has forfeited any right whatsoever to ask us for any costings on any proposals we put up in opposition. They have introduced in this budget this ephemeral \$750 million saving that they will have one day. One day, well after the next election, they will tell us where the savings will be made.

They already have savings in the budget. For instance, in my arts portfolio, they had for this year and the next three years in the forward estimates \$200,000 savings each year for each of the arts administration and the arts grants. However, that is not part of the \$750 million savings: that is just part of the normal savings they are having at the moment. You cannot get any detail from them as to specifically what will be cut or where the cuts will occur on the savings that are already in there; but in addition to all of that, this government says, 'Some time after the next election, there is this \$750 million of savings that we will find out of all the departments and agencies, and we are not going to tell you where any of that saving will come from'.

The debt level of this government is extraordinary: the basic debt that we can already analyse is \$6.7 billion. However, as the leader said in his speech a short time ago, when you add in the unfunded liability of WorkCover and superannuation and all the other things, we are actually looking at a \$20 billion debt. The only thing that has saved them at the moment is the fact that they have been bailed out by the feds. Good old Kevin Rudd ('Rudd the Dud') has come up with this largesse, which would not be too bad if it was not borrowed money that all of us as taxpayers are ultimately going to have to pay.

I do not know whether you heard on the news this morning that the state of California, which has a bigger economy than the whole of Australia—and, in fact, the city of Los Angeles has a bigger economy than the whole of this country—is facing bankruptcy. They have got to the point where, in order to retain the money to pay the bills as they come due, they are having to give other people IOUs. They cannot pay their debts as they are coming due. They are fast heading into bankruptcy. If it can happen to an economy as big, as busy and diverse as California, make no mistake: it can happen again.

This Labor government has already, on a previous occasion some years ago, brought this state to the brink of bankruptcy, with a debt that was just unbelievable. It was costing us \$2 million a day in interest, the debt level was so high. Yet, that side of the house would not allow any action to be taken to save us from that dreadful situation. Two million dollars a day. Just think of all the schools, all the other things around the state, such as, hospitals and the police—\$2 million a day it was costing us in interest because of its previous debt level, and here we have debt levels that are as bad, if not worse. This government needs to be held to account for its absolute failure.

One last quick comment before I go. There was a little statement in the budget papers about no new taxes—no new taxes, just new fees. I will quickly mention the Residential Tenancies Tribunal. That is where people go for a quick, uncostly response when they are a tenant and they have a problem. Now the government is going to introduce fees, but not only is it introducing fees,

if you look at the government papers carefully you will see that in the first year the fees need to be subsidised to the tune of about \$6,000 for the cost of running the things that it is now going to run, but in the out years the government is going to make money out of the fees.

Time expired.

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (11:46): I apologise for my voice from the beginning. After the resounding speeches given by the previous two speakers, I will do my best to make a suitable contribution to the post-budget speeches, but it may not be as long as I had originally planned.

In my first budget estimates as a shadow minister I was very pleased with the work done by my staff and the cooperation of fellow shadow ministers and other staff in this place, who assisted me to present a good argument with good questioning. I thank all those people involved, because without such good people I do not believe that any of us can make a good contribution to this state.

I will start my contribution by discussing the River Murray and water security. It concerns me that the Water for Good program will not be fully implemented until 2050. As indicated earlier by the leader in this place, we will either be in gophers or not here, quite frankly. It is too far out a plan and puts this state's water security at risk, with, perhaps, a target of only 50 gigalitres of water being trapped by that time in aquifer storage and stormwater recovery.

It is interesting to note that even the Salisbury council acknowledges that the whole process that the government has put forward in this so-called visionary plan could be completed in 10 years. In questioning the Minister for Water Security, Karlene Maywald, last night, I asked whether the government was going to take on the process of the sharp end of stormwater management, but no, it would still rely on local government involvement. I do not have any problem with that, local government has been leading the way, but I think, with the major investment that needs to be made and the synergies that I think could be made with SA Water, the state government could take on far more of a leadership role.

I note that the government, in its Water for Good program, is relying on local government and commonwealth government funding to move that program forward. Again, this is another of the initiatives that seem to come up regularly. It seems to be a regular event that a Labor policy comes up 10 or 12 months after the Liberal Party already has it in its policy.

Mitch Williams (the shadow minister at the time) put up a policy of 89 gigalitres of stormwater capture and re-use at a cost of \$400 million over 12 months ago. It is a little like the government's desalination project: the government hesitated and the Premier thought it might rain. It will rain one day and there will be lots of water, but, currently, we are in a drought. The government has seen fit to put a lot of its eggs into one basket by increasing the desalination plant to 100 gigalitres.

A lot of questions still need to be answered. The biggest issue—and this did come out of estimates—is that the plant will be switched off when the river has bountiful flow. We will be paying far higher prices for water, supposedly to make up for the cost of running the desalination plant, when the government feels it can get can cheaper—

Dr McFetridge: The one on the Gold Coast keeps conking out.

Mr PEDERICK: Yes, the one on the Gold Coast conked out. The government thinks that when there is enough water in the river it will take the water from there. Where has that progressed the state? There should have been proper management and a fast introduction of the Howard plan for the Water Act 2007 in order to get \$10 billion on the ground, including \$5.9 billion worth of works—and I do not believe \$1 of that has yet hit the ground—to convert channels into pipes. The desalination plant may end up a \$1.8 billion white elephant.

The government still does not realise that we need to look after the environment, which is suffering heavily. I see it all the time. I live not far from the river and the lakes. I am aware of the issues that will arise. The pump from Lake Alexandrina to Lake Albert was switched off two days ago. It is good that, finally, the government has listened to its own commission's report and listened, finally, to some in the community who have said that bioremediation could assist, and will assist, in relation to acid sulfate soils.

It is interesting that the Minister for the River Murray (and Minister for Water Security) acknowledged that 201 gigalitres of water has been secured for Adelaide and country towns. I asked a question about conveyance water—which is very important—because if we do not have

conveyance water it just does not get here. The minister indicated that water was secured, as well. I am pleased about that, but I am concerned that for our irrigators there is not much light at the end of the tunnel, whether they be in the Riverland, the Mid Murray or the Lower Murray.

The Riverland got a critical water allocation last year. It was supposed to be about 64 gigalitres but, in the end, it was 61 gigalitres. Certainly that has helped growers to make decisions about watering and keeping permanent plantings alive. I believe that they have access to 80 per cent of their carryover water but only 2 per cent of normal allocation. I acknowledge that there is not much water in the system but, as I have said in this place many times, because we do not operate the Murray-Darling Basin as whole we will never get it right. We will get this right only when the northern basin is brought in under some form of regulation.

An honourable member interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: Thank you. I believe that we should have one level of high security water and two levels of low security water, because the difference in variability between the northern basin and the presently regulated Southern Murray-Darling Basin is, I believe, about 700 per cent irregularity in the northern basin and about 250 per cent variability in the southern basin. So, I believe that it could work with a plan to have two low security sources and one high security source.

It was interesting when I asked the minister the question, 'What are people with permanent plantings going to do?' because a significant investment has been made by the government (I believe somewhere around \$20 million) in propping up these plantings last water season. Unless growers can afford to trade in water, they are left high and dry. It seems to me that the only answer lies in the Treasurer's \$467 million contingency fund, and I believe that the minister must be planning for some sort of grants process to get those growers through. I think it would be an incredible waste if that money was invested by the state government and no more was invested further on.

Moving further down the river, regarding the proposal with respect to the Wellington weir, it seems that the trigger date has been pushed back to March, which happens to be the month when the state election will be held. There does not seem to be too much coincidence there. One has to wonder why the government has spent \$14 million on the approach roads. Many people are wondering what the heck is going on.

This government has done the polling, and I firmly believe that cabinet is panicking not only about completing this dumb project, quite frankly, to tip a minimum of 700,000 tonnes of rock into the River Murray, but even commencing it. I think that we need to be a lot smarter with our water and use it in a much better way. I will now move to some of my other portfolio areas and speak on agriculture and being a farmer—

The Hon. A. Koutsantonis: Shadow.

Mr PEDERICK: My shadow portfolio; thank you, the Minister for Corrections—'Turbo' Tom Koutsantonis. I am concerned—

Members interjecting:

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member has already indicated that he has a bit of a voice problem, so let him concentrate.

Mr PEDERICK: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I appreciate the protection. I note that, as far as services to agriculture, the reality is that \$1.715 million per year is being cut from the budget over the next four years in research and development and \$450,000 per annum over the next four years in administration.

It is interesting that, when the minister was asked whether these people were just being put off, the answer was, 'No, it is targeted voluntary separation packages.' I believe that targeted voluntary separation packages must be different from voluntary separation packages. I would say it is very close to being sacked. I have certainly met some people in the field who are at the receiving end of these so-called targeted voluntary separation packages, and the input I have received from them was, 'Well, our jobs are gone and we're out of here, whether we like it or not.'

It is sad to see that positions will be gone from Loxton, as well as the loss of the Analytical Research Centre there. I am concerned about the future of regional offices in Jamestown, Keith, Kadina, Streaky Bay, Nuriootpa, and the fact that the Roseworthy Information Centre is being shut down, with the resultant loss of access to information at that centre and the jobs there. It comes as

a real concern on top of several years of drought and the tough times that farmers have had. We have been in exceptional circumstances for several years now, and I do commend the state and federal governments for keeping that program going.

It is absolutely vital out there in rural areas, and I do commend both governments for being the first in this country, I believe, to put a River Murray corridor into exceptional circumstances. I put that out there because it is assisting people, not only in dryland farming areas but also up that river corridor, who have been suffering immensely with not just the current global crisis but also drought conditions and river slumping. I note that the government is not proposing to assist local government with river slumping. The government did say that the federal government might be able to do a little bit of work with communities, but that remains to be seen.

Moving on to fisheries, I am still concerned about licensing and quota arrangements with the cockle fishery and the oyster fishery. There does seem to be a bit of an impasse at the moment. I note that the oyster people have won a reprieve at the minute, but I do fear they could see a massive jump in fees which would put a lot of people out of business in the future. I do admire their professional work. I have met with a lot of fishermen in the last couple of months, and they are very professional people and very passionate people. They do great work in this state and they do know how to manage their resources.

I do not believe that the very heavy hammer of marine parks and the proposal to shut off 45 per cent of our coastline is really targeted appropriately, because the real risk is that, even though, yes, sanctuary zones should be protected, these things are already happening under the Fisheries Act. The real problem is that I do not believe that appropriate compensation, if any, will be available to both professional fishermen and any recreational fishermen who may be affected by these changes.

I move on to my portfolio of forestry. I am still very concerned—and it did come up during estimates probing—that the government is still looking at the proposal to forward sell up to three rotations of pine trees. This could roll out to more than 111 years. I do not know, perhaps it is because I come from small business, but I do question how you can do a deal over that time frame, because I can guarantee that no-one in this chamber today will be there. I do wonder how you exploit the right amount of money and how you do protect the jobs that are already under stress, especially in the Lower South-East around that Nangwarry/Tarpeena/Mount Gambier area.

Different arguments get about concerning what happens with the export of round log. The union says that that log could be milled, and the government says, 'No, it's not the right size for the mills.' I guess it will be an ongoing discussion. It was sad to see a major mill down there, Carter Holt Harvey, giving notice that about 60 people would have to be laid off.

Mineral resources is another of my shadow portfolios. I do acknowledge the work that mining companies are doing in this state. As I indicated earlier in this house, I went to the opening of the Prominent Hill mine—fantastic work up there by OZ Minerals. Iluka is opening up a sand mining project on the far West Coast. So many other projects over there could crank up with the appropriate infrastructure. Obviously another big problem on the far West Coast and in the Far North is the availability of water for mining projects.

That is where I come back to BHP and its expansion plans. I wish BHP all speed, but I note that we do have to ensure we protect the environment, especially in relation to the desalination plant and the work of the big expansion. I do wish the company all speed ahead, but note it could be a little way off. I also note that royalties are way down on predictions, but there is some movement further up.

There are some problems overall in the budget. The razor gang will come in after March next year and the Treasurer will not have to commit. He just gets some other people to say, 'We will cut \$750 million.' That is an easy way out. There are so many things. For instance, the government has managed to put off the weir construction until March next year, because it has managed to save 170 gigalitres of water that it is pumping into Lake Albert and the 50 gigalitres that Peter Garret requested it purchase because of the projects at Goolwa. In closing, again I thank my staff, my fellow shadow ministers and other staff who helped me with my preparation for estimates.

Dr McFETRIDGE (Morphett) (12:06): A fair bit has been said about estimates over the years, and I have said a fair bit about the strange process, but I will not say any more other than to concur with the contributions of both the member for Enfield and the member for Heysen this morning. When I was at university, I did some mathematics and we studied this area of imaginary

numbers. To me, that is what a lot of the budget is about: it is about imaginary numbers. We have these forward estimates and numbers and plans that are outside of the forward estimates.

It always intrigued me that the imaginary number most commonly referred to was 'I'. If you talk about imaginary numbers and then you talk about the budget, it is 'I': 'I will do this' and 'I will do that'. However, when the government is saying that, you know that it may not happen and often, in some cases, it will not happen, particularly in the case of the Department for Transport, Energy and Infrastructure. Much of it is so far out of the forward estimates that you just have no idea about when it will happen, how it will be funded and how much it will cost.

Today, the Leader of the Opposition mentioned the recent water plan—2050. In 2050, I will be 98 years old, if I am still alive. I hope I am alive to witness that. In fact, a couple of my constituents are turning 100 next week. Morphettsville is a good area: it is a very healthy area in which to live being by the seaside. Perhaps I will be here in 2050 to see the fruition of the current plan. I hope it has been enhanced by then. The imaginary numbers being used in the budget to explain what is happening are a continual frustration to me. When you see last year's budget, this year's budget and projections out in the forward estimates, it is an absolute dog's breakfast.

When you ask people about it, people far more learned than I in economics and finance, they struggle in explaining it. As well as the estimates committees system being simplified, I would love to see the budgetary system being simplified. When you can have three different methods of working out how much debt you are in, that is completely strange to me. I think I said in my budget speech that, when I ran a small business, you knew how much debt you were in because of the size of your overdraft, but you watched your turnover, too. You kept building the business and working on the business. Your turnover was vanity—you wanted to increase your turnover—but profit was sanity.

If you are not making that profit and handling your debt and overdraft, paying your wages, and building the business, you are going nowhere fast. That is what I see in this very complex way of explaining the state's finances. To me, it is a completely incomprehensible process where you can have a bag full of money and a range of expenditure, and then you can come up with three different ways of balancing the books. You can juggle those figures to come up with three different answers, and the one that you like the best is obviously the one that puts you in the best position. That is the method that is used by this state, but it is not used by the federal government. If you used the federal government method, it would be a completely different outcome and the picture would be far worse than that put out there by the Treasurer.

The compounding issue I have with this particular budget is the razor gang that is coming in. I cannot remember its correct name, but it really is a razor gang, and it is going to introduce a number of cuts.

The Hon. A. Koutsantonis interjecting:

Dr McFETRIDGE: I am not sure who it is. We have no idea where the razor gang savings are coming from or how they are going to be implemented. The Treasurer says, 'Trust me. Don't use your imagination because we don't even know.' It is difficult for people to comprehend at any time how you can keep building the business and driving forward but keep cutting back at the same time. Yet, here we have this razor gang, we are being told that it has to save \$750 million but we do not know how, and we will not know any more about it until after the next election. It is just: 'Trust me'.

The other thing you have to mention about this budget regarding transport and infrastructure, which is a huge issue, is that it was a federal government bailout. The state government debt is big enough, but, compounding that, is the federal government debt that the Rudd government is getting Australia into. Someone said that the federal government has increased its statutory borrowings from \$75 billion to \$150 billion, and now it will be selling \$300 billion worth of bonds.

I saw somewhere that it will be at an interest rate of about 4.06 per cent—that may not be right. That is a reasonable interest rate, nowadays, and Chinese and many overseas investors are investing in those bonds, the same as the Belgian dentists did back in the days of the State Bank. We had to pay back that interest, and that debt will go on for years and years. It will be my children and my grandchildren, and probably their children, who will pay that debt.

It is a terrible position to be in. I think it is a position we should not have been put into using the excuse of the world economic crisis. I think there are better ways of managing it than just

hocking yourself, because the income has to be there. The cash flow has to be there. The turnover is vanity; profit is sanity. If you are just racking up the overdraft but you do not have the income, you had better be prepared for bankruptcy. We have heard the member for Heysen talk about the state of California today issuing IOUs. We have already seen the US and the UK implementing 'quantitative easing'. Quantitative easing is just a flash way of saying, 'We are printing money.' To me, that is just another recipe for disaster.

People in financial circles (far wiser than I) have said to me, 'The next big issue we are going to face, Duncan, is hyperinflation.' That scares the hell out of me, because I can remember back in the early 1980s when my wife and I moved back from Western Australia and were living in a tin shed down at Kangarilla, we were paying 17 per cent on the mortgage on the property, and the bank had lent us 110 per cent of the valuation—they would give you any sort of money then.

We were paying 17 per cent on the mortgage and 23 per cent on the overdraft. I cannot remember exactly what inflation was, but it was extremely high compared to now. It is a real worry for me because it is going to be a worry for my children and my grandchildren—and all of the working families in South Australia. So, let us hope that the resource boom, the defence boom and all the other industries in South Australia can do what we want them to do, that is, prosper under the current circumstances. It is a real issue for me.

The big concern that I have, and I am coming back to my particular shadow portfolio areas, is that we do not see any real plan from this government. We see an infrastructure plan where we are going to build bridges and some underpasses and we are going to electrify this piece of rail and that piece of rail, but I do not see any integrated transport plan. I have seen them overseas, and I have seen them interstate, but we do not see them here.

We had a draft plan put up by this government in 2002 or 2003, when minister Wright was transport minister, and it was a good plan. I looked at it; it was a really good basis for an integrated transport plan, but it got scrapped. Then we had this infrastructure plan foisted upon us, where we have various pieces of infrastructure—great developments in themselves—but there is no integration.

As I have said before in this place, as a vet student I studied anatomy, physiology, embryology, pharmacology—all the ologies that you can think of—but you had to put them together into one animal. They had to make that animal healthy, and it had to be able to thrive. That is what we do not see here. We see various plans, such as the State Strategic Plan and infrastructure plans, but we do not see the integration of all those plans. I do not see how this beast that is the South Australian economy is going to be able to thrive and survive without some overarching integration of all these plans. When infrastructure and transport are involved, it should not be just a one-page sheet that is released under FOI. This situation would be laughable if it were not so serious.

The minister has all this money: he had \$2 billion in the last budget, and he has about another \$600 million from the feds this time around, so \$2.6 billion. A lot of it fits in 'I' money, the imaginary numbers, because it is so far out in the forward estimates that we do not really have to worry about it at the moment. The government says, 'We are going to spend \$2 billion. Trust us; we are going to do that.' I hope that is the case, but I am afraid that I just do not trust the current government, both state and federal. I do not trust that they have a real plan for the future of South Australia; it is all for the immediacy. In the state government's case, it is all for March 2010.

As the member for Hammond said, the announcement of the weir being built has now been pushed out to March 2010. We see so many decisions, such as the one about the razor gang, where nothing will happen until after March 2010. We must be brave because with government comes responsibility. It is a tragedy that we do not have a brave government. We have a government that is thinking just about the immediacy. It is thinking of itself all the time, and it is using these imaginary numbers to try to justify it.

My other area of responsibility is Aboriginal affairs. The Minister for Transport and I enjoyed our usual friendly banter during estimates, but we ramped it right up to a far more cordial exchange in the other areas of estimates. Estimates can be quite fruitful, if they are allowed to be, rather than just argy-bargy across the chamber. It is a valuable time. As other members have said, thousands of hours have been put into preparing for estimates by both sides—the opposition, in wanting to ask questions, and the government, their minders and public servants, in preparing, to the best of their ability, the answers for estimates.

I think we need to look at making estimates work without long opening statements or Dorothy Dixers. I did that in most cases, as did the Minister for Gambling (Hon. Tom Koutsantonis), the Minister for Road Safety (Hon. Michael O'Brien) and the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation. We made a deal to cut back the time, because it has been my experience in the past that I can get in more questions and get a much more civil exchange going. I give the Minister for Transport his due: he let me have a go, but I do not always find his answers as fruitful—actually, some of them were quite fruitful, and we will come back to that later—or as revealing as we would like them to be in getting information on where we are going and what the plan is.

During estimates, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation and I discussed a number of issues about the challenges facing Aboriginal communities in South Australia. I was very disappointed to see him in the chamber today. I think his rightful place is with the Premier and the Treasurer at COAG because some monumental decisions are to be made about the future of Aboriginal communities in South Australia.

I understand that today's COAG meeting will address some of those issues to try to come up with some answers, particularly in relation to closing the gap between the health of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Australia, as well as the many economic difficulties encountered in Aboriginal affairs.

Some huge changes in industrial relations came into force in Australia yesterday. The perennial albatross around the neck of any minister for industrial relations is WorkCover, yet the Minister for Industrial Relations was able to answer questions to the best of his ability. He also allowed his advisers to answer questions, which is always a pleasure. In many ways the answers were guarded, because there are issues out there, and I think anyone who has been awake in South Australia in the last eight years has seen WorkCover continue to spiral down.

I do not see any light on the horizon, but I look forward to seeing some of the things the minister talked about in estimates come true with changes to WorkCover. I hope the corporation is able to improve its performance, I hope injured workers will not be discriminated against in any way or unfairly put off the system, and I hope the WorkCover Ombudsman is able to do his job and protect the rights of injured workers, because I believe there are some serious issues around WorkCover.

I was more than happy to participate in the session relating to science and the information economy with the Hon. Michael O'Brien yesterday, because he is one member of this place who has a really good grasp of economics. He is able to be open and frank and is more than happy to talk about issues at any time, because he has nothing to hide. He is managing his portfolios really well, and it was a good session.

However, I think one of the highlights with the Hon. Michael O'Brien, Minister for Road Safety as well as Minister for Science and Information Economy, was during the road safety session. Mr Hallion, the CE of DTEI, was present, as well as Assistant Commissioner Bronwyn Killmier, and there was an open exchange between members of the committee and those people. It was a really good experience, and we were able to discuss issues and get them on the table. Notes were taken, and I expect to see those issues addressed—not only issues out of the budget but also issues that surround the electorates of various members. It was a very fruitful estimates committee session.

I enjoyed the estimates committee session with the Minister for Gambling, the Hon. Tom Koutsantonis. I really do like Tom—

Mr Pederick interjecting:

Dr McFETRIDGE: The member for Hammond said that there was love in the room. I do not know about that; I like the guy, but—

Mr Pederick interjecting:

Dr McFETRIDGE: You can only go so far.

The Hon. A. Koutsantonis interjecting:

Dr McFETRIDGE: You are right; we are both straight shooters. However, I was able to get answers to questions, once again, through the staff. That was an interesting experience, and I found out a bit about mail order and online gambling services. Fortunately, it is not a big part of South Australia. I asked about some of the harm minimisation processes, and it was good to see that they are really cognisant of that issue and are trying to do their best.

I went home on Wednesday night and spoke to my wife about some of the things that had gone on, and she presented me with a lottery ticket that had been through a scanner but had not worked. I said, 'Well, it's only 20 bucks', but it turned out that she did get her money at another outlet. I think that issue is being addressed by SA Lotteries.

The final thing I want to talk about is that in this budget, this estimates committee process, the only time my electorate of Morphett was featured was when I actually raised it in terms of road safety with Mr Hallion and the minister. There is nothing in this budget for the electorate of Morphett other than more heartache with taxation levels being maintained, more heartache with the debt continuing, and more heartache with no real plan for public transport and transport generally in South Australia. It is a shame that, in the first place, there was not more coming out of the budget that was concrete. A lot of it is out there in the forward estimates. You have to use your imagination. We come back to the imaginary numbers—they are there, but they are not there. It is just something like a smoke and mirrors job, the height of prestidigitation, and all those other terms that I have used to describe the budget in the past.

