

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 15 June 2022

The **SPEAKER** (Hon. D.R. Cregan) took the chair at 10:30.

The SPEAKER: Honourable members, I respectfully acknowledge the traditional owners of this land upon which this parliament is assembled and the custodians of the sacred lands of our state.

The SPEAKER read prayers.

Bills

CLIMATE CHANGE AND GREENHOUSE EMISSIONS REDUCTION (TARGETS) AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction and First Reading

Mr PATTERSON (Morphett) (10:31): On behalf of the Leader of the Opposition (Hon. D.J. Speirs), obtained leave and introduced a bill for an act to amend the Climate Change and Greenhouse Emissions Reduction Act 2007. Read a first time.

ELECTORAL (TELEPHONE VOTING) AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 1 June 2022.)

Mr TARZIA (Hartley) (10:32): Obviously, the Electoral Commission of South Australia published their report into the 2018 state election. Many members in this house would be aware that it was actually the former Liberal government that introduced the Electoral (Electronic Documents and Other Matters) Amendment Bill last year. That bill, unfortunately, did not progress, and then the Electoral (Miscellaneous) Amendment Bill was subsequently defeated in the Legislative Council.

There were a number of amendments provided for that related to telephone-assisted voting that were included in those electoral bills. Obviously, we have a duty as legislators to ensure that the laws we develop continue to reflect the technology. The bill comprises relevant provisions from what was the bill of 2021. There are amendments that amend sections 84A, 84B and 84C of the Electoral Act. They currently provide and allow for electronically assisted voting for members of the electorate who are, if you like, sight impaired. It is important that we cater for them and allow them to participate in the democratic process as well.

It is intended that electors with a whole range of ailments, a whole range of disabilities, and also electors who may be living overseas, will be able to cast their ballot using telephone-assisted voting. This is quite a logical thing to do. It exists in other jurisdictions interstate and around the world, and we would like to see it occur. This amendment sets out in the act what would actually be a new definition of a prescribed voter, and it allows for that type of voter and the methods of assisted voting to be prescribed. That can be prescribed in regulation. Of course, it does not all have to be set out in the bill; it can also be done by regulation, which, as we have seen, can be a much more flexible way of going about things.

In terms of consultation, there is a proposal to expand telephone and other assisted voting options. It was not contained in the 2018 election report. However, what we have seen on a number of occasions is there has been commentary around it, but it was a specific recommendation made by the Electoral Commissioner during a wideranging consultation process for the 2021 bills. I commend the bill to the house. If there are no further speakers, I would be happy to move to the vote on the motion that it be read a second time.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr Odenwalder.

Motions

REGIONAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr ELLIS (Narungga) (10:37): I move:

That this house—

- (a) recognises the serious shortage of doctors and other medical staff in regional South Australia;
- (b) acknowledges that regional South Australians are just as worthy of access to quality health care as those in the metropolitan areas;
- (c) notes that incentivising doctors in regional South Australia has not worked and that it is time to guarantee it;
- (d) calls on the state government to ensure the equal distribution of general practitioner doctors around regional South Australia, now and in the future; and
- (e) calls on the state government to establish a dedicated department of regional health to support access to quality health care across South Australia.

It is a wonderful honour to move this motion today. It is not necessarily a pleasant one but an honour nonetheless because I suspect that this is the issue about which the most significant majority of regional South Australians feel most passionate. It is not an exaggeration to say that regional health care is the issue about which I get approached most in the street. It is the subject of the majority of the meetings I have in my office and, personally, was the primary reason I was inspired to run for parliament in the first place.

We are all elected, and I am sure everyone is here with the greatest of intent, because the voters wanted us to get things done. For the government that mandate is an obvious one on the back of a strong election result. Similarly, I think it is obvious for us as regional representatives that health care is something that voters want action on. Enough platitudes by politicians, it is time for decisive action to address the shortfall in doctors and medical practitioners in regional South Australia.

We are very lucky on Yorke Peninsula and in the electorate of Narungga to have some tremendous, long-serving general practitioners staffing private clinics in towns the length and breadth of the electorate. They are extraordinarily hardworking and serve a significant population in their private clinics. Such is the demand on their specialist services that there can often be a significant wait for an appointment. That is of course not the fault of the wonderful GPs who do serve our communities; it is more a symptom of a shortage of doctors around regional SA so that that burden is spread amongst too few to treat far too many.

Unfortunately, that shortage of GPs has bled into our public health system as well. Over the past decade or so, GPs across the electorate have withdrawn their services as on-call doctors at our local hospitals because of the impost on their time and the relative lack of compensation, especially when compared with the locum doctors working the same shifts in the same hospitals.

That has led to a locum model that does not lend itself particularly well to continuity of care for people who rely on our local hospitals, and that, I would submit, does terrible things for the bottom line of our local health networks. It must be an expensive proposition to run: having to transport locum doctors in, house them for the duration of their shift and pay them for their time at the hospital.

Therein lies the most significant issue that we have in our electorate: a shortage of regional health professionals. As has been articulated, this is the case for doctors in our clinics and hospitals and also for nurses, pharmacists, dentists and others. It often feels to us as regional South Australians as if we are less worthy of those services that people in the city might well take for granted, which obviously should not be the case.

Those in regional SA are just as deserving of the ability to show up at an ED and expect to see a doctor in a reasonable time, and we are just as deserving of the ability to make an appointment to see a GP at a clinic and expect to get an appointment in a reasonable time frame. I submit that currently this is not the case.

We have significant issues in hospitals up and down the peninsula, from perhaps our biggest hospital at Wallaroo—which is the subject of many inquiries to my office about waiting times for those who show up at the ED and the standard of care provided by locum doctors and a whole raft of other issues that need to be sorted out quick smart—to smaller sites at Maitland, Minlaton and Yorketown and our wonderful community-owned hospital at Ardrossan, which does an exceptional job serving that wonderful community there on the coast. All of them are facing issues that can basically be boiled down to a shortage of trained staff and a difficulty in manning shifts at their hospitals.

Over the course of the previous government, and I hope it will continue as we progress through this one, I have been pleased to secure significant capital investment at hospitals up and down the peninsula. There is a brand-new surgery at Yorketown, which is currently filling lists of minor operations; there was a significant investment of money at Ardrossan, which helped cover the cost of manning their ED for uninsured patients who presented; there were significant alterations at the Snowtown Lumeah Homes that widened the corridors to allow sufficient room for hospital beds to be transported up and down the corridors; as well as smaller but no less meaningful upgrades elsewhere at other hospitals.

Despite all that wonderful work in upgrading the facilities, none of those works can overcome the difficulties in attracting health professionals. The locum model of staffing at public hospitals has been a disaster. We have doctors there sporadically with no attachment to the area, no ties to the people they are treating, and whose daily remuneration distorts the market and makes it difficult to attract doctors on a more permanent basis. The key part of this motion, and the part I will be clinging to most strongly as we progress through the debate, is that it has come time for action. It is time for the government—state and federal governments, I admit—to guarantee the equal distribution of doctors around our great state.

There are a large number of incentive programs on offer to encourage medical professionals to work in the country, the latest of which was an initiative of the previous federal government to offer to repay or to forgive the HECS debt of a medical practitioner who relocated to the country and to regional South Australia. This is an excellent initiative on paper, a tremendous idea—just like all the other incentives that are out there and available to try to attract doctors to regional SA.

There are more than enough carrots. It is time to get the stick out. None of the incentives are working like they should and it is time to guarantee equal distribution. Despite all these incentives, there remains a shortfall in doctors in regional SA and I would submit, as is contained in this motion, it is now time to take proactive action to ensure that all corners of our great state are serviced by the required number of doctors. We cannot leave regional health care to chance, that the incentives will finally attract a sufficient number of doctors to the parts of the state that need them. We need to now guarantee the equal distribution of doctors around the state so that those who need them can access them.

I fought hard over the course of the last government to secure funding to employ doctors at Wallaroo Hospital—a relatively rare thing in this state, to have staff doctors rather than rely on locums and local GPs. Unfortunately, despite that funding being provided—and thanks in no small part to the distortion that arose as a result of those locum wages—those three FTE positions have been advertised at the Wallaroo Hospital on three separate occasions to no avail. Each time we advertise we get a small number of applicants and by the time we reach the negotiation phase they have fallen through and reverted back to servicing hospitals around the state as a locum. We have not been able to attract anyone to take up these roles.

Compounding the issue, and this is particularly disappointing from my perspective, I know that there are local GPs who have previously served the hospital on a rotational basis and who are keen to maintain their skills. Those GPs genuinely enjoy working in that hospital and would be keen to re-up their commitment and rejoin the hospital and do small shifts here and there—not whole day shifts, not 12-hour shifts, but small shifts here and there—but they are being frozen out by the local health network, which is beholden to locum agencies.

Unfortunately, when these LHNs attract a locum agency these agencies can have a tendency to demand a full day or a full three-day block to ensure that it is worth their locum's time getting out

there, which makes it very difficult to provide small shifts for local doctors to fit in with their work at the clinic.

A further part of this motion calls for the establishment of a department of regional health. While I do not profess to be an expert in the machinery of government and how it all works, I have formed a view that, no matter from which party they originate, the job of the Minister for Health and Wellbeing is too large of a task for a single person.

In addition to that, I have also formed a view that the problems, or at least some of the problems that we face in regional SA, are quite distinct from those that are being faced in the metropolitan area. As a means to ensure those distinct issues receive the attention they deserve, I believe that the current department could be devolved so that regional SA has its own hierarchy.

This new hypothetical department would work with the local health networks established by the previous government to ensure that local hospitals are equipped to deal with the issues as they present themselves. We would also, I believe, be better placed to develop policies that would proactively solve the problems before they present themselves. Having a minister, or at least an assistant minister for regional health, means we would finally have someone banging their fists on the table in the cabinet room on our behalf to ensure that we get the outcomes that we deserve in regional SA.

In concluding, the time for action is now. Enough of the platitudes; we need decisive action to guarantee the equal distribution of doctors around the state. As I said at the opening, this is the issue about which I think the majority of regional South Australians feel most passionate. It is really a hot-button issue that gets brought up time and time again and is a source of great frustration for people who desperately need health care.

When they show up to an ED in a situation that cannot wait, that cannot be put off, and they have to sit in the waiting room for a number of hours before they can be seen by anyone, it can really be distressing, and it is a terrible shame when those people give up being patient, jump in the car and have to drive off to Adelaide. It is two hours in an uncomfortable car that could otherwise be spent in getting treatment. Not only that, but it deprives the hospital of a statistic that might otherwise be used as a help to justify increased services.

Even if those people do not go to the hospital and decide to go to Adelaide straightaway rather than wait around for a service, it means that we do not get those numbers through the door; consequently, when it comes time to argue for an increased service, we are faced with the proposition of having to deal with a set of numbers in a table that shows that the hospital is not as busy as it used to be and that there is no need to continue to improve services there or to provide the same level of service that used to be there.

It is imperative and it is vital that we now take proactive action to ensure that we get those services. I know that the voters in this state expect it from us, and I am hoping that the parliament as a whole—not the government, not the opposition, but parliament as a whole—can step up and provide that very thing. I commend the motion to the house; not only that, I also urge this parliament to use it as a trigger for action. We have reached the tipping point and cannot wait any longer. I look forward to the debate progressing.

The Hon. C.J. PICTON (Kaurua—Minister for Health and Wellbeing) (10:48): I thank the member for moving this motion. I do have some amendments in relation to the motion. I move to replace (c), (d) and (e) with:

- (c) notes that previous approaches to incentivising doctors in regional South Australia have not worked and that it is time for new strategies;
- (d) calls on the state government to work with the commonwealth government to ensure the equitable distribution of general practitioner doctors around regional South Australia, now and in the future; and
- (e) calls on the state government to work with regional clinicians and communities and regional local health network boards to support access to quality health care across Australia.

In doing so, I have tried to keep the crux of what the member for Narungga has moved in the parliament because I know his passion for this issue, and its importance in terms of all regional

members of this parliament is an issue I have spoken about a number of times already to the member for Narungga in this house since we have been elected. I have also spoken many times to members such as the member for Giles, who has raised this issue repeatedly with me since my time in parliament, as well as the member for Mawson. I know this is particularly an issue for Kangaroo Island as well.

We have seen the situation get worse and worse, unfortunately. We have seen the situation deteriorate over time. While I think there has been a lot of goodwill from successive governments of both persuasions to consider this matter, we have not seen significant action that has really turned the dial for this situation, which is getting worse. As the member for Narungga has said, that means we have communities that need a local doctor that do not have one. We have communities where we are now, at great expense to the taxpayer, flying in and out locum services to those areas. We now have a professionalisation of locums, where it is easier and better remunerated to become a professional locum rather than become a local doctor in a particular area.

I am concerned to hear what we have heard from the member for Narungga today, that he has general practitioners in his local area who would like to work in the hospital, who would like to work in the emergency department, perhaps not at the full extent that they had previously, but they would like shifts here or there to maintain their skills and provide support to the local area. That is absolutely something that I am keen to chase up with the member for Narungga to make sure that we do everything we possibly can to have those GPs connected back into the system.

This is something where we clearly have had a lack of proper workforce planning for the state for some time. We are inheriting a situation where we do not have a state workforce plan. The previous government said that they would do work in this space. We have a number of regional medical plans and other professional plans that have been put in place, but there has not been a significant extent of implementation of the recommendations.

There are a lot of glossy booklets that are sitting on shelves but have not been put into action. As the new minister, I am particularly keen that we put these recommendations that we know have been in place for some time into action and get to work. We need to work with the local health networks, we need to work with the local communities and we need to work with the federal government.

The federal government have a particularly important role to play here because they control a whole lot of the levers that are impacting this issue. They control the levers at universities of how many doctors graduate and in which universities across the country. They control levers in terms of Medicare payments, how much doctors are paid and what incentives are paid. I think that is a very important reason why we need to include in this motion the role of the federal government in providing for regional doctors in South Australia. That is why I have added that in my amendment.

The other element where I have made an amendment is in relation to the suggestion of a new department of regional health. I will have to agree to disagree with the member for Narungga because I am not advocating for a new department to be put into operation. If I thought that would lead to more doctors being in place in South Australia, then I would have no doubt about doing so, but I think that would lead to more bureaucrats, to be honest. To put words in the member for Narungga's mouth, probably the last thing the member for Narungga would like to see is more bureaucrats in South Australia.

I would like to see more money devoted to health service delivery. We have inherited a situation and a new system in place for local health network boards across South Australia. That is not something that I have sought to rip up and replace, but I do want to see them operating effectively, and I do want to see them playing an important role in delivering recruitment and retention of medical staff on the ground. The experience of that has been variable from location to location.

There are areas in the state where we have been doing that well. I look at the Riverland Mallee Local Health Network board, which has been ably led by some medical leaders in that area who have been doing an excellent job in not only reconnecting with local general practitioners but also creating innovative training pathways for general practitioners, particularly in terms of the Rural Generalist Program, which has really been spearheaded by Professor Paul Worley in the Riverland LHN.

That is what we want to see happening across the state, and I want to see that same level of enthusiasm we are seeing up there applied right across regional areas in South Australia. It is important that we work on that with the federal government and also the universities, and I know universities in South Australia have enthusiasm for doing more in this space.

There has been an issue where the previous federal government pulled back a number of medical training places in the hope they would go into regional training. All that has happened so far is that we have had a new regional medical school developed—I believe in New South Wales—but not in an area of significant shortfall as we see in South Australia. We have not seen any benefit of that coming to South Australia, and there are still places for students that have been held back.

We will be advocating that South Australia gets our fair share of those. I know, from discussions with both Adelaide University and Flinders University, that they are both eager to play their role in terms of training more doctors in regional South Australia. Ultimately, the more doctors we have who come from regional areas and who get trained in regional areas, the more likely it is we will see doctors ending up working in regional areas.

As well as that, we need some to properly develop and implement programs such as the GP Rural Generalist Program, which I am a strong advocate for. We need to work with local communities, and I have spoken to a number of local councils that are keen to play their role in helping to attract workforce into their areas.

The other element I would like to highlight in my remaining time is that, while I know the focus of this motion is specifically on doctors, we also have an issue with a range of other health practitioners: nurses, midwives, allied health professionals. We see significant shortages of these in a number of areas across regional South Australia at the moment, and we need to take action in those areas as well, working at both the training level and the attraction and retention end.

We know there was a protracted negotiation in terms of doctors and their contracting arrangements that I think led to significant anguish for a number of doctors, and a number of doctors have spoken out and a number have left the workforce over the course of those negotiations. I am glad that in the final days of the previous government that negotiation was completed, and I am certainly working to get those arrangements in place as soon as possible to make sure that doctors can be properly remunerated and that we have the best possible attraction and retention.

I thank the member for Narungga for his motion. I support it with some amendments, and I look forward to working with him and other regional members to make sure we address this very high priority issue.

Ms PRATT (Frome) (10:58): I rise today to support the motion, in full, that has been presented by the member for Narungga. Regional health is incredibly complex and, as both a regional member of parliament and the shadow minister for regional health services, I am committed to doing all I can to advocate for and strive to provide better services for regional people.

I am excited about the opportunity to advocate for regional health and prepare policy as we head towards the next state election, with an opportunity to present an alternative vision for regional health for South Australians at the March 2026 state election, whilst also holding the government to account for their strategically located regional commitments and providing constructive ideas to better our system going forward.

As the shadow minister for regional health services, I am proud to be working alongside two fellow regional members of parliament. In the health portfolios, I note the member for Schubert and the member for Chaffey, which, in turn, triples our voice in this space. It is worth noting that the Labor government does not have a dedicated minister for regional health, and I commend the leader of the South Australian Liberal Party for his vision and his commitment to services in the regions. I cannot ever recall that a Labor regional member of parliament has held the health portfolio in a Labor government, but I can assure the member for Narungga that we are collectively banging our fists on the shadow cabinet table in relation to regional health services.

I am no stranger to the acute challenges facing regional South Australia in relation to the procurement, access and retention of healthcare and health professionals and the impact this has on the everyday lives of regional people and our communities. Although Premier Malinauskas and

his health minister have declared that services should not be limited to one's postcode, that sentiment does not translate into practice. I will never begrudge funding and investment into regional SA but, on the face of it, the only health-related capital works programs coming out of the budget are to be found in our bigger regional centres like Port Augusta, Mount Gambier and Mount Barker. Of course we welcome those investments, but you will not be surprised that I will keep calling for more.

Given the estimated completion dates that are set out in the forward years, past yet another election, I think the local members are entitled to be disappointed that this government have put their projects in the slow lane. We are all aware in this chamber that our regions are the economic powerhouse of this state. The economic contribution of South Australia's regions was around \$31.2 billion in the 2020-21 financial year. My own electorate of Frome is the third largest contributor to the economy, representing \$4.5 billion of the gross regional product.

I reference this because these successes from hard work mean more money back in the local economy too. Our farmers are spending money in towns, their families are growing, the schools are filling up and the doctors who appreciate the lifestyle choices and work-life balance that should be possible for a country practice are on the table. Recruiting and retaining general practitioners is a national challenge, and it will now be a matter for the Albanese Labor government to work with the states to address this critical service to regional Australia.

As we know, health care takes many forms, all of which play an important role in the overall health outcomes for individuals and communities; they are the preventative, acute and emergency layers of issues. The imbalance of the health workforce around the country will likely only be resolved through the implementation of a range of policies to get more GPs, nurses and allied health professionals to the areas where they are needed most.

The Deloitte 'General Practitioner workforce report' revealed that by 2030 the demand for GPs in Australia would rise by 17.6 per cent in the regions and 47 per cent in major cities—quite a challenge, I think. One of the reasons is an ageing workforce, with the report finding the workforce would lose about 1,500 GPs to retirement in the next three years.

Although much has been said about the need to incentivise graduates to choose general practice instead of specialising, and then the need to incentivise GPs to choose to live in the country, this is still a challenge that governments, clinics, practices and local hospital boards face together. It should not be for communities to solve this issue, but they do suffer. Securing GPs in regional areas is multifaceted, and along with my neighbours, the members for Narungga, Chaffey, Stuart and Schubert, I relish the chance to be a part of the solution.

The Malinauskas Labor government has had a chance to be a part of the solution. In fact, they had 16 years of opportunities to be a part of the solution—in this instance, an opportunity to alleviate the rising cost-of-living pressures on ailing patients, but they failed at the first hurdle. The state budget afforded this government an opportunity to put their money where their mouth is and double the rebate for the Patient Assistance Transport Scheme, commonly known as PATS.

Our loved ones do not choose to be sick, but when the only specialist service is in the city the complications and inconvenience pile up. Families need to plan for days or weeks away from the farm or town, plan for pets to be cared for and stock to be fed, for the grandchildren to be supervised and work to be rescheduled, and they also need to book and often pay for accommodation. I think the inconvenience is clear.

I have raised in this place the need for the support of this scheme, but the Labor health minister's response was to point to local infrastructure investments down the track and, although I welcome any dollar being spent on country health, these projects are set to be completed after the next state election and they are not going to assist regional people with acute or emergency health issues now. I am grateful for the conversations I have already had with members in this place about the health priorities and challenges in the regional areas we represent. No two communities are the same.

Finally, I extend my thanks to the member for Narungga for moving the motion and continuing to advocate for improvements in regional health. His community will be pleased to know that the

member has successfully moved this motion as an extension of his commitment to achieving better outcomes for regional health services and improved standards of living and I share those sentiments.

I note his interest in the establishment of a dedicated department of regional health based on the New South Wales model and I look forward to future conversations with the member for Narungga, as well as within my own party, to explore innovative policy ideas in the regional health spaces. I support this motion.

Mr HUGHES (Giles) (11:06): I rise to support the amendment, but in so doing I fully acknowledge the sentiment contained within the original motion. People from regional South Australia know that the issue of access to professional health care is probably the biggest issue. As the member for Narungga said, many of the people who come to see him come to see him about issues to do with access to health care. Some of these issues are longstanding and complex and it is a mix between what happens at a federal level and at a state level.

We have a public health system in this state and in the other states that is underfunded, even though it is the largest budget item, and there is a history to that underfunding in the public health system that partly dates back to the Abbott government. The Rudd-Gillard government put in place an agreement with the states that recognised the real cost increases that were happening in the public education system.

What Abbott did—and it was one of those broken promises, along with a lot of other broken promises—was change the formula and put in a different cap, which had a detrimental effect upon the public health system throughout Australia. We are now talking about billions of dollars that would have gone into that system that did not go into that system and it is why the states are agitating with the current federal government for an extra \$5 billion a year across the nation to go into the public health system.

Some of the consequences took time and I guess COVID was the straw that broke the camel's back, but it was policy decisions made by the Abbott government that cascaded down through the years that had a major impact on public hospitals.

Another area that generated a lot of concern—and there were efforts, but the efforts were probably in many cases misapplied—is the availability of GPs in regional communities. We know that, when it comes to GPs, it is essentially a federal issue. We know that there is a maldistribution of GPs in this state and in other states. We know that there is a disproportionate number of GPs in the city, especially in the more salubrious parts of our cities. There is almost an inverse relationship between where the health needs are and where the GPs are.

In country South Australia, there is a mortality gap of around two years compared with the metropolitan area, and there is more chronic illness in regional areas. You have to pull that apart because some of it might well have to do with access, but some of it is to do with other social determinants of health. My electorate has probably one of the worst examples of social determinants of health at work. That is in the APY lands, where the average life expectancy is around 52 or 53 years. It is not about Closing the Gap—that is an actual chasm when you are talking about the health needs of people in the APY lands.

The suggestion here, as proposed in the original motion, is to set up what the minister quite rightly said is another bureaucracy. I do not think that is going to help. It has been alluded to that that was done in New South Wales. If you look at the stats in New South Wales, if you look at some of the things that are happening in New South Wales when it comes to health, that approach has not worked. It is not going to work here because the health system is a system as a whole. The largest country hospital is actually the RAH.

For a whole range of reasons, we have to come to Adelaide because the types of services, the types of intervention you need, are not going to be in a country hospital in the main. It was said that there has been no-one on our side from the regions who has been Minister for Health. That is not accurate. A former member for Giles, Frank Blevins, was the Minister for Health, and a good minister—a good minister across a whole range of portfolios. We do face a complex problem of how to get more GPs and more specialists into country areas.

PATS has been mentioned. The Marshall government had four years to do something with PATS and it failed to do so. When we were in government, we did carry out a review—

Mrs Hurn: What are you doing now?

Mr HUGHES: Give us a chance. We have just been elected, so give us a chance. I am sure I will be lobbying the minister, as will other people, to do something about PATS. When we were last in government, we did have a review of PATS and we increased their funding by 30 per cent. There are clearly other things that need to be done. We also carried out major investment, admittedly in the major regional hospitals. It was a very significant investment where we did get extra services in some of those hospitals. You can do the buildings and you can do the capital works, but the challenge is getting the professionals to come out to regional communities.

It can be a life and death situation. I have recounted a previous incident in my life that involved a major car crash just outside Wudinna. If it were not for the doctor, the GP in Wudinna who stabilised that person in that car crash, that person would have died. There is no GP now in Wudinna. That is potentially tragic, and that has a major impact on the people in that community and the surrounding areas. I think the doctor just gave up in frustration. He had had enough. In my electorate, Quorn is going to lose a longstanding doctor. It is going to be very hard to replace Dr Tony, one of those old-fashioned doctors, on-call 24 hours a day. People choose their lifestyles; they feel they do not want to live that sort of life the way other doctors did in the past.

I have seen services downgraded in major regional hospitals but, as I said, I have seen other services built up. It is complex. When we talk about the previous Labor government, there was significant investment in a range of additional services in regional communities. I would be the first to admit that when it came to the smaller hospitals in the final budget, or the final half-year budget, we did allocate \$140 million for capital works in the smaller hospitals and that should have been done sooner, in my opinion.

When it comes to GPs, we are going to have to work with the federal government to address this. I have always been of the view that we should take a far more robust approach to the allocation of Medicare provider numbers. It is overserviced in parts of the city and totally underserviced in parts of the country. Other countries allocate GPs on the basis of their population ratios. The point made by the member for Narungga is about an even distribution. That is great, but you need the tools to do it, and one of the tools might well be how you allocate Medicare provider numbers, along with other incentives, along with other models of health delivery, to get people back out into the country.

In some parts of the country—and I have seen it over the years—it is not just the medical profession but a whole range of professions that once upon a time used to be part of your community, used to live in your community, that are now more likely to be fly-in fly-out. There is a whole raft of underlying, more complicated issues when it comes to addressing that, but this is a major issue. Hopefully, we can collectively work on it to get something done at the state level, but it does require serious federal government input.

Mr TELFER (Flinders) (11:16): I rise to speak in support of the member for Narungga's original motion and as the member for Flinders, where we have 11 regional hospitals and health services as well as a number of very important Aboriginal health services across the electorate. Every time I get up and it is pertinent, I want to remind this place and the state that our regions' economies put \$29 billion into our state's economy and to keep that in context when we are looking at the services that are needed to service those communities. For mine in Flinders, I have travelled across and heard from many community leaders, many community members, and it is clear from those discussions that regional health across my region is the number one priority.

Concern from my communities about the recruitment and retention of medical professionals is always front of mind, and it is the biggest health challenge for my electorate, especially for those communities that are away from large population centres. I also agree with the words of the Minister for Health about the challenges around the recruitment and retention of nurses, midwives and allied health professionals within our communities.

Without appropriate medical services, we are losing those who are most vulnerable in my community: the elderly, the young families, those who add to a balanced and fulsome all-inclusive

community. These people are forced to leave communities where there is no medical support, and we cannot afford to let that happen in communities like mine in Flinders.

I was encouraged when the former government looked at the opportunity to develop and implement the Rural Generalist Program, a program which was specifically geared to making sure that those people looking at getting into GP practice have the skill set and the breadth of knowledge necessary to be able to service the dynamic regional communities we have. It is the full range of age that these GPs in our communities serve, from the very young, or even those who are yet to be born, to the very old at the end of their life and everything in between. It is a wide skill set that is necessary, and that Rural Generalist Program is a key one in making sure that those students who are currently studying medicine have that necessary skill set.

That is really about the long-term arrangements, the long-term capacity for our communities, but short-term solutions need to be put in place as well. The current arrangements for our smaller regional centres are not working and we need to develop structures, incentives and arrangements that actually reflect the needs of our communities. The recruitment process for our GPs is not working. If you look at some of the websites of the organisations that are tasked solely with recruiting GPs, they are not dynamic. There is a job notice. They are not being proactive enough.

We have communities within my electorate of Flinders—councils, local government—investing tens of thousands of dollars around recruiting GPs. This is local government looking at doing the job of other levels of government. We are at the point where everyone has to fend for themselves. We have regional communities competing against each other to try to source a GP from a very small pool, often looking at overseas arrangements. Short-term expensive locum services referenced in this place are not sustainable. They provide no certainty, no continuity and actually undermine the long-term sustainability of our communities.

I certainly agree with the member for Giles that there is opportunity for us to explore the different mechanisms around the Medicare provider number system to guide GPs into areas where there is a need. I am keen for the state government to be proactive in asking the federal government to look at these sorts of solutions.

Where I come from it is the Eyre and Far North Local Health Network, and I share some of that area with my colleague the member for Giles. Those who have been out there and looked at some of the medical practices and hospitals would know that there is a significant distance in between. The electorate of Flinders spans hundreds of kilometres, and there are hundreds of kilometres in between the 11 hospitals across the electorate.

At the moment, we have arrangements whereby doctors are being told: if you are considering coming to a community such as Cowell on the east coast of Eyre Peninsula, you can come to Cowell, but you have to service Elliston as well on the opposite side of the peninsula, some 200 kilometres away. At the moment, there are short-term arrangements for a GP from Ceduna to come a few days a fortnight to service the town of Wudinna, aforementioned in this place. Again, that is a couple of hundred kilometres of travel time added onto the time in the consultation room.

Kimba is currently without a doctor and, sadly, has been for a number of years. Wudinna is without a doctor. Cowell is without a full-time doctor. Port Lincoln, the major regional centre, the hub of the seafood industry as I have spoken about in this place, has a shortage of doctors. We are at a point where even the major centres in our state—Port Lincoln, Whyalla, Port Augusta—are struggling to recruit and retain GPs as well.

We have unique arrangements in South Australia. The point has been made that the RAH is actually a regional hospital. That may be so, but we need to make sure that arrangements are in place that make our communities sustainable. We cannot say every time there is something a little more complicated than an elevated heart rate that we need to send people off to the Royal Adelaide Hospital. That hospital is already struggling from the burden of nearby patients, let alone trying to draft in more country patients.

We need to invest into our regional communities, invest into our regional hospitals and incentivise and guide doctors into our regional communities. We need arrangements that suit the needs of our dynamic communities. It is time for real action, not just strategies, not just working groups. We need real action on regional health and real outcomes for our regional communities.

The Hon. D.R. CREGAN (Kavel) (11:23): Adequate regional health care is vital to the Adelaide Hills community, and I have campaigned strongly on this issue. The recent investment by the state government in respect of the Mount Barker hospital is welcome. Also welcome is an investment to ensure that a second ambulance crew can operate out of the Mount Barker station. That station, as I understand it, will be completely rebuilt.

It was totally unacceptable that only a single ambulance had operated at Mount Barker since 1992—since 1992. Ensuring that there is adequate investment in Adelaide Hills health care is a shared responsibility across all governments. The former government formed the view that by executive fiat there needed to be a new city in the Hills. It is not a separate suburb of Adelaide; it is a new city, and with a new city come new investments to support a population—a population that is growing rapidly.

But of course there is population growth right throughout the Hills, from Lobethal in the north through Woodside, Inverbrackie, Littlehampton, Nairne, through Hahndorf and into Mount Barker and further south into Strathalbyn, where I acknowledge the government is also making investment to support ambulance services.

One of the clear-eyed benefits of being an Independent is that you can serve your community well ahead of any political interests, but you can also give credit and criticism where it is due. I acknowledge the investments being made by the government and also the additional investment of \$36 million to bring forward works at Mount Barker. But, as I say, and I emphasise, a former Labor government decided that a new city would be built at Mount Barker and the obligation to fund services in my community continues.

Left unresolved is the need for a 24-hour doctor service at the Gumeracha hospital. Dr Geoff Symons and others in a local medical practice have committed their lives to ensuring that there is adequate service for my community and for communities served by the member for Schubert. I acknowledge and thank the member for Schubert for ensuring that there will be a community forum on 26 July.

The forum will be deep in her electorate but, as I say, these services affect my electorate and it is generous of her to include me. I am hopeful of ensuring that there can be a further meeting with the Minister for Health and the community representative, Dr Symons, in relation to these unresolved issues. Regional health care is complex, but it is not beyond the wit of policymakers to resolve the issue that lies extant at Gumeracha. Of course the relationship with the commonwealth is important, and the Monash funding model has caused difficulties for communities that are on the edge of the funding line.

We must do more to ensure that the Adelaide Hills community is well served by adequate health resources and services and that we have, as we rightly expect to have, the same level of service as those in the city are able to experience. My community is not second class or second rate and will not tolerate a failure to invest to ensure that we continue to support country health care and regional health care.

Mr BELL (Mount Gambier) (11:27): I rise to support the motion and commend the member for Narungga for getting it on the *Notice Paper*, particularly at No. 1—a very good effort from a good Independent member of parliament. In Mount Gambier, the state's second largest city, there are numerous issues around health. Almost weekly there is correspondence with my office or people stop me in the street to talk about an experience that either they have had or have been involved in the health system, so it is certainly something that needs continual and ongoing attention. I am confident in the minister and his experience and that those issues will be addressed over time.

There are people like Rebecca Kurzman, who has contacted me several times around occupational therapists and the lack of access her six-year-old daughter has had in that area, and even telehealth being delayed. It is in two-week blocks and almost like a drip-feed out: you cannot be seen in this two weeks, then of course the appointment comes up and then in two weeks' time it is cancelled and another one is made for another two weeks henceforth. There is also Lesley Braithwaite, who needs specialist cancer treatment, and part of that is not covered by the Patient Assistance Transport Scheme.

Certainly, there are many local issues that we will continue to fight on. An issue of great concern, which has been raised in here before, is the attraction and retention of professional health staff to our area. I think of smaller areas and the difficulty that they would also be having, because if the state's second largest city is facing issues in terms of attracting and retaining doctors and the allied health professions then that will be magnified in other areas.

To give some context, I asked a question of the minister on 1 June this year about why the COVID-19 ward was closed in Mount Gambier. He indicated that, in effect, the hospital was running with a shortage of 70 full-time equivalent staff. That is a massive number of people. In fact, very few industries would be able to run with 70 full-time equivalents out of action on a normally fully functioning roster. It has been in the paper recently that we have had Code Whites.

I then look across the broader Limestone Coast region to Penola, Naracoorte and Keith, which had been a continuing issue of great concern for the local community. It is pleasing to see that the incoming Labor government has made some serious attempts at addressing some of those issues, in particular with \$9.5 million for the Keith hospital and health service. Quite frankly, that is the type of commitment that I would have expected four years earlier. Everybody has known that it was an ongoing cause of concern, and to have a budgeted commitment now—it is in the budget—of \$9.5 million is fantastic for the Upper South-East or the Upper Limestone Coast area.

Obviously, \$8 million for the Naracoorte hospital is welcome news for a facility that needs urgent attention, and the emergency department will be the beneficiary of that commitment. There is \$24 million for the Mount Gambier hospital, which comprises \$8 million for the emergency department and \$11.4 million for mental health beds. I will flag with the minister that I would like to see some rejigging of that. There is no point having beds sitting there if you do not have the staff and trained professionals to support and treat those suffering mental health issues.

My greatest emphasis with mental health and all health-related issues is early intervention, so repurposing some of that \$11.4 million into early intervention so that issues can be addressed earlier instead of waiting until they hit an acute stage and the person ends up in the Mount Gambier hospital. There is \$7.4 million for additional paramedics. Again, that is a very good commitment. There is also \$4.6 million for drug and alcohol services in Mount Gambier. If we want to talk about the most prevalent drug out there that causes great community damage and personal damage, it is of course alcohol. I am glad that we have a focus on addressing that in the state's second largest city.

I am very pleased with the Malinauskas Labor government and the commitment they have made to health in the Limestone Coast. I think it is long overdue, and it will go some way to addressing perhaps some of the physical structures around health, but we keep getting back to staffing and attracting people to regions.

A lot of work can be done around revitalising our regions. A cooperative between the federal, state and local councils to promote the benefits of relocating to a regional area, whether it is cost of housing, lifestyle, a great place to bring up kids—all of that type of stuff—really needs to be promoted across Australia and across the world. I think we could have a targeted drive to revitalise and repopulate our regional areas.

Just employing one doctor in a small regional town is not the answer, because we find that that person is on duty, whether officially or unofficially, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 52 weeks of the year, and of course their burnout rate is quite high. It has to be much greater than that. Some ideas I have had floating around include, firstly, the Patient Assistance Transport Scheme needs more money. People in the regions deserve exactly the same standard of care as those living anywhere else in our state.

The Royal Flying Doctor Service is flying to Mount Gambier three times a day with empty planes on the way down and full planes on the way up, which means that a number of people, once they have finished their treatment, are left to find their own way back to Mount Gambier. There is a return service three times a day. The facilities at the Royal Flying Doctor Service are amazing and they would be waiting in comfort until that next flight goes down to Mount Gambier. Having those planes full on the way back to Mount Gambier provides a better service of care for those who need to come up for treatment.

I would like to see the government work collaboratively with the commonwealth and look at a bonded doctors scheme, very similar to what used to happen with bonded teachers, where there are large incentives to help pay for university courses, but those people would be bonded back to regions for a period of time, whether it is four, six or whatever number of years is appropriate.

Of course, our kids need to be supported earlier in schools. Country kids more than likely will return to the country once they have finished their degree, so supporting country kids with early intervention in schools, with career pathways, government support to help pay for it, means that we can see country kids becoming country doctors and returning back to country. I commend the member for Narungga for this very important motion.

Mrs HURN (Schubert) (11:37): I, too, rise in full support of the motion moved by the member for Narungga. Regional health, I believe, is one of the biggest issues facing South Australia and our health system more broadly. One of the key pillars of strength of the former Liberal government's approach to health was that it was all centred around delivering better health care to people closer to home and, regardless of where you came from in regional South Australia or where you came from across the state, there was investment.

I was so pleased to see investment in capital works and services right across South Australia, including in the regions. One of the most difficult problems that has yet to be solved and one of the biggest challenges—and it has been touched on by almost every single member in this place—is how we can attract and retain our local doctors. This is something on which we must work with the commonwealth, and I am pleased to see that that is on the radar of many people in this house. We must look at ways to incentivise GPs and health professionals to come to our regions, and we need to retain them in our local areas.

I would like to touch briefly on a couple of local issues in this space, in particular the Gumeracha emergency department. I acknowledge the member for Kavel and the work that he is doing in advocating for the reopening of the Gumeracha emergency department. This is something that I, as the Liberal candidate and now as the proud member for Schubert, have been advocating for.

It is absolutely an issue of critical importance to the local community, and I would like to acknowledge passionate local advocates like Joel Taggart, and our hardworking doctors, in particular Geoff Symons, who heads up the Gumeracha medical practice. They have been working around the clock for many decades in Gumeracha and, indeed, the northern Adelaide Hills. It is safe to say that COVID has put a number of pressures on them and their staff.

COVID was the catalyst for the closure of the emergency department in Gumeracha and I am really disappointed to see that this is yet to be addressed by the new government. Indeed, I note reports in the *Courier* today that the Minister for Health has failed to get back to passionate locals like Joel Taggart. I certainly welcome the member for Kavel's commitment in working to facilitate a meeting with the minister. I thank him for spruiking our local forum that we will be having to address this issue, because if you go anywhere in Gumeracha or in the northern Adelaide Hills, it is the main issue that is raised, and I can see why. It is such an issue of importance that we must see it addressed.

I would like to pick up on a number of comments that have been made across the chamber: that now is the time for action when it comes to regional health. We do not need important capital projects being put in the slow lane as we have seen in this latest state budget. We need action on the ground now. It is critically important. We do not need more projects being put in the slow lane. We do not need more reports being done. We know what the problem is and we must all work across the chamber, across the political divide to see these issues addressed.