It is something that I wish could be simplified, both the estimates process and the budget process, so that humble veterinarians like me could understand what is going on, and so that we do not look just at the turnover: we look at the profit margin, we look at where the business is being built, and we look at where the economy of the state is going. I look forward to the government and, certainly, the opposition contributing towards changes both in the budgetary process and the estimates process.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY (Kavel) (12:26): I will raise some issues concerning the budget and the estimates committee process in the time allocated to me this afternoon. I had the pleasure of being a member of a number of committees. I think I sat on the committees every day bar one afternoon, and experienced good cooperation from some ministers. But, as is the norm with other ministers, we were exposed to their usual belligerent and uncooperative manner with which they conduct themselves during the committee and pretty well generally around the parliamentary process. I do not necessarily need to identify those ministers, because we know who they are.

I sat on a committee where the Hon. Michael O'Brien was minister, and there was quite an atmosphere of cooperation, I thought. The member for Morphett is quite right in saying that the Minister for Road Safety (and with the other responsibilities he has) is a very capable member of parliament and a very capable minister, unlike some of his ministerial colleagues.

Notwithstanding those issues and also those points raised by members, particularly on this side of the house—and I note the member for Enfield's contribution—I think there can be some improvements made in the committee process. Whether or not we look to involve those members from the other place, I think that is a matter for debate and decision, but I do think that the sign in sign out process that has to be undertaken could be refined. It is a lot of work for the officers to ensure that people are signed in and signed out, with all that red tape. We all talk about minimising red tape and the process orientation of some of the business we carry out. I think we could look at some improvements in those areas.

I will talk about are some real issues that have been highlighted through the committee process, specifically as they relate to key transport infrastructure requirements in and around the state and particularly in the electorate of Kavel that I represent. I asked the minister, during the transport portfolio estimates committee, what plans the department is looking to prepare for the real need for a second park 'n' ride facility in the Mount Barker, Littlehampton, Nairne township area.

I am pleased that, a couple of years ago now, a new park 'n' ride facility was opened at Mount Barker. However, it did not take very long for it to be at capacity. All reports are that it is over capacity and that commuters have to park outside the park 'n' ride facility in a car park some distance away from the facility that was used by commuters who were catching public transport prior to the park 'n' ride facility being constructed.

Local reports are that that facility is over capacity and, while I am not immediately asking the government to commit funding to build a new second park 'n' ride tomorrow, I am calling on it to at least start the planning process for where it might locate another facility and start thinking about it. I raise this matter, because that part of the Hills district is continuing to expand. Land has been recently rezoned, where another 8,000-plus homes are to be constructed, let alone the plan the government has for opening up further good farming and horticultural land in the Hills district potentially for massive residential development. That is something on which the government needs

to focus its mind, and the department certainly needs to focus its attention on starting the planning process for a second park 'n' ride facility.

The second key infrastructure requirement in that part of the Hills district is the second freeway interchange. I have spoken about this issue since first being elected to this place and I assure the house, the minister, the departmental people and my local constituency and all South Australians that I will continue to campaign and lobby for that key piece of infrastructure until that second freeway interchange is built. I will continue to raise it as an important matter to be pursued. We have seen significant residential development in the Mount Barker, Littlehampton, Nairne township district, and there is real pressure—and congestion—on the current road infrastructure and on the only existing freeway interchange at Mount Barker that serves those three towns—the tri-town district of Mount Barker, Littlehampton and Nairne.

One only has to stand on the side of the main road to Adelaide running from the township of Mount Barker to the freeway interchange, or at the other end at the main street of Littlehampton, to see the continual flow of traffic down onto that piece of road infrastructure, which is the only interchange in that area. The traffic is continuous and, if an accident or emergency blocked the road, there would be a real issue in trying to get motorists on and off the freeway.

There are two real needs for the second freeway interchange: to relieve the traffic congestion at that point, and if there is an emergency situation we would need another access point onto the freeway. I will continue to raise this matter until the second interchange is built. To the credit of the state Liberal Party, we have committed, in our strong policy development over the past three and a half years, to building that second freeway interchange, among a whole raft of other tremendous policy initiatives we have already rolled out.

I also want to talk about some aspects of the budget that were highlighted in the second reading debate. It is important to highlight at this stage of the debate the history and the track record of this government in terms of its lack of control of expenditure and, hence, the budget difficulties that the Treasurer currently finds himself in.

We have stated previously that the government has not suffered from a revenue problem; it has suffered from the lack of ability to control its expenditure. The budget reveals that revenue is actually continuing to increase even though we are supposedly experiencing a global financial crisis. All the commentators are saying that South Australia is not feeling the effects of the GFC to the same extent as the Eastern States and, obviously, the US, the UK and Europe. That is, I think, more good luck than good management by this government, to be totally frank.

If the Treasurer had made hay while the sun shone, so to speak, and taken advantage of the seven good years that South Australia experienced, he may well have found himself in a position where the budget would not have to fall into considerable deficit over the next two budget cycles. The Treasurer's ability to pull the state out of the deficit situation is predicated on, from memory, yet to be experienced growth of 4.5 per cent in the second year, to return the deficit position to surplus.

I certainly agree with the member for MacKillop who, in his second reading contribution, said that that is all very well and good but that the state has not experienced that level of growth over the past decade. So, while we are supposedly feeling the effects of the GFC—obviously, not to the extent of some other jurisdictions and economies of other countries—the Treasurer is predicting a growth component that we have not experienced in the past 10 years to pull us out of a deficit situation. I said before and I will repeat: returning the budget to surplus is based on a wing and a prayer. That really sums it up. It is more hope than reality that we will see the budget return to surplus in that two cycle period.

As other members have stated, South Australia now has the unfortunate reputation of being the highest taxing state in the whole nation. I have said before and I will continue to say, because it is the fact of the matter, that this is a glaring example of how many Labor governments over the past 30 or so years in this country have been extremely high taxing and high spending.

The figures are there for us to see. They are in black and white in the budget papers and in other information that is available to us that we have extremely high levels of expenditure and we are the highest taxing state in the country. We are experiencing a very high taxing government and as I said, this has been the hallmark of Labor governments over the past 30 to 40 years, particularly when the Whitlam government came to power in the mid-seventies.

I would like to make some comments about water and water security. What have we seen this week? We have seen the Premier, with all his bells and whistles, going off in front of the TV cameras (where he spends the majority of his time), running out all the written and rehearsed predetermined lines that he and his spin doctors have spent hours working on, sitting behind closed doors and working on all the one-liners. We have seen him supposedly roll out the water security policy of the government.

Where has the government been for the past eight years? It has had eight years to develop a water security policy. We have seen Water Proofing Adelaide and all that sort of jazz over that period. If the government had acted three years ago, when the state Liberals rolled out a very significant piece of policy work in terms of the desalination plant, instead of trying to find every excuse under the sun to refuse to accept that policy, it would have been close to having the desalination plant built and commissioned, with desalinated water, fresh potable water, running through the mains water system and being delivered to every house in metropolitan Adelaide now.

But, no, it knew best. The government rejected it and opposed it, which has always been the norm. Any good idea the state Liberals have come up with, in government and in opposition, has always been rejected. We have seen what has happened, three years down the track: the government has had to adopt our policy. A couple of years ago, the Premier stood on top of the tallest building and shouted from the hilltops, 'We are going to build not only one desalination plant; we are going to build two desalination plants. We are going to build one down at Port Stanvac and one up at Whyalla, piggybacking on BHP Billiton.'

What do we see? There is no mention of the second desalination plant now in the budget. It has been wiped off—so much for the Premier. It comes down to the credibility of the Premier. Does he deliver on what he says? Does the government deliver on its commitments? The evidence is extremely clear that it does not deliver on its promises. It has not delivered on the two desalination plants. It has completely scrubbed the second desalination plant at Whyalla where BHP Billiton is looking to assist with the expansion of Olympic Dam.

It comes down to the credibility of this government: does it honour its promises? I was brought up to believe that if you make a commitment, you honour it. My parents instilled in me that, if you say you are going to do something, you do it. We have seen example after example of this government making promises and commitments to the South Australian public but not delivering on them and not honouring the commitments. I can tell you that, over the next eight or nine months leading up to the next election, we will be using every available opportunity to highlight that this government does not deliver on its promises.

Mr PISONI (Unley) (12:44): What an interesting few days it has been in estimates committees. They are something I quite enjoy, and I have heard comments from others who probably do not enjoy them as much as I do or, alternatively, they are not honest in their appraisal and perhaps really do enjoy them but are saying otherwise. It is not without suggested improvements, and some of the improvements that have been suggested by other members are probably fair and reasonable. Perhaps we could review the need for opening statements or Dorothy Dixers from the government and perhaps there could be a loosening of the lead-in to questions and comments made according to standing orders by the chairs in charge of the process.

I thought it was interesting that, this year, the Minister for Education had prepared an enormous number of Dorothy Dixers in order to chew into the 2¾ hours that were allocated for education. I found this surprising, because in previous years the minister was happy with an opening statement and up to six Dorothy Dixers from the government members that were perhaps then used to release a media statement, but we saw a deliberate attempt to stall the questioning process from the Minister for Education at this estimates.

The minister was more than happy to use twice and perhaps three times the number of Dorothy Dixers than she had in previous years. I think the message was loud and clear to those in the education system: the minister is disengaged from her portfolio. It is interesting to note the recent debate on radio about disengaged students in schools, because I think we have a disengaged minister in the education minister. I think her deliberate attempt to reduce the scrutiny of her portfolio during this estimates process was evidence of that. I will speak about some of the items we discussed shortly.

I think the political barbs that were woven into the minister's opening statement and the Dorothy Dixers that she had prepared answers for set the tone for the education estimates debate. It was quite extraordinary that the minister was much more interested in playing politics and trying

to discredit her opposite number than being open to scrutiny about her management and department.

There were some positives, though. The minister was much more on top of the details relating to the Digital Education Revolution than she was last year. Last year she continually made the claim that there were no extra computers; yes, there were new computers, but they were replacing existing computers and, consequently, there would be no need for infrastructure. This year, the minister conceded that there were extra computers in the Digital Education Revolution after my office had exposed the fact that, at the beginning of this year, we had schools with computers in boxes but no systems in place to wire them up.

The feedback that I received from exposing that situation in the media was that the minister then took a personal interest, and her office contacted those schools in round 1 of the Digital Education Revolution package that did not get the original infrastructure funding of \$1,500 per computer. She contacted them, made some effort and then that money appeared from Canberra. I was very pleased that I was able to help the minister in her role in delivering those computers to schools on behalf of the federal government, but it was not without enormous resistance.

Of course, we all know that the independent and Catholic schools had their computers installed within weeks of receiving the money on 1 July last year. It was not without a great deal of effort by the minister's department to milk the Digital Education Revolution for what it could. Due to the Liberal Party exposing the issue that schools were being charged a commission on commonwealth grants by the Rann government of \$65 per computer for handling and recycling, the minister was able to clarify that this amount has been reduced to \$12. Again, I am very pleased to have been involved in that process. The minister, who would not provide up-to-date computers for our schools, has instructed her department to waive the cost of dumping the obsolete machines, and that is a bonus for schools.

The amount of discretionary spending in school budgets is getting smaller and smaller. The school my children attend has 400-odd students, and the discretionary spending in that school's budget is about \$180,000, and that has been reduced by a further \$26,000, with the cuts in their energy budget. Last year, the energy budget for schools throughout the state was cut by 75 per cent of 2001 levels. So, schools were told they would be allocated only 75 per cent of the money they spent on power in 2001. You can see how silly the situation is when you see how much has happened to technology since 2001.

We have a federal government that made an election commitment to put computers into schools, and that is being rolled out, and we have seen more in the way of electronic devices in schools, such as electronic whiteboards, and entertainment and education devices—all of which use power. At the same time, the government, with some kind of green policy, is saying that the way for schools to reduce their electricity use is to cut 25 per cent off their budget—not for what schools were using last year but what they were using back in 2001, before schools had all of these requirements.

It is interesting to note that the minister did not impose those same standards on her own head office in Flinders Street. From what I can gather from investigating that issue with the minister, there was no obligation for central office to meet those same targets. So, that is an interesting part of the budget.

We also spent some time asking questions about school truancy, and it was revealed that there are 5,000 truants a day in our schools, 2,000 of whom are habitual truants, and that is despite premier Rann saying back in 2003 that his government would reduce truancy. Well, there has been no changes in the level of truancy in that time. It was interesting to see that the minister was very interested in semantics when we were talking about the compulsory school leaving age and training—earning or learning, I think the process is called—between the age of 16 and 17. The minister actually wanted to have a debate about whether 17 or 18 year olds were in year 12, which I thought was bizarre. I would have thought that, if a student is enrolled in school, you would expect them to be in school and that it would be in the government's interest to ensure that they were, in fact, in school. Again, this all about a minister who is disengaged with her portfolio and has no interest in it whatsoever.

However, it was interesting to see how much interest the minister had in the tourism portfolio. She seemed to know an awful lot about that portfolio—that \$57 million portfolio—compared with what she knew about the \$2.3 billion education portfolio. So, we know where the

minister's interests lie. Of course, tourism is a very, very important part of the state's economy, but I would argue that education needs a full-time minister and a minister who has some interest.

We talked about the Education Works program. It is ironic that we learnt on Monday that schools in Whyalla have voted against closing 35 schools in and around the Whyalla district. Today we learned that Port Pirie voted against closing those schools. I am calling on the minister to restore the school maintenance budgets that she pulled out of that region to bring those schools back to the standards that we see in city schools.

There is no doubt that over the last 18 months or two years this government has made a deliberate attempt to pull back on maintenance funding in our regional schools that have been targeted for closure, so that parents would feel that they had no other option but to vote for the closure of their schools in order to have new schools. That message, or that selling job, of the government did not work. I think it is obvious that those residents in the Spencer Gulf saw that they were being sold a lemon.

The government was vague on what the education outcomes would be for these children. The government was concerned about large super schools. It knows about the trend away from super schools in the United States and the UK. It knows about the difficulties with student engagement, discipline and educational outcomes that large schools have, and it knows that parents want choice in public education for their children.

So, the government has done a terrible job in selling Education Works as an education project. We know that the Education Works project has everything to do with Treasury and nothing to do with education. I think that the people in the Spencer Gulf region have worked that out, and I congratulate them on making a decision that is in the best interests of their children and their communities.

I will make some comments about my other portfolio, that of employment, training and further education. Interestingly, we saw 128 jobs identified in the budget that will be targeted for voluntary redundancy packages, but then, with a little bit of drilling down, we also saw that another 66 jobs were targeted for redundancy. The interesting thing there was that those redundancy packages had to be funded within the department. There was a loan that would be provided by Treasury, but the department will have to pay that back. So, that has very long-term implications for the budget.

Part of the cost cutting and efficiencies involved an increase in fees. The minister confirmed that fees will be increased in the budget in the future within various departments. South Australia already has the highest cap of TAFE fees in the country, and we have had it confirmed by the minister that an increase in fees is part of the plan to reduce costs in his department.

I asked whether any areas were exempt from the Treasurer's \$750 million razor gang after the next election because, of course, we do not know what those cuts are going to be; we do not even know if they are going to be \$750 million or \$1,750 million, because we know that this government has enormous trouble in controlling its costs. We know that at least \$750 million has been admitted to by the government, but it will not tell us where that is coming from. The minister for further education has told us that nothing in his department is exempt from those cuts.

As of 31 May, the employee cap in the department is 3,564. So, we will see where that ends up this time next year, or during the Mid-Year Budget Review—that will be an interesting one to watch. Of course, the government was pleased to talk about its removal of costs for children of students in some sectors of further education in the public system. I raised some concerns about the impact that that might have in zone schools in Adelaide, and Adelaide High School in particular. We already know that families in the education minister's own electorate are locked out of sending their kids to Adelaide High School.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Would the member care to seek leave to continue his remarks?

Mr PISONI: No, that will do, thank you.

Debate adjourned on motion of Hon. A. Koutsantonis.

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

STATUTES AMENDMENT (PUBLIC HEALTH INCIDENTS AND EMERGENCIES) BILL

His Excellency the Governor assented to the bill.

STATUTES AMENDMENT (AUSTRALIAN ENERGY MARKET OPERATOR) BILL

His Excellency the Governor assented to the bill.

NATIONAL GAS (SOUTH AUSTRALIA) (NATIONAL GAS LAW—AUSTRALIAN ENERGY MARKET OPERATOR) AMENDMENT BILL

His Excellency the Governor assented to the bill.

NATIONAL ELECTRICITY (SOUTH AUSTRALIA) (NATIONAL ELECTRICITY LAW—AUSTRALIAN ENERGY MARKET OPERATOR) AMENDMENT BILL

His Excellency the Governor assented to the bill.

WATERWORKS (RATES) AMENDMENT BILL

His Excellency the Governor assented to the bill.

PAPERS

The following papers were laid on the table:

By the Minister for Transport (Hon. P.F. Conlon) on behalf of the Treasurer (Hon. K.O. Foley)—

Emergency Services Funding—Notice 2009—
 Declaration of Levy and Area and Land Use Factors
 Declaration of Levy for Vehicles and Vessels
 Regulations under the following Act—
 Emergency Services Funding—
 Remissions—
 Land
 Motor Vehicles and Vessels

By the Minister for Transport (Hon. P.F. Conlon) on behalf of the Minister for Industry and Trade (Hon. K.O. Foley)—

Regulations under the following Act—
 Public Corporations—South Australia Trade and Investment Corporation—
 Dissolution and Revocation

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

Regulations under the following Acts—
 Development—Open Space Contribution Scheme
 Road Traffic—Miscellaneous—Apparatus

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

Regulations under the following Acts—
 Australian Energy Market Commission Establishment—Australian Energy Market
 Operator
 Electricity—General—Australian Energy Market Operator
 Gas—Australian Energy Market Operator

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

Regulations under the following Act—
 Victims of Crime—Fund and Levy
 Rules of Court—
 District Court—
 Civil Rules 2006—Amendment No. 10
 Criminal and Miscellaneous Rules 1992—Amendment No. 8
 Supreme Court—
 Criminal Rules 1992—Amendment No. 25
 Civil Rules 2006—Amendment No. 8
 Witness Protection Act Rules 2009

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

South Australian Patient Safety—Report 2005-08

By the Minister for Environment and Conservation (Hon. J.W. Weatherill)—

Regulations under the following Act—

Natural Resources Management—General—River Murray Prescribed Watercourse

By the Minister for Families and Communities (Hon. J.M. Rankine)—

South Australian Local Government Grants Commission—Report 2007-08

Regulations under the following Acts—

Land and Business (Sale and Conveyancing)—Fees

Liquor Licensing—

Dry Areas—Long Term—

Goolwa

Port Vincent

Rates and Land Tax Remission—Remission of Sewerage Rates

Local Council By-Laws—

City of Onkaparinga—

No. 1—Permits and Penalties

No. 2—Moveable Signs

No. 3—Roads

No. 4—Local Government Land

No. 5—Bird Scarers

No. 6—Foreshore

By the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries (Hon. P. Caica)—

Regulations under the following Acts—

Fisheries Management—Fees—Licence and Registration Application

Primary Produce (Food Safety Schemes)—Food Safety Schemes—Seafood—

Fees

By the Minister for Industrial Relations (Hon. P. Caica)—

Regulations under the following Acts—

Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation—

Scales of Charges—Medical Practitioners—Revocation

Scales of Medical and Other Charges—Revocation

WATER FOR GOOD

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD (Chaffey—Minister for the River Murray, Minister for Water Security) (14:04): I seek leave to make a ministerial statement.

Leave granted.

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD: On Monday 29 June, the Premier launched Water for Good, which is a comprehensive plan to guarantee South Australia's water security to 2050 and beyond. This plan builds on seven years of South Australia's nation-leading reform and tireless action to both protect and make better use of our water. It builds on the extensive investment that our government is making to secure South Australia's water supply.

Through more than 90 deliverable actions outlined in Water for Good we will diversify our water sources, improve water conservation and efficiency and ensure that there is enough water available for the state to fully capture emerging economic opportunities while reducing our reliance on the River Murray and other rain-dependent water resources.

Construction of our 100 gegalitre desalination plant is well underway, providing first water by the end of next year. By 2013 our stormwater re-use will have more than doubled; by 2025 we aim to be harvesting 35 billion litres of stormwater for re-use; and by 2050 we expect this to have increased to 75 billion litres across the state. The most up-to-date, comprehensive and realistic assessment of Adelaide's large-scale stormwater harvesting potential—that is, the Urban

Stormwater Harvesting Options Study—was undertaken by the Stormwater Management Authority. It provides for the first time a detailed and realistic assessment of Adelaide's large-scale stormwater harvesting potential and it identifies the potential for up to 60 billion litres per year to be harvested.

It will, however, take time to fully develop Adelaide's stormwater harvesting potential, and the capture of very large volumes of stormwater is neither easy nor cheap. The Urban Stormwater Harvesting Options Study has informed the government's submission for funding from the commonwealth that was recently lodged to contribute to important stormwater initiatives worth \$145 million across Adelaide, from the airport to new developments in Adelaide's north and south.

The state government has committed about \$45 million to these projects across different agencies, plus what was committed in the budget, and the local governments of Charles Sturt, Onkaparinga, Salisbury and Playford along with other partners will also commit substantial funding. These projects will harvest more than 8,000 million litres of stormwater for treatment through aquifer storage and recovery schemes. The projects are:

- Water Proofing the West, which is a \$58.6 million scheme which will harvest 2,500 million litres through wetland and aquifer storage and recovery projects at Cheltenham, Riverside Golf Club and Old Port Road;
- the Adelaide Airport Stormwater Scheme, which is a \$9.7 million scheme which will harvest up to 1,000 megalitres (or 1,000 million litres) of stormwater to reduce the draw on mains and groundwater supplies;
- the Unity Park biofiltration project, which is valued at \$14 million and involves expanding the existing scheme at Pooraka to harvest an extra 1,300 megalitres to supply local industry, schools and sports facilities;
- Water for the Future, which is a \$19.2 million project which is building on the success of Water Proofing Northern Adelaide to harvest an additional 640 megalitres for irrigation of sports reserves and gardens;
- Water Proofing the South stage 2, which is another \$30 million project which is using sites at Reynella East, Pedler Creek Reserve and Port Willunga to harvest 2,200 megalitres per year;
- the Adelaide Botanic Gardens Aquifer Storage and Recovery Scheme, which is a \$5.8 million project harvesting and treating 100 megalitres of stormwater which will replace drinking water used currently to irrigate the Botanical Gardens; and
- the Barker Inlet Stormwater Reuse Scheme, which is a \$7.8 million scheme which is an SA Water project using existing wetlands to harvest 350 megalitres to supply industrial and commercial customers in the Regency Park area.

These are all fantastic projects. We will also build on our nation-leading efforts in wastewater recycling, with 45 per cent of urban wastewater recycled by 2014 and up to 75 billion litres across the state by 2050.

By 2014, we will have independent economic regulation of our water and wastewater services while maintaining state ownership of our water infrastructure, and we will have opened it up to provide third party access and new entrants to our infrastructure. We will have a single, overarching water industry and planning act to manage a more competitive and diverse water industry, with the discussion paper to be released later this year that will inform the development of legislation to be introduced next year.

Across South Australia demand and supply plans will be in place to ensure that long-term solutions for each region are based on local needs and local knowledge. Additional water resources, including desalinated sea water, will supplement supplies in areas such as the Eyre Peninsula, subject, of course, to site and environmental investigations.

The regional plans are already being rolled out, with the first on Eyre Peninsula being completed, Yorke Peninsula is underway—and I thank the honourable member, because he has had a strong involvement and I appreciate his support for that project—and also Kangaroo Island.

Water for Good will ensure that South Australia is well placed to meet new challenges and manage future demands for generations of South Australians to come.

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I advise members of the presence in the gallery today of students from Para Hills High School, who are my guests.

QUESTION TIME

STORMWATER HARVESTING

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH (Waite—Leader of the Opposition) (14:14): My question is to the Minister for Water Security. Why did the government set such low targets for stormwater harvesting in its Water for Good statement? Water industry experts Professor Mike Young and Salisbury council's Colin Pitman have said publicly that the government's stormwater targets are too low. The Centre for Economic Studies' latest report on local government involvement in stormwater lists projects in operation, under construction or with approved funding as having a projected output of almost 21 gigalitres, yet in its recently released Water for Good statement the government's target for stormwater harvesting is only 20 gigalitres.