As the member for Schubert, it would be remiss of me to have an opportunity to talk about regional health without mentioning the Barossa hospital. It is something that has been spoken about for over 30 years in the Barossa Valley community. It was something that the former Labor government failed to act on for 16 years. In our four years in government, we managed to build momentum to such a point where we had money in the budget for the very first time, we had 16 sites narrowed down to two and we had clinical expert planners in the field looking at what services would be housed in this hospital.

It is time that we get on with delivering this hospital. I am very pleased to receive a commitment from this new government that the process of the Marshall government will be followed through with. This is absolutely music to the ears of my local community. I will be watching it like a hawk. Once again, I wholeheartedly support the member for Narungga and indeed all regional MPs in this place who have spoken so passionately about their regional communities and I look forward to supporting this motion.

Mr TEAGUE (Heysen) (11:42): I am very glad to take the opportunity to speak in relation to the motion. I commend the member for Narungga for his thoughtfulness in light of experience in bringing the motion to the house, highlighting as it does the importance of making sure that we provide for regional health, both in capital terms and by practical measures—some of which have been referred to by the member for Mount Gambier just now.

I think it is important to highlight—and it should go without saying—that which the member for Narungga highlights in paragraph (b) of his motion, that 'regional South Australians are just as worthy of access to quality health care as those in the metropolitan areas'. That should be at the core of health policy in this state.

Let's be really clear about the context in which this motion is brought. The Marshall Liberal government, over the course of the last term of government, went about the process of restoring regional health in a stepwise and thoroughgoing way, whether it be through the structural processes of the local health networks (mine being the Barossa Hills Fleurieu Local Health Network) or by getting to grips with the discrete and particular needs of those local regional communities.

What we saw before that of course, infamously, was the destruction that was wreaked by Transforming Health, the ideological approach to health of the previous Labor government, characterised as it was by a notion that by centralising health services—and this negatively affected metropolitan South Australians as well—somehow you are going to deliver a better outcome. The opposite is so clearly true.

As one way to illustrate it—I have spoken about it before and it is just a really good example of how those two diametrically opposed approaches make such a difference—I had the honour when I was first elected to represent the community of Strathalbyn, and now it is in the good hands of the member for Hammond. In January 2017, the then health minister (and it is no simple use of an analogy) at the stroke of a pen and from that central vantage point determined to close a community aged-care facility and render Strathalbyn without even the aged-care facility such as it had become at Kalimna.

It was a stroke-of-the-pen decision made at a distance from the community and without any apparent understanding of the nature of what Kalimna meant to the community. It was also in the context of what had been a decade or more of neglect in keeping up with necessary investment in Strathalbyn, but the solution that was applied in the context of that central approach distant from community was to say, 'Alright, at the stroke of a pen we will close that down.' Those residents of the local community, supported as they were by the investment of the broader community in the facility, were then told, 'Right, well, you can go and find your aged-care needs elsewhere.' It was a complete lack of appreciation for how that facility played an important role in the community of Strathalbyn.

Happily, the community spoke up through the course of that year. They made it really clear that the history of Kalimna, the objects of Kalimna and the present day of Kalimna all were about health for local aged-care residents but also health of community more broadly. The only way to appreciate the value of the concept of that facility was to have a close and connected understanding of the local community.

The response of the Marshall Liberal team in opposition, and it was then delivered immediately in government, was to understand that need, how is it addressed and then to act to make the difference. I am eternally grateful to Minister Wade for working through that with me in the diligent way he did through 2017, making sure that those funds were budgeted in 2018 and then continuing to work in the years that followed to ensure that where further work was needed to be done then it could be.

The result so far has been the building of a brand-new aged-care facility adjacent to the hospital. That has taken the stress and the heat out of the hospital, which, as in so many regional

towns, can come to be a de facto aged-care facility, and that in turn puts stress on the hospital. It takes the heat out of the hospital and it can get back to doing what it needs to do. The facilities for the hospital in the course of that were improved and faith was kept with the Kalimna project, with the result that the community have greater confidence that they can then engage and benefit from the delivery of health services throughout the state.

In one sense, it serves as an anecdote to proper engagement with the regions with a view to delivering good outcomes, and it is one that can be repeated. It is that approach to health that is about not only delivering capital funding but also working in a dedicated and steady way with individual communities to make sure the response meets the needs of those communities.

I cannot leave that topic without stressing that, when we talk about the reopening of the emergency department at Gumeracha, we talk in the same breath about the need to reopen the emergency department at Strathalbyn—also closed in emergency circumstances during the pandemic. The government has charted a course out of the emergency declaration, and that is good news, but you have to do more than just signal a return to normality and away from declarations. You have to then act to bring back normal conditions to our regional towns and communities, and that includes reopening the emergency department at Strathalbyn. It must be done as a matter of urgent priority. The investment has been made so that that hospital can provide those services, and it should be done as a matter of priority.

I am the odd one out in the family in some ways. My brother and my sister-in-law are the leading lights as far as regional doctors are concerned. They have lived and breathed it all their life. I continue to hear from them about how to get GPs and other medical folks working in the regions and in the remote parts of the rest of the country. I am sure I will continue to hear from them, and I just take the chance to applaud the work they do every day in their local community, and I certainly endorse the need for health in the regions to be ever stronger and better resourced.

Mr WHETSTONE (Chaffey) (11:53): I, too, rise to make a contribution to a very good motion by the member for Narungga. He obviously understands and recognises the shortcomings when providing a good medical service in the regions of South Australia. For far too long we have seen people of the regions having to travel extensive distances with the shortcoming of having those services in our local hospitals or in our local towns due to the shortage of medical practitioners.

In the great electorate of Chaffey, I have a number of hospitals, probably more than most. I deal with the Renmark Paringa hospital, which is an institution that has been there for many decades. We also have the Riverland General Hospital in Berri, which is the centrepiece of health services in the Riverland. We also have the Barmera hospital, which has been closed a number of times in a recent period due to staff shortages, and that has cast doubt over the ongoing viability of that hospital. Congratulations, as those staff have returned and the department has had it back up and running.

The Waikerie hospital has also had the shortcoming of not having enough staff, particularly with the birthing suite and particularly with midwives, to keep that service open. Again, it is still short on midwives and so the birthing suite is still closed. The Karoonda hospital lost services over recent years, but I must say that a centralised model is not really part of the fabric of a regional town.

What we are seeing is that Karoonda continue to lose those expert medical frontline people because they are finding it hard to attract doctors, attract nurses, attract the frontline expertise and retain them in those smaller country hospitals. The Loxton hospital is a very worthy country hospital that does a great job and that is renowned for a great ability, particularly in obstetrics, and I congratulate that community.

I want to comment on all these hospitals that are supported by volunteers. Many volunteers come in and play a role in keeping the doors open and the lights on, raising money for the auxiliary fund, raising money for upgrades in infrastructure into those hospitals, and I think they all should be commended for the great work they do. We all know that regional hospitals are part of the fabric of a regional community.

I would also like to thank all my volunteers as my HAC representatives on those hospital boards. It is imperative that they play a role—as a volunteer, they are the eyes and ears on those health advisory councils—so that they come back to me and give me an update on and an

understanding of just what the shortfalls or the issues are at those particular hospitals. As I have said, all six hospitals in the region need doctors, nurses, midwives. They all need frontline staff and administration, and they need their volunteers. It is getting tough, and it is becoming tougher and tougher to retain health professionals in those smaller areas.

While we are talking about providing services, it is very disappointing that the incoming Malinauskas government has seen it fit not to support those who have to travel for health services. Potentially, what we are seeing is a government that again is drawing a line in the sand with a very thin understanding of what it means to travel out of a faraway regional or outback centre to undertake health services.

We are seeing that the PAT Scheme does help subsidise the cost of travelling. We know that the cost of living at the moment is severely impacting the ability of families to travel for those health services. I have had many people come to my office making a decision: will they travel or won't they travel? They cannot afford to. It is not only the emotional strain of having to travel away from home, away from your family, away from your job. Potentially, what we are seeing is that people are forgoing any health appointments or any health treatment because either they cannot afford it or it impacts on their capability of travelling away from home due to the cost.

I think it was just mean. It was mean of the minister and it was mean of the government not to put into their budget help for cost of living, for travelling to those health appointments from 16¢, as the Marshall Liberal government gave a commitment to increase it from 16¢ to 32¢ a kilometre. I think that was just a small token to support those having to travel.

Mental health, suicide prevention and substance abuse play a big role in regional settings, and country hospitals have finite resources in dealing with those issues. Particularly with suicide, it is all around substance abuse. It does have a connection with mental health, particularly with regional work and agriculture. Primary producers are the main victims of those three issues. As the shadow minister for all those three areas, I think the most important thing is the ability to have a visiting psychologist come to regional hospitals and regional settings so that we can identify and treat early the impacts of mental health and substance abuse.

I would also like to pay tribute to the Royal Flying Doctor Service. There are 600 journeys to the Riverland per year. The newly announced transfer facility at Renmark is much applauded. I want to thank both Tony Vaughan and Peter de Cure for their great leadership at the Royal Flying Doctor Service. They do an outstanding job with all the volunteers, raising money to make sure that institution is relevant. It not only provides an outstanding service into the regions but a service that the standard public health system just cannot cope with. They have done an outstanding job. Through the COVID pandemic, some of the work they did was second to none. I thank them for their dedication.

I would also like to thank Flinders University for the training facility at the Renmark campus. It has multidisciplinary health education. I congratulate Professor Paul Worley on his great advocacy and the work he has done over time in bringing those training facilities. We know that the best way to retain doctors is to have regional people, local people, do their training in a local setting. It is the easiest way to retain doctors and health professionals, just like the RACE program under the guidance of Paul Worley.

We are looking for both state and federal acknowledgement that the regional accreditation centre of excellence is a great program. It is about locals living, training and being retained in those local settings, keeping medical professionals local so that we do not have to go out there looking, hunting for doctors, trying to bring them out to the regional settings. We know it is just such a hard job.

In finishing, I also would like to put the government on notice about the COVID-19 clinic that has just been taken away from Berri and moved to Waikerie. We understand that the Riverland west area has seen a significant increase in positive COVID cases in recent times, so the clinic has been taken down to Waikerie, but there is no certainty as to where it will go after 30 June. I am calling on the government to give some certainty and some clarity—transparency, it is called. The minister needs to come out and make an announcement about exactly what sort of service and clinic will be provided to the good people of the Riverland in retaining that vital service.

I thank the member for Narungga for his motion. It is very important for regional South Australia that we have a staffed, relevant health institution, just like they do here in the city.

Mr McBRIDE (MacKillop) (12:03): It is a great pleasure to stand today to support the member for Narungga's motion this morning. It is a very important issue. I cannot go without reading out what it stands for and noting the last point, which I think he also has a spot of bother about. Whatever it takes to solve this, I am absolutely behind him. The motion reads:

That this house—

- (a) recognises the serious shortage of doctors and other medical staff in regional South Australia;
- (b) acknowledges that regional South Australians are just as worthy of access to quality health care as those in the metropolitan areas;
- (c) notes that incentivising doctors in regional South Australia has not worked and that it is time to guarantee it;
- (d) calls on the state government to ensure the equal distribution of general practitioner doctors around regional South Australia, now and in the future; and
- (e) calls on the state government to establish a dedicated department of regional health to support access to quality health care across South Australia.

As he noted when he brought forward this motion this morning: whatever it takes, but another department? SA Health is a huge department in itself, and obviously multiple billions of dollars are consumed yearly in this department, looking after the needs of South Australians. I am hoping we do not just create another department for the sake of it.

I will move on to why this is so important for the seat of MacKillop, the Limestone Coast and regional South Australia. In our current system, we have GPs out in our regions who are obviously not coping. Perhaps they have deserted, retired, moved on and not been replaced as years have gone by. We now use a locum model system which, as we know, is expensive. Doctors come and go, and it does not provide a consistent level of care. When constituents regionally, in MacKillop, approach a locum doctor, they never know who they are going to see or what the calibre is of that doctor, what their expertise is.

I will give an example to make sure we are all fully aware of the situation. A number of hospitals in my region are being serviced by locums. One of those hospitals is serviced by a doctor who lives on the Gold Coast. He flies down to the Limestone Coast, landing in Mount Gambier, and driving on to the hospital he will take care of for about two weeks. He then returns to his home on the Gold Coast. He is doing a wonderful job in the sense that there is no-one else to do it, but that really highlights where the population and the expertise reside, how they want to live and perhaps why we do not see doctors out in the regions looking after our constituents as we did 20, 30, 40 or 50 years ago.

In my local area, the current doctors out there are coming of age. They are getting close to retirement. We know they are being stretched, and they are not being replaced by new, up and coming doctors. We have talked about incentivising, about quota systems, and there have been conversations at all levels of government, federal and state, about the fact that to get a Medicare number you have to do a placement out in regional South Australia, but no-one has actually made this work. We have not solved it. There has been a lot of talk but there has been little outcome.

The doctors in our regions are being backed up by paramedics. The paramedic model was rolled out in the Kingston/Robe/Beachport/Lucindale area; two paramedics were brought in by our government to back up a very busy GP service. That has been absolutely welcomed, because they are stretched, and there is no doubt that the expertise those paramedics bring helps find solutions to help with our GP shortage. However, it still means that if I want to get an appointment in Kingston or Robe or other medical clinics like Beachport, there could be a wait of up to six to eight weeks for a general appointment for a medical concern.

These sorts of waiting periods, and the angst they cause our constituents, are not borne by our city cousins, who do not have to live through those sorts of dynamics. I have to highlight that our constituents right across regional South Australia are perhaps hardened by having had to take into consideration the vagaries of the medical system that has been in place for the last 10 to 20 years.

It is difficult to navigate. If you do want to see a GP, for all the right reasons, it is going to take a number of weeks to do so.

Our volunteer ambulance drivers are affected by the lack of GPs and vice versa. The further they have to go to a hospital with a doctor or a locum in it, the further the local ambulance volunteers have to go to take critical patients for an initial consultation to assess the requirements of the patient they have been called out to. It is becoming more cumbersome, and the time frames that regional constituents have to put up with are greater than ever before.

It is really ironic, what I hear about hospital ramping, which we do not see a lot of in regional South Australia but which is well and truly known about in the city of Adelaide. People complain that it might take 15 minutes to receive an ambulance, or that it might be 15 minutes late because there is a shortage and they are being ramped, and so forth. In the country, ambulances taking beyond an hour is not unheard of, maybe even two hours and the like, and it is getting worse, not better.

It is funny how we talk about the fact that some ambulances might be 15 minutes, 20 minutes or 30 minutes late for a city call-out, but in the country it is okay because we have distance and so forth to work with. On top of that we have a lack of volunteers, on top of that we have a lack of paid ambulance drivers, and on top of that we could actually do it better if there were more paramedics out in our regions, backing up our ambulance drivers as well as the volunteers and our local GPs.

In regard to the local GPs, I cannot really go much further than talking about the Millicent hospital and what it was 10 to 20 years ago. You would probably have to go back 20 years, rather than 10. It was a hospital punching well above its weight. It had two anaesthetists, it had obstetrics and it had a medical clinic attached to it. The medical clinic doctors were well integrated into the hospital, but that has been totally fractured and fragmented and is nothing like what it was in its former glory days.

Yes, it is still working and it does have local GPs connected to the hospital in such a way, with private patients. Yes, we have locum doctors at the Millicent hospital but not the GPs like we used to. There are some surgical operations that are taking place at the Millicent hospital, and that is on the improve, but it is nothing like it was 20 years ago.

All I can say is that it does not take an Einstein or someone very clever to understand that if the intent is to make it worse, or not to actually make it better, then obviously it will fail and will not work as it used to. It takes a mindset, it actually takes a deliberate course of action, and it will take a government that actually wants outcomes to turn this around. I am hoping this new Labor government does not reflect on its last 16 years and that they turn it around and put it in a positive light, following the member for Narungga and his motion. This could be the very start that is required to get this process underway.

Another hospital that is very much of interest is the Keith hospital. I really welcome the funding that has come from the state government and their election promise to lift that budget up to about \$1½ million a year and trying to find a model that works, with a paramedic who backs up the GPs. We find it very hard to get GPs into Keith, and I am hoping that the Keith hospital will find its feet and be a really good medical clinic into the future.

The Bordertown hospital is working and functional. There is big talk about a new medical clinic there, with a GP, and building a facility that will attract specialists and will be alike, or very much akin to, what is going on at Nhill with their medical clinic. I really welcome the time that it comes to fruition, if it does. Bordertown is a very industrial town with a growing population and a shortage of housing, and it will be welcome to see those sorts of medical facilities being built there.

By way of housing, we also heard that local GPs and new GPs, when they go to a town, are subject to the affordable housing problem. They do not want to buy the million-dollar house in the local town or an expensive house. They want affordable, modern and neat accommodation in our local towns if they do go out and want to work in the regions. The housing shortage is affecting our new GPs. Hopefully, this government also sees that the housing issue can help our doctor problem as well.

I would also like to touch on the fact that we have hospitals like those in Lameroo, Pinnaroo, Naracoorte and Penola all suffering from a shortage of doctors. I fully support the way that the

member for Narungga has brought this motion to the parliament, and I hope the Labor government comes on board and supports it as well, for all the good outcomes that can be arranged. I fully support this motion.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI (Unley) (12:13): It has been a terrific debate today and we have learnt a lot about regional South Australia. Regional South Australia does suffer, more so than other regions in Australia, in the delivery of services for those who live outside of the main capital. It really is a matter of scale.

We hear about locums, and in an earlier speech we heard about the locum who was flying down from the Gold Coast. The missed opportunity there is that that doctor is not living in the community. If that doctor were living in the community, there would be that doctor's salary that would be spent in the community, that doctor's children would go to the local schools, and the doctor's spouse would also likely work in the community. There would be a connection with the community that is not there with locums.

I know that one of the biggest challenges I was dealing with as the minister responsible for skilled migration was increasing that population in the regions. If we look at why it is difficult in South Australia, it is because there is such a big difference between the size of the capital city, Adelaide, about 1.3 million people, and our regional cities.

If you look at Hobart, for example, it has about 300,000 people, or a little less. The next largest city in Tasmania is Launceston, with 80,000 people. If you contrast that with South Australia, there are 1.3 million people in Adelaide and the next largest city, Mount Gambier, has about 28,000. It is a significant difference in what services you can deliver effectively and constantly and the quality of life that you can offer between a city the size of Mount Gambier and a city the size of Launceston.

By taking on the challenge and working to increase the population in regional South Australia, we will be doing two things: we will be increasing demand for services, such as rural doctors and health services so there can be a permanent presence in those cities and those regions, and providing a permanent workforce. We saw through the pandemic just how the regions rely so much on a transient workforce, whether they be backpackers, tourists or Pacific Island workers coming in at different times.

The problem with all those solutions is that they earn their money in the regions and then they take it away with them and do not spend it in the regions, so again it is another missed opportunity. It is a bit like the chicken and the egg really: you need to have the lifestyle and the services available for people to choose to live in regional South Australia.

I think that there is no doubt that it is changing. We have certainly seen growth in those regional areas within a couple of hours' drive of Adelaide where people for lifestyle choices have decided they can work from the regions. They can work from Clare, for example, and work from home and participate in the statewide economy. We are seeing more and more of that with our digital economy and how things are changing.

A couple of years ago, I visited the Clare childcare centre, which was doubling in size, and I asked what the driver was of the growth. It was the fact that people from Adelaide or people from outside of Clare were moving to Clare, working in local businesses or working in their own businesses or moving their businesses to Clare, and developing that demand for those extra childcare services in regional South Australia.

They took advantage of the incentives that were there to introduce paid traineeships to the childcare centre, rather than the traditional institutional method where students would go to an institution, either TAFE or a non-government provider, to gain their qualification in child care. They would do that while they were being paid to deliver and gain their on-the-job experience. That has also had the impact of seeing more opportunities for young people in the regions to start their careers and be supported in doing that.

I know that many of the speakers on this motion today spoke very passionately about rural doctors, but it is an issue that is related to all service delivery in regional South Australia. It is a massive opportunity for this government, as it was for the previous government, to focus on the regions and to encourage those regions to grow.

We expanded the GigCity network into Whyalla and Mount Gambier so those who lived away from Adelaide would still have that connection to the world through very fast internet connection and very cheap internet connection by being able to participate in the expanded GigCity network that, until then, really was only an Adelaide-based internet provider that was offering cheap high-speed internet.

This means that even educational services can be expanded into the regions, which is very important, because we need to encourage those young people who are leaving school in regional South Australia to start their tertiary education in regional South Australia, just like we are seeing in the Hub in Port Pirie, where students are starting the first year of a number of degrees, mainly in the health area.

They are still within their communities and are not travelling down to Adelaide or moving to Adelaide. That is being delayed by a year or two because they are able to have those services delivered through a local hub, where they are developing their community ties and expanding their friendships in the community. It is tying them to the community and giving them the ability to make a decision when they get their qualifications to come back home and use their qualifications where they grew up.

It is a very complex issue, there is no doubt about that. There is not a one-size-fits-all. I commend the member for Narungga for raising this issue and for his motion. It is a big picture project for the South Australian government. There is no single solution for regional doctor shortages or service shortages in South Australia. We know that if we can increase demand it will have a snowballing effect. We will see more people choosing to live in the regions for lifestyle reasons: because of technology, they will choose to live in the regions. That will increase demand for those services, and it will make it more attractive for regional doctors and other health providers to make the regions their home. I commend the motion and thank the member for Narungga for bringing it to the house.

The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL (Mawson) (12:22): I rise to support the amended motion because, representing the south-western side of the Fleurieu Peninsula and Kangaroo Island, we know how bad things are for general practitioners and the resultant health services that people are getting. I know that when the health minister was in opposition he was always at the end of the phone when I would ring him, and he would speak directly with practitioners on Kangaroo Island about how things can be improved; and I have great faith in the health minister that we will achieve that. It is not going to be easy. This is a problem right across Australia, but it does need a different approach and I am very pleased that the health minister is right across all this.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank him, our Treasurer and our Premier for their commitment in the budget for \$10 million for the Kangaroo Island hospital—I think that is really important—as well as the new ambulance stations and extra paramedics and ambulance officers on the Fleurieu. We are moving in the right direction, but more needs to be done. The very fact that we are in here talking about health in regional South Australia and we are talking about rural GPs is a good thing. It just shows the people in the area that I represent, and other regions, that as leaders we are in here taking the matter very seriously and we appreciate the circumstances that they have been going through for a number of years now.

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (12:23): I rise to support this motion by the member for Narungga and commend him for it. Regional health: where do you start? We certainly need to see what we can do to make sure that we have the right conditions—and to attract doctors and other medical workforce not just to work in the regions but also to live there—and we must make sure that we look after the ones that are in place. As time goes on, and we have seen it over and over again in recent times, doctors nearing retirement age fear for the communities that they have lived in. They have loved to be there and, when they are about to retire, they wonder what will happen next.

Certainly, I have been lobbied by local doctors at Murray Bridge assisting with running the emergency department there to make sure that we can get enough on-call doctors. I note that it is operated by a private service, the Bridge Clinic. They have been doing it for decades as a service contracted to governments of all colours. They do a great service, but they would certainly like more support. I know when we were in government, until recently, there was some support supplied there

as well, but it is contracted to those private clinic doctors, as it is in a lot of areas across South Australia, and they certainly would, as I said, appreciate more support.

I note that in the town of Murray Bridge, which is my biggest town in the Rural City of Murray Bridge, there are two other clinics. They operate as day clinics, which is great, to service the needs of the ever-growing population of Murray Bridge and the surrounding districts. It being a popular town only an hour south-east of Adelaide, a lot of people, a lot of farmers, from right around the state retire there. They do not want to live in the city amongst all the concrete and bitumen, which I appreciate, but they want to be within reach of good services.

We do get this issue, though, that not just any doctor these days can turn up and work in emergency departments. They have to be credentialled and that is another level of training that must take place. I have been meeting with the doctors at the Mannum health services as well, talking about the needs not just of the doctors there but of the nurses, whether they be at Karoonda, which used to be in my electorate, or Mannum, which still is in my electorate, and the shortage there.

Also, as I indicated, we must make sure that we retain doctors, make sure everything is in place, whether it is the right conditions or whether it is the structure of how they get paid and supported. It is very much a different world in country South Australia. The difference in what happens if you land in emergency, for instance, is brought up at times. Some people cannot get their head around it, but in most places in the country, because they are on-call doctors for the emergency units, if you do not get admitted to hospital there is a gap fee.

One thing the gap fee does—apart from infuriate some people, because they have to pay a gap fee for this kind of service in the country, and I acknowledge that—is it does keep people out of emergency. It does keep people out of emergency, so they attend their own doctor if they do not need to address an urgent situation. But the issue, and it would be an issue that the health minister in the new government would be well aware of, is that it would be well north of \$40 million annually to fund that service not having a gap fee. It was interesting that in the city two years ago, in Adelaide, numbers dropped heavily in emergency attendance, by about 70 per cent, which was probably (not probably; I am sure it was) because people were scared of the risk. They thought hospitals were full of COVID.

There are obviously strategies that we put in place. We put in rural generalist training, which can take up to 12 years—that is up at Berri in the Riverland—to get doctors used to working in regional conditions. It is tough. I have been around a while, but when I was young the local doctors would do the operations, they would do all the childbirth work, they would deal with the accidents and they would see their patients. I do not know when they slept, and I think that is the issue.

There are a lot more doctors on the scene now, and I commend those doctors for what they did. We are now more heavily reliant on overseas-trained doctors, but their credentials do not match up with the requirements of the South Australian health service or the Australian health services when they come in from overseas. They are a much-valued group who come in to support our communities in regional South Australia, but when they come here they have to retrain. A lot of them work in aged care and other fields while they are doing that training to get accredited to be a full-blown, accredited doctor in South Australia.

It is not without its issues. Some people cannot work out why the place is so isolated when they come from overseas, and it takes a while to get used to the lifestyle. It does not matter what you do. I know that, as a community, we fixed up the nurses' quarters in Taillem Bend for a doctor but, as the demands and needs of that family grew and they needed to be in Adelaide for education, university and other matters, they left.

I guess it is the beauty of the bush, and sometimes it can be the tyranny of the bush. The bush is a great place, I love it, but obviously for a lot of education needs, as well as professional needs, people want to be in the city areas. I have never forgotten a speech that a former member for Kaurana, the Hon. John Hill, gave here one day. I just about fell over when he said that they were having trouble attracting doctors in Reynella. I thought, 'Wow! If they're having trouble at Reynella no wonder I'm having trouble getting a doctor to Pinnaroo.' That speech in the house has always stuck in my mind.

We must do all we can, as we did. We put in the rural generalist training. I was proud to deliver, as part of the Marshall Liberal government, a new \$7 million emergency department in Murray Bridge combined with \$3 million to update the operating theatres there, which is going very well. Obviously, we have seen the commissioning of a new ambulance station under us at Strathalbyn as well. In recent times a new five-bay station was built in Murray Bridge. I note that under our watch we instigated the 36-bed aged-care and dementia ward that was opened in Strathalbyn, and I see that it is still in the budget.

The future of Kalimna might be fleshed out a bit in estimates. It was shut down by the previous Labor government before the 2018 election, and those residents were essentially kicked out in the cold. However, it is pleasing to see that an aged-care centre of some kind will be built there into the future. I will be watching that as time goes on as the new local member for Strathalbyn as the member for Hammond, because as the population ages we certainly need to look after them.

There are so many things that we need to do to make sure that we get health care right, not just in city areas but across the state, and make sure that we can put in place the right programs to attract not just doctors but other healthcare workers. I commend the motion by the member for Narungga.

Mr ELLIS (Narungga) (12:33): Do I close the debate prior to the amendment being considered?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, you close the debate and then we will put the motion, which will be the amendment first.

Mr ELLIS: Thank you for your guidance, Mr Deputy Speaker. What an uplifting day we have had, or what an uplifting time we have had to start parliament this fine Wednesday. I have to admit to those present in the chamber that on previous Wednesdays I have sat here considering whether what we were doing was the most proficient use of parliamentary time.

On Wednesday mornings, without reflecting on any motions that might be on the *Notice Paper* at the moment or previously debated, there have been some rather inane motions put to the parliament, but this morning this is a tremendously important one. The regional health motion, as many members have said, is a particularly important motion to those living in regional South Australia.

It is wonderful to hear what appears to be unanimous support for increased action to try to address the shortage of regional health professionals across our wonderful state. Thank you to each and every member—I will not list them all due to the vast quantity of them—who has made a contribution in support of the original motion and the amendment in some cases. It is much appreciated.

I do want to quickly touch on a couple of things, the first being that there have been a number of contributions celebrating capital investment in different hospitals around the state, which is a wonderful thing. I am equally as proud of the capital investments we have made across the electorate of Narungga as well and I do not wish in any way to denigrate any investments made in our regional hospitals whatsoever, but the intent of the motion was about the health workforce rather than any capital works.

I would like to make the point that, in a lot of instances where that money has been spent upgrading those facilities, the anticipated or hoped for influx of new professionals has not necessarily eventuated. It has not been like Kevin Costner in *Field of Dreams*: 'If you build it, they will come.' We are still waiting for those doctors to show up. While those capital works are great, there needs to be some actual work done. The rubber needs to hit the road on some actual work to guarantee the equal distribution of doctors around the state.

We accept it as fact that for police, teachers and other vocations there needs to be some prioritised work done to make sure that the communities that need them have access to those different vocations. There must be a similar answer to the problem that is the regional health workforce. We need to make sure there are a discerning number of positions available in different parts of the state to ensure that those areas that might not otherwise have access have access to

that key vital service. If we accept that it is possible for police, teachers and other vocations, I am sure it must be possible for our regional health workforce.

That being the case, I would like to particularly thank the shadow ministers—the shadow minister for regional health and of course the shadow minister for health—for their contributions and support and look forward to ensuring that they aid us in our plan for increased action on the regional health workforce. I would also like to thank the Minister for Health for his contribution and amendments. Old habits die hard. There was a little bit of trepidation when he informed me that he intended to amend the motion, but I have to admit that it is a rather reasonable amendment and I do not intend to impose three minutes of bells upon the wonderful people of this chamber. I will let that amendment pass and hopefully the motion thereafter.

There is one part of the original motion that has not found its way into the amendment and that is the word 'guarantee'. That is the one thing I would like to see happen—some actual guarantee (and I am sounding a little bit like a broken record), some proactive action to ensure equal distribution. I would like to see a guarantee, some actual action, but I will not die in a ditch over it.

Pardon me if I am jumping around, but I acknowledge again an oversight on my behalf. The minister has done an excellent job including 'the commonwealth government' in paragraph (d). That probably should have been there right from the get-go. Thank you to him for that. Finally, he expressed concern about not wanting to put words in my mouth. On this occasion, he is more than welcome because he is dead right.

We do not want extra bureaucracy further clouding the wonderful work of the health department, but there must be a way to ease the burden on the Minister for Health. It is just a massive job for whoever takes it on, irrespective of their party. By separating that into regional health and metropolitan health, there would be an opportunity to have a greater focus on each. With those words, I accept the amendment and hope that the motion passes as well.

Amendment carried; motion as amended carried.

HYDROGEN SECTOR

Mr PATTERSON (Morphett) (12:39): I move:

That this house—

- (a) recognises the Marshall Liberal government's support for clean hydrogen and renewable energy in South Australia;
- (b) commends the Marshall Liberal government for releasing South Australia's Hydrogen Action Plan in September 2019 to help scale-up renewable hydrogen production for domestic consumption and export, which will provide major economic benefits to South Australia and support the transition to a low emissions energy system;
- (c) commends the Marshall Liberal government for their vision and investment in the hydrogen hub at Port Bonython, which will unlock significant investment from global energy industry leaders, create thousands of jobs and will establish Port Bonython as a domestic and international export hydrogen hub;
- (d) recognises that the Port Bonython hydrogen hub will further stabilise the South Australian electricity grid and accelerate South Australia's achievement of net 100 per cent renewable energy by 2030 and generation capacity of 500 per cent of current grid demand with renewable energy by 2050; and
- (e) acknowledges that the Port Bonython hydrogen hub will be a transformational legacy of the Marshall Liberal government that sets up South Australia to become a global renewable energy powerhouse.

I move this motion because it really is a good opportunity to speak in parliament today and to recognise the former Marshall Liberal government's support for not only renewable energy in South Australia but clean hydrogen. It is part of an energy solution that is not only looking at providing clean energy in South Australia but making sure that there is an orderly transition that goes with it, that it is reliable and clean as well as being affordable.

When we couch it in terms of where we are this week and the major issues facing the National Electricity Market, principally in the east coast market, those pressures are making themselves felt in South Australia. A lot of that is based around a transition making sure that there is enough

generation capacity in the market and making sure, from South Australia's perspective, that as we are transitioning we are doing so in such a way that is orderly. If you go too fast one way it invariably has issues, and there are issues at the moment in the market. I think South Australia has been through them.

We do not want to see forced blackouts in South Australia and that is why the Marshall government put in place an orderly plan to make sure there was also grid stability supporting that push for renewable energy generation with capacity—grid-scale storage capacity. Even the Home Battery Scheme was very worthwhile in terms of making sure that we were able to reduce those peaks of demand which happen in the morning when families are getting ready for work and also in the early evening when they come back.

One of the main reasons why South Australia is able to look to transition to much more renewable energy resources is that nationwide South Australia has around 69 per cent of Australia's quality wind and solar generating land, from which we can generate large amounts of renewable energy. We are currently transitioning our energy system. Only in the last year we had over 60 per cent of the state's electricity generated from renewable energy.

As I said, it is important to know that this transition is done in an orderly fashion so that we create not only clean electricity but electricity that is affordable and reliable. One of the ways to make sure we do that—because, of course, the sun is not always shining and the wind is not always blowing, so the energy can be intermittent—is to make sure we are connected up with other parts of the grid. In times when we are not generating enough via these renewable sources, that allows us to source it from the east coast.

Importantly, what happens most of the time, when we are generating more electricity than is being used in South Australia, is it can be exported. Even yesterday, when we were generating more than was being used here from renewable sources, it was getting sent over to Victoria. That helps out from their perspective in terms of their generation as well. It is important that we look at this as a whole, as a nation, and not try to compartmentalise and go it alone.

A focus area was on the interconnector between South Australia and New South Wales. That was going to create a capacity of upwards of 800 megawatts between South Australia and New South Wales. As I said, it allows us to export that excess renewable energy not only now through Victoria but, when up and running, into the big New South Wales market as well. Again, that provides stability for us and for the National Electricity Market.

A key reason for doing that is that South Australia has a massive uptake of rooftop solar, with over one gigawatt previously and it is rising at about 10 per cent per year, so this is growing and growing. Our average demand is around 1½ gigawatts as a state. It can peak during summer at over three gigawatts, but we want to make sure that this rooftop solar can continue to grow. By having access to another market, that is going to encourage and enable us to continue to grow those household solar panels on roofs.

With these big solar and wind resources we have in South Australia, we are attracting massive investment from large-scale solar and wind projects. They are going to look and say, 'By setting up in South Australia not only can we supply into the South Australian market but, by having these interconnectors, we can supply into the much larger New South Wales and Victorian markets as well.' That is attracting investment and giving them certainty that they will be able to sell into a market. That has seen huge investment.

I have talked before about Neoen with their \$3 billion Goyder South project. That consists of 1,200 megawatts of wind energy, 600 megawatts of solar and 900 megawatts of battery capacity. Neoen themselves have said that two-thirds of this (that is \$2 billion) investment in Goyder South relies on being able to export to New South Wales. The managing director himself has said that Project EnergyConnect is vital to unlocking the full potential of Neoen's multigigawatt Goyder Renewables Zone and the significant jobs and investment it represents for South Australia.

That is an example of the sort of investment that is going on here. There is a massive pipeline of renewable energy investment that is either approved or planned that totals over 16 gigawatts and represents about \$20 billion worth of new generation investment happening here in South Australia. That is going to create jobs immediately and also, by lowering electricity prices, that will have flow-on

effects to make sure we can support industry in South Australia by having sufficient generation capacity here.

We know how this intermittent energy can be used, but the challenge is, as you grow, it is intermittent so it is not always on. We need to match it up with demand, so storing this intermittent energy has been important. I have talked before about some of the battery schemes that were created by the Marshall Liberal government, but another way of storing this is through hydrogen, which people see as having enormous possibilities because it can be created with renewable electricity that electrolyses the water, splits off the hydrogen and the oxygen, then significant amounts of energy can be stored in that hydrogen. That allows that to effectively become a chemical battery, and this battery can then be used later on to produce renewable energy. The great thing about this is that this green hydrogen is emissions free.

As I said, South Australia is ideally suited to seize on these vast opportunities provided by the emerging global market for hydrogen, not just the domestic market. The Marshall government recognised that in September 2019. It released a Hydrogen Action Plan at the opening of the International Conference on Hydrogen Safety right here in Adelaide at the Adelaide Convention Centre. This Hydrogen Action Plan set out 20 key actions across five key areas that were going to help scale up renewable hydrogen production for export and domestic consumption.

This plan really worked to underpin a safe and secure hydrogen export and domestic sector in South Australia. One of the first projects was at Tonsley, looking to set up a 1.25 megawatt electrolyser that then would create hydrogen. That hydrogen was blended into the natural gas network that then fed into over 700 houses in Mitchell Park.

It helps them decarbonise in using their gas, but also shows that there is a way forward to this. That then begs the question of how this can be done on a larger scale, and certainly the Marshall government was very interested in pursuing that. That ultimately led to the Marshall government bidding into the former federal government's hydrogen hubs initiative and locking down on Port Bonython as a location.

The bid submitted was over \$146 million into that hydrogen hub, so that announcement by the federal government in April that they were prepared to proceed with this was fantastic news. It is a huge win for South Australia, will create thousands of jobs and establish the state as a globally significant supplier of clean hydrogen right here in South Australia. As I said, it was a partnership between the former Marshall Liberal government and, importantly, experienced global industry leaders, ones that have experience in the industry and really can be driving this initiative as well, because they have that experience and technical know-how.

Also, the partnership was with the Morrison Liberal government, the former federal government. It is looking at unlocking upwards of \$13 billion worth of investment and creating thousands of jobs. The acceptance of this bid was a strong endorsement of the Marshall Liberal government's hydrogen plan for Port Bonython, but also its ambitions in the renewable energy and hydrogen space. Companies that were involved at the Port Bonython hydrogen hub with the domestic focus are Santos, Fortescue Future Industries, Origin Energy and H2U.

These were among some of the companies selected to develop and work on this hydrogen bid, but also the Port Bonython hydrogen hub is going to be a truly global project, with companies from Japan being involved as well as Canada, such as Chiyoda, AMP Energy, ENEOS Corporation and Mitsubishi Corporation, all coming together to build what is envisaged as a precinct of multiple hydrogen hub projects right here in Port Bonython.

Importantly, they are also bringing with them a significant investment of, as I said, \$13 billion. They are bringing it in their own right, and in the case of some of the Japanese companies they are backed up by the Japanese government, which has a new energy development organisation. It is overseeing significant project funding in multiple hydrogen projects. It is great that two of those companies involved there are looking to locate and set up here in South Australia.

As I said before, Japan has a big ambition as well. In the hydrogen space they are looking by 2030 to increase their hydrogen use from 200 tonnes today to 300,000 tonnes. There are massive opportunities there as well, and that is why those companies are involved at Port Bonython. Looking

at the scale of what this could be by 2030, these projects at the Port Bonython hydrogen hub could support up to three gigawatts of electrolysis, which is around South Australia's current peak demand. That is certainly going to help with some of the other issues that eventuate in terms of the demand curve in South Australia.

The hydrogen hub project is going to support over 6 gigawatts of new renewable energy and aim to produce up to 1.8 million tonnes of hydrogen per annum. This is a significant project to produce hydrogen from the vast renewable energy resources that we have here in South Australia. It is the perfect location for a hub here. There is also the opportunity from hydrogen that has been produced from gas in Moomba that has been sequestered and carbon captured underground to also be piped down to Port Bonython. This mixed production approach certainly will mean that the hydrogen produced there will have the ability to be cost competitive much earlier, hence increasing the success of the hub itself.