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD (Chaffey—Minister for the River Murray, Minister for Water Security) (14:15): Thank you very much for the question, Leader of the Opposition. It is a very important question because there has been a lot of hoo-ha about stormwater and what is the actual potential amount of stormwater that can be harvested from the Adelaide Plains area. The government decided to let science tell us, rather than commentators or the opposition, and to do a substantial body of work to determine, on a scientific basis, what was actually achievable in relation to stormwater harvesting. The Stormwater Authority commissioned some work to be undertaken to look at what was the potential for stormwater harvesting. The urban stormwater harvesting options study (which was completed recently and also launched this week) advises and informs the government about what is the potential for stormwater harvesting. For the first time, this report provides a detailed and realistic assessment of Adelaide's large scale stormwater harvesting potential.

Remembering that, whilst Colin Pitman and the Salisbury council have done a great job in the Salisbury area, and Mike Young is a very good expert who provides opinion to debate in relation to water issues, they are not hydrogeologists and nor are they hydrologists. We asked the experts in this field to be able to tell us, through the stormwater harvesting options study, how much stormwater could be harvested in Adelaide. They have identified up to about 60 billion litres of water per year (60 gigalitres) is achievable. This government is committed to doing what we can in the stormwater area, but we wanted stormwater targets that are realistic, achievable and affordable. They are much better projects than \$1 billion-odd for sports stadiums.

It is really important to note that, in my ministerial statement—and I will not go through them again—we are investing in a range of projects in partnership with local government and seeking funding from the federal government to enhance our stormwater capacity. The projects we have presented to the federal government will more than double the amount of water that is being harvested from stormwater in South Australia should they all be supported—and we are very confident that they will be. I think it is important to note that these kind of projections and wish lists that are put out by commentators without any of the scientific fact behind them are nothing more than that. They are nothing more than fantasy, unless they can be substantiated through realistic projects; and that is what this government has endeavoured to do and that is what we have achieved through the Water for Good strategy and working with the Stormwater Authority, and local government, to determine what is actually achievable.

RURAL ROAD SAFETY

Mr PICCOLO (Light) (14:18): My question is to the Minister for Road Safety. Can the minister advise the house what investment the government is making into rural road safety?

The Hon. M.F. O'BRIEN (Napier—Minister for Employment, Training and Further Education, Minister for Road Safety, Minister for Science and Information Economy) (14:18): Over the five year period 2003 to 2007, approximately 65 per cent of all fatal and serious crashes on rural roads have involved people losing control of their vehicle prior to the vehicle leaving the road and, in most cases, either hitting a fixed object or rolling over. Hit fixed object crashes are the most common type of fatal and serious injury crash in South Australia. There were 1,125 fatal and serious hit fixed object crashes between 2003 and 2007.

Loss of life or serious injury should not be the accepted outcome for a driver who makes a mistake on the road. It is possible to mitigate the consequences of driver mistakes on rural roads through a variety of cost-effective infrastructure treatments. Two of the most cost-effective of these safety treatments are sealing the road shoulder to give drivers more room for control and recovery, and shielding those vehicles that do leave the road from severe collision hazards such as trees, culverts and Stobie poles, or removing these collision hazards, if this is at all feasible. The member for Schubert would be aware of the difficulty with the last of those propositions.

The continuation of the shoulder-sealing program, together with the Rural Road Safety Program, will provide significant safety outcomes by reducing the number and severity of road crashes. Road improvements made under the rural road safety program include audio tactile line marking (often referred to as rumble strips), and this is a particular initiative of the Victorian government, which is seen to be a trendsetter in the area of road safety. Other road improvements include safety barrier installations, removal of roadside trees in hazardous locations and improved delineation.

An additional \$23 million over the next four years has been allocated in this year's state budget for a safer road network in rural South Australia through the Rural Road Safety Program. In 2009-10, \$5.25 million has been allocated to deliver 29 projects in the Adelaide Hills, Barossa, the Mid North, the South-East, Fleurieu Peninsula and the Lower Flinders Ranges. As I said, these funds and this program will complement the ongoing shoulder-sealing program which has been allocated \$7.2 million in the most recent budget, which is to gain passage today. This will seal shoulders over 125 kilometres of road across rural South Australia.

The member for Schubert would also be aware that his electorate is actually the major beneficiary of this funding, with in excess of 50 per cent of all work on shoulder sealing occurring within the electorate of Schubert. The member for Schubert's constituents have had a fairly difficult nine or 10 months, with a high level of fatality within the Barossa Valley, and I think they will be extremely pleased with this particular initiative.

The South Australian Strategic Plan contains a target to reduce road fatalities to fewer than 90 per year and serious injuries to fewer than 1,000 per year by 2010. These programs will play a vital part in assisting the South Australian community to meet these objectives, just as responsible driving behaviour will play its part.

WATER PRICING

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH (Waite—Leader of the Opposition) (14:22): My question is again to the Minister for Water Security. What figure will the government use to calculate water price increases—the \$1.8 billion for the desalination plant alone, or will it include the \$400 million for the interconnector, taking the total cost of supplying desal water to \$2.2 billion? The government has stated that the water price increases will reflect its total cost for recovery of the desalination plant.

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD (Chaffey—Minister for the River Murray, Minister for Water Security) (14:23): Water prices will include the cost of providing water through a desalination plant and the interconnection of the system.

MARINE PARKS

Ms FOX (Bright) (14:23): Can the Minister for Environment and Conservation update the house on the progress and processes of the pilot working groups that he established to assist in the establishment of marine parks?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL (Cheltenham—Minister for Environment and Conservation, Minister for Early Childhood Development, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation, Minister Assisting the Premier in Cabinet Business and Public Sector Management) (14:23): I established three pilot marine park working groups in April to provide advice to me on marine parks in the West Coast, South-East and Spencer Gulf areas. The working groups were established to provide advice to me on possible amendments to the outer boundaries and to assist me in determining whether to recommend any adjustments now to the outer boundaries proclaimed in January.

The working groups consisted of representatives from the seafood industry, the conservation sector, local government and state government, and the groups have now provided their advice to me. I am currently considering this advice and am yet to make a decision, but what I can say is that the advice will play a very valuable role in my decision-making process.

The pilot groups were brought together last week to discuss their experience and to provide advice to me about whether the working group process should continue and, if so, how. The general view was that the process had been valuable, notwithstanding that there remain some difference of views between the sectors.

I will be announcing my decision on the adjustments to the boundaries in the coming weeks. As I stated in estimates last week, I will be releasing the advice that I have received from these working groups once I have had a chance to consider it for my decision-making process. So, I was a little surprised when the former shadow minister for the environment said that I would not be releasing these advices provided by the pilot working groups. In fact, his media—

The Hon. P.F. Conlon interjecting:

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: That's right. His media release said this. He set out an extract, from estimates, as follows:

I asked the environment minister, Jay Weatherill, will there be any reporting process before the end of July so that the committee knows whether or not there has been real dialogue and action based on good faith negotiations, or whether it has just been duped and silenced. The minister answered decisively, 'No'.

Well, the difficulty that I have with that is that I have scoured the *Hansard* and that exchange simply does not occur. In fact, this is what I said in *Hansard*.

I am happy to make them available to anyone who wants to look at them. I am happy to make the process open, but we want to consider them first.

He has released—

Mr Williams interjecting:

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: No, I'll come to you in a moment. His release also repeated the line that 'fishing people will be locked out of half of the state's waters'. Of course, he knows that the overwhelming majority of all the parks will provide for fishing. But he also included the hysterical claim that 'South Australia's water recreation freedom will be put at risk.' This, of course, continues the community campaign that the opposition is trying to whip up around marine parks.

I suppose, really, the crowning glory in this media release is when he, ironically—I think it must have been ironic—calls me 'gutless'. This media release must have been something close to the last act of the former shadow minister for environment. It must have been tossed over the shoulder as he flew out of the building, as he declared, as he confronted his leader, and called for his resignation, but—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Heysen.

Mrs REDMOND: Point of order on the relevance of the minister's comments: it does sound very much like debate rather than an answer to the question.

The SPEAKER: I think the minister is in danger of straying into debate. The Minister for Environment.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: I didn't throw this elbow, sir. Can I say that the former shadow minister for the environment (who is the current shadow?) is tossing around the 'gutless' phrase in circumstances where he has so bravely run away from not only the shadow portfolio but also, it seems, the fight. Apparently, he is now going to be back in the running for leader of the opposition on Saturday. Apparently—

Mrs REDMOND: Point of order, Mr Speaker!

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister is now debating. The member for Hammond.

WATER PRICING

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (14:28): Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr PEDERICK: My question is to the Minister for Water Security. Will the minister give a commitment about the increase of non-residential prices foreshadowed in Water for Good; will the

prices be detailed in the December 2009 announcement of 2010-11 water prices; and will the government avoid scrutiny by delaying this announcement?

The Water for Good report released on Monday revealed that the government is planning to increase prices. The report states that the government will transition to a single potable water use price for SA Water's non-residential customers. Last month, the parliament opposed the government's attempt to change the law so that it could hide water pricing changes until after the March election.

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD (Chaffey—Minister for the River Murray, Minister for Water Security) (14:29): Of course, the government intends to be very open, as it has been, about our price pathway. There is absolutely no doubt about that. We intend to increase prices to meet the substantial investment in water security that we are undertaking.

In relation to the non-residential component, had the member listened to the answer last night in estimates he would remember that the non-residential provisions will result in a substantial decrease in prices for many commercial customers of SA Water, not an increase.

HAMMILL HOUSE

Mr BROCK (Frome) (14:30): My question is to the Minister for Health about the Hammill House upgrade, which was announced in the budget. This may be a Dorothy Dixier, but I want this on the record to ensure that it will go forward. I ask this question, as I would like an answer from the minister, and I hope that I get one.

An honourable member interjecting:

Mr BROCK: Excuse me, member.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BROCK: The Hammill House facility is for aged and acute care, and it adjoins the Port Pirie Regional Health Service. Stages 1 and 2 were completed some years ago, but we have been waiting for some years for the completion of the project. What work will be carried out in stages 3 and 4, which were announced in the budget?

Members interjecting:

The Hon. J.D. HILL (Kaurana—Minister for Health, Minister for the Southern Suburbs, Minister Assisting the Premier in the Arts) (14:31): I thank the member for Frome for his question, and I am amazed that members on the other side are attacking him for asking this important question. The government has a longstanding commitment to Hammill House. Stages 1 and 2—

Ms Chapman interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. J.D. HILL: I note that the deputy leader is interjecting. I really hope she gets to ask me a question today. I look forward to being able to answer her questions in parliament today, but I have to say that, if she keeps—

Ms Chapman interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. J.D. HILL: Stages 1 and 2 of the redevelopment—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order, the member for Schubert and the member for Kavel!

The Hon. J.D. HILL: This is a very important question for the member for Frome, and I acknowledge his great interest in Hammill House and the hospital, where I think he was on the board for a while. Stages 1 and 2 of the redevelopment included a \$500,000 upgrade of the building for the Day Care Centre and Industrial Therapy, which was completed in December 2006. The redevelopment of the Dementia Wing, which cost \$1.5 million, was completed in March 2007.

As the member said, in the most recent state budget the state government allocated a further \$2.78 million to stages 3 and 4 of the Hammill House upgrade. This work is due to commence late this year, and it is expected to be completed by the end of 2010.

Stage 3 includes conversion of the existing multibed wards on the north side of the building to provide 13 beds in single and double rooms with en suites and an associated upgrade of air conditioning infrastructure. Stage 4 includes the conversion of existing wards on the eastern side of the building to provide eight beds in single and double rooms with en suites and an associated upgrade of air conditioning infrastructure and the provision of patient and visitor lounge areas.

The member for Frome has strongly advocated for the refurbishment of this facility for his community, both before and since he entered the House of Assembly, and I acknowledge that and thank him for it. As members would be aware, the commonwealth government sets uniform standards for these facilities and allocates bed licences to aged care providers.

The commonwealth has advised us that, following completion of the capital works, the commonwealth government (within its required 60 day window) will favourably assess the suitability of the premises to be granted beds licences. Commonwealth approval will then be sought to activate 30 commonwealth licences previously transferred from the Department for Families and Communities to Hammill House at a cost of \$0.7 million.

Once activated, commonwealth licences will result in ongoing recurrent funding from the commonwealth of between \$1.8 million and \$2 million per year. So, this is a good arrangement for both the community and the state government.

HAMMILL HOUSE

Mr BROCK (Frome) (14:34): I have a supplementary question. When the works are tendered out, will local businesses in the region be given the opportunity to tender for them?

The Hon. J.D. HILL (Kaurua—Minister for Health, Minister for the Southern Suburbs, Minister Assisting the Premier in the Arts) (14:34): That is a good question. Of course, we are bound by Treasury rules around tender processes but, subject to those tender processes, of course local businesses will be able to tender.

APY LANDS

Dr McFETRIDGE (Morphett) (14:35): Does the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation agree with the federal government's decision to appoint AP Services as the provider of municipal services on the APY lands? In a letter dated 29 June 2009 to the acting state management of the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, the Chairperson of the APY Lands Executive, Mr Bernard Singer, stated in relation to AP Services:

The NGO is in Special Administration, having previously wasted \$1.3 million of taxpayers dollars on lawyers and consultants fees which had nothing to do with the service delivery but instead were directed to the subversion of the elected government of the APY Lands and the introduction of an alternative political structure.

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL (Cheltenham—Minister for Environment and Conservation, Minister for Early Childhood Development, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation, Minister Assisting the Premier in Cabinet Business and Public Sector Management) (14:35): I have a bit of free advice for the shadow minister for Aboriginal affairs, and that is: do not buy into factional disputes on the APY lands. It is the best advice I can give him, and the question proceeds from that fundamental difficulty. AP Services is controlled by one faction of the AP lands; the APY Executive is controlled by another. There is a struggle over who will control the resources. I simply will not participate in that nonsense.

The Hon. P.F. Conlon: it sounds a bit familiar, actually.

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: That's right. The truth is that I have been studiously trying to avoid being dragged into the very issues which the honourable member seeks to agitate and which are being played out regularly through a cascade of media releases which, to anybody who is prepared to listen, get increasingly hysterical from one day to the next. At their essence, they have as their objective a struggle for who controls resources. I would have thought the struggle should be about who can provide a better future for the children in the APY lands rather than who can get their hands on the money and get the power and influence they seek to enjoy.

The reality in relation to AP Municipal Services is that, unfortunately, it is one of the only shows in town, so the federal government made a very pragmatic decision to work through it on an interim basis for the provision of municipal services. It is not my decision but, as I understand it, the federal government has taken the view that, on an interim basis, while the AP Services is under administration (so it is not presently being managed by the people who managed it when it got into difficulties) it is in a shape ready and appropriate to deliver municipal services in the communities.

The advantage with that is that it is done on a regional basis. Members would be aware that the government has announced a move towards a regional council. It is our intention to press ahead with a regional council in relation to the AP lands. In my view, that would be the appropriate vehicle in the future for the delivery of municipal services, but in the short term there are some interim arrangements that need to be put in place.

Just to demonstrate the sort of nonsense that is going on in the APY lands at the moment, AP Services, albeit under administration, is the provider of significant services on the APY lands. The Chief Executive Officer of AP Services has been denied a permit by the present leadership in the AP lands, so we have the spectre of the chief executive officer of a service organisation being denied a permit to carry out what presumably the Chief Executive Officer should be charged to do, that is, to go to the very place where she is to deliver those services. It is this sort of nonsense that we are seeking to intervene to stop. We will not be deflected from our objectives in that regard, and we would be greatly assisted by a bipartisan approach.

GAMING MACHINES

The Hon. I.F. EVANS (Davenport) (14:39): My question is to the Minister for Gambling. Are the hours that gaming machines can operate a conscience vote for government members?

The Hon. P.F. CONLON (Elder—Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Minister for Energy) (14:39): The reason—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: It is good to see someone on that side cheerful today; and I can understand why some are cheerful and some are not. The member for Davenport would know this because he has been around a long time; he is one of the more skilful in this place in relation to the things he does in here and the things he does outside. He would know the Minister for Gambling has responsibility to this house for gambling. He does not have responsibility to this house for the rules of the Labor Party.

Mr Williams interjecting:

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: My God! It's not often that you get an interjection that invites you to make a comment that you really don't want to make, but I have an interjection from Mitch Williams. I am taking advice from the man who declared that he could not possibly serve under the Leader of the Opposition—but insists everyone else does. I mean, he has some credibility!

The rules of the Labor Party, even though I do not have responsibility to the house for them, for the benefit of members opposite, whether a matter is for a conscience vote is a decision, in the first instance in here, for the Premier and, in the party at large, for the President. I do not believe anyone has a responsibility to the house in terms of the rules of the Labor Party, but I will pass the question on to the Premier to see whether he wishes to provide the honourable member with an answer.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA POLICE

The Hon. I.F. EVANS (Davenport) (14:41): My question is to the Minister for Police. Has anyone in SAPOL received a bonus, or is anyone in SAPOL able to receive a bonus, for meeting finance or budget targets?

The Hon. M.J. WRIGHT (Lee—Minister for Police, Minister for Emergency Services, Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing) (14:41): Obviously, the honourable member is the most talented person on the opposition benches but, despite that, I do not think he is standing. That is a question on which I will need to seek advice from the Commissioner with whom I meet on a regular basis. I will seek that advice and get an answer for the honourable member.

ROYAL ADELAIDE HOSPITAL

Mr GRIFFITHS (Goyder) (14:42): Did the Minister for Health or any member of the government seek advice from the central urban planning agency, Planning SA, on the best possible use for the City West railway site before deciding to build a hospital there?

The Hon. J.D. HILL (Kaurana—Minister for Health, Minister for the Southern Suburbs, Minister Assisting the Premier in the Arts) (14:42): I must say I was so excited by the fact that there was a question from the other side that I missed the beginning of it. Let me recall the process

we went through. This is an interesting question. Are you not going to get Treasury but, rather, health, Stephen? Is that the deal?

Members interjecting:

The Hon. J.D. HILL: Planning, I see. Well, I am happy to answer the question. When we developed our state health strategy back in 2007, we developed the South Australian Health Care Plan. We went through a process of determining the resources required for the future of health care in our state. We recognised that the Royal Adelaide Hospital needed to be upgraded not only because it was old but also because it was not big enough.

We needed another site, so we identified a number of potential sites around the city. The railway land was one of the sites. The Glenside facility was another potential site. We thought about Keswick Barracks, but we did not own that and it has a lot of heritage buildings. We looked at about a dozen or 15 sites, and through that process it was decided that the railway land was the best site because it had sufficient land available and it was proximate to all the services to which it needed to be proximate. It is close to the existing site and the universities, and so on. That was the site that Health determined was the ideal site.

Of course, we then went through the process of developing a cabinet submission, which went through the broad cabinet process. Of course, Planning SA and all the other agencies of government were involved in that process. Planning SA had its say and we engaged in a process with Planning SA, particularly in relation to the zoning that was required and how it fitted in with other ideas of Planning SA, particularly in that section of the Parklands where the old gaol and the SA Water land, and other bits and pieces, are. So there was a process which involved Planning SA.

POLICE, RANDOM BREATH TESTING UNITS

Mrs REDMOND (Heysen) (14:44): My question is to the Minister for Police. What directions are given to police officers on whether or not to pursue vehicles which either do not stop or which drive off from random breath testing units?

The Hon. M.J. WRIGHT (Lee—Minister for Police, Minister for Emergency Services, Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing) (14:45): I think there are guidelines in place, and I will obtain those guidelines for the member. Obviously, it is a sensitive area and caution needs to be applied.

UNLEY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mr GOLDSWORTHY (Kavel) (14:45): My question is to the—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: —Minister for Infrastructure. Will the minister allow Unley Primary School, located in a heritage character zone, to have the same specifically designed hall to complement the heritage buildings on site and in the surrounding streets, as has been the case with the North Adelaide Primary School?

The Hon. P.F. CONLON (Elder—Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Minister for Energy) (14:45): I have heard a bit of nonsense about this, I must say. Can I explain the process for these matters in South Australia—and, of course, to understand why we have that process you need to understand the background. The background is that part of the federal government's stimulus package involved giving cash grants to people—which the Liberal Party said would never work, but the current retail figures show that it has worked, and worked in bucket loads. It also introduced a number of infrastructure packages, including one for school buildings. We welcomed this, as we did the additional funds for school maintenance. I note that the Liberals opposed the spending of this money in our schools and have continued to oppose it, and the only questions we have on it are criticisms of the project.

The project involved something like 590 school projects to be completed in 18 months, and those projects vary between roughly \$500,000 and \$3 million. That is obviously an extremely large challenge. It is important to reduce delay, so the planning processes have been truncated to the extent that the Coordinator-General is the planning authority. The way we have set it up and the way we have done it has been complimented nationally. We are considered to be the best at it of all the states.

We have heard some nonsense about what is going to be approved at Unley. My understanding (and I will check this) is that the last time we spoke about it there had been no application from Unley for planning approval of any type. The Unley school will not be required to take something it does not want and, when an application does come, it will be judged on its merits and whether it is appropriate. It is recognised by the Coordinator-General that what is appropriate in one site may not be appropriate in another.

The process involves engaging designers and architects, and we believe it is going very well. An application from Unley will be decided on its merits and will not be approved unless it suits the circumstances for that school. I note that, despite the fact that this is a marvellous outcome for so many schools in South Australia, the Liberal opposition continues to oppose it.

PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYMENT

Mr GRIFFITHS (Goyder) (14:48): My question is to the Minister for Industrial Relations. How many public sector jobs will need to be cut for the government to achieve the \$290 million savings target in public sector wages costs set by the Treasurer in the 2009-10 budget? The Australian Manufacturing Workers Union will reportedly seek to use the new workplace laws, starting today, to pursue annual pay rises of between 4 and 6 per cent across 1,300 agreements, with better performing companies to be hit with claims of up to 6 per cent, while the Treasurer has decreed that a 2.5 per cent cap on public sector wage increases must be pursued.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON (Elder—Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Minister for Energy) (14:49): On behalf of the Treasurer, can I say that the Treasurer has brought down a tremendous budget that has maintained a historic level of infrastructure spending and has been able to exercise restraint in recurrent expenditure and preserve the state's AAA credit rating.

There is no doubt that one of the things that will underpin restraint in the future will be wage restraint. I am not going to comment on the metal workers and what they pursue in the private sector. What I can say is that everyone on this side of the house is committed to achieving the wage outcomes in the public sector set out in the budget. The Treasurer has said this a number of times, but there are two manners in which the current expenditure can be saved in government: one is restraint in wage outcomes; and the other is fewer people receiving wages.

There is no doubt that our preference is to achieve the restraint through restraint in wages. No matter what the metal workers want to say and what they want to do in the private sector, I point out that inflation forecasts are very moderate and that the wage outcomes' forecast in this budget will allow people to meet inflationary pressures, that is, their real wages will be protected if the inflation figures are correct, and we believe they are. We stand by that. I would be interested to know whether you think they should get more, because I do know that when we come into this place regularly the Liberal Party is apparently the great champion of the workers.

I remember the member for Morphett's ferocious commitment to make sure that the WorkCover changes did not—

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: Of course, the ferocious commitment did not last that long; and Mitch, of course, crossed the floor to vote against WorkCover provisions to preserve the right of entry for unions. So, they do have a rather muddled—

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: I am sure that went down well back in Millicent—the member for MacKillop's preservation of the right of entry for unions. He went further than Julia Gillard did. But, that's all right, he is capable of having more than one view on a subject, apparently.

The Hon. J.D. Hill: Remarkably flexible.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: Remarkably flexible for a bloke of his size. What I would say is that the opposition, if it were real, would do something. It would support the notion of public sector wage restraint. It would support that. It is in the interests of the state. It might, in fact, support the bill that we have in the upper house in terms of government reform. What we do know is that the business community shakes its head in disbelief at the various positions this opposition takes; and, from what I have seen, nothing seems likely to change in the future.

I would note, and I have to say this, that the federal Liberal member Christopher Pyne did in fact seek to—what was the phrase? He came to bury Caesar but he seems likely to inter Brutus instead.

MURRAY RIVER, RIVERBANK SLUMPING

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (14:52): My question is to the Minister for Water Security. What action does the government propose to take to prevent a recurrence of the riverbank slumping, which has recently occurred in the Murray Bridge area at Taillem Bend? Slumpings along the lower reaches of the Murray River have been reported for the past two years. It was apparent that falling river levels were the primary contributor to this risk, yet, as we understand it, no specific preventative or corrective actions have been taken by the government, and it is only recently that the report has been presented.

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD (Chaffey—Minister for the River Murray, Minister for Water Security) (14:53): This is a really important question, because the issue of riverbank slumping is of great concern to the state government and to the communities that are affected by it. The Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation (DWLBC) has received about 40 reports in relation to riverbank collapses since February 2009, some which noted extensive cracking with the high likelihood of future slumping. A main road is also at risk near Young Husband due to cracking.

The most severe incident to date was on 4 February at Long Island Marina, an 80 metre strip of land. A number of trees and three cars disappeared into the river. Since then there has been secondary slumping extending this total to around 400 metres. Nearby, an SA Water sewer main has been rerouted. We have been unable to locate two of the vehicles that disappeared into the lake bed, and it is indicative of what we understand is the base of the river there. It is very fine silt and, as the riverbank slumped, the cars disappeared into that like quicksand and we have not been able to locate them.

However, DWLBC is coordinating efforts to manage these incidents. Ongoing actions, including fencing off incident sites, removing navigation hazards, establishing a 24-hour hotline for public reporting and monitoring identified high risk sites below Lock 1 is occurring. We have put in place a communications strategy, which has incorporated media releases, newspaper advertisements and distribution of pamphlets; and we have contacted owners in high risk areas individually and had many public awareness presentations.

Factors such as steep riverbanks and the presence of deep water have been used to identify 26 locations below Lock 1 facing high risk of collapse, and relevant landholders and local councils have been notified. Council has been pushing some parts of the bank to reduce the slope level and the like in areas where there is high risk.

The overall management approach covers legal compliance, scientific and technical advice, local knowledge and other responses. All relevant agencies, including local councils, SA Water, Department for Transport, Energy and Infrastructure and ETSA are participating in this process. A technical expert has been engaged to provide advice and is consulted on a needs basis.

One of the important things to note in this entire process is that we are all working together to try to minimise the risk to public health and public safety in relation to these incidents. We are playing a very strong role in ensuring the community is well informed and landowners understand what their responsibilities are, and we are working to minimise the risk on land that the government is responsible for managing. It is not easy.

The member suggests that remedial action should take place. It is very difficult to undertake remedial action in this instance. It is a natural phenomenon as a consequence of the low levels in the river, and we are doing all we can to ensure that the public is protected from the risk of these riverbank slumpings.

WATER TRADING

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (14:56): My question is to the Minister for Water Security. Has the department ceased buying water from willing sellers in South Australia? A constituent at Jervois recently offered 400 megalitres of permanent water to the SA government, as he was anxious it should stay in South Australia. On inquiring, he was told by an SA Water officer that the government had bought all the water it wanted to at the moment and was not interested in his 400 megalitres. The constituent, much to his disgust, has now found it necessary to offer the water

to the federal government and perhaps an interstate buyer, knowing that that water may now never reach this state.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr Pederick interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Hammond will settle down. He has asked his question.

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD (Chaffey—Minister for the River Murray, Minister for Water Security) (14:58): I find it a really interesting question, because, at the federal level, the federal Liberal Party, in the first instance, was strongly opposed to the purchase of water from willing sellers up until a couple of years ago. As a consequence of significant lobbying by the South Australian government through Malcolm Turnbull, who was the former minister for water, only a couple of years ago we achieved acceptance that purchase of water from willing sellers was important. We also had an agreement across governments that we needed to coordinate the purchase of water and we could not have everyone out there buying water all over the place for permanent water, because the initiative that we needed to support was a national approach to the management of the Murray-Darling Basin, a national approach to the application of the purchase of water for the environment.

However, we had an agreement across states that we would continue to invest in the Living Murray initiative, which we had all agreed upon and which was the first step to returning water to the river—500 gegalitres by June 2009. South Australia was in the marketplace purchasing permanent water for that purpose, and we were successful in achieving our 35 gegalitres in the required time frame. South Australia was the first jurisdiction to meet its targets under the Living Murray.

We also agreed with the federal government that it was important that a coordinated approach did occur for the purchase of water for the environment across the Murray-Darling Basin. We also agreed that it was critically important that we established a national commonwealth environmental water holder to hold permanent water entitlements on behalf of the environment and manage that environmental water for the best interests of the Murray-Darling Basin, a Murray-Darling Basin without borders.

When you have a Murray-Darling Basin being managed without borders, you actually have water held by the commonwealth to do just that. It does not include whether that environmental water is South Australian owned, New South Wales owned or Victorian owned; it is in a bank of water to be managed in the best interests of the basin on the basis of the priority needs within the basin.

We met our requirements to purchase permanent water out of the marketplace to achieve our 35 gegalitre target and, since then, we have concentrated on the purchase of temporary water, because South Australia has needed to meet our immediate critical human needs and also critical water allocation for our permanent plantings. Also, we have purchased critical water for the environment, to enhance our environmental water into South Australia on the temporary market. There is a market out there for people to sell their water to the federal government for the purchase of water for the environment.

Mr Pederick interjecting:

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD: If the member for Hammond truly wanted a national approach to the management of the Murray-Darling Basin, he would encourage his constituents by saying that the federal government is the appropriate place to hold water for the environment.

Mr Pederick interjecting:

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD: If you were genuinely intent upon supporting a national approach, that is what you would do. Instead, you are not—

Mr Pederick interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr VENNING: Point of order, Mr Speaker.

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD: You are not focused on supporting—

The SPEAKER: Order! There is a point of order.

Mr VENNING: On a point of order, the minister is impugning improper motives.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! I do not think the minister is impugning improper motives, but she is referring to the member for Hammond using the second person pronoun, which she should not do. She should direct all her remarks through the chair.

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD: I apologise to you, sir. I did not mean that it was you; it was the member for Hammond, who seems to be confused about what he wants to achieve through the national reform being undertaken at the moment. The member for Hammond wants a national approach. The member for Hammond wants the federal government to take strong leadership. The member for Hammond thinks that we should have a river system run without borders, but he thinks the states should actually be able to buy water themselves, which means that he expects New South Wales and Victoria should be able to do that as well.

If the member for Hammond wants South Australia to do that, he obviously wants New South Wales and Victoria to do it as well. That would not be in the long-term interests of the basin, so the member for Hammond needs to take a long, hard look at himself and advise his constituents about what is necessary to have a national approach to the management of the basin. A national approach means that you take the states out of it. He needs to understand that.

MURRAY RIVER, LOWER LAKES

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (15:02): I am just so glad that I survived that withering attack. My question is to the Minister for Water Security. How is the government proposing to manage acidification in Lake Albert now that pumping from Lake Alexandrina has ceased?

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD (Chaffey—Minister for the River Murray, Minister for Water Security) (15:03): As has been very publicly canvassed and as has been heard in our answers to questions yesterday in estimates; it is with bioremediation through the use of planting of different crop types, and also through the potential introduction of lime to the water, should the water be reaching critical pH levels.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT, SENIORS

Dr McFETRIDGE (Morphett) (15:03): My question is to the Minister for Transport. How many seniors are not able to travel for free on public transport during off-peak periods, and what is the government doing to assist these people? To take advantage of the free travel offer for seniors, people need to have a Seniors Card, be over 60 and a permanent resident, and not work more than 20 hours a week. The opposition has been informed that a number of people who are close to these limits cannot obtain free transport.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON (Elder—Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Minister for Energy) (15:04): The number of seniors who can travel for free on public transport is, I think, 257—

The Hon. J.M. Rankine: No, about 275,000. Between that and 300,000.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: About 275,000 more, at a minimum, than there were last week.

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: Not all at once. Not all on the same bus. For the member for Morphett to raise a question about the greatest extension of free travel to seniors in the history of the state, and to be critical of it—

Members interjecting:

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: If we go on for a minute or two longer, it is all going to be his idea in the first place. That is what usually happens.

Dr McFetridge: It was Western Australia.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: It was Western Australia. The reform has been received enormously well. I believe that all our people have written to people in their electorates to advise them of the travel and the terms, and to make sure it is used by as many as possible. The reform came about as a result of the fact that there were many elderly in the community who have

suffered disproportionately from the effects of the global financial crisis, the drop in the stock market, and the drop in interest rates. While many of us young people benefit from a drop in interest rates, it is not a good thing, necessarily, for those who are elderly in the community.

So, we found a way of giving free travel, to make better use of our infrastructure as well, and we found a way of doing it for those who we think are most likely to benefit properly from it. We believe that that was the best. If you believe there is a different scheme, we would like to hear what it is. Apparently it is the—

An honourable member: Does anyone miss out?

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: Does anyone miss out? Yes, the people who do not have a Seniors Card miss out. Why do people have a Seniors Card? Because they are considered the people appropriate to have a Seniors Card. One of the things that will disqualify you from having a Seniors Card, for example, is not being old enough.

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson: Where there is more than 20 hours work a week involved.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: Or working more than 20 hours. We think it is a very good standard, and it has worked out in conjunction. But, if you want to criticise us now for buildings in schools, yes; if you want to criticise us for giving free travel to the elderly, yes. You may be worried about us wasting money. Maybe that is what it is. You do not want us to waste money on the elderly. But, let me say this: I think there is a terrible waste of money in this place. It is moving those nameplates all the bloody time! Please do not move them for this reshuffle, because who knows what will be next week. Please don't put permanent nameplates; I recommend sticky paper.

Mr PENGILLY: Point of order. I believe that the minister is debating.

The SPEAKER: Yes; perhaps the minister has strayed into debate, but I think he has finished his answer.

GAMING MACHINES

Mrs REDMOND (Heysen) (15:08): My question is to the Minister for Gambling. When will this government introduce legislation aimed at correcting its failed policy to reduce the number of poker machines by 3,000? The draft Gaming Machines (Miscellaneous) Amendment Bill 2008 has been available since September last year. The Liberal Party is aware that former minister Zollo had received feedback on that bill from a number of stakeholders, including the relevant sector and industry groups.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS (West Torrens—Minister for Correctional Services, Minister for Gambling, Minister for Youth, Minister for Volunteers, Minister Assisting the Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (15:08): As the member would be aware, when she calls the policy 'failed', there are a number of members in this house—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: —who voted for the \$50,000 cap. So, rather than being a failure of the Rann government, perhaps it is a failure of the parliament, and all members who voted for that cap are equally guilty. I am looking directly at one of them.

The truth is that the reduction of poker machines is about harm minimisation. The government has some great programs in place about harm minimisation, and they are through precommitment trials we are running now, which I am sure the member is well aware of. I understand that the Productivity Commission is bringing down a report, from its first report in 1999, in February next year. I think it would be pre-emptive of the government to do anything before that report is tabled.

TRAM TRAINS

Dr McFETRIDGE (Morphett) (15:09): My question is to the Minister for Transport. Is the government scrapping plans to buy tram trains?

The Hon. P.F. CONLON (Elder—Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Minister for Energy) (15:09): Can I say on this: the member for Morphett has a lot to say about public transport, as does his leader. I listened to the debate today that says—

Dr McFetridge interjecting:

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: No, just wait. I know it may well be your final days, but, apparently, you are glued on, so you may be rewarded at least for loyalty.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: Tina? Does this mean something to you? It is an acronym, I assume. The Leader of the Opposition—

The Hon. J.D. Hill: There is no alternative.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: There is no alternative—in his speech today said that we promised tram extensions last year, but they disappeared from the budget this year. We announced a 10 year program last year. The tram extensions, which he claims disappeared this year, were not in the out years last year or this year because they are estimated to have—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: We have given them all the questions in the hope that they will allow Vickie just one. I think they had about 16 before, but Vickie still can't get on the list. Given that I have never had a quiet question time from her before, I assume there is a reason for it. There has been no change in the timetable whatever for those tram extensions. We support them, and they—

Dr McFetridge interjecting:

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: I am going to come to that in a moment. There is no change at all in those timetables, despite the untruths stated in this place by the member for Morphett and the Leader of the Opposition, but that is what we have come to expect from them. There is no—

Dr McFetridge interjecting:

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: He says that is not right. I have to say that, when you come into this place and say that the government promised them last year and dropped them from the budget this year, you are not telling the truth. There has been only one change in the timetabling since the introduction of the 10 year plan, and that was the additional investment from the commonwealth that has allowed us to add the Seaford extension—and I point out to the Leader of the Opposition that it is not an extension to Seaforth, which is in Western Australia, but to Seaford—and the acceleration of the Gawler electrification. So, the only change has been acceleration in the program, despite the untruths that are told.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: With regard to the rolling stock, can I say that this bloke has a track record, too. On our recent tram purchase from Spain, he was—

Dr McFetridge: And you paid the wrong price.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: We paid the wrong price, he said. They don't like it, do they? The price he said we should have paid for the Spanish trams was \$4.8 million.

Dr McFetridge: No; I didn't.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: Well, it was in the story.

Dr McFetridge: No; I didn't.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: So, what should we have paid?

Dr McFetridge: 3.4.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: 3.4! Of course, somebody bought new ones for \$4.6 million, but we should have paid 3.4. For the benefit of the story, the price we actually paid was 4.6, so we could have paid 4.8, but we don't think it would have been a good idea. We could have got them to take 4.8, but we thought 4.6—

Dr McFetridge interjecting:

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: What—they are just two year old trams? You just make it up as you go along. One of them did two weeks. They all have new tram warranties; the rest of them were in the shed.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: Can I say that there are two things I hope for this coming Saturday. One I am sure of: they will keep the current bloke, and I think he deserves some loyalty. I hope they keep the member for Morphett. I want him forever. We will be purchasing the greatest purchase—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

Dr McFetridge: Have a cup of tea and a lie-down.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: The member for Morphett suggests that I need a cup of tea and a lie-down because I am apparently so—

An honourable member: Is that a proposition?

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: If that is a proposition, it's not the best one I've had. The member for Morphett has invented more stories about tram—

Dr McFetridge interjecting:

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: Why would that be, Duncan?

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: The member for Morphett has invented more stories about trams than Scheherazade managed in a thousand nights. The difference—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: Why do I upset them so much? I have tried to be nice to them today. Let's face it: what you could do to them today if you wished! Is this a dagger I see before me—again? Out, damned spots! What we could do to you if we wanted to, so just try to be nice. I have not seen a clash of giants like this since 'Duelling Banjos'.

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson: The rumble in the jungle!

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: Thriller in Manila; Dumb and Dumber do the numbers. In about 2012-13 we will be buying the biggest purchase of rolling stock in the state's history—electrified rolling stock for a totally upgraded system. There have been changes to that, because we have to buy more. Why do we have to buy more? Because the federal government gave us more money, including for an extension to Seaford.

We will buy what is the best available rolling stock at that time for the purpose. The current belief in the department is that the best way to address the issues of the Outer Harbor electrification is with tram trains. I point out that there will be tram lines on that extension, and there will be trams running on it; there is no doubt about that. What we will be doing is buying the best rolling stock available in 2012-13 to suit our needs. If you have a different approach—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: If you believe there is a different approach we should take, I am happy to hear that. The current planning in the department, as I understand it, is for tram trains. I can say this: in 2012-13 we will unashamedly buy the best rolling stock that is then available to give the best return for the people of South Australia. What I guarantee you is this: when it is completed, there will be brand new rolling stock.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: Some will be new, he says.

Dr McFetridge interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order, member for Morphett!

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: Apparently, they have been two years sitting on a lot now; there you go. One of the trams sustained a two-week service; the rest did not; they have new tram warranties. I am not sure what more you could add. Do not forget that what this bloke told us we were going to buy was 30-year old Eastern Bloc trams. That was his first story. The member for Morphett has the credibility on trams that Mitch Williams has on leadership, or Marty on emails. Where is the member for Unley?

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr Venning interjecting:

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: Now we've got Ivan Venning telling me I'm dumb. Okay. Joe Scalzi used to tell me I was short—and Joe Scalzi is on his way back, which proves that the more things change in here, the more they stay the same. I look forward to being back here.

I urge the opposition not to waste the little green nameplates: just put some sticky paper on them for the time being—scrawl it on—because it will save a bit of dough. I don't think they're settled yet. I will stop indulging myself. I will say that we have been criticised for free travel: guilty. We have been criticised for buying new trams and trains: guilty. We have the greatest investment in public transport the state has ever seen. It will influence the shape of this city for decades to come. It is the most advanced program we have ever seen.

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson: Extend for half an hour and we'll hear from Vickie.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: I cannot extend for half an hour because I have to go and renew my licence. I close by saying that, if a leadership challenge causes Vickie to be this quiet at question time, I think we should have one every week.

BURNSIDE CITY COUNCIL

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE (Wright—Minister for Families and Communities, Minister for Northern Suburbs, Minister for Housing, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability) (15:20): I table a copy of a ministerial statement relating to the City of Burnside made earlier today in another place by my colleague the Minister for State/Local Government Relations.

GRIEVANCE DEBATE

WATER FOR GOOD

Mr WILLIAMS (MacKillop) (15:21): Today I want to take the opportunity to talk about the government's recently released Water for Good plan. It is the government's plan for where it wants South Australia to be not this year or next year but, rather, in 2050. I want to read out one of the key actions which highlights the sort of government we have in South Australia. One of the key actions states:

- The South Australian community will have an enhanced level of awareness of water issues and people will instinctively take action to save water, such that we are regarded nationally as a water sensitive state.

That is what this government wants to achieve in relation to water by 2014. By 2014 it wants the community to know that we have an issue with water. We have had a water issue in this state for at least six years and the government has just put out a 190 page document. There is nothing new in it, just a lot of words. The really important thing the people of South Australia need to know is that the government is so embarrassed about the document that it does not want anyone to read the document. It is spending \$2.4 million worth of taxpayers' money trying to sell it through advertisements on television and in the print media.

The sum of \$2.4 million could be put to good use in South Australia. There is one project that \$2.4 million could complete, that is, the Urban Trees Project in the West Parklands. Because the government has used another \$45 million worth of taxpayers' money to do out a building in the centre of the city, SA Water is vacating an area off West Terrace in the West Parklands, and the government asked the city council to build an urban forest and put in some wetlands.

Guess what the shortfall of funding is to complete that project? It is \$2.4 million—just the amount of money that this government is spending on advertising a new water program which does nothing new for South Australia. It even fails to recognise that we have a problem. It sets targets. It talks about stormwater harvesting and it states that by 2014 we might be able to harvest 20 gegalitres of stormwater in South Australia.

Colin Pitman at Salisbury tells me that he could harvest 18 gegalitres of water next year. The only thing holding him back is that he cannot distribute the water. Once he extracts it from the aquifer it is difficult for him to distribute the water. Why? The reason is that he does not have access to a pipe network—one that is already there. The government says that it will open access to SA Water's infrastructure, that it will give open access to the pipe network by 2050—over 40 years away.

Colin Pitman could supply most of the stormwater next year that this program targets by 2014, if he could have access to the pipe network. However, this government refuses to accept that treated stormwater can be brought up to potable standard, notwithstanding that, after four years (it would probably be five years by now) of conducting research into the water that Salisbury council has been storing in aquifers to the north of the city, CSIRO has found that it is at least as good a quality as the water supplied out of our dams in the Adelaide Hills.

The government having appointed a Commissioner for Water Security almost 12 months ago—a supposed expert—to come up with a plan to provide water security for this community and the greater South Australian community, I for one am deeply disappointed. It is 190 pages of waffle and there is nothing new; it tells nothing we did not already know. Principally, the only thing it does tell us is that this government does not really want to achieve anything certainly today and certainly not next year, and it wants people by 2014 to be aware that there is a water issue. And it gets worse. By 2025 it wants people to be really aware that we have a water issue.

Time expired.

COASTAL GARDENS

Ms FOX (Bright) (15:26): Today I wish to congratulate minister Weatherill and the Department for Environment and Heritage, along with the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board, on their joint publication entitled *Coastal gardens: A planting guide*. As members may be aware, many residents in the Bright electorate (including me) live in close proximity to the coast, and I know that gardeners across the state face the challenge of long, hot summers, drought conditions and water restrictions. However, those living in coastal areas have the added stress of salt spray and sandy or saline soil. With these conditions, residents find it extremely difficult to maintain gardens.

The coastal gardens planting guide provides simple yet inspiring gardening advice for people living in all coastal suburbs of Adelaide. The plants that are featured in this publication are native plants that require very little water and maintenance and do not need pesticides or fertilisers. Not only do they save gardeners a great deal of time and money but they also look stunning. The guide is very user friendly and was put together with the help of landscape architects. It provides plants for a variety of different gardens including contemporary, natural cottage, formal and Japanese-style gardens.

The other added bonus of encouraging gardeners to use plants that are native to coastal areas is that it reduces the number of plants that tend to multiply outside the garden, which can spread across the coastline and become weeds. For this reason, the guide has a useful list of plants that are dangerous to the native environment and should not be grown near the coast.

In the Bright electorate we are very lucky to have the Carter House Native Garden in the suburb of Kingston Park. This garden is absolutely beautiful and encapsulates everything the planting guide is trying to achieve. The City of Holdfast Bay along with many volunteers helped to create this garden, which boasts over 2,000 plants used by the Kurna people, and I would like to acknowledge their invaluable help on this project. The native gardens border the Tjilbruke springs, which is one of the most significant Kurna sacred sites. I strongly recommend that all members of the house, if they have an opportunity, visit this garden. It is not just a lovely place to be: it is an amazing part of our state's eco-heritage. I went there again last week, and it truly is striking.

The planting guide allows members of the community who live near our coastline to rethink what they are planting in their gardens which may compromise the health and wellbeing of native

plants along our natural coastline. I would love to say that I have a green thumb, but I do not. I have more of a sort of gloomy, verdant digit. Despite this—

Mr Pederick: Please don't explain it.

Ms FOX: No, I am not going to. I guess what I am trying to say is that I am not the world's best gardener, but I do like pottering around in the garden and, like many others in my area, I struggle when it comes to growing things and maintaining my front and back gardens. I am very pleased to discover that not only have they produced this book but the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board will hold workshops for people who wish to embrace this coastal garden initiative but do not know where to begin (that is people like me). These workshops are completely free. You go along and they tell you what will grow well and how to plant and what to expect. I have informed constituents who live close to the coast about this guide, which is free and available, and, of course, they can contact my office if they wish to get one.

Over the coming months and years, I look forward to seeing many constituents with native ecologically-friendly gardens. It really is a credit to minister Weatherill, the Department for Environment and Heritage and the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board that the coastal gardens plantings guide is already so popular. I congratulate them and I encourage them to continue working towards producing solutions such as this to help members of our community towards a greener future.

BROADBAND ACCESS

Mr PENGILLY (Finniss) (15:30): I would like today to welcome yesterday's announcement by the federal government of the rollout on the 'backhaul blackspot program', and the fact that Victor Harbor has been chosen as the spot for this in South Australia, along with a number of other locations around Australia: Emerald and Longreach in Queensland; Geraldton, Western Australia; Darwin; Broken Hill; and South-West Gippsland. This is a step in the right direction, and I welcome it as I am sure will the residents of my electorate.

I pay full credit to Mr Roy Ramage, particularly, the Economic Development Officer of the Victor Harbor council who has worked and pushed and shoved at this, along with a couple of people from the Fleurieu Regional Development Board for a fair while. I am intensely interested in how this will roll out, and I hope that it will benefit the residents of Victor Harbor and increase markedly the amount of broadband coverage and broadband connection they will have in terms of their ability to communicate with the rest of Australia.

It is also important to recognise that Telstra already has this cable in hand. In fact, it owns the cable that is in there, and this backhaul will be put in place as a supplement to that. It is important to note that Telstra actually has its cable paid for, and I want to know (and I will do more work on this) whether individual residents in Victor Harbor will be connected to this or whether they will have to apply and pay considerable amounts of money to get onto it. While I sincerely welcome it, this is only the first step. What we have to do now is to get a network provider to come in and hook up to this form of communication so that it can improve the lot of Victor Harbor residents.