This is a fantastic initiative by the Marshall Liberal government. It will push towards the net 100 per cent renewable target by 2030, but also look to producing 500 per cent of the current grid demand in renewable energy by 2050. The Port Bonython hydrogen hub is going to build on the work of the former Marshall Liberal government in the clean energy and hydrogen space. It will stabilise the state's electricity grid, deliver cheaper reliable energy and, most importantly, leave a lasting transformational legacy from the former Marshall Liberal government that will set up South Australia to become a global renewable energy powerhouse.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr Odenwalder.

Parliamentary Procedure

STANDING ORDERS SUSPENSION

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS (West Torrens—Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Minister for Energy and Mining) (12:54): I move:

That standing orders and sessional orders be so far suspended as to enable me to move a motion without notice for the rescission of an order.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: An absolute majority not being present, ring the bells.

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

Motion carried.

SITTINGS AND BUSINESS

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS (West Torrens—Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Minister for Energy and Mining) (12:56): I move:

That the order making the consideration of the adjourned debate on the second reading of the Statutes Amendment (Justice Measures) Bill an order of the day for 30 November 2022 be rescinded.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: An absolute majority being present, I accept the motion.

Motion carried.

Mr TEAGUE (Heysen) (12:57): I move:

That consideration of the adjourned debate on the second reading of the Statutes Amendment (Justice Measures) Bill be made an order of the day for Wednesday 6 July 2022.

Motion carried.

Sitting suspended 12:57 to 14:00.

Ministerial Statement

DECLARATION OF ELECTRICITY MARKET SUSPENSION

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS (West Torrens—Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Minister for Energy and Mining) (14:00): I seek leave to make a ministerial statement.

Leave granted.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Challenging and unique conditions are currently occurring in the National Electricity Market, impacting supply availability and wholesale prices. Wholesale gas and electricity prices are currently significantly higher than longer term averages, driven by higher seasonal demand, generation unavailability, high fuel costs and the global energy supply crunch associated with the war in Ukraine. These circumstances have resulted in persistent high spot market prices across the National Electricity Market.

The administered price provisions of the National Electricity Rules form an important component of the market safety net, which operates to protect and sustain electricity trading in the National Electricity Market during periods of sustained high prices. If market prices in the region rise to levels that are likely to cause substantial financial stress, then those prices are capped until they return to lower levels.

Administered price conditions are independently assessed by the Australian Energy Market Operator for each region and each market within the National Electricity Market. An administered price period is triggered in a region when the sum of spot prices for the previous seven days exceeds the cumulative price threshold. The cumulative price threshold that currently applies is \$1.36 million, which is equivalent to an average spot price of \$674.16 per megawatt hour over the previous seven days.

The cumulative price threshold has been reached in Queensland, New South Wales, Victorian and South Australian NEM regions. Where the cumulative price threshold has been reached, an administered price cap of \$300 per megawatt hour for dispatch intervals in that region applies for the duration that prices are administered. It is important to note that generators who bid into the market will be protected from losses through the administered price cap arrangements.

This approach factors in the direct cost of generators and opportunity costs and are designed to ensure that generators continue to bid into the market and provide protection for generators so they will not face losses during through this process. This process is run independently by the Australian Energy Market Commission. We now have generators bidding as if they bought their coal and gas for these new spot prices, so AEMO has placed a price cap.

While the generators have sufficient capacity to supply our operational demand, as a result of the administered price cap being implemented, some generators are deliberately withdrawing from market. This has forced AEMO to issue a lack of reserve notice to direct generators on to avoid load shedding. This direction entitles generators to additional compensation, which is in the best interests of their shareholders.

The government has poor visibility of the market, which impedes its ability to predict and manage situations like this. As the house is aware, we are progressing reforms which seek to improve the transparency of the gas market. The previous Labor government put in place 250 megawatts of sovereign generation as a safeguard to protect us from uncooperative markets. The former Liberal government promptly privatised this safeguard.

While AEMO has directed the Snapper Point power station to generate at 100 per cent of its 150-megawatt capacity, the house would be disappointed to hear it is still using diesel—or as members opposite would have said 'dirty diesel'—as a primary fuel for the gas turbines.

Even more disappointingly, the 120 megawatt Lonsdale generators are unable to operate as they are disconnected from the grid. The gas turbines, generators and associated equipment are being prepared for relocation to a new site at Bolivar as a result of the privatisation, decommissioning a piece of—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister has the call.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: —critical infrastructure so we are left vulnerable over winter. The current market practice of generators withdrawing capacity, forecast lack of reserves and the market operator having to direct generation into the market—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Flinders is called to order. The Premier is called to order. The minister has the call.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: —to manage these reserve shortfalls is not how the market should be operated, nor is it sustainable.

The Australian Energy Market Operator has informed the NEM of its intention to suspend the spot market in each region at 1.30pm today. This is unprecedented in the history of the National Electricity Market. AEMO says it has taken this action because it has become impossible to continue operating the spot market while ensuring a secure and reliable supply of electricity for consumers in accordance with the National Electricity Rules. What this means is that the market operator will apply a predetermined suspension pricing schedule for each region, including South Australia.

The declaration will continue until AEMO determines again it is possible to operate the market within the capability of AEMO's market systems in accordance with the rules.

Parliamentary Procedure

PAPERS

The following papers were laid on the table:

By the Minister for Health and Wellbeing (Hon. C.J. Picton)—

Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Amendment (Professional Indemnity Insurance) Regulation 2021

SA Health—Report on Response to the Deputy Coroner's Finding of 4 November 2021 into the Death of Theo Nikolas Papageorgiou—May 2022

Ministerial Statement

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

The Hon. G.G. BROCK (Stuart—Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Roads, Minister for Veterans Affairs) (14:07): I seek leave to make a ministerial statement.

Leave granted.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: The year 2022 may well be the 'year of elections', but on 23 August the most important election process of the year will start. This is the day when nominations for election to our local councils open.

One of the things that is said most often about councils is that they are 'the sphere of government closest to the community'. It is said a lot as it is absolutely true. When you think about the services that have the most impact on people day to day, that define their lives within their local area and often form the connections that make us a community, they are very often delivered by their local council.

Any member of parliament will tell you that the issues raised in our election, or the questions and concerns brought to us in our electorate offices, are often about the decisions and the actions of the local council. But I think one of the challenges for councils is to translate this reliance on councils into participation, and nowhere in this challenge is it more important than in local council elections.

Unlike state and federal elections, of course, voting for South Australian councils is voluntary. Voter turnout is therefore an excellent indication of citizens' sense of engagement with their local council and also with the candidates who are standing. Improving voter turnout is an ongoing challenge.

At the 2018 council elections it was just 33 per cent. While this was low, it was slightly higher than the 2014 elections, which, as the Electoral Commission pointed out in its report on the 2018 elections, 'bucked the trend' of declining participation in other elections both in South Australia and around the nation. If this pattern continues this year, we are heading, slowly but surely, in the right direction but not fast enough.

Like all governments, councils can only be as good as the people they consist of. That is why it is essential that we attract as wide a range as possible of highly qualified candidates—people who have a real commitment to supporting their community and making their local area a better place.

One of the highlights of the 2018 election was the record number of candidates across all 200-plus elections that were held. There was both an increase in the number of candidates and a decrease in uncontested elections from the 2010 council elections. It was not only the sheer number that was great to see but also the big increase in women standing and being elected. Female candidates increased from 28.6 per cent to 33 per cent, and 42 per cent of mayors elected in the 2018 council elections were women, with another 40 per cent of female ward councillors and 29 per cent of councillors at large.

But there are still sections of our population that are not sufficiently well represented: young people, Aboriginal people, people from diverse cultural backgrounds. While having almost 50 per cent of our local leaders as women is great, we can still aim for 50 per cent across the board. We must recognise that the quality and diversity of our candidates also drive voter turnout. Increasingly, people simply will not vote if they are faced with a list of candidates they do not think will represent them well.

I also recognise that there is a real risk this year that council elections will be impacted by being the third election this year—that a sense of 'election fatigue' may affect both nominations and voter turnout. That is why I am asking all councils, the Local Government Association and the Electoral Commission to work together to invest in the promotion of this year's local government and to make sure that this investment is as productive as possible.

I also note that there are a number of people in this chamber who, like myself, have made the transition from local to state government and, also like myself, I am sure that they would say that serving on their council provided that first great opportunity to both represent and support their local communities.

My time as a council member and Mayor of the Port Pirie Regional Council was one of the most rewarding periods of my life. I therefore call on all my fellow members in this house to do what we can to encourage good local people to stand for their council and to encourage all people to cast their vote when they receive it in the mail in October. We must never lose sight of the fact that participation is what it is all about—as candidates, as voters and, when our new councils are elected, as active participants in our local decisions.

Finally, I would like to also acknowledge the fact that this will be the first council election held in South Australia for many years without the contribution of the Deputy Electoral Commissioner, Mr David Gully. I am advised that Mr Gully is now on leave pending his planned retirement and that in characteristic fashion he has planned matters so that his formal retirement will start exactly on his 25th anniversary in the job.

While it may therefore be a little premature, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr Gully for his dedication to making sure that both state and local government elections in South Australia are run smoothly and with great integrity. I wish him all the best in his future plans, and we will do our very level best to run a local government election without him. Again, I encourage everyone in this house to encourage people in their own communities to stand as a candidate in the forthcoming council elections and wish everybody the best.

Parliamentary Committees

LEGISLATIVE REVIEW COMMITTEE

Mr FULBROOK (Playford) (14:12): I bring up the ninth report of the committee, entitled Subordinate Legislation.

Report received and read.

*Question Time***PUBLIC SCHOOL FEES**

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER (Morialta) (14:15): My question is to the Premier. Who wrote the text of the letter signed by the Premier and the Minister for Education that was received last week by families of public school students across South Australia? With leave, I will explain.

Leave granted.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Last week, public school families across South Australia received a letter signed by the Premier and the Minister for Education, Training and Skills on the Premier's letterhead in relation to school fees.

The Hon. B.I. BOYER (Wright—Minister for Education, Training and Skills) (14:15): I thank the member for Morialta for the question. I believe, if I'm correct, the letter to which the shadow minister would be referring is a letter which was talking about the Malinauskas Labor government's commitment to reduce the amount that families in public schools pay for the materials and services charge by about \$100 this coming financial year and next financial year.

Obviously, this is a very important announcement at any time, but particularly now with the cost-of-living concerns that South Australians are facing at the moment. I think it is appropriate that this government has done everything in its power to bring this commitment forward so that it comes into effect in this coming financial year so those parents get \$100 off the materials and services charge for every child that they have, and then the same again for next year.

In terms of who actually drafted the letter, I would have to go back and check that. I'm happy to take it on advice and come back to the house with an answer.

PUBLIC SCHOOL FEES

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER (Morialta) (14:16): My question is to the Premier. Were any public servants from the Premier's office correspondence team, or indeed any other public servants in the Premier's office, involved in either the drafting or the dissemination of the letter in question?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier) (14:17): I'm more than happy to obtain a briefing regarding the specifics of who was responsible for what part of the letter, as per the minister's question. Needless to say, the government takes very seriously its obligation to inform South Australians who are the beneficiaries of government policy. We know that South Australians at the moment very much have cost of living top of mind.

This is a policy that I understand enjoys bipartisan support because, of course, the shadow minister announced this policy in the lead-up to the election in conjunction with ourselves. This is a policy that South Australians who were paying close attention to the election process would know enjoys bipartisan support. We very much hope that that bipartisan support is maintained.

The Hon. D.G. Pisoni: The letter doesn't say that.

The SPEAKER: Member for Unley!

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: In terms of the policy itself, as the minister has correctly enunciated, it is one that provides a not insignificant degree of relief to families. We have a number of policies that were delivered in the context of the most recent state budget that try to orientate support to those members of our community who need it most.

On the one hand, we have the Cost of Living Concession, which we announced before the election we would commit to doubling. That has been honoured in this year's budget and will be rolled out progressively over coming months. That is orientated towards those South Australians who are on low and fixed incomes, pensioners probably being the most significant cohort.

Then, on the other end of the spectrum we have families. We know when they have school-age children, families have to incur substantial costs associated with education. We see this \$100 relief providing a degree of support to those families, and they are entitled to know about that relief accordingly.

PUBLIC SCHOOL FEES

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER (Morialta) (14:19): My question is to the Minister for Education. Who in the minister's office was responsible for the dissemination of the letter provided to public education families, in particular to education directors across the state and in the Department for Education? With your leave, and that of the house, sir, I would like to explain.

Leave granted.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: The opposition has been informed that the letter in question was sent to principals across South Australia early last week by education directors who requested that they send it on to their local communities.

The Hon. B.I. BOYER (Wright—Minister for Education, Training and Skills) (14:19): I thank the member for Morialta again for the question. As I said in my answer to the member's first question, I am happy to get some more information and come back, but my understanding in terms of who disseminated the letter is that that was done by the education department. My understanding is that it would have been the education department who disseminated it to education directors to make sure that it got to schools.

The reason it was so important for us to do that quickly was that we were up against a bit of a time line here to make sure that we got it out in time for this coming financial year, to make sure that those families who were eligible for the \$100 off for the materials and services charge for each child knew what action they needed to take in order to, first of all, claim it if they hadn't paid their school fees yet, and, in those cases where they may have already paid their materials and services charge, what they could do to get that refunded or, in some cases, as I understand, if it is possible for them to work with the school in question to have that \$100 discounted off other things that aren't covered by the materials and services charge, which could in some cases be school camps or excursions.

PUBLIC SCHOOL FEES

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER (Morialta) (14:20): Supplementary question: why does the minister say that it was necessary to get that information out quickly to families so they would know what to do when the letter itself says, 'You don't need to do anything yet or contact your school,' and it then goes on to explain that the school will be in touch with families to later tell them what to do?

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Unley! Member for Badcoe!

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier is called to order. The member for Schubert is called to order. Member for Unley! The minister has the call.

The Hon. B.I. BOYER (Wright—Minister for Education, Training and Skills) (14:21): Well, that's a real gotcha moment. Obviously, it's because those opposite, when they were still in government, made a commitment to offer this \$100 per child this financial year and the next and it was matched by the Malinauskas Labor government, the then Labor Malinauskas Labor opposition.

There was some public discussion, public dialogue, between public school families and the education department around how this would be happening and when it would be happening. We wanted to make sure it was clear to parents, who had already started asking questions straightaway about whether or not they needed to do anything to be able to claim the money and of course, where they had already paid school fees, which has happened in some cases, what action they could take to try to get reimbursed for the school fees they had already paid or whether they could work with their local school in any cases to have that \$100 instead discounted off other things that the school might be running in that year—for instance, excursions or school camps.

It was very much about informing the public and making sure they knew what they did or didn't have to do in this case. I know that, as a former education minister himself, the member for Morialta would know that in such an enormous system, where we have in the whole public system 270-something thousand students and in the public system more than 170, there are obviously going

to be lots of questions we are going to have to field from concerned parents who want to make sure they are eligible and, if they have already paid the school fees, what they can do to still take advantage of the \$100. Making the most of this communication out to families about what the process was I think was the prudent thing to do.

PUBLIC SCHOOL FEES

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER (Morialta) (14:23): My question is to the Minister for Education. Why did the minister feel it was necessary for a letter to go from the minister and the Premier to all families in addition to information they received from their schools explaining the very things the minister outlined in his last answer about what families would need to do?

The Hon. B.I. BOYER (Wright—Minister for Education, Training and Skills) (14:23): I thank the member again for the question. This was a very important announcement. As I said in my last answer, the public education system in South Australia is vast. There are something like 170-odd thousand students in the public education system. There are lots of families and, in some families, multiple children. As I said, some hadn't paid their school fees yet.

The process for them, in terms of the materials and services charge, was going to be quite straightforward. For those who had already paid the materials and services charge, the process was a little bit more complicated. I guess it was done out of an abundance of caution and to make sure that everyone was aware of this and to make sure of course, too, that everybody who had already paid their school fees was still able to take advantage of the \$100 per child.

As the member for Morialta stated in his question before, those who hadn't paid the school fees or the materials and services charge didn't actually need to take any action, those who did would possibly need to discuss with the local school how to get a reimbursement or discuss with the local school how that \$100 per child could perhaps be deducted from the cost of something else. To make sure that was understood by families, and that as many—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Flinders! Member for Unley!

The Hon. B.I. BOYER: —South Australian families as possible could take advantage of this fantastic cost-of-living initiative that we have put in place, we also sent a letter from the Premier and the minister.

COUNTRY CABINET

Mrs PEARCE (King) (14:25): My question is to the Deputy Premier. Can the Deputy Premier update the house on her country cabinet visit to the Limestone Coast last week and some of the work being undertaken by local businesses to be more environmentally sustainable?

The Hon. S.E. CLOSE (Port Adelaide—Deputy Premier, Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science, Minister for Defence and Space Industries, Minister for Climate, Environment and Water) (14:25): I am delighted to answer this question and thank the member for her question. One of the questions that has come up for me in this new range of portfolios I have is why I have such a broad range, having industry, innovation and science on the one hand, along with defence and space industries and also climate, environment and water.

In fact, if we go out into the world, into the community, many businesses, if not most businesses, are now already ahead of many politicians and many bureaucrats, dare I say. They understand truly that the future of growing our economy, the future of being sustainable and prosperous, is to be much more mindful of the impact on the environment that our businesses have and, in fact, able to take advantage of the opportunities presented in being in a very low carbon electricity generating state and, increasingly, in a sustainable and circular economy state.

That was really brought home to me on the recent visit that we had to the Limestone Coast as a cabinet—a very welcome visit, incidentally. It was a delight to be there, and a couple of the local members are sitting in this chamber. We were warmly welcomed by the community. I spent the first day essentially looking at environment projects and the second day looking at industry projects. In fact, I spoke about and listened, more importantly, to people talking about the environment, possibly

even slightly more on the second day than on the first because it has become such an overwhelming driver for businesses to shift to a more sustainable footing.

On the first day, I visited some dairy farmers, the Muellers. Ian and Julie are the parents and Trent is the son—I think the third generation is coming up through. The dairy farmers had engaged in a water efficiency program there sitting on the Murray. It is very similar to that which we are begging the other states to undertake in order to give the 450 gigalitres but it is being resisted by the other states, facilitated by the great capitulator on the other side.

They were able to sell an allocation of water and invest in efficiency projects that then facilitated being able to have that water become part of the environmental flow. They were pleased not just to do the right thing for the sustainability of the river but, in fact, to make their farm far more efficient and far more prosperous.

I visited a number of friends groups in Bool Lagoon, including the Mount Gambier Area Parks, Bool and Hacks Lagoons and also Shorebirds South-East. Naturally, they talked a lot about the environment with me and the need to look after nature. The next day, when I spent time with Mondelez, Bio Gro, Kimberly-Clark and Timberlink, I heard just as much about the importance of paying attention to nature. Each one of those companies is working on not only treading more lightly on the Earth but, in fact, contributing and having a prosperous path through demonstrating to their supply chain and to the people that they are marketing to that they are more environmentally sustainable. That is the great opportunity that we have in South Australia.

We have an opportunity to not only do the right thing but be secure in our trade relations, which increasingly we will expect and every customer will expect low carbon and sustainability, and be more efficient and therefore able to extract more value and more profit. Mondelez is shifting to a proper wastewater treatment plant. Bio Gro is an incredible company that takes green waste and also forestry waste—the detritus that is left after clearance—and turns that into compost and sells that both in Victoria and South Australia.

Kimberly-Clark is looking at alternative sources of energy in order to reduce their carbon load and Timberlink has created a product—one is able to replace concrete and the other steel—that is far more sustainable than either of those and therefore much more zero carbon. It was a terrific visit. I was inspired by the Limestone Coast and very pleased to see the two sides of my portfolio brought together so satisfyingly.

PUBLIC SCHOOL FEES

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER (Morialta) (14:29): My question is to the Minister for Education. Did the minister discuss the letter in question with the chief executive of the education department or any member of the senior executive group in the Department for Education? Who was it who gave the instruction to education directors to distribute, to instruct principals to distribute that letter?