I point out that it has to be viable for another provider to come in to do this, and that will be a challenge in itself. I will make a few discreet inquiries on where we go with that. Yes, it is welcome. We do not want to get too excited. We need to find out what the cost to consumers will be, because that is an important issue. We need to find out what providers will be interested in getting in on this backhaul, this extension, and, if we can, we also need to make sure that these services will be cheaper for consumers.

While the federal government's announcement is a good thing for the area of Victor Harbor, we have got a bit of work to do in my view before it comes to fruition. I understand also that it will take about eight years for this to roll out across the nation, so I am pleased that Victor Harbor was chosen in the first round. I think that is a good thing. Unfortunately, we need to remember that the Rudd government cancelled the OPAL network, which was targeted for completion this year and which would have seen new fibre backhaul rolled into service areas of every state and country, with a 30 per cent discount in current backhaul pricing across the 15,000 kilometre network.

Governments come and governments go, and blessed be the name of the government, but we are one step backwards from where we were, from where we should have been, in my view. However, this will work to the benefit of Victor Harbor in the long term. I look forward to further announcements for other towns, cities and regional places across South Australia. I think this is

just the start. The backhaul will assist the communication through to the major centre in Adelaide and it will be a step towards improving broadband services. I think there is a lot more to come out of it, and I hope that before too long I can find out more information and report positively to the house.

ROAD SAFETY AWARENESS

Mr PICCOLO (Light) (15:35): Today I would like to speak briefly about an issue which is of great importance not only to my own electorate but also to the region, that is, the loss of life on our roads. This has caught the sentiment of the community over the last few months, because there have been some tragic accidents in the region—

Ms Bedford: Too many.

Mr PICCOLO: Yes, the member for Florey is quite right, too many. The devastation of the families affected by this is enormous. I must confess that, as a parent, one of my worst fears is the loss of a child, and to lose a child in a way which can be avoided is a greater tragedy and, as a community, we need to do whatever we can to minimise that. We will never get it down to zero, but we need to ensure that we reduce the incidence of young people dying in car accidents. Unfortunately, two things which are common in the statistics for our locality are young people and young males. We need to ensure that we have a greater understanding of their behaviour and what we can do to change it.

Today, I report to this house two things which my community is doing—in addition to the operation by the local police—to make young people and people generally aware of the implications of speeding and, if something goes wrong, the consequences of speeding. First, I advise the house of a public meeting which was held about 10 days ago. The meeting was organised by two people from Lyndoch, Kim Michelmore and Malinda Melbourne. They organised a public meeting to discuss ways that the community could come together to help minimise the tragic waste of life as a result of accidents. The meeting was held in the Barossa and it discussed the possibility of establishing some sort of centre to improve driver education and how to be a better driver but to raise awareness about the consequences of speeding or driving under the influence, etc.

These two people said that a whole range of organisations offer driver education, and they would like to offer one structured program that coordinates and brings all those things together on an ongoing, sustainable basis. This program is trying to bring together all the other ad hoc programs in our community and our resources to achieve a better outcome for our young people. At this point, I mention what the minister said today in answer to a question I put to him about road safety, particularly in rural areas. There are three things which improve road safety: first, good behaviour by drivers; secondly, ensuring that we have the appropriate infrastructure, etc.; and, thirdly, ensuring that drivers have the appropriate skills.

In his answer today, the minister addressed how we can improve the infrastructure to lessen the impact of road accidents. Improving infrastructure may not always prevent an accident, but certainly improved infrastructure can help lessen the consequences of an accident. The minister announced some additional funding in my region and the region represented by the member for Schubert, that is, shouldering of roads and construction of barriers. This will certainly improve road safety in those localities, and I welcome those announcements. I commend Kim and Malinda for this project, which will bring people together to work as a community.

The other thing I bring to the house's attention is another community project by the Barossa, Light and Gawler Football Association and also the Barossa, Light and Gawler Netball Association. They have started an annual event, which is a road safety weekend. They dedicate one weekend of sport to road safety awareness to make young people—and footballers and netballers players are mainly young people—more aware of road safety. One of the things they do is hold a road safety night. This forum is going to be held at the Gawler Central clubrooms with a number of speakers: Dr Griggs, who is a trauma specialist; the Minister for Mental Health and Substance Abuse, Dr Jane Lomax-Smith, who is representing the Premier; and a number of others. This night is about making young people aware of the hazards of speeding, etc.

MOUNT CRAWFORD FIRE SIREN

Mr VENNING (Schubert) (15:40): I would like to add to what the member for Light has just said. I have been involved with the program and have attended all the public meetings. I

congratulate both Kim Michelmore and Malinda Melbourne on their initiative to establish a young driver education program in all our schools. I certainly support that.

Many years ago when I came to this place, I represented Port Broughton. They had a similar scheme at the school. They actually had access to a car which was donated to them by one of the car yards. They had a year 11 compulsory driving course. I do not know what happened to that. Anything that we can do to address the loss of life has to be supported.

Earlier this year, I was contacted by a constituent from Mount Crawford regarding the concerns of some residents of the area about not having a fire siren. I believe that the concerns of the community are extremely valid, particularly in the wake of the Victorian bushfires and the deaths of so many people, which resulted, in part, from the lack of warnings about the danger of the fires approaching their towns and their homes.

About 12 months ago, a lightning strike at night caused a fire on top of Mount Crawford. The first the owners of the adjoining property knew about it was when the fire units asked for help in getting to the blaze. So you can understand why they have concerns for their safety if a bushfire were to occur, particularly at night.

On 6 January this year, a gentleman who has lived in Mount Crawford for over 35 years wrote to the Premier outlining the concerns of the community because they do not have a fire siren, and requesting that the fire siren be made operational once again. The constituent informed me that, some time ago, the siren was located and operated by the local forestry office.

The constituent did not even receive an acknowledgement of his correspondence to the Premier, so he contacted me to advocate on his behalf, which I did. The gentleman finally received a response from the Minister for Emergency Services in late May, nearly six months after the initial letter. That is not good enough in my book, but delays in receiving responses from ministers are not the subject of this grievance: the safety of the people of Mount Crawford is.

A couple of years ago, the constituent raised the issue with the manager of the local forestry office and was told that there was no way the fire siren would be reinstated and that it did not work. The response then turned into, 'We don't have one.' Well, wonderful. The minister's response states:

The CFS does not have a station within the Mount Crawford area, and the fire appliances and the crew that service the Mount Crawford area belong to ForestrySA.

He goes on to say:

I am advised that the CFS has stations adjacent to the Mount Crawford area at Williamstown, Forreston and Mount Pleasant. Both Mount Pleasant and Forreston have sirens that are activated according to the CFS siren policy.

I do not think that having fire sirens in areas near Mount Crawford alleviates the worries the community has about a fire burning through their region. Look what happened in Victoria. The fire travelled extremely quickly. What if a similar situation occurred here, particularly if you are inside on a hot day with your air conditioner on and your TV going, unaware of what is happening outside? Really, the fire siren is the only way that you will hear about a fire if you are not listening to the radio.

The minister's response also states that the CFS contacted ForestrySA about the use of the siren at Mount Crawford. ForestrySA advised that it had no use for a siren and also that it was not aware of any requests for a siren. This seems to be a bit of a cop-out. Since when does ForestrySA have the exclusive power to determine whether or not a certain area requires the use of a fire siren? Surely, the local community should have some input, particularly when taking into account the incident that occurred when a fire started as the result of a lightning strike. People need to be warned, particularly at night.

The constituent who first brought this matter to my attention told me that he has contacted the local ForestrySA office regarding a fire siren several times. He is an elderly gentleman, so he has no reason to lie; yet ForestrySA maintains that there have been no requests made to it to have the siren returned. I find this very strange indeed. It is all very well to set up a bushfire task force and ask people to have bushfire plans but, unless proactive action is taken in relation to warning people, we are leaving ourselves wide open to another bushfire with tragic consequences occurring here.

I urge the Rann Labor government to reinstate the fire siren in the Mount Crawford area. I cannot believe this is the case. A fire siren is of minimal cost. They are not big capital outlays. I cannot understand why the siren that was there is not reinstated or replaced with a new one and operated in the same way it did before. The people of Mount Crawford are asking for this, and I think it should be urgently addressed before the next fire season.

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN BLIND BOWLERS CLUB

Ms BEDFORD (Florey) (15:45): In today's paper I noticed a great article by Craig Cook, talking about lawn bowls. It is a very popular game, and a lot of us have already attended bowls in our electorates many times. The origins of the game date back to 12th century England. The article talks about bowls being a part of the Commonwealth Games since 1930, with world bowls championships being watched by three million viewers, played by more than 40 countries and more than 50 national teams. The article is accompanied by a photograph of an amazing venue where you can play lawn bowls totally undercover. It is very reminiscent of Wimbledon, for some of us late night owls who have been watching that.

Looking at this awe inspiring facility, it reminded me that I should put on the record my admiration for the awe-inspiring efforts of the South Australian Blind Bowlers Club. As a proud patron of the club and a member of the wider community, I acknowledge the work and dedication of the group that acts as the executive. I would especially like to thank Ray and Jill McKay, who recently celebrated their ruby wedding anniversary, for their role with the blind bowlers and, indeed, for blind sportspeople in general, and for being the people who originally contacted me in my capacity as their local MP and made sure that I became involved with this wonderful group of people.

It has been a very busy year for the South Australian Blind Bowlers Club. It was part of the national team that attended the World Bowls Championships in Victoria. The South Australian president, Kath Murrell, provided a great report to the recent AGM and advised that Australia won the championships with a score of 94 points, eight points ahead of second placed South Africa, with England in third place with 75 points, narrowly ahead, much to their horror, I imagine, of the Scottish team on 72 points. Other teams came from Malaysia, Hong Kong, Israel, New Zealand, Canada, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The next nationals will be in England in 2013, and I am sure that Australia will be well represented and competitive there again. From 19 to 29 May, our South Australian 11-member team traversed the continent to Perth for the Australian National Championships. Team manager, Doreen Smith, organised all travel, accommodation and itineraries. Our team competed well, with great success, bringing home three gold and two silver medals.

I refer to Doreen's report to the AGM, which advises that Florey resident, Marilyn Koch, directed by Doris Thomas, won two gold medals; Rebecca Arbon, directed by Ron Fawkes, won one gold and one silver; and Kath Murrell, directed by Beryl Woodall, won a silver medal. Marilyn and Rebecca won their gold medal in the ladies B2 pairs, and it is the second time that they have taken out that title. Marilyn won her medal in the mixed pairs with a man who lives in Tasmania but competes for the Northern Territory. It is the fifth time that they have taken out the pairs.

Rebecca won her silver medal in the ladies B3 singles, and Kath Murrell won her silver in the B2 pairs with a lady from Western Australia. Our men came very close to winning a bronze medal but were narrowly beaten on two occasions. We hope that the boys will do better next time. The next nationals will be held at the Salisbury Bowling Club from 13 to 23 April 2010. A great deal of planning has already taken place and will continue until the opening ceremony. I advise members to put that date in their forward diaries. The closing ceremony, as I said, will be on 23 April.

It has been a very busy year for blind bowlers. Kath Murrell's report detailed even further activity, noting the sad passing of Karen Cornaggia, Michelle Arbon and Mary Linton on top of the death late last year of Barbara Scriven. Kath thanked Ray McKay for his work as secretary and for acting as treasurer after the resignation, due to ill health, of long-time treasurer, George Murgatroyd. Everyone at SABBC acknowledges his long-standing commitment and dedication to this role over a number of years.

Thanks also for Maureen Clothier's contribution as vice-president of the club, Doris Thomas, who is always willing to help in any capacity, and also to Ray Marks at Affordable Print, who has helped them. Thanks to Doreen Smith, team manager extraordinaire, who is also the assistant secretary of ABBA and the BSSA delegate, as well as being the chief sandwich maker for

Friday bowls. It is important to thank the many bowling clubs that support the blind bowlers through donations on these occasions on Fridays and for their contributions, too, to the wrong bias tins.

The South Australian Blind Bowlers Club wants to express its continuing with thanks and appreciation to the Salisbury Bowling for the use of its greens and facilities. It has been a great supporter for many years, and it should be acknowledged for its help and support. We all look forward to the nationals there next year.

Kath also thanks the committee for its hard work and friendly support during the year, as well as the directors, who assist players on and off the greens. Without directors, this sport, difficult and challenging for anyone who is sighted, could not be offered as a sporting opportunity for people with the disability of visual impairment. The Blind Sporting Council continues to provide much-needed financial assistance to South Australian blind bowlers to help them send teams to the national titles, which is a very costly business.

APPROPRIATION BILL

Adjourned debate on motion:

That the proposed expenditures referred to Estimates Committees A and B be agreed to.

(Continued from page 3373.)

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Pederick): I call the member for Schubert.

Mr VENNING (Schubert) (15:51): Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. I congratulate you on your elevation to high office. It is a big day for you: you have gone to the front bench and you are also in the chair. You can write this in your diary as one of your finest hours, but let us hope that you can become permanent in one of those positions—either in a frontbench ministry or that chair later on in your career here. I also commend the minister for agriculture. Was it your first or second estimates?

The Hon. P. Caica: The fourth, but the first as agriculture minister.

Mr VENNING: On behalf of all the farmers of the state, I congratulate you. We have empathy with you, which is more than we can say for your predecessor, with whom we did not have empathy. I am afraid that you have a lot of work to do to catch up because of a lot of the damage that was done and the uncaring things that went on.

The estimates committees are a useful means for members to examine government policies and expenditure over the next 12 months. Many of the punters out there, and perhaps some in here, believe that figures can be made to say just about anything. After the spin doctors get to them with a smart press release or two, even the most unacceptable position can appear to be justified. That is why, in my many years here, I have always felt that you should keep your eyes and ears open but remember what went on last week or even last year was half the battle.

I have watched while South Australia imports a Victorian to tell us what we are doing wrong with our water—and you would know that, sir. It is rather a joke since, from the 1960s, South Australia has been the nation's leader in water. We capped our usage 30 years before the rest. We enclosed our last open irrigation channel about a decade ago. Victoria is still trying to pinch water out of the Murray system for Melbourne, it still has open irrigation systems galore and this Premier is currently taking it to the High Court of Australia for its illegal antics over the Murray—great idea! Still, at least this commissioner has got the Premier to pull his head out of the sand.

We have had a severe drought the several years now, and Adelaide has been on water restrictions because the government has neglected to secure supply. Every time it rained, most of the rain rushed into the gulf, and it still does—what a disgrace!

There has been ongoing cause for experts—such as Professor John Argue, Professor Mike Young and Thinker in Residence the late Professor Peter Cullen, and practical men, like Colin Pitman of Salisbury council, not to mention nearly every member on this side of the house—to urge the government to invest in stormwater capture in wetlands and storage in our aquifers.

I do not know how many times and in how many ways I have heard the government say, 'It's not on. It won't work,' and that includes an almost hysterical Attorney-General claiming that we would all be poisoned or become sick if we drank even rainwater out of the tank. Apparently, the commissioner has converted to him on the way to the polls.

As of Tuesday, we are asking for something of the order of \$37 million to construct seven wetlands with the aim of capturing 60 gigalitres of water, exactly the same figures as those experts I mentioned before have been touting for years, but of course they were all wrong. Here we see it: a reality. Still, we could not expect much more. After all, how many reasons were there that we could not and would not have a desalination plant when it was suggested by the Leader of the Opposition? What a different song they are singing now! In fact, they want to double the size of it, which we do not support.

I also noticed in Saturday's paper that they are advertising for a commissioner for sustainability. Apart from the fact that the only commissioners I knew were the men who earned their living opening hotel and cab doors for guests, before this government started appointing every man and possibly their dogs as commissioners, I thought to myself, 'Well, I should give them credit: maybe they do care.' Then it was all ruined, because I got one of those brown paper bag tip-offs that the Premier could not live without when he was in opposition. Now, you can imagine that I thought I had better check the authenticity of this one.

Just so there is no doubt, I will be very clear indeed, and I will go slowly so the ministerial staffers can get this down. The document I refer to was addressed to the Director of Organisational Change and Development, and it is interesting that there is actually a full-time director for that. Its subject was 'SARDI fixed term contract arrangements'. Its author was Elizabeth Warhurst and the document was dated March 2008.

As members would know, SARDI employs many scientists who have done wonderful work to keep our rural industries competitive for decades. That is why I was appalled to see on page 5 of this report that 71 of those scientists have been employed for over 10 years on casual contracts and that in at least one case an employee has been contracted for more than 20 years. I will say it again: more than 71 of the state's best scientists have been employed continuously for more than 10 years as casual employees.

That is a disgrace. Any public servant employed continuously for a fraction of that time would have been made permanent. Indeed, almost all the administration staff in that bureaucracy are permanent employees (again; we have heard that before) but not, apparently, those who really drive the place. The brightest and best, those who look to resolve water issues, to improve grain production, to protect us from climate change—those, in short, whom we desperately need to ensure a better future—are demeaned and treated as transitory and expendable.

I am sure we will get our commissioner; I am equally sure we will get thousands more dollars of feel-good ads, but will we get any action? Will we have any scientists left, or will they all leave for permanent jobs in Canberra, New South Wales and Victoria? Is it not past the time the government stopped talking the talk and started walking the walk?

Returning to the budget in detail, as I said in my Appropriation response, I am very disappointed that the budget handed down by the Rann government on 4 June overlooked and ignored country South Australians. The answers I received to a couple of questions I asked during estimates hearings definitely prove that this government does not care about any region north of Gepps Cross.

I am concerned about the government's response regarding my questions about enhancing transport services to the Barossa. The Barossa region contributes very heavily to state revenue, and what does it get in return from the Rann government? Nothing. I particularly refer to question time today, when we heard about the all the new rolling stock coming to South Australia—millions of dollars worth; the greatest purchase of rolling stock ever, according to the minister. How much is coming to the Barossa? None. It is a disgrace.

The community has been calling out for public transport services to be improved for many years but, when I questioned the Minister for Transport during estimates as to whether if the Rann government cannot supply trains it would be able to supply buses that link with the scheduled Gawler to Adelaide train services so that at least a few times a day it can run linking services into the Barossa under the Metro ticket system, the minister categorically ruled it out, despite his acknowledging that it is a growth area for South Australia. In his answer, the minister said in relation to public transport:

About 75 per cent of the system is paid for by the taxpayer and about 25 per cent is paid for by the user. So, no public transport system is feasible.

If you use that principle, the state government obviously subsidises public transport—about 75 per cent—but not in country South Australia. Where is the equity in that? The minister or one of his advisers stated numerous times that extending the passenger rail line from Gawler to the Barossa is not viable, but now he admits that no public transport is viable either, particularly if you use this criterion. It is not viable at all. Why not trial a service to the Barossa? I am sure patronage would equal that of any public transport service offered in regional centres across South Australia.

During a radio interview last year the minister admitted that some regional centres have quite high levels of subsidy. He said:

In regional centres it is very much a case of very different systems that have developed piecemeal over time, but some of the major centres have quite high levels...the Port Lincoln bus service has quite a high level of subsidy for some reason...others have a lower and some don't really get very much at all in regional areas, to be quite frank.

Well, it appears that the Barossa falls into that category. At the moment, the cost of public transport offered in the Barossa is prohibitive so not many people use the services. Currently, it costs \$12.80 one way for a full fare and \$6.04 for a concession fare to catch the bus from Angaston to Gawler. It costs more to get to Gawler than it does to get from Gawler to Adelaide. The cost of a single trip ticket from Gawler to Adelaide during the peak service is only \$4.40—which includes the rise that was announced in this year's budget.

I will continue to lobby on behalf of the Barossa community for improvements to the public transport systems offered in the region. If it cannot give us a train, at least the Rann government could provide a bus linking the main towns to the railway station in Gawler under the metro ticket system. I also include Kapunda, because the rail line is still there and still operative; I have no problem with that and I would support that, too. I have also asked questions about security of the carparks at Gawler Railway Station. If we are going to force people to use them, at least we should provide security so that when they come home their car will be there and not vandalised.

The government has been pushing ahead with urban growth boundary plans, particularly with the Gawler East development, which is estimated to have around 20,000 houses. The minister also put on the record that the Rann Labor government has no plans to extend the rail system to this new area. The answer the minister provided demonstrates that the government is surging ahead without planning appropriate infrastructure for such a large development—more policy on the run. That is a disgrace.

There is nothing better than developing infrastructure before people start building houses. It is obvious common sense—and an opportunity lost. The government has to have much more foresight than that. The whole issue about the northern growth boundary is getting on the nose very quickly, as the member for Light would know. It is not popular, and it is a travesty that we are seeing houses being built on the best land in South Australia. Why are we not forcing them to go west of the Princes Highway and leave this land to grow the food that we will need in the next 20 to 30 years? Food will be in short supply, indeed, and we should not be allowing development on our best land, particularly in the Freeling and Roseworthy area. It is bad news and it should be against the law.

It is clear, as a result of examining the budget and answers to questions in estimates, that the Rann Labor government is determined to forge ahead with its \$1.7 billion rail yard hospital—before cost blow-outs—which will drain funds from all other areas of health, including Country Health. There is no mention of any funds for a new Barossa health facility in this year's budget—again—and with the government set on building a new Taj Mahal on North Terrace I do not expect it as long as this government is in power.

In the wake of the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission report being presented to the Rudd federal government yesterday, after 18 months of study of the nation's health system and with preliminary findings in February this year recommending that the federal government take over key aspects of Australia's health system, I think it is time to start asking the federal government for direct funding for a new Barossa hospital. If everything else fails, we will go to the federal government.

It is crystal clear that, as long as the Rann government is in power and, therefore, has the responsibility of running our state's health system, the Barossa will never get a new health facility. During the 2007 election campaign, Mr Kevin Rudd (then leader of the opposition) warned the states to fix their hospitals or risk commonwealth takeover should he be elected. He said, 'When it comes to health and hospitals, the buck will stop with me.'

Well, we got some money in last year's state budget for a business case. It started only a few months ago, which was a deliberate delay tactic so it could not be completed before this year's budget was handed down. When John Howard was prime minister he bailed out Tasmania's Mersey Hospital—and maybe it can be done again for the Barossa.

I will personally invite several federal and state MPs to visit the Barossa Hospital at Angaston. I will send invitations specifically to the federal health minister, the member for Barker (Patrick Secker), the member for Wakefield (Nick Champion), the member for Mayo (Jamie Briggs), several Labor senators and several Liberal senators to come to the Barossa to look at this hospital. I am sick of saying it: everyone knows that it is appalling and most inappropriate for one of our tourism jewels and one of the sectors of success in our state. Yet the government leaves us with a hospital that can only be described as a hovel.

The Minister for Transport acknowledged during estimates that the Barossa is a growth area. The front page of one of the local papers yesterday carried the headline 'Barossa population set to boom'. The article was based on the Barossa and Light Regional Development Board's regional profile for the region, but we cannot get the government to invest in our health system and give us new health facilities. It is a disgrace.

Obviously, when it comes to water—the state's most pressing need—this government has failed. The newly released Rann government's water plan fails to deliver any new initiatives, particularly with respect to stormwater harvesting results, as I said, until 2050. How long should it take? As we said during question time today, by 2050 we will all be well and truly gone—or, at least, all in our gophers.

The plan also fails to recognise a need for water security in regional South Australia. I do not understand how a country member who is also the Minister for Water Security cannot seem to find some opportunity to invest in stormwater and re-use opportunities in regional South Australia. It would definitely help farmers and irrigators at this time. We have had some good rain (and it is still raining), and the crops are looking wonderful, I report to the house. However, we need it to rain heavily for a long time to get over the past seven years of protracted drought and, more importantly, to get run-off into the river.

Mr Acting Speaker, I commend you and your private endeavours as the member for Hammond for what you have done. You are a fearless campaigner for the cause, and if every member had your dedication we would not have the problems we have in this state. So, I commend and congratulate you very much.