The Hon. B.I. BOYER (Wright—Minister for Education, Training and Skills) (14:30): Thanks to the member again for that question. I will have to go and get some answers. That's a pretty detailed question. The member obviously wants a very precise time line here about exactly what took place. He knows full well how many things are going on in the education minister's office at any one time and in the department. There may have been a discussion about what communication was going out around the announcement about the \$100 off the materials and services charge. I can't recall whether that was a conversation I had. More likely, it was probably a conversation that occurred between my—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Chaffey!

The Hon. B.I. BOYER: More likely, it was a conversation that would have occurred between my staff and the department. I'm happy to check that. As I said, and as I have said publicly in the past, the approach I am trying to take as the new Minister for Education is to be out on the front foot when there's good news and out on the front foot when there might be bad news. I think it's a very

easy trap to fall into as the minister that you use the department always as a shield. I think my predecessor did a bit of that.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Morialta! The minister has the call.

The Hon. B.I. BOYER: I think my predecessor did a fair bit of that. When there was good news and plaques to be cut, he was everywhere. When there was some bad news to front up to, he was nowhere—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister has the call.

The Hon. B.I. BOYER: When there was bad news in the portfolio, which happens from time to time—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Hartley!

The Hon. B.I. BOYER: It's such a very large—

An honourable member: Nine to five.

The Hon. B.I. BOYER: Nine to five, yes, I have heard the nine to five one—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Chaffey!

The Hon. B.I. BOYER: —passed on to me by some departmental people, that's right, but it's important as minister that you also front up when the news is bad news. I have tried to make sure that I am a minister who does both those things. I proudly had my name, as did the Premier, on this communication that we sent out to families to make sure that all South Australian families in the public education system get the opportunity—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Flinders!

The Hon. B.I. BOYER: —to save this \$100 off their materials and services charge this year and next year as well.

PUBLIC SCHOOL FEES

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER (Morialta) (14:32): My question is to the Minister for Education. Has the minister considered that the letter is consistent with section 6 of the Ministerial Code of Conduct, the requirement to maintain party political neutrality? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I would like to explain.

Leave granted.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: The letter begins:

Dear parent/caregiver

At the recent State Election, we made a commitment that a Malinauskas Labor Government would give South Australian families with school-age children a \$100 discount on their public school's Materials and Services Charge for each child for the next two school years (2022 and 2023).

Bolded:

At a time when cost of living pressures are being felt by many families, we are making sure we deliver on our commitment as quickly as possible.

The Hon. B.I. BOYER (Wright—Minister for Education, Training and Skills) (14:33): My understanding is that it is consistent and it is not in breach of the particular clause that the member for Morialta just read out. I am happy to take some advice on that, but I think my answer is: I don't think it contravenes the code of conduct in any way.

I think the letter is pretty straight, to be perfectly honest. It really doesn't go into politics in any detail at all. It is a short letter, which sets out in very easy to understand terms for all South Australian families who have children in the public education system what they need to do or what they don't need to do to make sure they get access to this \$100 off the materials and services charge this year and next year as well.

PUBLIC SCHOOL FEES

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER (Morialta) (14:33): My question is to the Minister for Education. Is the minister aware that the Code of Ethics for the South Australian Public Sector requires, and I quote, 'Public sector employees must be detached from political influence'? If so, why did the government instruct leaders in public education sites to distribute the letter in question?

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Chaffey is warned.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer is called to order. The Premier is called to order. Member for Badcoe. The minister has the call.

The Hon. B.I. BOYER (Wright—Minister for Education, Training and Skills) (14:34): I am aware of the provisions to which the member for Morialta refers. As I said in my answer to his question before that question, I don't think the letter that was sent out by the Premier and myself about the \$100 off the materials and services charge breaches that in any way. The member for Morialta is possibly a bit more of an expert on these matters around communications that get sent out than I am. There was a bit of a near miss with the Ombudsman, as I recall.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. B.I. BOYER: So I will happily take his advice on these things.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Chaffey, member for West Torrens, order! Has the minister concluded his answer?

The Hon. B.I. BOYER: Yes.

HOMELESSNESS SERVICES

Ms PRATT (Frome) (14:35): My question is for the Minister for Human Services. Did a recent media report prompt the minister to take action on a homelessness case?

The Hon. N.F. COOK (Hurtle Vale—Minister for Human Services) (14:35): I take action on a number of cases. We get dozens of them coming through our office every day. I assume you are talking about a case last week in respect of a young woman who was in a tent at a caravan park who had been in housing crisis since before we came to government. I assume that is the case you are talking about, although you haven't provided specifics.

What I can say is that I was reached out to from my office regarding that woman. I reached out to her twice over the phone. I spoke to her personally. I told her how awful it was that she was going through that situation. I told her that I would see what we could do immediately to remedy that. I reached out via the department to ask them to ensure that she would have hotel accommodation provided. We were advised that she had been offered that some weeks before and didn't show up for the hotel accommodation that she had been already offered.

What I am trying to spell out, without going into too much detail about a woman who has many issues and very complex problems, is that sometimes the full picture cannot be painted. In the particular circumstance that happened last week, yesterday I had a conversation with our executive team. There is a very complex and challenging process of supporting people in such circumstances, and members opposite might be aware that that is the homelessness service that has been put in

place by their own team when in government. They are actually doing an incredible job, considering the huge escalation in numbers that are presenting to the service each week.

In this particular case, I am advised that, while a hotel booking was made over the phone, there wasn't a secondary email that was sent. I am advised that the shadow minister was in contact with the particular lady and unfortunately felt that she would provide the lady with alternative hotel accommodation rather than reaching out to the homelessness service. Also, I think I recall her marching across the chamber in the Legislative Council and slapping a phone number down on the desk of one of our members who found a woman walking the streets one night and tried to find help, but she didn't contact us.

Anyway, there was a missed step in the confirmation of booking. This particular lady has been provided now ongoing hotel accommodation. In fact, yesterday she was offered a home, which she refused because of her complicated situation, which I respect and will not unpack any further.

We will make sure we are providing very consistent and very thorough ongoing checks on this particular lady, who is in a remarkably difficult position due to a range of issues. We have apologised to her for the lack of appropriate accommodation on Friday night, in the first instance, because that was offered.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I haven't finished. In saying that, I thank you for your diligence—

The SPEAKER: Minister—

The Hon. N.F. COOK: —and I hope that we won't need to talk about her again.

The SPEAKER: Minister, your time has expired.

The Hon. D.G. Pisoni: You couldn't finish the job on Friday night either.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Unley is called to order.

MOUNT BARKER HEALTH SERVICES

Mr FULBROOK (Playford) (14:40): My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. Can the minister inform the house of the Malinauskas Labor government's response to the rapidly increasing community demand for healthcare services in Mount Barker?

The SPEAKER: Minister, I am very keen to hear this answer.

The Hon. C.J. PICTON (Kurna—Minister for Health and Wellbeing) (14:40): Thank you, sir. I thought you might be interested in this particular answer, Mr Speaker, as I am sure the member for Playford is because the truth of the matter is that we do have a rapidly escalating population in the Mount Barker region and that we do need to provide appropriate health services for people who live in that region.

That's why I am very delighted to be part of this Malinauskas government that is delivering for people who live in the Mount Barker region. Sir, we have listened to you, we have listened to the federal member for Mayo, we have listened to Mayor Ferguson and other community leaders and to people in the Mount Barker community who have been saying to us loud and clear that we need improved hospital services in the region and that we need improved ambulance services in the region.

That's why I am delighted that in this year's state budget we have a historic commitment of a \$220 million new Mount Barker hospital. Not only that, delivering what we said we would have the state election, but in fact we are bringing forward more funding of that to get work started sooner and to open up more beds and facilities for the Mount Barker community even sooner.

People will be familiar that in the election we promised that \$95 million of that commitment would be provided within the forward estimates; in fact, we have now brought that forward to \$127 million within the forward estimates. We want to get this work started as soon as possible. We want to start delivering improved services for people in the Mount Barker community as soon as possible.

It was great to be there recently with you, sir, and the Premier and the Treasurer to meet the staff at that Mount Barker hospital who were delighted with this news. The Premier and I met Anthea, who had been working at the hospital as a midwife for 42 years and it happened to be her retirement day, which is an incredible length of service. She was so excited at what this meant in terms of the future of birthing services and children services for the growing population.

As you know very well, sir, this is a population that has grown from a few thousand people a few decades ago to what is scheduled to be up to 50,000 people, but with the same number of just 34 hospital beds across that time. We will triple the number of hospital beds at the Mount Barker hospital to make sure there are 102 beds in the community, which not only improves services for people locally but helps to keep pressure off the city hospital system because we know that there is a low level of self-sufficiency.

Less than one in two services that people need for the Mount Barker community are able to be provided locally. They have to travel to Flinders Medical Centre or the Royal Adelaide Hospital, so the more services we can provide locally the more that keeps pressure off our health system right across the state.

This is just one element of our delivery for the people of Mount Barker. As you are aware, sir, we are also investing in ambulance services for Mount Barker. At the moment, there is only one emergency ambulance available for people in Mount Barker, and very regularly that has to be down in the city or in other communities, leaving Mount Barker significantly uncovered at times.

We will invest in two additional ambulances: one another emergency crew and one would be a regional transfer crew, as well as building a brand-new ambulance station for the growing community there for the future. This is a very exciting development. In terms of the hospital, it is also going to involve 12 mental health beds, new operating theatres, new pathology services, and we are committed to getting started straightaway.

HOMELESSNESS SERVICES

Ms PRATT (Frome) (14:44): My question is to the Minister for Human Services. What actions did the minister take last Friday night to ensure that the accommodation was organised for said homeless person, and did she follow through in person? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

Ms PRATT: The minister claims records showed approval was granted at 4.42pm on Friday for this single mother to receive motel accommodation. However, the single mother claims she called to confirm at about 7pm and she was told there was no booking in her name and no rooms available.

The Hon. N.F. COOK (Hurtle Vale—Minister for Human Services) (14:45): Thanks for the follow-up. I think I actually explained that in the previous answer, where I said to you that I had spoken—

Mr Whetstone: You said weeks ago.

The SPEAKER: Member for Chaffey!

The Hon. N.F. COOK: —to the lady. Then I spoke through to our department. I had the adviser with me. We spoke to the housing manager and made sure they were aware that I was personally approving the accommodation for this lady so that it happened quickly. You might be aware that sometimes it takes hours to get emergency accommodation—

Ms Pratt: It didn't happen; the booking wasn't there.

The SPEAKER: Member for Frome! The minister has the call.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: —funding approved—

Members interjecting:

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Okay, you're not aware. It does; it takes many hours—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The minister will not respond to interjections. The minister has the call.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: It's really difficult. I am trying to hear what she's saying. It takes many hours to get emergency accommodation approved. In fact, in the regions it takes longer, and regional members will know that, so we are actually addressing that now. What happened then was I made a confirmation call with the chief executive officer so that we made sure that everybody was on the same page. The way the conversation was left at, I don't know, around five or thereabouts was that the process was in place to book the hotel and ensure it was available. No, I did not ring up late at night or after hours to confirm that was happening because, frankly—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The member for Hartley is called to order.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: —I would be on the phone—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The member for Frome is called to order. The minister has the call.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: —all night, every night, seven days a week, personally as a minister, and not one of you would have done it as a minister. I would not have done it.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Frome!

The Hon. N.F. COOK: However, I am grateful that—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Chaffey!

The Hon. N.F. COOK: —that this lady ended up in a hotel—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Flinders! The minister has the call.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Just to provide you with an example of the character—

Mr Cowdrey interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Colton!

The Hon. N.F. COOK: —of the person that deals with these types of vulnerable people—

Mr Cowdrey: The shadow minister did it.

The SPEAKER: Member for Colton!.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: We previously had dozens of emails calling out inaction on behalf of the previous government—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Frome! Member for Hartley!

The Hon. N.F. COOK: —that we are still trying to deal with—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The member for Frome is warned.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: —one of which was a gentleman whose property was ticked off—

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Point of order.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Excuse me, you don't even know.

The SPEAKER: Minister, there is a point of order.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I know.

The SPEAKER: Minister, please be seated. I will hear the point of order under 134.

Mr Tarzia interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The member for Hartley is called to order and warned. The member for Morialta.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: The question was specific in relation to the actions taken last Friday and what was done to ensure a hotel room was actually available when promised. Standing order 98 would require—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Elder!

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: —the minister to stay on that issue, and if she has concluded her answer to move on.

The SPEAKER: Very well, member for Morialta. I will ask the minister to take a line closer to the question.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I think what I am talking about is the process that happens in terms of providing appropriate supports for people who are in crisis. Apart from calling out the hypocrisy of people who would like to say that a minister should be chasing around every night after every person, when said shadow minister gets an email from someone, who she ticked off on getting rid of their property before leaving government, and then says, 'I will take you to the media to fix the problem'—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! Minister, please be seated.

Ms Clancy interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Elder! The member for Morialta on a point of order.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: The minister is not providing facts that are in any way germane to the question: standing order 98.

The SPEAKER: Very well. There is some force in the member's submission. I will continue to listen carefully. The member for Florey I note is interjecting. The minister has the call.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: The previous government did not build enough public homes for these people. We have put \$180 million of new money into the system. We didn't claim to invest—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. N.F. COOK: —by simply flogging off public land—

Mr Tarzia interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Hartley!

The Hon. N.F. COOK: —and contributing that to the building: we have put actual new money into building real outcomes.

Mr Tarzia interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Hartley!

The Hon. N.F. COOK: In the example I was talking about, this gentleman cried out for help to the shadow minister, thinking 'Oh, this is the person I've spoken to before. She signed off on the transfer of the property.' She then had the gall to say, 'Hey, if you want to fix, this I'll take you to the media.' She didn't even refer him to my office.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister, as I understand it—

The Hon. D.G. Pisoni: Still blaming others.

The SPEAKER: The member for Unley is called to order. The minister, I understand, has completed her answer, and therefore it may be unnecessary to deal with the point of order.

REGIONAL ROADS

The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL (Mawson) (14:50): My question is to the Minister for Regional Roads. Can the minister advise the house about funding for regional roads infrastructure as part of total road infrastructure funding in the 2022-23 state budget?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK (Stuart—Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Roads, Minister for Veterans Affairs) (14:50): I thank the member for Mawson for this question. This government understands the importance of investing in our regions, and that is why our approach is focused on action and not rhetoric.

We are investing in our regional roads infrastructure not only to improve freight corridors and increase economic growth but also to support regional communities and to improve road safety. That is why in 2022-23 this government will invest \$467.4 million in new projects in our regions. I emphasise the word 'new' because this additional \$467.4 million in new projects in our regions will bring our total regional spend in 2022-23 to well over \$1 billion. In actual fact, it is \$1.059 billion in this financial year.

Unfortunately, this fact was missed by my colleague the member for Hammond when he engaged with the media yesterday and also today. In fact, our regional infrastructure spend across the forward estimates is \$2.5 billion. I will say that this is including the forward estimates from the previous government, but it is \$2.5 billion. That is 39 per cent of our total spend being focused on the regions over the next four years. Further, if we remove the distortion of the north-south corridor spend—

Mr Whetstone interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Chaffey!

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: —our investment in regional roads infrastructure increases to 72 per cent of total infrastructure investments over the next four years.

The Hon. J.A.W. Gardner interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Morialta! The minister has the call.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: The member for Hammond—perhaps mistakenly—in a press release yesterday focused only on the new projects, disregarding all existing projects in the pipeline for regional road infrastructure over the next four years, suggesting—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Hammond! Member for Morialta!

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: —that this represents only 6 per cent—

Mr Pederick interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Hammond!

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: —of total road expenditure, and accusing the government—

Mr Pederick interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The member for Hammond is warned.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: —of ignoring the regions. I have said this before: I am willing to accept that this is a mistake and was not meant to mislead anyone, reflecting a lack of understanding of budgetary processes, accounting principles and even basic mathematics.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order, member for Chaffey!

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister has the call.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I have said before in this house that I am quite happy to sit down with the member for Hammond and any of his colleagues if they wish—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Hammond is warned for a second time.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: —to go through the budget papers to illustrate with a great deal of certainty that regional communities and regional economies will be well supported—

The Hon. J.A.W. Gardner interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Morialta!

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: —and taken care of by this government.

Mr Whetstone interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Chaffey!

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: It is worth noting some of the critical projects we will be delivering in the regions—

Mr Pederick interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The member for Hammond is on two warnings.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: —including but certainly not limited to the continuation of the Augusta Highway from Lochiel to Nantawarra, \$80 million—

Mr Pederick interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The member for Hammond is on three warnings.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: —annual maintenance of \$90 million; the duplication of the Joy Baluch Bridge, which is the refurbishment of the old bridge, \$38 million—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: There is also Truro bypass, \$40 million—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: —the Horrocks Highway for the member for Frome, another \$29 million plus \$50 million; the Murray Bridge refurbishment, \$25 million; and also the Princes Highway, a total of \$116 million being projected there.

I can confidently say that regional communities—and I have had this conversation with members out there in the regions already—will welcome and enjoy the commitments that will deliver these projects and many others as part of the enhanced roads infrastructure, which we will be delivering over the next four years. It will be \$2.5 billion.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the house the member for Hammond is on three warnings.

WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

Mrs HURN (Schubert) (14:55): My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. What, if any, new advice is being provided to the state government regarding soil contamination on the new Women's and Children's Hospital site? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

Mrs HURN: In early 2021 following geotechnical and environmental testing by the project team, it was reported that no significant contamination had been found in the soil upon which the new Women's and Children's Hospital would be built. However, reports in *The Advertiser* on 3 June of this year list contaminated soil as one of the main factors contributing to the new cost blowout.

The Hon. C.J. PICTON (Kaurua—Minister for Health and Wellbeing) (14:56): Firstly, I would never dispute anything that had been reported in *The Advertiser*—let me make that very, very clear—but I am not sure that that is a definitive statement in terms of the issues that we are facing with the new Women's and Children's Hospital.

The Hon. J.A.W. Gardner interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Morialta!

The Hon. C.J. PICTON: That's why I prefaced it.

Mr Cowdrey interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Colton!

The Hon. C.J. PICTON: Let's just go through the history in terms of where we are in terms of this project, because at the last 2018 election, the one prior to this one, there was a commitment from the then government to build a new Women's and Children's Hospital that would be open in 2024, so in just 1½ years' time the new hospital would be open.

Unfortunately, there is no work whatsoever underway on that hospital site. Down the track, they established a task force that was appointed and refused to release to the clinicians the task force report that had been prepared, but it subsequently came out by FOI that the price estimate at that point in time was \$1.4 billion for the hospital, to build a new hospital.

Many more months, years went by. Eventually, it was outlined that the cost would be \$1.95 billion, so quite a significant jump from \$1.4 billion to \$1.95 billion. It subsequently came out that that site would not involve any new adolescent or paediatric overnight beds at the hospital, in the \$1.95 billion hospital.

Upon coming to government—this is clearly one of the major projects for the state—we immediately sought a briefing in terms of where is this project up to. What we were advised was that, before the election, in February, the executive steering committee had been informed of the project that there was another escalation in the price again of—

An honourable member: Kept that quiet!

The Hon. C.J. PICTON: That's right. It wasn't announced publicly before the election. There was no discussion of that publicly. It was going to be at least another \$100 million in terms of the project, with no additional functions attached to that.

Mr Whetstone interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Chaffey!

The Hon. C.J. PICTON: As well, we were informed it escalated to be more blowouts in terms of the time frame for this project. Originally, it was going to be 2024 and then we were looking at 2025-26, then 2026-27, then 2027-28. It continues to push out in time for this project.

The Hon. S.C. Mullighan: It sounds like the giraffe enclosure.

The SPEAKER: The Treasurer is called to order.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order, member for Chaffey! The Treasurer is called to order. The minister has the call.

The Hon. C.J. PICTON: If only as much time had been concentrated on this project as the giraffe enclosure and Crystal Lake, it might have been in a better state. Upon learning of this news,

the government took a position, which was that we felt the responsible thing to do as an incoming government was to get a proper look at the state of this project.

We have appointed one of the foremost former public servants of this state, Mr Jim Hallion, former State Coordinator-General, to do a piece of work looking at the options in terms of this site, looking at where it's up to in terms of its cost, looking at issues in terms of whether another site in the precinct could be considered, a key factor being potential expansion for both the Women's and Children's Hospital and the Royal Adelaide Hospital. I think it's important we get that work so that we can make informed decisions about the next steps.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE INTERPRETING SERVICE

Ms HOOD (Adelaide) (15:00): My question is to the Minister for Human Services. How is the Malinauskas Labor government recognising the value of the oldest living languages on the planet? Ngaityalya.

The Hon. N.F. COOK (Hurtle Vale—Minister for Human Services) (15:00): Ngaityalya. I would like to thank the member for the question. The member for Adelaide, along with the member for Waite, myself very soon, and probably other members on this side of the house are learning the Kurna language. I think it's very important for us to be able to do that as part of the acknowledgement of the traditional owners of our country. As part of that, it was my great privilege last week to officially launch the Aboriginal Language Interpreting Service (ALIS).

The new service is changing how we as a government can communicate with Aboriginal language speakers. It's a critical step towards ensuring Aboriginal people finally have equal access to information and to services. Last financial year more than 20 per cent of requests for Aboriginal interpreters for people appearing in the court went unmet. In other words, more than 560 people appearing in court were unable to have their voice properly heard.

This is about victims, witnesses and alleged offenders who all struggled to have their voices heard or understand what was happening in our courts. It goes well beyond the justice system. People have been unable to communicate their needs in hospitals, homelessness services have been unable to understand people and their needs, youth services are unable to properly engage. The list goes on and on. Last week was the beginning of the end for these terrible outcomes.

The service is now providing interpreting services in all the major languages spoken by Aboriginal people in South Australia, and there are many. With an all-Aboriginal team of office staff and interpreters, ALIS is already increasing the number of Aboriginal people accessing employment and training opportunities in the first few months. I congratulate the Senior Project Officers, Tara Liddy and Clayton Dodd; Program Manager, Kristen Walter; and their amazing team on the groundbreaking work that means Aboriginal people are now able to be informed and helped to make decisions regarding critical matters which impact on their lives.

If we look back to 2017, the Weatherill Labor government allocated \$2 million to this service, but that money went nowhere for four years. The member for Dunstan, who took on many portfolios as Premier, oversaw an absolute lack of progress in this regard, which included Aboriginal affairs. He revealed his true colours in 2017 by describing the treaty process as, I quote, 'a complete hoax'.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Point of order.

The SPEAKER: Order! Minister, I will hear the point of order under 134.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Well, that last comment was a personal reflection, but prior to that the minister was debating and not actually answering the question about what the government is doing.

The SPEAKER: In relation to the purported personal reflection, I draw members' attention to standing order 127, which permits neither digression nor personal reflections, but in relation to the

standing order that was emphasised by the member for Morialta, debate, the core question allows a degree of context, and I understand the minister was providing it.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I think in general there was a complete lack of progress in this regard and genuine engagement in reconciliation. This Aboriginal Language Interpreting Service was fully funded and went nowhere. I think after more than two years, what I'm told is that it was actually handballed to the Department of Human Services from the Premier's department as a shameless attempt to cover up the lack of progress and a way to try to get something to happen. It is a true celebration—

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Point of order.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! minister, I will hear the point of order under 134.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: The commentary is partisan; it's barracking. It's trying to ascribe motive to a government decision of which the minister was not a member and it is—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: —entirely debate, contrary to standing order 98.

The SPEAKER: Very well. Minister, I draw your attention to standing orders 127 and 98. The minister has the call.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: It was a true celebration to see the office officially be launched last week. We celebrated with the wonderful music of Tilly Tjala Thomas, and we were blessed with a unique painting from artist Cedric Varco, which was a visual representation of the diverse language service. The picture said a thousand words. These lost almost precious languages are now part of a contemporary practice when it comes to providing services to people all over our state from a diverse range of Aboriginal lands.

HOSPITALS, CAR PARKING

Mrs HURN (Schubert) (15:05): My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. Will the minister advise the house whether free hospital car parking for health workers will remain now that the emergency declaration has ended? With your leave, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

Mrs HURN: In April 2020, the Marshall Liberal government announced that hospital workers would be provided with free car parking and free public transport to work for the COVID major emergency declaration.

The Hon. C.J. PICTON (Kurna—Minister for Health and Wellbeing) (15:06): This is another question that again highlights something that was put in place under the previous government. This was put in place to tie it to the emergency declaration, which has ended, so those arrangements connected to the previous decision by the previous government also then end.

This government is making no secret of the fact that we are investing in frontline health services. In last week's state budget, there was an additional \$2.4 billion investment in our health services to make sure that people can get the care they need but, most importantly, that we can hire more doctors, more nurses and more paramedics to ease the load on our current healthcare workers, who are under strain because there simply are not enough healthcare workers or hospital beds in the system. We are prioritising making sure that we invest in those services to make sure that people can get the care that they need, but also that we can reduce the pressure—

Mrs Hurn interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Schubert!

The Hon. C.J. PICTON: —off our hardworking—

The Hon. S.C. Mullighan: You increased hospital car parking fees. You increased the fees in 2019. You increased the fees.

The SPEAKER: The Treasurer is called to order.

Mrs Hurn interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The member for Schubert is called to order. The minister has the call.

The Hon. C.J. PICTON: As the Treasurer reminds me, this is pretty incredible given that it was the previous government that dramatically increased the cost of hospital car parking, not by 1 per cent or 2 per cent—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. C.J. PICTON: Check the guy up the back there who is waltzing in late.

Mrs Hurn interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Schubert!

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Point of order.

The SPEAKER: The member for Morialta on a point of order.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! I will hear the point of order under 134.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Two points of order: debate, firstly, and, secondly, referring to members by their titles.

The SPEAKER: I will certainly uphold the second point of order, but I also remind the chamber that, under standing order 131, interruptions are not permitted except in three circumstances: to call attention to a point of order or to call attention to a lack of quorum or to move a motion that is permitted under the standing orders. There is a good deal of interjection that falls well outside standing order 131.

The Hon. C.J. PICTON: The government is continuing with the policy of the previous government in this regard and in addition to that we are investing in frontline healthcare services to make sure that we open more beds and we hire more doctors and nurses to ease the pressure on our hardworking staff.

SMALL BUSINESS

The Hon. A. PICCOLO (Light) (15:08): My question is to the Minister for Small and Family Business. Can the minister inform the house how the Malinauskas Labor government is engaging with the small business community?

The Hon. A. MICHAELS (Enfield—Minister for Small and Family Business, Minister for Consumer and Business Affairs, Minister for Arts) (15:08): I want to thank the member for Light for his question and for his passion for the small business community in his electorate. When I took on the portfolio of small and family business, I think the one thing that surprised me was the lack of strategic direction, the lack of vision, for the small business community within state government.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: I might just do that.

The Hon. A. MICHAELS: As the member for Florey suggests, yes, having a Minister for Small and Family Business is something new. I am the first Minister for Small Business in four years and, by my recollection and going through history, the first Minister for Family Business ever in this state. What I have done since coming in is actually talk to small business, which has been very welcomed. I can tell those on the opposite side that since coming in I have spoken to a number of small businesses, including last week—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Morialta, member for Chaffey!

The Hon. A. MICHAELS: —dozens and dozens, actually—

The SPEAKER: The minister has the call.

The Hon. A. MICHAELS: —and I can say I have been doing that—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. A. MICHAELS: —for the last 20-odd years.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The member for Dunstan is called to order. The minister has the call.

The Hon. J.A.W. Gardner: Some of them were big businesses before Labor was in.

The SPEAKER: Member for Morialta!

The Hon. A. MICHAELS: Our trip last week to the Limestone Coast with country cabinet was actually a very warm and welcoming trip. I want to thank the member for MacKillop and the member for Mount Gambier for also welcoming us there.

I visited a number of businesses, and I also visited and met with a number of industry associations and business advocates, including the Millicent Business Community Association, the Mount Gambier Chamber of Commerce, the Limestone Coast Regional Development RDA and also the Women in Business and Regional Development association with Toni and Jacinda. They were all very positive in engaging with us and telling us what they want the state government to do for small business, and I was very grateful for that.

Obviously, some of the issues faced by regional small and family businesses are similar across the state, including a lack of training that has happened over the last four years particularly and a lack of housing for skilled workers in the regions particularly is very severe. What they did tell us is there are supports that they would very much welcome the state government—

Mr Pederick interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Hammond!

The Hon. A. MICHAELS: —to be able to provide to them, and that is what I am doing. I am taking on all that feedback and being able to create essentially a strategy for small and family business in South Australia.

I was very grateful for those who attended my business breakfast forum at the very iconic Mount Gambier business of The Barn on the Thursday morning. We had representatives from a number of industries, including construction and hospitality. There were winery, tourism and primary production representatives there; we went around the table and I really took on their ideas of how we could improve the services and the support the state government can provide to them.

Before last week, I can say that I have engaged with a number of associations. Business SA was one of the first ones. We organised a Zoom with chambers of commerce around the regions for me, which I was very grateful for. I have been meeting with groups like HIA, Master Builders, etc. and business owners themselves. I am very pleased to say that we are working with small and family businesses around the state. In the next few weeks and months, I look forward to being able to implement the strategy that takes on all that feedback and offers some support to small and family businesses in this state.

MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Mr COWDREY (Colton) (15:12): My question is to the Premier. Does the Premier retain confidence in his Minister for Industrial Relations? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

Mr COWDREY: On 2 June 2022, with limited—

The Hon. L.W.K. Bignell interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order, member for Mawson!

Mr COWDREY: —notice, the minister introduced a bill to the other place to amend the Return to Work Act. Among the immediate reactions, unions and Labor's own state council called for the bill to be withdrawn.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. A. Koutsantonis: That's a different body.

Mr COWDREY: I have a lot less to do with it than you, Tom, fortunately.

The SPEAKER: The member for West Torrens, order!

Mr COWDREY: Pardon me, it's state executive, sir.

The SPEAKER: Member for Colton, you will put your question.

Mr COWDREY: Among the immediate reactions, unions and Labor's own executive council called for the bill to be withdrawn, with the Law Society, on 9 June, noting also that it among many others had not been consulted. Yesterday, on 14 June, the bill was withdrawn and the government gave notice that another bill would be introduced but in this place and not led by the minister.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier) (15:14): I thank the member for Colton for his question because it provides an opportunity to respond on what is a really important issue of public policy and how the various parties in this place conduct themselves on matters that pertain to industrial relations.

Let me start with one of the things that the member for Colton raised in his question. He just said on the record, which will be verified by *Hansard*, that he's very grateful for the fact that he has nothing to do with the union movement or has less to do with it than us.

We on this side of the house have a fundamentally different view about how industrial relations should operate. I'm a firm believer that government policy should be seeking to achieve, particularly in IR, a balance between the interests of capital and labour. That means that on this side of the house we believe that unions have a seat at the table, just as businesses have a seat at the table. What we have been doing on this side of the house, over the course of the next—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier has the call.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: On this side of the house, what we have been doing very diligently over the course of the last few weeks, if not months, is working very closely with both business and unions to try to solve a problem that has been left to us by the former government.

Let's just take a moment to expand on the facts that have actually led us to the position that we currently find ourselves in. The first Summerfield judgement was handed down in early 2019, circa three years ago. Since then—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier has the call.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: —and over the course of the last three years, the former government have dutifully ignored decision after decision by the industrial tribunal and courts that have confronted this issue.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Colton! The member for Colton is called to order. The Premier has the call.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: So much so that in 2021, when a final determination was made by the highest court in the State of South Australia, this government's response was to do nothing. Subsequently, the government sat back and watched leave being sought in the High Court that was subsequently rejected, and again what did the government do? Absolutely nothing. Soon after the change of government, we received advice—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier has the call.

The Hon. D.G. Pisoni interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Unley! The member for Unley is disorderly. The Premier has the call.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: We received advice that without government action the WorkCover levy was going to go up to 2.2 per cent. Presumably, those on the opposite side of the house—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: —thought that was a perfectly reasonable course of events. They were utterly sanguine about the prospect of that substantial levy increase to be imposed upon businesses. We weren't going to allow that to occur. Unlike those opposite who claim to be the voice of small business—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Colton!

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: —they did absolutely nothing—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Morialta!

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: —absolutely nothing. They utterly—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The member for Morialta is called to order.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: —relinquished their responsibility to soured economic policy, whereas on this side of the house—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: —we have been working very diligently to respond, and now what we will see is the introduction of a piece of legislation that has the support of both the trade union movement and employees—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Members to my left!

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: —and employers.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Morialta!

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: I look forward to those opposite now having to get off the fence and having to make a decision about where you stand. Of course, those opposite can continue

to evade. They can evade briefings, they can evade having to make decisions for as long as you like, but the people of South Australia will know—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Morialta!

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: —and we look forward to seeing exactly how you respond when you have to make a decision in due course and having to vote on the bill.

Grievance Debate

MINISTER FOR HUMAN SERVICES

Ms PRATT (Frome) (15:18): I rise today to express my deep concern in regard to the conduct and judgement of the Minister for Human Services. It is the second time in less than a month that this minister, appointed by Premier Malinauskas, has failed in her duties.

It is unfortunate that I raise not one but two major issues that have come to light in regard to this minister. These issues are a clear indicator that she is not up to the task of being the human services minister. The human services portfolio requires a minister who is in touch, empathetic and effective. The member for Hurtle Vale is failing on all metrics.

In the minister's own words, she recently declared, 'I am here to change South Australian lives for the better.' The evidence is in. I refer to a very concerning situation where there are claims the minister left a homeless woman with nowhere to go, despite publicly promising her a roof over her head just days ago.

As widely reported in the media, Meagan, a single mother and disability pensioner with severe epilepsy, has been living in a tent since May after being squeezed out of the rental market. The minister has known about her plight since April. When the minister became aware that Meagan had gone to the media, she called Meagan directly, and there are claims the minister used a tone of interrogation in the conversation. I find it shocking that the minister does not understand the concept of abuse of power. As a minister talking to a vulnerable single mother, homeless and with disabilities, the minister lacked empathy and was instead focusing on herself and her image.

Subsequently, the minister's solution to negative media was to hold her own press conference to make a public commitment that the single mother would be offered short-term accommodation. She proceeded to tell Meagan to pack up her tent and go to Housing SA herself to collect the taxi vouchers rather than delivering them to her, knowing very well that Meagan has a disability. Meagan promptly packed up her tent with relief, caught a bus to get her taxi vouchers and was ready to start her new journey with more hope of help, only to call the motel and discover that the booking was never confirmed.

Just last month, this same minister told the house how proud she was to support a person in distress from a fire, and she promised that she would deliver him a hot meal. Will every homeless person in this state get the same personalised service from the minister? Apparently not. It is so disappointing that the minister left Meagan in a situation where she had nowhere to go. The minister did not bother to monitor progress and follow through to ensure that Meagan was safely in accommodation.

Imagine the indignity of packing up your belongings because a minister promised a relocation, only to discover it was an empty promise. Imagine having to explain to your crying son that he would have to continue couch surfing. Imagine what courage it took to trust another politician, as Meagan did with our shadow minister who, understanding the system and responsibility owed to Meagan, actually helped her in person to find lodgings where the current minister had failed. If not for our shadow minister intervening, Meagan may have remained homeless all weekend, through no fault of her own. Our shadow minister called Meagan on Friday night, picked her up from her relative's place on Saturday morning and took her straight to the motel.

Meagan is just one of many South Australians who should not have to put up with a rookie minister who cannot do her job properly. This is a minister who tells parliament she is working to restore care, empathy and humanity, yet she cannot follow through on a single case. It does not stop

there. Not only did the minister fail this woman but, as the chamber discovered yesterday, she appears to be in breach of the Ministerial Code of Conduct after sending a politically charged email to thousands of DHS employees.

Yesterday, the minister defensively claimed that a junior staff member was to blame and that the intended recipients were the respectable residents of Hurtle Vale, but not one southern suburb was mentioned. It just does not make sense. No public sector employee or ministerial adviser would or should have access to the Hurtle Vale database. Similarly, absolutely no electorate officer should have access to the DHS mail list. It is a conundrum. Even the hyperlinks in the email itself link back to the DHS website.

I am confident the voters of Hurtle Vale will see right through this, but there can be no explaining this brazen manoeuvre to influence our public sector employees, and it is just another rookie move by this L-plate minister. As stated, in the code of conduct—

The SPEAKER: Member for Frome, we are well against time. I will allow you maybe a few moments.

Ms PRATT: I am in my last phrase, Mr Speaker, and it is an important one because it refers to the code of conduct:

If a Minister engages in conduct which prima facie constitutes a breach of this Code...the Premier shall decide...

So the question is now before the Premier: what course of action will the Premier take?

Time expired.

The SPEAKER: Member for Frome, I have indulged you on this occasion but in future perhaps stay closer to the time.

SOUTH ROAD UPGRADE

Ms CLANCY (Elder) (15:24): I rise today to talk about a topic that I know is very close to the member for Hartley's heart, but, unfortunately, we are missing him. It was so close that he actually was going to move a motion at the last sitting and then failed to turn up for his own motion, so I thought instead I would speak about South Road today.

The Hon. J.A.W. Gardner: Point of order, sir.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Elder, there is a point of order. Member for Morialta, if you are raising a point of order in relation to 127, that can only be raised by the member who has been referred to.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I was not, sir.

The SPEAKER: Very well, I will hear you.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Sir, it is disorderly to reflect on the vote of a session. The member, in identifying a—

Members interjecting:

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: There was a vote taken by this parliament to discharge a motion when one member sought the call and was given preference over another member. Secondly, it is also disorderly to refer to a member's participation, presence in the chamber or not. There are two standing orders broken.

The SPEAKER: Very well. I will listen carefully.

Ms CLANCY: I rise today to speak about South Road. Our Malinauskas Labor government is committed to the north-south corridor project. We know how difficult South Road can be—not just in peak hour but at any time and on any day. The member for Badcoe might argue with me on this one, as I know it is tricky in her neck of the woods too, but I would say the worst part of South Road

is in front of Castle Plaza and Bunnings. You feel like you are in one of those car parks when you are out the front.

People in our community really want this work done. Whether they are tired of being stuck on South Road or they live on West Street, Edward Street, Winston Avenue, Towers Terrace in the member for Badcoe's electorate, or on any other road used by those who are avoiding South Road, they want this work done and they want it done properly, which is what they will get from this government.

While previous Labor governments have proudly completed sections of this project, the former Liberal government has just left a string of failures. Those opposite feign interest in this project and, instead of actually supporting us to get this work done, choose to cause worry and concern that is unnecessary for people in our community.

This is a mess created by the former government and our government is now working to address it. We know that because of the former Liberal government's failures, the project's completion has to be pushed back to 2031. Their program for the project was unrealistic and did not reflect the actual status of design development, community engagement, the relocation of utility services and technical investigations. Their program also failed to recognise the very well-known skilled labour and supply chain constraints being experienced nationally.

The arrogance of the former minister and government also meant that there was not adequate consideration and development of options and solutions, which could achieve the same traffic benefits but impose less impact on the community; for example, the large overhead structures proposed at the Anzac Highway intersection. The former government also failed to include in the scope of the project:

- restoring of the degraded sections of South Road above the tunnels to a fit standard;
- upgrading key feeder routes supplying precast tunnel shells and for hauling excavated materials to allow for increased loadings during construction;
- capacity upgrades to key intersections away from South Road that will experience traffic increases due to traffic choosing to not travel on South Road during construction; and
- upgrades to key intersections and road links necessary to cater for changes to traffic flows once the project is complete.

The former Liberal government quite simply did not do the work required for the Torrens to Darlington project to be completed and be completed well under their time frame. Labor knows how important this project is, which is why we are making sure we get it right. We are taking the time to reset this project with the right scope, a realistic construction program and a realistic budget expenditure profile.