During estimates, I questioned the minister for agriculture about the future of PIRSA regional offices. The minister responded that he cannot give assurances that all 17 regional offices will remain open, and that worried me (and I note that the minister is in the house). These offices provide farmers, horticulturalists, vignerons and many others within the primary industries sector with important research work and advice—or I should say independent research work and advice, because it does not come with any price tag or commercial bias.

The minister said that across the 17 regional offices there are about 115,000 inquiries, of which 40,000 (about 30 per cent of the total) are received from primary producers and agribusinesses. The remainder are from other government agencies and the general community. I think that 40,000 queries in a year made to regional PIRSA offices from primary producers and agribusinesses demonstrate the importance of these offices and the services they provide to rural communities.

I also query the merit of the Rann government's decision to cut jobs from the primary industries department. It seems that it is being asked to shed some long-term jobs, it is being asked to shed the fat that it never took on. The extra public servants who have been taken on are not from within the department of agriculture.

The minister responded that there is a clear requirement that all agencies make cuts and deliver savings, but I do not think it is right. Why should the department of agriculture have to cut back when it never grew fat in the first place, especially at a time when our primary producers need its support more than ever?

In the time that I have been here I cannot recall one instance where we saw a blow-out or a lift in the department of agriculture's employment levels. Every year it has been decline, decline, decline. So, why is this department now being placed under the same scrutiny as all the others? If you compare it to, say, the department of environment and the huge growth in that department—

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson interjecting:

Mr VENNING: Did you say 'elite'?

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson: Mr Leak.

Mr VENNING: What an appalling comment to make. I cannot understand why the department of agriculture is being put under the same scrutiny as these other departments that have grown fat over recent years. So, you are putting on the screws—I thought that comment was most un-Christian; very much so.

The Hon. J.M. Rankine interjecting:

Mr VENNING: It is not true—and I have already said that. I will get a Bible if you wish. I think it is appalling that this person stands in this place—

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson: You are a principal Liberal leak to the media.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Pederick): The Attorney-General will come to order!

Mr VENNING: I was quite put off my job here. I just cannot believe that a person who purports to be a Christian can say that. I have already said to him privately that it was not—I stand up and honestly—he did quote an instance. I denied it emphatically and I do again, absolutely, on the Bible.

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson: Tell the house what that incident is.

The ACTING SPEAKER: The Attorney-General will come to order! The member for Schubert has the call.

Mr VENNING: I think that it is a bit rough that the department of agriculture has been put through the wringer like everyone else has. Just in closing, I will put all my personal things open for the public, the whole lot; my personal life, too. You put yours there, too. Shall we start? Shall we start with our private lives? Shall we start about our partners? If you want to go this way, I'll take you on, because you are a despicable grub.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: Mr Acting Speaker, I call upon the member for Schubert to withdraw and apologise for the remarks he has just made.

Mr VENNING: I will do that, sir, but you heard the slur that came across the chamber here. This is where the dodgy documents, I think, have come from—from this source. This man is a man—

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! Please return to the debate.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: Mr Acting Speaker, my point of order is that the member for Schubert has just accused me of fabricating the dodgy documents.

Mr Venning: Do you deny it?

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: Yes, I do, and I ask that he be required to withdraw.

Mr VENNING: I will do it without being asked, sir. I withdraw that.

The ACTING SPEAKER: And please return to the substance of the debate, member for Schubert.

Mr VENNING: I have been misled and very much provoked, as you can see. I am here to—

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson interjecting:

The ACTING SPEAKER: The Attorney-General will come to order! The member for Schubert has the call.

Mr VENNING: I am here to support the department of agriculture, the workers there and particularly the comments I made earlier about SARDI. I do not veer from that fact. I think it is unfair to these people, particularly the closures at Roseworthy. You and I, sir, were there the other day at the information centre—a wonderful facility—that is to be closed. The wonderful library there is to be closed. I could not believe it. It is a sad day. I will always support the department of agriculture and be there for the farmers.

Time expired.

The Hon. R.B. SUCH (Fisher) (16:11): I once described estimates as a near-death experience; I do not believe that things have changed much. I was delighted to hear the Premier say this week that he was considering (and, hopefully, committed to) reforming the estimates process. It is important for the government and ministers to be put under scrutiny, but as a parliament I think we can do it in a much more efficient and effective manner than the current arrangement that we have via estimates.

The parliament itself—and I am talking in particular about our house—could engage in a big dose of reform. South Australia used to lead the world in a lot of things, including parliamentary and electoral reform, and I think it is time that we brought ourselves up to a point other parliaments have now reached, where they have much more efficient and effective processes. I wish to consider a range of issues. The first matter is local government, and I am aware of the statement that the Minister for State/Local Government Relations put out today in connection with the City of Burnside.

What I have been arguing for a long time is that we need to have a look, and the government needs to have a look, at the whole area of local government. The fact that it is called 'local government relations' and not 'local government' per se indicates that the government has taken a step back from what I think is a necessary process of reform. When I have raised this issue some people in local government have said, 'What about reforming state government?' I say, 'Hear, hear!' Let us reform that as well. Let us reform federal government. I believe it is long overdue that we look at whether or not, in the metropolitan area, we can make the councils more efficient and effective.

I do not know how many there should be, but I point out that, in the metropolitan area, we have 263 elected members in local government—that is including deputy mayors and mayors. That in itself is not necessarily a good or a bad thing, but it is certainly a lot of elected members. The number of councils in the metropolitan area of 19 has a total operating budget of \$975 million—I will round it off. The City of Brisbane has an operating budget of \$2.2 billion. It is interesting that, in the City of Brisbane, the basic allowances paid are less—\$3.4 million (I will round it off)—than what we pay to the 263 councillors, mayors and deputy mayors in the metropolitan area of Adelaide, which runs into over \$4 million per annum.

Once again, that of itself does not prove a lot, but it suggests that maybe it is time we looked at the issue of whether or not we have the optimal number of councils in the metropolitan area and whether it should be one or whether the status quo should prevail. That should be determined by an independent review. In respect of councils—and this is the related issue—they have just had an elector representation review. In the City of Onkaparinga, which, overall, I rate as a very good council in most aspects, they have 21 elected members, that is, including the mayor. I think that is far too many to have an effective decision-making body, which should be more akin to a cabinet, rather than a large representative body—21 members.

I made a submission suggesting they should have 11. The answer that came back from the government was that, if the people do not like the number of elected members in a council, then they should indicate that at the time of the local government election. How can they? They cannot. A whole range of issues need to be looked at. Many of the CEOs in councils in metropolitan Adelaide are now getting \$300,000 a year or more; maybe they are worth it, maybe they are not, but it is time to look at that whole issue. The answer that has come back from the government is: we cannot look at councils and the number thereof, etc., because we are focused on the growth boundary. That is quite inappropriate and silly. Governments can look at more than one issue at the one time.

In concluding on the matter of local government, people have contacted me concerned that some of the councils have no ward structure at all. I think that, without a ward structure, you are not likely to have accountability. It is something we need to look at in terms of the Legislative Council; that is, it should have districts or zones that its members represent because, in that way, you get better accountability, in my view.

The issue of education is something that is very close to my heart. I think it is high time that DECS was subject to an extensive and thorough review, because, at the moment, I do not believe that DECS is really serving the educational interests of this state. Once again, our education system used to lead not only Australia but the world. I do not believe it does any more, and one of the key factors for that is that DECS is in need of a major overhaul and major decentralisation, including decentralising decision-making more to the school level, rather than in head office.

The other government agency which I think is in need of a significant review and overhaul is the police department. We have a very good police force overall, I believe, but I cannot recall the last time the police department was subject to an overall review: a complete and fundamental look at how it operates and whether it is operating efficiently or effectively. It is a long time since that sort of review was undertaken. Obviously, it needs to be undertaken by someone independent of the police force. Police members contact me, and have done so recently. I have said to them, 'How come you're getting a bigger budget? You have more police than ever before, but we don't seem to see them out and about.'

The answer given to me by police was that they are doing projects. I do not know whether or not that is true. That is the accusation that is made. We have seen *The Advertiser* report on stress levels in the police force. That was a point made to me also by a serving police officer. Also, the police seem to have this view that, despite having over 400 unmarked vehicles, very few of them are used as unmarked vehicles in policing work other than, obviously, for criminal investigation. For example, very few of them are used by traffic police.

I think it is time that the police department was thoroughly examined to see whether it can be improved in terms of efficiency and effectiveness. Overall, I think we can be very proud of the police force here in terms of their integrity and honesty. There will always be a few police who do not do the right thing. As an organisation, I think it is time for a total review of the way in which the police operate.

In relation to both DECS and the police department, I just make the point that the estimates committee process does not really provide the opportunity for the sort of review that I am talking about. I have attended many estimates—many more than the member for Finnis—and the reason I did not attend this year is that I find the exercise rather pointless, until it is reformed. I have called for reform over the years and, finally, thankfully, the Premier is going to do something about it. I can serve my electorate better by being out among my electors than being in the estimates and feeling like a fossilised member of some antiquated institution.

In terms of other issues that need focus, I am delighted that minister O'Brien is taking the road safety portfolio very seriously. I am pleased that he did not go down the path of blaming trees and poles for people crashing into them. I note that some researcher at the University of Adelaide came out and blamed trees and poles. As far as I know, trees and poles do not jump out at motorists. Nevertheless, if a pole, or whatever, is an obvious danger, it is prudent that we do something about it. I travel on the old road to Murray Bridge quite a lot. I commend the government on its shoulder-sealing program; it is excellent in terms of improving safety. Also, the installation of Armco railing has been very much welcomed on that particular road, and elsewhere.

In regard to road safety overall, I would like to see the government follow the lead of New Zealand and some of the states in the US, where very strict controls have been imposed on P-platers carrying other passengers after midnight. Unless the P-plater can show that it is necessary in terms of work, they should not be able to fill their car with mates after midnight, putting themselves and others at great risk. I do not know how many more young people we have to lose tragically because we, as a community, allow them to put themselves at great risk under peer pressure, or whatever.

In regard to road safety, I would like to see the minister look at the possibility of repeat road offenders—and I emphasise 'repeat'—being required to re-do a licence test and maybe undertake some other program, which could involve looking at the consequences of poor driving, road trauma, and so on. I heard the member for Mayo (Jamie Briggs) suggest that everyone should redo their licence after five years. I think that is unnecessary and excessive in terms of cost and imposition. However, people who repeatedly do not behave on the road should be required to redo a licence test and undergo other appropriate training.

Years ago, people had to attend police lectures if they offended on the road. Sadly, that seems to have gone by the wayside; maybe that could be looked at as well. One of the schemes that would help in terms of reducing road trauma has been successfully introduced in Europe. That scheme has various names but, in general, it comes under the heading of 'New car rebate scheme'. In Germany, a scheme has been introduced where people get a financial incentive to replace cars that are nine or more years old.

What has happened in Germany is that sales of cars have increased by 18 per cent in the four months to April 2009. Not only has it helped to reduce accidents, because people are in better cars, with airbags and so on, but it has also helped the car manufacturers and employment as well.

Clearly, the state government would be under financial pressure were it to introduce such a scheme, but the commonwealth certainly could. In Germany, they offer \$3,320 equivalent to replace old cars. Likewise, France has a scheme to replace cars that are 10 years old or more, and it resulted in an 8.1 per cent jump in car sales in March this year. Britain offers £2,000 towards the cost of a new car, and some of the provinces in Canada do likewise.

One of the big lifesaving features of modern cars is airbags, but, sadly, many young people cannot afford to buy a new car. South Australia has the second oldest car fleet in the nation, and I think it is time that the federal government, in particular, provided a financial incentive to help upgrade the cars on our roads. It would help the car industry, employment and, importantly, save lives and reduce road trauma.

There are some other very important issues. I notice that the Hon. Dennis Hood has introduced a measure relating to the government's significant tree legislation, which was the development bill of 2007. I was a little surprised by the member's comments reported in the newspaper today that people should be able to do basically what they like on their own property. I think that is a very risky strategy, whether it applies to trees or anything else. There is no doubt that tree reform is needed, and I am quite willing to assist that process in this chamber.

At the moment, the scheme that was meant to protect big river red gums has been distorted and is being used to protect any big tree, and the term 'significant' is no longer used in the correct way. A small tree can be environmentally significant, but it is not big, obviously, and therefore it is not protected, in most situations. That legislation needs to be rejigged, and we need to try to put legislation in place that does not impose undue burden on people who want to remove a tree that was planted inappropriately or may even be dead.

Last night, someone at a community meeting was telling me that they have a dead tree in their yard. They have to pay an application fee of \$30 to the council, as well as planning permission fees, and then they have to get an arborist to say that the tree is dead. I think that is excessive, and it imposes an unfair and unnecessary burden on landowners when it is obvious that the tree—a tree that was planted by the owner, anyway, and is dead—should be removed because it is dangerous.

The government seems to be moving very slowly in a couple of areas that are of particular interest to me and my constituents. One is spent convictions—and I see the Attorney sitting in the chamber. I know he has made a commitment to try to bring in a template-based spent convictions bill. I hope he can help expedite that so that people who did something silly of a minor nature years ago can get a clean slate and a second chance at life.

Graffiti is still an issue, and I understand the Attorney and his department are trying to deal with that more effectively. I am currently working on some proposals, which I hope will assist. I notice that the government, in developing its hydroponics legislation, is doing some of the things it said were not possible with my graffiti proposal several years ago. So, I will be reminding the government that, if it is good for hydroponics, maybe the principle should also be applied to graffiti vandalism.

The other one which seems to be very elusive is cat management reform. Mitcham council took two steps forward and one step back, but we still need consistent, congruent cat management reform across the state that will help protect cats and also wildlife and reduce the nuisance that some cats may cause to people in the neighbourhood.

It annoys and distresses me that, continually, because people dump cats outside our country towns, people like me have to have those cats destroyed. At the moment, the system allows that to happen, in terms of people dumping cats and not looking after them. It is an area that needs attention, and I urge the government to really get cracking on it.

I am aware that an announcement was made this week to name and shame restaurants that are dirty. It has been a hobbyhorse of mine for a long time to try to clean up the small number of restaurants that do not do the right thing. I advocated scores on the doors, which is the English model, where you highlight positives and rate restaurants according to their cleanliness and so on, but this week's announcement by the government is still worth while.

In terms of public transport, we need improvements in my electorate. We need lighting on Happy Valley Drive; the Minister for Transport said he was looking at it, and I hope we can see some action there. I notice the rapid progress in standardising the Belair line. I have to pay tribute to the contractors, for the fantastic job they are doing there and the speed at which they are doing

it. It is a great testament to what private enterprise can actually do. Finally, I pay tribute to small business in my area. Many of the proprietors work their butts off.

Time expired.

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders) (16:32): Yesterday, I attended the SA Water estimates hearing where the minister stated, in her very first words:

This state government's number one priority is ensuring that South Australia has sufficient water supplies for future economic and population growth, and this week we outlined a comprehensive plan to guarantee South Australia's future water security to 2050 and beyond.

If water is this government's number one priority, why then has it taken seven years for this Water for Good plan to be developed, and why is the state under level 3 restrictions, the River Murray running dry and Eyre Peninsula's underground resources overdrawn? Currently, 0.8 gegalitres of water is being pumped all the way from the River Murray to Kimba on Eyre Peninsula, with a proposal for this to be increased to 2.3 gegalitres if necessary.

This water is pumped through a \$48.6 million pipeline from Iron Knob, which people on Eyre Peninsula did not want. Frustratingly, this funding could have provided a desalination plant that could have almost doubled the region's current nine gegalitre requirements. A desalination plant for Eyre Peninsula was promised by this Labor government years ago. It would have taken pressure off the underground resource, provided good quality water in place of the substandard product we are currently supplied with and stimulated significant development—all this for less than the cost of pumping, accrued interest and the cost of the pipeline and taking precious water from the extremely stressed Murray River.

I quote the Mayor of Ceduna in today's *West Coast Sentinel*, in an article entitled, 'SA Water needs some common sense', which sums up the feelings of many people on the West Coast of South Australia, as follows:

There is an urgent need for an injection of common sense and private enterprise into the operations of SA Water before more foolish decisions are made.

A read of past press releases from SA Water about 'water security' revealed amazing details. Stage one of the Iron Knob to Kimba pipeline cost about \$50 million and is presently delivering about 800 megalitres of water from the River Murray.

Contrast this with what could have been delivered by private enterprise. The environmentally benign desalination project proposed for Penong would have delivered 1,250 megalitres of water for zero capital investment on the part of SA Water. There are now other potential operations able to deliver a similar amount on the same basis.

Clearly, SA Water is an incredibly slow learner because it is now considering a further expansion to the foolish pipeline to cost 'less than \$50 million' to deliver a further 900 megalitres of water from the dying River Murray. This possible action is a ridiculous blend of environmental vandalism and fundamental stupidity.

While all of the above is proceeding at a pace way below that of a badly wounded tortoise, Eyre Peninsula is enduring unnecessary water restrictions, coupled with an inability to go ahead with desperately needed development, because of the inability of SA Water to supply additional water. While this is happening, SA Water has spent millions on studies which lead nowhere.

To add insult to injury, the rationed water that we are being charged for is barely potable. As an example of this, prior to purchasing water from any other source, SA Water requires that water to have a hardness level of only between 60 and 120, yet supply us with water with a level of 298.

As I suggested in the header for this article, SA Water desperately needs an urgent dose of common sense, which should be provided by private enterprise. Our water security is too important to be left under the exclusive control of a virtual monopoly.

I therefore call on minister Karlene Maywald to intervene to bring some sanity into this process before even more money is wasted.

The Eyre region produces about 40 per cent of the state's grain in a good year and about 65 per cent of the state's seafood, with about 80 per cent of the current mining exploration, but has only about 3 per cent of the state's population. It is very unfortunate for us, therefore, that this government's funding policy is based on population, with little consideration for the wealth that we create.

To justify the fact that regions got so little funding in the recent budget for regional communities, the member for Giles stated in the *Eyre Peninsula Tribune* in her guest editorial today, 'In fact, probably, per head of population, we get more than metropolitan suburbs.' I ask what relevance that observation has in relation to the fact that we are desperately in need of

infrastructure and opportunities that populated suburbs take for granted, for example, to bring to fruition the massive mining potential in the region.

In parliament this week I attended the launch of the new Regional Development Australia consultative body that will replace state regional development boards. This move will see the amalgamation of the Eyre Regional Development Board that covers the huge area of Eyre Peninsula with the Whyalla Development Board.

I am concerned that there is little community of interest between the two very different regions, with little benefit for the Eyre region, particularly based on the Labor government's population-based funding policy, where future funding is likely to be population based, not on the need and potential of the region. I do not believe that either board is happy with the amalgamation. Mark Cant, chief executive of the ERDB, said in today's *Port Lincoln Times*:

The biggest risk of having one organisation covering both Eyre Peninsula and Whyalla was the different dynamics in the two areas, with Whyalla's economy being industry based and the Eyre Peninsula's economy being agriculture, fishing and seafood based.

Mr Cant said:

While funding levels are expected to stay the same, the governments were looking at modelling for redistribution of the funding, possibly using population base as part of the formula, which would affect Eyre Peninsula.

The proposed new port and a desalination plant at Whyalla to cater for the needs of BHP's expansion at Olympic Dam are more examples of ill-conceived developments by this government.

The proposed port will be totally inadequate for the new 300,000 to 400,000 tonne ships that are fast becoming the world standard for efficient shifting of cargo, including iron ore, around the world, as they will not have any room to manoeuvre. A long-term view must be taken to upgrade the port and rail infrastructure on Eyre Peninsula to cater for the whole mining industry in the region into the future, and not just BHP.

Instead of a desalination plant at Port Lowly that will not even provide potable water for the Spencer Gulf cities or Eyre Peninsula, and will not provide for the future needs of other mining companies that are coming onstream, a major desalination plant should be placed in a more environmentally sustainable position on the west coast of Eyre Peninsula. This would cater for the needs of Eyre Peninsula, including the new mines in the north and west, and the value adding that we must do to our minerals before we export them.

The BHP environmental impact study is now out for comment by 7 August. I will be making a submission on the desalination proposal in particular, and I urge others who are concerned to do likewise. I was disgusted to read an ABC transcript last year when the Minister for Water Security, in my view, implied that the plant was a done deal. She said:

What the environmental impact statement will do will be identify risks and then you need to put in place the technology and the management to ensure that those risks are managed...so you can ensure that you don't damage the environment with what you're doing...that's what the environmental impact assessment is doing...the impact assessment is actually identifying where there could be problems to ensure that we can put in place the management and the technology.

Then, in answer to David Bevan's interjection, 'But there's no guarantee the desal plant will go ahead,' the minister went on:

The desal plant will go ahead. I believe the desal plant will go ahead. The environmental impact assessment is well and truly under way...the pilot plant is operating up there.

In conclusion, this Labor government cannot keep on making promises that it does not keep or puts so far in the future that nothing is resolved.

As a state, we have had unprecedented income in recent years, together with considerable help from the federal government, that has been squandered and we have little to show for it—certainly, no income-earning assets that will provide future jobs and income for our people. This government must abandon its population-based funding model and recognise that funding must be injected into regional infrastructure projects that leverage real, long-term jobs and growth instead of trams that go nowhere, underpasses that do not work efficiently, opening bridges and gimmicks. The port, rail, road and water assets in regional areas are just not adequate to provide for the expansion of regional industries that this state desperately needs to provide jobs and real export income into the future.

In the time I have left, I wish to put on record the conclusion in the 2008 scientific paper entitled 'Hindcasts of the fate of desalination brine in large inverse estuaries: Spencer Gulf and Gulf St Vincent, South Australia' by Mr Jochen Kampf, Craig Brokensha and Toby Bolton. It states:

A carefully calibrated three-dimensional hydro-dynamic model...was applied to hindcast the planned discharges of desalination brine in South Australian inverse estuaries, Spencer Gulf and Gulf St Vincent.

The far-field study revealed that, owing to slow flushing (>1 year), the upper reaches of the gulfs are the most unsuitable locations for brine discharge. Studies indicate that brine discharge in Upper Spencer Gulf leads to long-term accumulation of discharge water at steady concentrations of 0.3 per cent in the far field (within 20km from the discharge site). Although this concentration seems relatively low, long-term exposure and potential accumulation of pollutants in bed sediment is of ecological concern.

Near-field studies revealed that dilution of discharge of water can substantially weaken in the absence of tidal mixing during dudge tides (which are extremely weak neap tides in these gulfs). In Upper Spencer Gulf, the concentration of discharge water might increase during dudge tides to values >12 per cent with associated salinity changes of >5psu. These calm periods of two to three days in duration occur roughly every two weeks and are particularly critical in terms of marine impacts. Interestingly, a decrease in dilution during dudge tides was not predicted for the planned brine discharge of Adelaide in Gulf St Vincent. Here, peak concentrations remained relatively steady during the spring-neap tidal cycle at values of 8 per cent and salinity increases of 3psu. This suggests that some discharge locations are more sensitive to dudge tides than others, an interesting feature that remains for thorough exploration in the future.

In agreement with many previous studies...the conclusion of this study is that the choice of location is crucial to minimize marine impacts of seawater desalination. Owing to a sheltered nature and associated slow flushing and given that the marine ecosystems in adjacent marine regions are already under stress...discharge of desalination brine into South Australian gulfs might have severe and irreversible negative impacts on the marine and benthic environments.

Mr WILLIAMS (MacKillop) (16:45): It was interesting listening to the member for Fisher earlier; I had to agree with him when he said that the estimates process should be reformed, and I will spend a very short time discussing that. Unlike the member for Fisher, I did attend a number of the estimates committee sessions and was involved in asking questions of ministers, and on a number of occasions I sat there and listened to answers to Dorothy Dixers.

I think the member for Fisher would agree with me that that is one of the problems with the estimates committees: we are forced to sit there and endure ministers reading answers to Dorothy Dix questions that they have actually written to allow them to repeat what has been said ad nauseam by themselves, their media people and, from time to time, their agencies. Most of it is persiflage and totally unnecessary; quite frankly, it is damn hard to put up with. But estimates could perform a very important function.

Unfortunately, the time limitations are another one of the significant problems. Last week I was responsible for asking questions on behalf of the opposition in the energy portfolio area. Two hours were allotted to that portfolio, the same as last year—and I was asking questions of that portfolio last year, and I think I may have been asking questions on that portfolio even the year before that. Two hours may well have been a reasonable time to question a minister responsible for energy in the days when the government of South Australia owned ETSA, when it owned the electricity generators, the electricity distribution and the electricity retailers. A lot of policy decisions were taken by government and a lot of money was expended, and two hours to ask questions of the minister responsible for that may well have been reasonable.

Twice this year my colleague the shadow minister for transport requested that the minister (because it is the same minister) reduce the time allowed for energy questions and move some of that to transport, and the minister responsible for infrastructure did the same. Surprisingly, the minister declined both requests. Why would that be? It is because the minister knows that his responsibilities under the energy portfolio are very limited, and are becoming less and less relevant as most of the powers have been handed over to the ministerial council, a combination of commonwealth and state ministers. The minister here can then dodge any questions simply by saying that it was a decision of the ministerial council that has been ratified by all parliaments around the nation. It is a nonsense.

On the other hand, in some of the estimates I had a vast list of questions to go through that I had written down, because I wanted to ask the responsible minister about various aspects of the budget. In the area of emergency services, for example, I had written out 70 questions, I think, but I had the opportunity to ask probably 20 of them. I thought all of them were important questions that would have explained the budget and given not just the opposition but also the community of South Australia an insight into the budgetary process and the impacts the budget has on the delivery of services.

There is a vast amount of room to update and modernise the estimates process. All I can say about the charade we go through is that if the minister and the government were comfortable about the way they were managing, and if the Treasurer was comfortable with his budget, there would be no argument about having to filibuster and fill in the short amount of time allowed to cover most agencies to prevent the opposition from asking very many questions. There would be no need for ministers to prevaricate in their answers and go all over the place except to the nub of the question and reveal any real details.

However, that is the situation and the process we have, because ministers, particularly the Treasurer, do not want to be scrutinised. As a parliament, it is an issue we should consider seriously. Unlike the member for Fisher, I do not expect the Premier, notwithstanding his comments, to make any changes. I recall that the Premier prior to the 2002 election talked extensively about government accountability. In my opinion, this has been the most secretive government in the history of South Australia.

This government does not allow the release of innocent documents under freedom of information. I do not know how many requests I have submitted that have been flatly turned down. From the Minister for Water Security I generally get an acknowledgment—sometimes not even that—and that is the last I hear of it. This government simply flouts the freedom of information laws; and I will talk more about that over the ensuing months because some governments handle it completely differently from the way in which we handle it.

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson interjecting:

Mr WILLIAMS: I think the report has been released.

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson interjecting:

Mr WILLIAMS: He did not have the balance of power, unfortunately. He would have enjoyed it. Again, the secrecy of this government is reflected in the way in which it manages the estimates process.

I now turn to a number of issues that were raised in the estimates committees when I was responsible for asking questions. First, under the Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation, I asked the minister about marine parks. The minister talked about that today and selectively quoted from a press release I put out and the estimates committee *Hansard*. The argument I was making was that the minister established the outer boundaries for 19 marine parks—he has not actually named them—across the state waters from the Western Australia border to the Victoria border.

Mr Griffiths interjecting:

Mr WILLIAMS: The member for Goyder points out that none is anywhere near the most degraded coastal waters in South Australia off metropolitan Adelaide. It is the only place where our coastal waters are under serious threat—and have been for many years—and where extensive damage is not being attended to at this stage.

The minister, under the act, established the outer boundaries on 29 January. There was a public furore, a public outcry of resentment against what the minister said, because something like 45 per cent of the state's coastal waters were to be locked up in marine parks. No-one prior to that—not the mainstream conservation groups, the Conservation Council or the Wilderness Society—even in their wildest dreams thought that the marine parks would extend to cover that area. Notwithstanding that, the minister declared them, which resulted in a public furore. He said that he would set up some working groups to look at it and advise on the outer boundaries.

One has to understand the legislation that the parliament passed. The legislation provides that within six months of declaring the outer boundaries—and that will expire at the end of July—if the minister wishes to amend the outer boundaries he can do it simply by the stroke of a pen. If the outer boundaries are to be amended after that time, it needs to be a motion of both houses of parliament.

We all know that is quite difficult and that it is an instrument used to stop future governments from changing things. The minister knows full well that is the situation. What did he do? He set up some working groups to advise him on the outer boundaries. He said, 'I want them to report by the end of May.'

Everybody expected that this would be good, because now they would have a say, having had no say, and would hear what was going on by the end of May and, if the minister did not listen,

they could crank up the public campaign again. What has the minister done? First, he said, 'No, I'm going to extend that a bit; they're not quite finished,' and he extended it out to the middle of June. Now he says, 'We still haven't finished, but they'll report to me soon.' When I asked the minister in estimates, 'Are you going to release those reports; is the community going to get them?', he said, 'Yes, of course I am going to do that,' and I thought, 'You beauty!' Then he said, 'After I've had a look at them.'

The reality is that this minister has no intention of releasing any of those reports until after the end of July and, when the public outcry starts again, the minister will say, 'Sorry, boys and girls; I can't do anything about it. You have to appeal to the parliament, because it is only the parliament that can change those outer boundaries.' The charge I level against the minister is that he never acted in good faith. When he established those working groups he did so in bad faith. He knew what he was doing. He knew that it was a ploy to make sure the community of South Australia could be silenced for the rest of that six month period to get him past the end of July so that the pressure was taken off him. The minister would no longer have the power to change the outer boundaries by the stroke of a pen.

The minister has used this device and gone to people all across South Australia. He has had well-intentioned, hardworking South Australians out there in good faith attending meetings, sitting down in discussion groups, being briefed by the department and making argument back and forth. They have been working in good faith but, unfortunately, the minister has not been. The minister has been exposed as acting from day one in bad faith.

All he was doing was silencing a political problem and, come the end of July, I guarantee what this minister will say to anybody who objects to the outer boundaries of the marine parks. He will say, 'I can't do anything about it; you'll have to appeal to the parliament,' knowing full well they will then be stymied. That was the charge I laid against the minister in the press release I put out last Thursday or Friday and I stand by it, because the minister acted in bad faith. The same minister is responsible for the EPA. I asked him questions about the old Mobil oil refinery.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: On a point of order, Mr Speaker, would it not be contrary to standing orders and the practice of the house for a member to say that another member acted in bad faith? While I am on my feet, I am wondering whether the member could seek leave to continue his remarks, to give you time to contemplate the point of order.

The SPEAKER: I do not think saying that someone acting in bad faith implies improper motives. I have always understood improper motives to mean something criminal, some sort of allegation of criminality or corruption, essentially, so I think I will allow it.

[Sitting extended beyond 17:00 on motion of Hon. M.J. Atkinson]

Mr WILLIAMS: I am delighted with your ruling, Mr Speaker, and it shows consistency with your ruling a week or two back. It is the modus operandi of the Attorney to interrupt members when he feels that they are making a good argument; he does it all the time. I am delighted that the Attorney used that device at this time because it reinforces my argument and convinces me that I am on the right track. I thank the Attorney.

I wish to raise two other matters, and I will have to be reasonably quick. I asked the same minister, who is responsible for the EPA, about what actions the EPA had taken and what were his responsibilities with regard to the old oil refinery site. And, lo and behold, the minister said, 'The Treasurer is handling all that. I make no decisions.' He did say, 'The EPA might have a role, but I make no decisions.' So, the minister for the environment will be making no decisions about the clean-up at the Mobil oil refinery. I do not know whether government members know that, but the opposition now knows it, and I think it is absolutely outrageous that the minister for the environment has no role in policy decisions with respect to the clean-up at the Mobil oil refinery.

It was the Treasurer who said that the clean-up will only be to industrial standard, not to residential standard. That was the Treasurer's decision. I would have thought that the recommendation taken to cabinet should have been taken by the minister for the environment, not the Treasurer. Similarly, with respect to the rail yard site, I understand from his answers in the estimates committee that the role of the minister for the environment was very limited.

I was also in the estimates committee with the planning minister (and he has just walked into the gallery), and I was very interested to learn from him that no advice was sought from

Planning SA about other uses for that site or about its suitability for a hospital versus some other use. No cost-benefit analysis or use-benefit analysis was done on that site. Apparently, the political decision was made that 'we will build a hospital and we will build it there', and then Planning SA looked at it and tried to fit it into its planning parameters. Again, it was backwards planning.

The most important thing that was revealed in the estimates committee was when I asked the Minister for Correctional Services questions about a new prison complex. Obviously, we talked about the fact that the government had walked away from its decision to build a new prison complex, a project that has been in the budget for several years now. I think it was first announced in 2006-07 that it was going to be then over \$500 million. I believe it was added to in subsequent years and it was up around a \$700 million PPP.

I say to the people of South Australia that the only reason the prison complex has been pulled out of the budget is that when the Treasurer was in the United States talking to Standard & Poor's and Moody's he asked, 'How can I keep my AAA rating? What do I have to do? Is it possible?' and they said to him, 'You've got to pull the prisons project, because you can't afford it. If you go out and roll up that much more debt you've lost the AAA.' Within three days of his getting home, the prisons project has gone—

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson: And what would you have done?

Mr WILLIAMS: —I have not finished—and we are still heading into deficit. We are heading down the road to greater deficit. Can this Treasurer honestly stand up and say that the state cannot afford to build a \$600 million or \$700 million prison project, whether it be PPP or debt funded—'We cannot afford to build that; we'll lose our AAA credit rating'—and expect the community to believe that, in two years' time when we are further into debt, we can build a \$2 billion hospital? That is what we have to ask ourselves.

The Treasurer has been sprung. He cannot afford to rack up another \$700 million debt to build a prison complex because he would lose the AAA credit rating and he would lose the election. What would the Treasurer have us believe in two years' time, when the state's debt level has increased dramatically? We know we are going further into the red: the Attorney is quite silent, because he and I both know that we are going into the red. In two years' time, when the hospital project would be getting off the ground and the debt would start to come onto the balance sheet, we will be in a worse position than we are in today and the hospital project will be about three times the cost of the prisons project.

The reality is that it is not going to happen. However, this government will continue to run to the next election saying, 'We are going to build a new hospital,' knowing full well that it has no intention of honouring that promise, just like the promises that it has been making ever since it has been in office. I probably do not have time to go through them all, but there is a raft of promises that this government has made since it first ran for office in 2002 and in the subsequent budgets. All you have to do is pick up *The Advertiser* on the day of the budget or the day after and look at the headline, and there is a raft of promises which have been made year in and year out, all of which have been broken.

Time expired.

Mr PENGILLY (Finniss) (17:05): Thank you for the opportunity to speak this afternoon. It has been an interesting several hours over the last day or so listening to people's opinions on estimates. I probably concur with most members in this house, most eloquently put this morning by the member for Enfield, that we would be better off if estimates shifted to that other place and if members of the Legislative Council had the joy of dealing with all this stuff.

I find it a soul-destroying exercise for five days, quite frankly. I am sure that numerous colleagues on either side of the house would agree with me. I would far prefer to be out in the electorate doing more useful work than having to spend four or five days in Parliament House going in and out of Bs and As to various estimates committees and seemingly achieving very little, apart from catching up on some reading that I needed to do.

It requires the Public Service to do huge amounts of work and to check over what they have already done and to make sure that they can justify it, or more to the point, that the ministers can justify it. There are countless numbers of public servants involved. Someone should do a bit of homework on it and work out just how many were required to be in Estimates Committee A and B over the five days of estimates, most of them sitting in the galleries just in case they are needed.

With the exception of those who were sitting by the ministers in the front of estimates, most of them were not needed. I am not casting any doubt on their abilities, but I am saying that most of them would be far better off doing some more useful work than sitting in Parliament House listening to a gaggle of politicians and ministers of the government have a crack at one another and try to get some answers. Little if anything was gained from the five days of estimates. I know the chamber staff looked severely bored for the five days, and I am sure that they had better things to do as well.

My view is that the way the estimates are run in Canberra in the federal sphere is a much more useful exercise. The Senate does it and members have the opportunity to seriously question senior public servants. In the estimates that we have in the South Australian parliament, the fact remains that, unless the minister of a particular committee wishes to ask a senior public servant to answer a question, they sit there most of the time offering suggestions and passing over pieces of paper.

The Senate estimates in Canberra seem to be a much more useful exercise; they seem to get much more out of it. I am concerned that the process here is stymied. I heard a little of what the member for Reynell said this morning, and I will read the *Hansard* later, but the reality is that, despite the carrying on that we have in this place from time to time, you actually have to have a bit of banter and a bit of exchange to liven things up and get something going.

If you sterilise it or paralyse it, as is done by some chairs—and I hope I am not speaking out of turn here, sir—the problem is that you really get nothing out of it. There is not the opportunity for members to have a free and open discussion. It is desperately difficult for the opposition to get answers out of ministers during estimates committees. Whether it happens that we are the opposition at the time or members on the other side in turn become the opposition, I believe what goes on in estimates committees is just a cynical exercise in stupidity a lot of the time. You get boring, mundane answers without getting any sense to it. The member for Enfield, in his delightfully eloquent and amusing way, raised some very serious matters this morning during his contribution to the debate on the estimates committees.

I do hope that the government will go away and think about this, because I can assure members that the opposition will. It must be improved. I think that the way this thing takes place at the moment is just a foolish exercise. There was little that came out of the committees in which I was involved that provided any sort of level of scrutiny at all, in my view. There were something like 23 or 24 different sessions, or whatever it was; there were a number of sessions. I was not privy to all of them. I did 10 or a dozen, and I know that, given the fact that the government had to have four members in the committees at all times, there were some faces on the other side of the chamber that we saw pretty regularly as well.

I think that it can be improved. I hope that you take the message on board and I hope the government takes the message on board. I am disappointed because I would have liked to raise a number of issues to do with my electorate, but the estimates committees process makes it difficult to raise issues relating to your local electorate. I did raise the issue of the Seal Bay entrance fees with the minister for the environment and I got a bureaucratic answer, as did so many other members.

These are important issues. The issue that I raised about a 100 per cent increase in entrance fees into certain national parks on Kangaroo Island is a critical matter for the tourism industry and the economy of Kangaroo Island; and, in my view, it was not treated as it should have been. We should be able to work through this and have justification from the public servants—in this case the Department for Environment and Heritage—as to how they justify this, instead of this blurb which comes out and which is read into *Hansard* and which does not do anyone any good at all.

It is an enormous issue. It is an issue that, again, today was on the front page of the local Kangaroo Island paper, *The Islander*. The industry is dreadfully upset, and these bean counters who make decisions on entrance fees and whatnot based on pure bean counting do not understand that they will cost jobs, they will cost income and they are foolish in the extreme. I would say that, if the department had recommended increases of even 10 or 15 per cent, that may well have been acceptable. They would have grumbled about it (everyone grumbles about increases) but it could have been worked through.

To have a 100 per cent increase thrust upon the tourism industry on Kangaroo Island through centrally-based bureaucrats in the city and to justify it by saying, 'We have done planning,

we have done strategic reviews and this, that and everything else' is certainly not good enough. It is arrant nonsense. I predict that the tourist numbers to Seal Bay, particularly, will drop incredibly and, in turn, that will cost jobs. Operators have already said that they are getting requests from overseas companies to drop it off their tourism agenda.

It is cutting off your nose to spite your face. I will be following through on this even further. I know that the industry sector, supported by the editorial in *The Islander* this week, is quite prepared to keep battling away at this. It is highly disappointing and a fool of an idea. They are decisions made by extremely foolish people who have no thought for isolated communities and the impacts they may have on the economy.

On that issue alone I had the opportunity to question the environment minister. I know that he was lobbied about it on a recent trip to Kangaroo Island. I would have liked the opportunity to throw it up at the tourism minister, but that did not eventuate. The reality is that Tania O'Neil, who is the Marketing Manager for tourism in Kangaroo Island and who is an employee of the South Australian Tourism Commission, came out in a strong and decisive manner and put forward the views of the tourism industry on the island, only to have the CEO (Mr Andrew McEvoy) basically castigate her in public on radio and put her down.

I find this to be absolutely incredibly stupid. It is a smack in the face for a public servant, who is employed by the government and speaking with an inside knowledge of what goes on, to be put down by a senior officer from her own department—no doubt, by instruction from above. I have no doubt about that whatsoever.

A host of other issues arise in the state budget that are of major concern for the people in my electorate. Once again, we have had no money allocated to the Victor Harbor to Adelaide road that I can find anywhere. There has been no money allocated towards trying to fund some form of public transport for people who live on the Fleurieu Peninsula and the South Coast.

I heard the minister this afternoon talking about free public transport for pensioners and the wonderful electric trains we are going to get, as well as this, that and everything else. The reality is that, once you get outside the metropolitan area, there just is no public transport at all. There is nothing, although there might be small public transport capacity, funded by councils in the main in some of the larger towns. I do not have any details with me, but they struggle to maintain those services.

We have had community passenger services funded through the health area, but they are all struggling. My own electorate has the Premier Busline, which operates as a regular service between the Fleurieu Peninsula, the South Coast and Adelaide. It is a private service that does a good job, but there is no public transport if you want to go between Currency Creek and Encounter Bay or Goolwa and Victor Harbor—it does not exist.

Let me quote the example of the Southern Fleurieu Cancer Support Group which has problems getting people backwards and forwards to Adelaide. It currently has a vehicle that was very kindly donated to them by the Honda Foundation. It is a fantastic innovation brought about by the hard work of a number of people, chiefly Mr Neal Wilkinson, as I understand it, but that is going to drop out. This means that cancer patients in the south and the Fleurieu will be unable to come to Adelaide for treatment unless we can find some kind of replacement vehicle for the one previously supplied by the Honda Foundation.

A host of problems have been overlooked, and I fear greatly for regional and country people. They are ignored and treated with disdain and contempt by this government, and this budget does little or nothing to accommodate them. It has been explained here today just how much debt we are starting to see placed on the record in South Australia and where the Rann Labor government is taking us with debt. The way it is going we will have State Bank mark 2 in no time; however, that pales into insignificance, given the direction of the federal Rudd Labor government.

I was at a function on Sunday at which Joe Hockey was addressing the audience. He told us that, since Mr Rudd became Prime Minister, the Rudd Labor government has spent money at the rate of \$10 million per hour. It is frightening, absolutely frightening where this is leading. If you put that into some sort of context with the world situation, in my view, we in Australia are living in a fool's paradise at the moment. With unemployment in the United States running at 10 per cent, unemployment in Spain running at 18 per cent, and unemployment in Ireland now running at 20 per cent, we have a fair bit coming to us.

One of the questions put to Mr Hockey concerned the state of debt in eastern Europe and where that will lead. The answer to that was most interesting, because the billions of dollars worth of debt in eastern Europe since the Iron Curtain came down have chiefly been funded by western European banks. Now, if they happen to default, it will get substantially worse over there. The risk of civil unrest is great in those countries, and who knows where that will lead? I am not a prophet of doom, but this is the reality. I do not think we in Australia are coming to grips with where we are. We are living in this fool's paradise at the moment.

All this money which has been borrowed has to be paid back. Mr Rudd and his merry men and women may well think that they can escape some of the repayment of this debt through inflation. That might be their modus operandi, I do not know, but my three children—Tim, Sarah and Patrick—Sarah's husband, Ryan, and the rest them will be paying this back all their working lives. I do not know how the devil they will cope with it. How will they get ahead?

The only way this country can become wealthy is to create wealth through individuals. Small business is still the engine room of the economy in Australia. It has been for a long time and it remains the engine room of the economy. They are getting crucified. In the last couple of days, we have seen what has happened with the unions demanding to have a heap of power back and starting to persecute small business again. It is a nonsense. It will lead us into a downhill spiral at a great rate of knots, in my view. I shudder to think where it will end up.

It will not make a lot of difference to me, and I suggest the member for Stuart probably concurs with my thoughts, but the member for Goyder will be around for much longer than the pair of us. They will be paying it back, and heaven forbid where it will end up, because we in Australia are only early down the track at the moment. We have a substantial distance to go and, in my view, the Rann Labor government has got its eyes right off where it is going. It does not understand. The Premier was there for the collapse of the State Bank. He sat back while former premier Bannon and his crew sent us broke, and Premier Rann is back there again doing the same thing, making all the promises in the world.

I think it was yesterday that we had this grandiose water plan. We are planned out of existence. We have more plans sitting around than we will ever see come to fruition. I have grave misgivings about this state, the state's economy and where it will end up. I am deeply disturbed about the future of younger South Australians and Australians who will have to deal with this issue of paying back this mess over the next few decades.

The Hon. G.M. GUNN (Stuart) (17:24): I rise to support the noting of the Estimates Committees A and B reports. The estimates process is a bit like drawing a difficult tooth—long and tedious—and sometimes we do not achieve a great deal for sitting on these benches for a great length of time. However, I suppose it is part of the democratic process and the parliament has to have the ability to question the executive annually to make sure it is focused on the real issues affecting the people of this state.

I think the greatest thing this parliament can do to ensure that it acts in the interests of all South Australians is to wind back unnecessary bureaucracy, because the greatest threat to democracy is bureaucracy. It is well meaning but, unfortunately in many cases, it is misguided and insensitive.

I think the government will be fortunate this financial year because we have every prospect of having a pretty good agricultural year, which will generate a great deal of revenue and opportunity for people to invest and create employment. We know that other sectors of the economy are going to be under considerable stress, with the downturn in the mining industry, for instance, and the shedding of jobs, unfortunately, will continue.

I believe that, before this is over, people will not have the benefit of low interest rates; I believe that you will see interest rates go up, because I do not think there is any alternative. If governments continue to borrow at the rate they are borrowing, someone has to pay; and, if a limited amount of capital is available and governments want it, they will have to go out and pay for it. I think we will all pay a price for that.

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: Well, the economic situation is such that there is no alternative, unfortunately. I do not like to see interest rates go up, I can tell you. Nevertheless, that is what will happen.

I want to speak briefly about one or two important issues. This budget spends a lot of money in relation to providing an education for the next generation of South Australians, and we all support that. My request to this government is: make sure that those people who live in the outlying and isolated parts of the state are given an opportunity so that their children can access some of these fine institutions we have.

Great stress and strain are put on families in trying to give their children a good secondary and tertiary education. The ability just to access the internet for education is something which is straining the resources of many families, and it is not acceptable in the year 2009 that children living on stations out from Yunta, for example, cannot have access to the internet for the educational purposes they desire. That is not acceptable, in my judgment.

When we see how we have spent money on all sorts of other activities, I do not think there is anything more basic than making sure that sections of the community are given a fair cut of the cake. We have little schools like the school at Yunta, which has great computers, but those who live 50, 80 or 100 kilometres out have to access it through the internet, and the online costs for the School of the Air are substantial. So, it is a very important issue.

The next important issue is the harvesting of water here in Adelaide, and we have had a ministerial statement today, which I have read—excellent! When I came into this place in 1970, we had just connected the Poldia Basin up to the Todd system, and I had my photo taken alongside it. It is a good photo; in fact, although if you look at it now, you might not recognise me. Nevertheless, today we have virtually wrecked that basin.

I hope that the good rain we have this year will recharge that aquifer, but there is a clear lesson to be learnt: we have to manage these assets very carefully. My real concern is that we are pumping water closer to Port Lincoln, but what is going to happen if we deplete that resource? So, around South Australia we have to make sure that the investments we make for alternative water supplies are carefully considered but that it is done quickly.

My constituents on the outskirts of Hawker and those residents in places like Marree have water of terrible quality, yet these people have to pay the River Murray surcharge. If you live at Marree, Oodnadatta or Orroroo, you have to pay the River Murray surcharge. I think it is nonsense. It is unfair, because those people do not get a great deal from the government. They do not ask for a lot; they get a lot less. I think those issues need to be looked at and addressed very carefully. The ability of these people to get their products to ports at a fair and reasonable charge, and on decent roads, is terribly important.

As we sit here late this afternoon in order to pass this year's budget, there are ongoing discussions about what is going to happen to the ports in South Australia and the effects of ABB being taken over by a Canadian company. I think this parliament has a responsibility to step in and say that those ports are fundamental to the continued economic development of this state. They should be set aside and, if necessary, the government should legislate. I am not one for government control, but I believe that it would be the most unwise course of action for us to allow one of the major competitors in the grain industry to take over our ports system, which has been developed over a long time. I am sure that it will not be to the long-term advantage of the grain industry or the people of South Australia.

I was one of the people who caused a bit of a hassle at the time the ports were privatised. I well recall getting a telephone call from the then premier in London, who was far from pleased with me. It was not the first time that he had not been pleased with me; I do not know why, I thought I was a reasonable character. I told him that I would not support the sale unless funds were set aside to develop Outer Harbor and a decent export port. I still believe that it was right, and the money that was set aside went there. There were a few hassles, and this government has sorted some of them out, but they need to be sorted out once and for all.

They are just a few of the issues. There will be many other issues that the people of this state are going to face. The most important thing that we can have in this state and this nation is governments which are sensitive to the needs of the people. They are not there purely to govern in the interests of the insensitive and unsympathetic bureaucracy so that they can build little empires of their own. Situations like what they want to do around the coastal reserves—take away people's land without proper consideration for their long-term needs—are deplorable. It is really amazing to think that that can happen in a democracy.

The challenges that this state will face will not be solved by taking easy solutions but by putting in place sensible policies which will have a long-term benefit for the people of this state. I

have seen many budgets pass through this place. I have seen times when the economy has been booming and I have seen times when the economy has been in very difficult circumstances. I want to see the next generation of South Australians have the same opportunities that some of us have had in the good times. The last seven years have been good for South Australia. I want to see that continue so that we can see infrastructure continue to be built around the state and see young people getting opportunities and training so that they can have jobs for the future and are able to own their own house.

As I complete my stint in this parliament—which has been over an extensive period of time—I want to say to the people who follow me: please remember a number of important factors. This parliament (this house and the other place) should never give away its rights, privileges and powers to the bureaucracy. That is not in the interests of the people of South Australia. It is the role of members of parliament—particularly backbenchers and their committees—to question, challenge and stand up to the executive. That is their role. Their role is not to nod, hoping that they will get the next plum job. You are elected to this place to stick up for people and look after them. I have never worried about that in my time. I know that some of my colleagues have thought, from time to time, that I have been fairly difficult to manage—I don't know why!—and I make no apology for that.

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. G.M. GUNN: Well, all I have tried to do is to stick up for those people who have sent me here and to stick up for what I believe in. If that has sometimes offended people or has got in their way and annoyed them, so be it. I have been very fortunate that my constituents have continued to send me here on 12 successive occasions. I have enjoyed it, and if I had my time over again I would do it all again. At this time, I do not intend to keep running up the taxpayers' dollars by continuing to talk, because it is expensive to keep this place running. I support the measure, and I want to see South Australia progress and go ahead, and it can happen only if the government creates opportunities and encourages people, gets out of their way and does not overtax them. I support the measure.

Mr GRIFFITHS (Goyder) (17:36): I commend the member for Stuart for his contribution, which was obviously heartfelt. Although it will not be the last contribution he makes in this place, I appreciate the fact that he has seen more budgets handed down than most people would dream of. His corporate knowledge is immense; there is no doubt about that.

I want to reflect on my own involvement in the estimates process, which involved all five days; some days were busier than others. I have been involved with the estimates process for the three years I have been a member of parliament—and it is not because I am looking for punishment; it is actually out of a desire to learn.

I know it is easy to criticise the process, and there is no doubt that it could be improved. However, as minister Holloway said, when hosting lunch for those people who had been before him, it ensures that, from a staffing, ministerial or opposition point of view, you have the greatest possible access to information about the budget, which involves some \$14.4 billion, during the estimates committees.

We as an opposition are able to ask questions about areas in which we have a particular interest and to hear what the government has to say about areas it wants to promote. It allows South Australians the opportunity to be far more informed about a collection of pages devoted to the expenditure and receiving of dollars, all of which makes a difference to South Australian taxpayers because it comes out of their pockets.

My first contribution was with the Premier on Thursday of last week, and it was in relation to the Economic Development Board. On that day, we certainly referred to the global financial crisis that is hitting our nation, and indeed the world, and the fact that unemployment in South Australia was projected possibly to increase to as much as 9.6 per cent. None of us wants to see that occur. We want to make sure that South Australians are in jobs, because that will create a strong future. We encourage governments around nation to pursue every possible policy that ensures that people are in employment.

At that time, the Premier confirmed that South Australia's population target of two million has been revised to 2027, which in itself represents a great opportunity because more people living in this state will create more transactions for small businesses and private enterprise. The government receives its income from transactions, so that means the economy will grow. It

probably also means that several hundred thousand homes will have to be built to accommodate these people, and that represents a great opportunity.

My next session was with minister Weatherill and it related to the public sector. I think it is fair to say that the opposition has a level of concern about the continuing increase in public sector numbers, although not from the good people who take on the job opportunities provided. The concern is more for the lack of real control exercised by the minister when it comes to ensuring that restrictions put in place as part of their budgets are being met. Caps have been put in place for all departments. As I understand it from a direct question I asked the Treasurer, the predominant problem exists in health, with cap numbers not being enforced. Health itself is a particular area where there needs to be an ability to react to instances. However, that is for the government to pursue. Certainly, we on this side of the house want to control expenditure.

It is interesting that the budget identified that an additional 1,485 people were employed above the budget allocation in the 2008-09 financial year, and 1,308 are within the public sector definition. When I later asked a question of the minister and Treasurer about whether they could identify how many of those were in the core areas of nurses, teachers, doctors and police, they were unable to fix that for us.

Targeted voluntary separation packages are also discussed. Within the public sector, 1,200 people have to be identified by the end of September this year and 200 additional people for each of the following financial years. There is a provision, we are advised, at an average cost of some \$72,000, as confirmed by the Treasurer, per targeted voluntary separation package, so some \$90 million is provided in the budget for that to be achieved. It will be a great challenge for all departments to identify that.

It was interesting that, in talking about the public sector, the minister provided some information on the fact that, of some slightly in excess of 90,000 people, relating back to about 79,000 full-time equivalents within the public sector, there is a staff turnover rate of between 10,000 and 12,000 a year. I was genuinely surprised about that.

It represents a challenge to ensure not only that the public sector becomes a career of choice but also that there is there is an ability to recruit those good people within the public sector and, indeed, to manage the large cohort of older members of the Public Service who will retire over the next five years as part of the baby boomer generation.

It was quite a lengthy session with the Treasurer in a few areas on Thursday afternoon. I am rather intrigued by the Sustainable Budget Commission, an announcement from the Treasurer as part of the budget, which has the challenge before it of saving some \$750 million over three years. Intriguingly, the terms of reference for the Sustainable Budget Commission will not be confirmed until after the 20 March 2010 election.

Interestingly, the Treasurer also advocates wage restraint within the public sector. If it achieves and keeps to the 2.5 per cent target he has set—so, it is a great challenge for minister Caica, the Minister for Industrial Relations, and all departments in their negotiations with the public sector workforce to try to keep that figure—it will mean \$290 million of the \$750 million. It will be a great challenge for the government.

Importantly, my concern has always been based on the fact that announcements of savings have been made by the government over the last four years. There was the Smith review, there was an efficiency dividend requirement by the Treasurer of 0.25 per cent of each department for each year, dollar savings were introduced as part of last year's budget amounting to hundreds of millions of dollars, and now we have, on top of that, further savings.

However, when you ask the Treasurer about the level of reporting on those savings requirements, you do not read it: it is not in the Auditor-General's Report and it does not feature in the budget. It really disappoints me that these commitments are given—and they form a very important basis of the credit rating provided by Standard & Poor's upon the state's finances and, therefore, our ability to borrow at what cost—but there is no reporting against them. It is rather intriguing, and there is seriously room for improvement.

Shared Services was also discussed. All would reflect upon an the fact that the intention was there for a \$60 million saving per year to be achieved probably in about next financial year. In his report last year, the Auditor-General identified, over the forward estimate period, a gap of \$103 million, where there was uncertainty attached to those savings.

We talked about the effect upon regional areas, where 253 people, who are full-time equivalents, had originally been within scope of the first tranche identified from regional South Australia to move across the shared services. The number was reduced to some 59 people, only six of whom had actually moved. The second tranche from shared services in the regions has not been identified, but it is obvious that a much lower figure is being projected.

The PPP for the hospital was also discussed. It is interesting to hear the Treasurer talk about the grant, which the state government will have to make to the successful consortia—and he was not sure whether it was \$700 million or \$1 billion—of a figure that will go at the back end of the building project to therefore act as the government's contribution towards the PPP project. It will reduce the lease fee; I do recognise that, but it will be, therefore, a lease fee and a debt that has been repaid at the same time. It will be interesting to see how the dollars stack up on that.

Royalty revenues for the mining industry are under some attack; they are reducing. The GFC has created less demand for the product and, certainly, overseas countries are less inclined to pay higher amounts for our exports; therefore, that is dropping. The Treasurer confirmed that an increase in royalties does not automatically relate to a full 100 per cent value increase for the state. It goes into the big pot the federal government looks at in determining its grant allocations to the states, and it will have, through horizontal fiscal equalisation, a reduction in other grants. So, it might be that, of an increase in royalty revenue, we get 20 per cent of that. That is an issue for us to be concerned about.

I asked a series of questions of the Treasurer about land tax. I was rather disappointed that, in a briefing provided to the opposition some 18 months ago on anti-avoidance measures in land tax, we were told that it was going to bring in additional revenue of \$5 million. In reality, it has actually achieved \$19 million. It is also very disappointing, on behalf of all South Australians who pay this terrible thing, to see that there had been a 50 per cent increase in the 2008-09 financial year alone. Private property land tax liability payments had actually increased from \$220 million to \$330 million, and, indeed, in 2009-10 they are factored in to increase by another \$30 million-odd, or a 10 per cent increase. Within the Department of Trade and Economic Development (it is interesting: the Treasurer provided me with a new term I had not heard) are 'stretch targets'.

Ms Chapman: That's right. The ones we never reach.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Yes; true. As the member for Bragg confirms, they are the ones that are never reached; you just push the date out to ensure that it still appears in the Strategic Plan and you are working towards it, as all the words say, but will it ever happen? Exports are one of these. Indeed, information provided today confirms that South Australia's level of exports in the 12 months to May of this year has decreased by over 4 per cent, whereas the national figure in that same time, on average, has seen a 32 per cent increase. South Australians need to be concerned about this. It is a great worry to me.

Defence SA was discussed. The opposition does support that. South Australia has worked very hard over the last 10 or 15 years to build a reputation for the defence state. The investment in Techport, through scoping issues and a greater level of infrastructure development, has cost more than originally envisaged, but it will place South Australia well when it comes to the white paper on defence that the federal government has released. The intention in future years to actually invest in defence will benefit our great state enormously.

On the Office of the Northern Suburbs, I had the opportunity to ask questions on behalf of the Hon. John Dawkins. It is a small budget line but an important area of the state with, I think, the 7th Battalion, RAR moving there in about 18 months' time. So, there are great opportunities for the north. Also, business opportunities are happening there. I know that only a small office has been established. It was interesting that a lot of money has been spent in the three month period that the office opened, and let us hope that—because questions about that rather confused me—the opportunities in the north are accessed, because they need to be.

I also had the opportunity, on behalf of the Hon. John Dawkins, to ask questions about the Office of Regional Development relating to the business enterprise centres and regional development boards, which are amalgamating. As of yesterday, the process was put in place. Eight new regional development association areas are going to be established: one in the metropolitan area and seven in the regions. My focus is on ensuring that the good people who have worked within the area consultative committees, the regional development boards and the BECs have a continuity of service, because they have great contacts within regional and metropolitan Adelaide,

and it is important that their skills be retained to ensure that we have the connections they have to make business opportunities happen.

I also express some concern about some of the information provided. I commend the shadow minister for agriculture on his questioning on the area of PIRSA officers in regional areas. It is a great worry to me—having one in my electorate at Kadina—that the people there are very concerned about their future. They provide a wonderful service. There are 10 consultants, as I understand it, who work out of there. There are other, bigger offices across the regions, but these people have been told that they face the threat of face-to-face office opportunity being lost and everything being done by internet or telephone. These regional PIRSA officers provide a great service to a wider collective area, and they deserve every opportunity to continue that. I would urge the minister to reverse the position on that and ensure that these offices remain open. With those few words, I thank you.

Ms CHAPMAN (Bragg—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (17:49): The estimates process was as illuminating as ever this year. It was a stark contrast to me, having listened to the Treasurer on 4 June announcing record expenditure in this year's budget proposed by the government, which was to be restrained in expenditure, including the cancellation of projects because of the economic financial position internationally and announcing that there needed to be some restraint and then, under the penetrating examination by the member for Goyder this week, to see the Treasurer stand here in the estimates committee, at a time when he is asking every other department to cut staff, exercise some fiscal responsibility and manage finances, and admit, right here in the estimates, that he is about to move his whole department to new premises. He will spend almost \$5 million to re-fit it and—wait for it—explains it by saying that it would cost about that to redo their current offices, so it is reasonable.

That is fine, but in the next breath he said that the rent will be \$1.6 million a year plus another \$100,000 a year for the Roxby Downs unit (which has ongoing responsibility), and that to stay in the current premises would cost about \$1.2 million per year. So he is prepared to blow half a million a year just on offices for his department at a time when he is asking the rest of the state to tighten its belt. What a disgrace! This is the sort of thing that happens in estimates, when we are able to examine what is really happening behind the scenes.

The rail yard hospital is the biggest infrastructure project proposed in this state, at \$1.7 billion—not that we really know because we do not have \$1.7 billion in the budget, we have 'n/a'. I do not know if that means the government has no idea. We are told it means that it is not sure what it will be any more, and that because of the financial arrangements—whether it is PPP or its own build—that could change. We have a site contamination report prepared by Coffey International but we are not allowed to see it. The minister could not even advise us what has so far been paid to Coffey International as an interim report, and he has taken it on notice. Anything tricky or difficult on this issue and the government takes it on notice. That is the way it has dealt with it.

We now have the absurd situation where it is quite clear, from this year's budget, that we will have a tram built along North Terrace out to the Entertainment Centre. We will have a medical research centre built on the rail yard site, then they will clean up the site and build a hospital. About 450,000 tonnes of dirt have to be taken back out of this property to be cleaned, sanitised, and then brought back in. I hate to think what this poor little tram track will look like by the time this government has 'mince-meated' through that over the next few years.

Then we have these stolen/lost/misplaced USB files, an electronic device containing the rail yard RAH design and information. We do not know exactly what was on it, because there were mixed reports in both the media and the parliament about that. Again, we have no information regarding whether or not it has been referred to the Auditor-General, or who knew what and when. Even the minister was not able to tell us. All the heavies sitting around him during estimates knew about this issue nine days before it was disclosed to him; of course, it was then another six days before he disclosed it to the parliament. There is a lot of water to go under the bridge in relation to that issue.

The Glenside Hospital redevelopment is very important, and the opposition commended the government for announcing the initiative two years ago. I have condemned the Treasurer, and I say it again: it is a disgrace. The government can go ahead and build other things, including movie hubs, yet it adjourns this redevelopment for two years. Then there is the astounding revelation from the Minister for Housing that the government will build affordable housing on the Glenside Hospital site at a cost of—wait for it—\$213,000. I do not know how the minister thinks she can do that, offer

property for sale at that price in that area, unless it is the size of a tent on wheels, a caravan, or a room above a garage. That is the size of the dwelling it will have to be for that price.

The only other option is for the government to kick in the money for it, which clearly it has not budgeted for, or expect every other purchaser of property in any housing development on that site to subsidise it. It is a gross transfer, cost shifting, from public housing for the people of South Australia across to the people who want to buy homes—and that is young people in this state who will be looking to secure a home at the site when it is developed. The government is delusional in that respect. The idea might be highly aspirational and sound good, but the reality is that for that price we will end up with an affordable housing dwelling at the Glenside Hospital site the size of a bathroom.

We also had, of course, the stunning revelation by the Minister for Mental Health and Substance Abuse that the sale of the three sites to fund the consolidation of Drug and Alcohol Services at the Glenside Hospital had not happened and was not going to happen in the forthcoming year. Perhaps they are going to be sold at the end of the budget; but, for the record, the documents from the department reveal in the announcement by the former minister (Hon. Gail Gago) at the time of the 2006 budget that those properties at Norwood, Joslin and North Adelaide would be sold and that the anticipated revenue from their sale (several years ago) would have been \$8.67 million. I hope the minister is able to correct that information in this parliament because, clearly, it has been announced that those properties will be sold, and we need to have some expectation of the value that will be recovered. If they are to be sold outside of forward estimates, I think the government should disclose that.

Finally, I say that the highlight of the week for me was appearing in the estimates committees with the Hon. Gail Gago, who represents women in South Australia. She is the representative for women and advises the cabinet and represents women on issues of importance in this state. Well, I say this: we had a field day. It is a small budget, but it is important. The government has retained a Premier's Council for Women. I was critical of the Premier previously for taking well over a year to appoint one when he came into government, but he did eventually, and there are important, experienced and qualified people on it.

I am appalled that, for the last seven years I have asked mostly the same questions of the government every year to identify what it has been doing, what targets have been reached, and how that is being progressed, and yet I still do not have last year's answers about the number of cases of drink spiking (in light of the new legislation) or in respect of the number of women on boards as a percentage of each department.

[Sitting extended beyond 18:00 on motion of Hon. K.A. Maywald]

Ms CHAPMAN: Having asked those questions but received no answers, I came back this year and said, 'Well, minister, what subjects have been referred to the Premier's Women's Council during the preceding year?' No idea. 'Well, minister, what is the report card on the number of women on boards and chairs of boards in South Australia, by department?' Again, no idea. 'What is the report card on the number of women in executive positions in government departments as per different ministerial officers?' No idea. Finally, I asked, 'When were you last briefed on these matters?' No idea. 'Can you remember when you were last briefed? Even if you cannot remember when it was, what was the advice you were given?' No idea.

It is laughable that we have a minister responsible for the women of South Australia but that on the most basic things, including the two targets that have been set in the State Strategic Plan as to women's representation on boards and committees and in executive positions in departments, this minister has no idea. It is unacceptable.

The best thing the minister can do after this appalling presentation during estimates committees is to resign. I ask that this issue be taken up by the Premier so that women can have proper representation in this state and we can go on to achieve what are admirable and important targets that are being completely ignored by this minister, who does not have a clue what is going on. She did not have the decency, when she had all the experts sitting around her, to make sure that they call for that information so that we have that here for the people of South Australia. It is an absolute disgrace.

As usual the estimates have been eventful. Of course, in due course we will pass the Appropriation Bill. The hypocrisy of the Treasurer asking the state to pull in its belt and then lavishly

spending on his own office administration points out the inconsistent, inadequate and inappropriate priorities of this government.

Mr HANNA (Mitchell) (18:00): I am replying to the examination of the budget through what we call the estimates committees. I will pick out one particular line and expand my remarks upon that. The Minister for Water Security and the River Murray in her opening statement said:

Through the more than 90 actions outlined in the Water for Good we will ensure that there is enough water available to the state to fully capture emerging economic opportunities, while reducing our reliance on the River Murray and other rain dependent water sources.

Because water is probably the number one issue for South Australia—and that is recognised when I talk to people in my community—I have chosen to focus on just that one topic. I am interested in the Water for Good statement or report that has come out from the government. I recall the waterproofing South Australia document—an excellent report with many worthy recommendations. I believe that was released in 2005. It became out of date in a mere two years because it was based on projections which were out of touch with the changes that had already taken place in south-eastern Australia's weather patterns.

Water for Good is claiming to have overcome these failures and aims to take us through to 2050—an even more ambitious target. However, it is based on the same short-sighted thinking as the waterproofing South Australia report. It uses IPCC projections from the fourth assessment of 2007, which are already looking seriously out of date in the face of climate science that is declaring an unsafe, rapidly heating, increasingly unstable atmosphere.

What if the 15 to 30 per cent reduction in rainfall turns out to be larger? We will have a scenario where only the Port Stanvac desalination plant is a reliable source of potable water, and the government will not have put in place the sustainable alternatives that are really drought proof.

The thrust of the Water for Good report is to maintain high rates of population and economic growth for the state. The chief beneficiaries of the water plans being put in place will be big business, high consumption users (both individuals and organisations) and the water companies. What if the boom times of the past 10 years, which have seen massive expansion of the mining industry and consequent growth in population, do not revive? We do not know what the economic future holds, but gearing for expansion in water consumption may be a highly undesirable assumption to build into our planning.

The impact on our environment is highly questionable. The linchpin reliance on the desalination option calls into question the future of the marine ecosystem of the Gulf St Vincent. The threat of a series of desalination plants dotted around the coastline of South Australia, as envisaged by Business SA, to allow unlimited expansion of settlement and industry betrays a myopic view. The fact is that increasingly we will be living in a semi-arid climate and we will need to adjust.

Once again, we need to focus on sustainability as the number one goal to pursue. By that, I mean long-term viability, not just unlimited growth in economic opportunities and population. We need to think about how we will have any sort of substantial population viable in South Australia in the long term. The government recently coupled this plan for the future with a proposal to drop water restrictions for households, and that is a wrong message. How can we ask households and industry to restrain their water use in the name of sustainability when at the same time there is an election sweetener that water restrictions will be reduced in just two or three years?

We remain in the dark about so much of the management and contract arrangements for the Port Stanvac desalination plant. I am told that it will be a baseload supply, meaning that it runs 24/7. This will be expensive water—I think everyone recognises that—and it will place huge demands on southern Adelaide's electricity supply.

Apart from the gulf, the most critical question in relation to the desalination plant is how much electricity it will consume, and then we need to consider just what that means for the electricity consumers of southern Adelaide, namely, the people who live there and the business that operate there.

The big winner in terms of the Water for Good plan is probably the biodiversity, that is, the living plants and creatures in the vicinity of Mount Bold reservoir. It seems that the government will be able to postpone indefinitely the option of doubling the capacity of Mount Bold, which would have caused a big stir in environmental circles and been highly controversial.

The expenditure of over \$1.8 billion on the desalination plant at Port Stanvac effectively has squeezed out the budget for a lot of the stormwater and wastewater measures we should be taking. The selling point of the desalination plant is that half Adelaide's water needs will be covered, but there remain questions about the impact on the Gulf St Vincent and on our electricity supply once the demand for the desalination plant is satisfied.

There is in South Australia an independent Commissioner for Water Security but, with all due respect to the incumbent, I have only ever heard her speak up for the government and government plans, and sometimes we need to look at even more independent sources of advice. Certainly I have respect for a couple of the scientists at Flinders University who have commented on the possible impact of the desalination plant on the gulf.

Now is probably not the time to go into great detail about the threat to the gulf, but suffice to say that, notwithstanding the environmental studies commissioned on behalf of the government, it remains highly debatable whether the ecology of the gulf will be able to survive in its current form with the output from the desalination plant.

My final comment is that it has been disappointing to see a lack of commitment in this budget in relation to stormwater. The Water Proofing Adelaide plan really was far thinking in setting out so many potential sites around Adelaide where stormwater could be harvested in very substantial quantities. I have set out those sites in previous remarks in parliament, yet in this budget there is really such a very small commitment to turning those plans into reality.

I realise that for stormwater harvesting we need rain, and there is no doubt that, if there is no rain, we are left with the supply from a desalination plant. However, in the context where our supply from the River Murray perhaps cannot be guaranteed in a few years' time, especially if this drought keeps up, we need to put in place a variety of measures that includes extensive stormwater facilities along the Adelaide Plains as well as the desalination plant.

In summary, I am not as optimistic as the minister that the Water for Good plan will, in fact, take us through to 2050 and I hope that in the next couple of years we will see some rethinking. I am sure that there will need to be some adaptation, because the science is going to tell us more and more about the dangers of drying out as we go on.

Motion carried.

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD (Chaffey—Minister for the River Murray, Minister for Water Security) (18:11): I move:

That the remainder of the bill be agreed to.

Motion carried.

Bill read a third time and passed.

At 18:15 the house adjourned until Tuesday 14 July 2009 at 11:00.