While the Liberals' lack of progress means the time frame for spending must be adjusted, the new Labor government is now working to get this project back on track so it can be delivered as quickly as possible. I would like to thank the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport for his incredible work on this project, as well as the member Badcoe for all her advocacy. Labor's ongoing commitment to this project is very clear. Previous Labor governments have done so much of this work, and after four years of failures from those opposite we are getting back to work.

MURRAY-DARLING BASIN PLAN

Mr WHETSTONE (Chaffey) (15:28): I will continue my appropriation contribution with a little bit of a history lesson on the Murray-Darling Basin. It is of concern that we have a Labor government that is now going to contribute \$2.1 million for a commissioner to do the work that the minister should be doing. I cannot understand, cannot believe, that a Labor government continues to avoid doing the hard work in the Murray Darling Basin Plan.

South Australia again has led the way with reform in the Murray-Darling Basin. We pushed for action to address rising salinity, even back as far as the 1980s, with the implementation of the salt interception schemes and world-leading technology. One that comes to mind is Sentek. Sentek

is a great South Australian company, exporting all over the world, with its beginnings at the Loxton Research Centre in the Riverland.

South Australia also supported national action on water security at the height of the Millennium Drought that led to the commonwealth's Water Act and the Murray Darling Basin Plan. South Australians supported the establishment of a royal commission in opposition to tackle water theft and maintain the integrity of the basin plan implementation. As I have said many times in this place, metering is the essential base of water use. If you cannot meter it, you cannot manage it.

We are the state of innovation, and we continue to lead the way in the basin by example. That is why South Australia must continue to strive to lead the way to achieve its contribution towards the 450 gigalitres for the southern connected basin. We must not stop being forward thinkers. How do we achieve the 32 gigalitres as part of South Australia's component to the 450 gigalitres? Does the state government have a role to play? Yes, they do. Turn on the desal, a taxpayer-paid piece of infrastructure that is sitting there collecting spiderwebs, collecting dust.

Other initiatives include off-farm environmental projects; the flow from the Murray into Lake Albert, connected to the North Coorong; more mechanisation of the barrage gates; more wetting and drying wetlands and backwaters; and perhaps a groyne at the mouth to use wave action to keep the mouth open. River communities have done their part and the food producers have played their part too. If South Australia is to succeed in gaining and maintaining a healthy, working river, then they all need to pay their part.

We cannot forget tourism. In the Riverland, tourism is the second largest economic contributor, with \$232 million going into the local economy. South Australia has always been a national leader in water conservation. We led the Murray-Darling Basin Plan; we cannot walk away from it now. Have a look at the opportunities to achieve the basin plan in full. Riverland irrigators and their communities have done the heavy lifting to date.

With low commodity prices, buybacks should not be a part of the solution. Certainly, at this point in time it would be preying on the vulnerable. We saw what buybacks did in the initial Murray-Darling Basin strategy. It created a Swiss cheese effect, where there were ongoing supply charges with fewer irrigators, and it drove many out of business. I would also like to see other methods to achieve the 3,200.

We have to look at other environmental works and measures off-farm, efficiency programs. We must droughtproof and futureproof our farms for the region. It has taken over a century to place the basin into this precarious state. We are not going to fix it overnight. Again, buybacks are not the answer. Water can be the creator of wealth in South Australia, and we need to continue to feed the world. It also underpins the state's economy.

Millions and millions of dollars here in South Australia are generated from the Murray's contribution to not only food production and vibrant communities but also forward thinkers, so South Australia must be the exemplar. We must bang the drum loud and clear if we are going to achieve the basin plan in full. We have led by example once before. We must now continue that legacy.

In closing on the Murray Darling Basin Plan, it is imperative that this parliament supports the River Murray rebuild, the environmental water that needs to be put back into the river system, so that we have a healthy, working river, not only so that we have a sustainable future for our children and our grandchildren but also so that we have the capacity to feed many, many millions of mouths right across the world.

NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME

The Hon. A. PICCOLO (Light) (15:33): Today, I would like to talk about some of the services which I think are important for governments to deliver and some of the reforms which have taken place over the last few years. I also want to highlight an area of reform which I believe is necessary if older people are to live dignified lives.

Some years ago under the previous federal Gillard government, when I think the Hon. Bill Shorten was assisting the Minister for Disability Services, at the commonwealth level we introduced the National Disability Insurance Scheme, which was premised on two key principles: choice and control for people living with disability in terms of the care they received.

It was an important and major reform, on the same sort of level that Medicare was a major reform initially under the Whitlam government and then under the Hawke/Keating government. Despite some of the difficulties with the scheme itself—and I am sure that MPs in this place are receiving complaints about some of the issues regarding the current scheme—it is a very important reform because it actually helps people live more independent lives with a greater quality of life.

Putting aside for one moment some of the market failure that is occurring now in that service sector—just like any new sectors or new service areas, there are often issues of market failure and things that need to be improved—I think the move towards establishing a National Disability Insurance Scheme was the correct one. It also ensured that people living with disability are treated with dignity and can live with dignity.

There is another vulnerable group in our community that I think requires major reform in terms of the way they are cared for as well. It took us some decades to understand that putting people living with disability into institutions and hiding them away was not the right way to treat people. It was not the right way to see them develop as individuals and not the right way to ensure they met their potential. The people in this group are involved in our aged-care system, people living in various nursing homes or in institutional care.

I think that the time has come—as we have done with the delivery of disability services—to start taking people who are now living in nursing homes, etc., out of institutions and find a new way of living. I think it is very important that people towards the end of their lives are also able to live fulfilling lives and not only to live a life that is full of dignity but also to be treated with dignity.

In saying that, I am not suggesting that any providers are doing the wrong thing. I think that even the best providers in the aged-care sector are still providing what you might call institutional care. Like all institutions, to some extent they are run on efficiency principles, which means that individuals have very little choice and control about their lives. As a society, we need to do much better in how we treat people who need full-time care in that part of their life.

The reality of institutional care in most cases is that people eat at a certain time, shower at a certain time and do all sorts of things at a certain time. There is very little personal autonomy for the individuals in these institutions. Often these are people who have lived quite fulfilling lives and who have often worked in a whole range of different careers, etc., and in this part of their life they are treated in a way that I think is not the most dignified.

I think that we need to reform the way in which we deliver these services. We need to rethink how we care for people who need full-time care and to break down institutions and to bring the services to people in different settings. We can learn from what we did with disability services. I think that is important, but to just building institutions and putting people into institutions is the wrong direction.

We need to make sure that people at the end their lives can live with dignity. We need also to make sure that we can deliver services to those people who live in their homes. We need to make sure that health services and other services can be delivered to those people's homes to ensure that they get proper care.

RECONCILIATION WEEK

Mr TEAGUE (Heysen) (15:39): It is my pleasure to rise and to reflect on some of the sporting events that occurred in the course of Reconciliation Week recently. I had the honour to attend several—and not just sporting events—throughout the week, some of which have been reflected on in this place over recent weeks in support of motions in support of Reconciliation Week.

In my capacity as shadow minister for Aboriginal affairs, last Friday, for example, I attended the Croydon FC versus Metro Stars game and was really glad to see that first-time occasion for those clubs to celebrate an Indigenous round and in what I expect will be the first of many to come. I congratulate both clubs.

Similarly, I was proud to attend earlier, at the end of May, the event at Mount Barker, convened by Mount Barker Football Club, celebrating the Indigenous round and community reconciliation at Laratinga Wetlands—really creative endeavours that are in many cases happening

for the first time or building on initiatives that are led by the community. In that case, Cornerstone College was very much associated with a council and a football club initiative.

The occasion I want to reflect on most particularly was the one that was held at the Heathfield netball courts and hosted by the Heathfield Netball Club on Saturday 4 June, just after the completion of Reconciliation Week. It was another example of an inaugural occasion celebrated by the Hills Netball Association recognising our First Nations.

It was on that occasion, and it was before the A1 match between Heathfield and Piccadilly, that arrangements were made to conduct a Welcome to Country ceremony at the installation of a plaque recognising the occasion and the celebration of Mandy Brown, a Peramangk woman who had prepared the bibs and associated training and materials that were associated with the occasion. A wonderful event it was too, and all the more so because president of the Heathfield Netball Club, Vasa Raven, was the most joyous and stoic club president I have seen in recent times.

With all the brass assembled, all the life members of the various Hills netball clubs in pride of place seating in the stand, Vasa very bravely continued with the ceremony that had been planned, despite its being what members will remember was about the rainiest weekend we have had for years. The very peak of the downpour occurred just at the point in time when the ceremony was to occur. There they were, both A1 teams assembled, the president, Vasa, at the centre of proceedings and a downpour, Mr Deputy Speaker, that you just could not imagine. It had everybody sodden. I found myself standing with as big an umbrella as I could find at arm's length, just preserving Vasa's iPhone from which she was conducting proceedings.

It was an occasion that I think will be memorable for that particular storm that hit the court at the time, but all the more so for the way in which it drew out the joy and creativity of all present, committed as they were to recognising our Indigenous history in the Hills and doing so through community and through sport. I congratulate that Heathfield Netball Club and the Hills Netball Association on what was a truly memorable occasion.

DAVENPORT ELECTORATE

Ms THOMPSON (Davenport) (15:44): Since skateboarding made its debut in the summer Olympics in Japan last year, there has been a ton of kids in my neighbourhood, particularly young girls, dreaming of taking out gold for skateboarding at the 2032 Olympic Games in Queensland, and the skate parks are busier than ever.

Skating is a serious sport and we should be embracing it in our communities. If you play tennis, netball or basketball then you will most likely be part of a club and you will most likely play on courts owned and maintained by council. Clubs are often required to keep their courts and playing surfaces to a particular standard to be able to be used for competition, so when cracks appear on the court or the courts need maintenance the clubs will work with council to see those surfaces resurfaced.

It is not as straightforward for skateboarding. In fact, there are very few people capable of repairing skate parks in this country, let alone in South Australia. This means that they are often given little maintenance and repair, and this is left up to the community to take care of. The skate community in the south is a very special community. Regularly at the skate park you will see locals bringing their own brooms to sweep up before skating. There have even been times when local skaters have been caught on CCTV cameras doing guerrilla repair work overnight with their own tools and paints.

Now that skating has been recognised as an official Olympic sport, and one that attracts local, state and national competitions, I think it is time we start supporting them as such. I would like to share a special letter that I received from a local skater, Sydney—a beautiful handwritten letter:

To erin Thompson,

Hello my name is Syd. Im 11 years old and a local to flagstaf hill skate park, were I spend most of my spear time. I know and appreciate that you you have tryed to fix the surface of the skate park. But the Paint of the skate park has caused some problems as Being a Bit slipery and when the suns shining the Paint reflects the light into Peoples eyes witch can be Pretty annoying. and its quiet Frustrating For When people like my self are trying somthing hard and then you slip out so you cant land your tricks. So Please if you can, is to sand Down the Paint so that Many Many

People will Be happy and the Loved skate Park Flaggy can Be Back to normal. and mabey even some competitions will Be Happening. If you can sort this issue the community Will Be stoked.

thanks for your time

Sydney...

He has even popped a little picture of a skateboard on his letter. I am really proud of Sydney for his advocating in our community. I have written to council and we will be working with them to see what we can do to deliver on Syd's request. I know that we have some future Olympic medallists in our local skate communities, so let's start giving them the support that they need to get to Queensland in 2032.

Bills

RETURN TO WORK (SCHEME SUSTAINABILITY) AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction and First Reading

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS (Cheltenham—Minister for Police, Emergency Services and Correctional Services) (15:47): Obtained leave and introduced a bill for an act to amend the Return to Work Act 2014. Read a first time.

Standing Orders Suspension

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS (Cheltenham—Minister for Police, Emergency Services and Correctional Services) (15:48): I move:

That standing orders be so far suspended as to enable the bill to pass through all stages without delay.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I need an absolute majority for that to happen. We do not have an absolute majority present. Ring the bells.

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

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: As there is an absolute majority present, I accept the motion. Does anybody wish to speak to the suspension of standing orders? Minister.

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: I do wish to speak to the motion to suspend standing orders. The government are approaching this bill and the outcomes that this bill seeks to remedy with a degree of urgency and with a degree of haste. I acknowledge to this house and to members that this is an uncommon but not unusual step to seek to suspend standing orders and we do so acknowledging that members will need to likely, or potentially, I should say, sit until all matters are proceeded with this evening, including the committee stage and the third reading.

In doing so, I thank members for their collaborative approach to this, but the truth is that, if the house and this parliament at large do not move with urgency and haste to seek to not only pass this bill but remedy the circumstances this bill seeks to address, employers and workers in this state will suffer significant hardship at a time when they can least wear it and at a time when this government is most committed to moving with the appropriate urgency to ensure this bill does pass this evening.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER (Morialta) (15:52): The opposition does not support the suspension of standing orders. It does not mean that we do not wish to see a suitable resolution to this matter so that people can know what the rules are to be very clearly going forward, but there were a range of opportunities available to this government this week, even in the context of the embarrassment they have suffered as a result of the instructions given to the Premier by his friends in the union movement. There were still other things that could have been done.

The government had a bill to deal with this matter, brought to the Legislative Council by the relevant minister, which was understood to be ready to be debated this week. Indeed, there were briefings taking place on Friday about that bill. There were meetings to take place at the beginning of this week on that bill and the opposition had said that we would be ready to have a position to deal with that bill by tomorrow in the Legislative Council.

None of that is relevant now because the government of their own volition pulled their own bill yesterday morning and now have brought forward a different solution, a different solution which the Premier earlier today said suitably balanced the needs of labour and capital.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Morialta, I think you are straying a bit from the suspension. If you want to debate the merits, you need to do it.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Sir, thank you, I appreciate your guidance. The point of the suspension is that this needs to be dealt with urgently, according to the government, and the point I make is that, in doing so, that does not remove the requirement that this parliament give appropriate consideration to how to appropriately balance those needs identified by the Premier earlier.

It is tremendously important that we do so because the very reason, the very trigger, that has caused the challenge in the first place is what is, as far as I can tell, an unintended consequence of the legislation as was previously understood. It certainly was understood in a different way by the board for a number of years until the case in question that has triggered this spate of activity. So, does a course of action need to be taken? Yes, of course. The government tells us now that this reform to an incredibly important bill must be debated today.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: A point of order has been called, member for Morialta.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: The member is not arguing about why the suspension of standing orders should or should not be debated. He has not mentioned the bills that are on the government business program that would normally take precedence over this matter. He is simply now arguing the merits of the bill. It is disorderly and he is wasting the parliament's time.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will let the member for Morialta continue, but he had better wind it up soon.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I believe I have eight minutes. I am reflecting whether that is the case.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: If you are going to use the eight minutes, you had better not stray one word.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Certainly. The motion in question is to debate urgently a particular bill, and the minister set out a set of reasons why he believed that it should take precedence and, further—and this is important; it goes directly to the point I was just making of why we need to move through all stages—why standing orders need to be suspended.

Standing orders exist in order to allow bills to have suitable consideration. It is the standing order that, when the second reading of a bill has been moved, the debate be adjourned. It is usually adjourned to the next day of sitting. The best practice is 10 days I believe the leader of the house reminded me on my first week in the job when I was leader of the house, but that sometimes is contravened and sometimes there are exceptions. This is understood. But let us not for one second think that it is anything other than the government's own decision to bring this bill at this time and now say that it requires it to be debated immediately.

The leader of the house spoke to me at about 8.30 this morning and identified that the government might be seeking to suspend standing orders this afternoon to go through all stages of this bill this afternoon as opposed to going through a more orderly practice, as per the standing orders, of having the minister explain the bill in detail, members getting a chance to read the bill, consult on the bill and form a view before participating further in debate and forming a vote. That is the orderly way of things, especially when dealing with a bill of substance that will impact on the way that every business in South Australia carries out its work.

Then we get to the question of the bill itself which was, as I understand it, provided in draft form at 10 o'clock this morning and provided in final form about two hours ago to the opposition to look at. Having had the bill for two hours—which was a period that included question time, when all members of the house were active participants in listening to the government's answers to the questions being asked at the time—I would suggest that it is not even the bare minimum time required for any sensible consideration of a bill. It is I think a reflection on the way the government considers this house.

Going towards the prioritisation that the member for West Torrens asked about, there is in fact a budget approaching \$20 billion which is the subject of debate, which is being set aside by the government if this motion passes to debate rather than doing this. That budget must be passed by tomorrow; there is a hard deadline and there is estimates on Friday.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: The budget second reading must be passed so that it can be sent to estimates. The government could well have sat past 6pm last night and they chose not to do so, so we will no doubt have to deal with that either tonight or throughout tomorrow. That is as it is, but the government is the one that has decided that this bill in this house takes priority, takes precedence over the budget, and the opposition does not agree that that is appropriate. Here we get to the next part: especially because there is an alternative remedy. The Legislative Council is the chamber in which the relevant minister with responsibility for the bill in question is also sitting. It is right over there. It is about a 30-metre walk. Advisers who are supporting the minister—

Mr Odenwalder: Are you sure? It's 4 o'clock.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: —that's quite funny—in question could just as easily support their own minister, the Minister for Industrial Relations, in their chamber where this could get consideration. I do not know why the government feels that it cannot rely on the industrial relations minister or indeed the Legislative Council chamber to deal with this matter today and why it has to be in the alternative chamber, the chamber where another minister is, rather than dealing with it in the Legislative Council chamber.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Point of order: I am reluctant to do this, but standing order 120, reference to debate in the other house: 'A Member may not refer to any debate in the other House of Parliament'.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: There is no debate in question in the other house because the government has brought it here. I am nearly done.

The Hon. A. Koutsantonis: You said you wouldn't be long.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I have been six minutes, plus points of order. I am nearly done, sir.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Can I recommend that you limit your comments to what is happening in this chamber, please.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: The opposition is familiar with the numbers in the chamber, I suspect, although I hope the backbench of the Labor Party will hear the force and the merits of the arguments I put, but I suspect they will stick with the caucus line and support the suspension.

Acknowledging that, I make the point that the opposition will contribute to debate as constructively as we can, but it must be remembered that the ink is barely dry on the bill that has just been provided. This is clearly not best practice in legislating any matter, let alone something so important. We oppose the suspension of standing orders on that basis.

The house divided on the motion.

Ayes 26
 Noes 14
 Majority 12

AYES

Andrews, S.E.	Bettison, Z.L.	Bignell, L.W.K.
Boyer, B.I.	Brown, M.E.	Champion, N.D.
Clancy, N.P.	Close, S.E.	Cook, N.F.
Fulbrook, J.	Hildyard, K.A.	Hood, L.
Hughes, E.J.	Hutchesson, C.L.	Koutsantonis, A.
Malinauskas, P.B.	Michaels, A.	Mullighan, S.C.
Odenwalder, L.K. (teller)	Pearce, R.K.	Picton, C.J.

AYES

Savvas, O.M.
Thompson, E.L.

Stinson, J.M.
Wortley, D.

Szakacs, J.K.

NOES

Basham, D.K.B.
Gardner, J.A.W. (teller)
Patterson, S.J.R.
Pratt, P.
Telfer, S.J.

Cowdrey, M.J.
Hurn, A.
Pederick, A.S.
Tarzia, V.A.
Whetstone, T.J.

Ellis, F.J.
McBride, P.N.
Pisoni, D.G.
Teague, J.B.

Motion thus carried.

Second Reading

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS (Cheltenham—Minister for Police, Emergency Services and Correctional Services) (16:05): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Every South Australian worker has the right to be safe at work and protected from injury. Unfortunately, we know this is not always the case. That is why we have a statutory workers compensation scheme in the Return to Work Act of 2014 to ensure that injured workers are treated with dignity and respect and are supported in recovering from their injuries so they can return to work.

When the act was introduced, one of its goals was to end years of financial difficulty which had plagued the former WorkCover scheme and create a scheme which is financially sustainable and does not impose an unjustifiable burden on South Australian businesses. While the WorkCover scheme system regularly had an average premium rate of 2.75 per cent, the new Return to Work scheme was designed with a legislated target to achieve an average rate below 2.0 per cent. It has met that target every year since it commenced operation.

The Summerfield decision has challenged the scheme's capacity to meet this target by allowing more workers than were initially expected to reach the seriously injured threshold and continue to receive income support until retirement age by combining impairments from related injuries together. It is simply not possible to allow a dramatic increase in the number of new seriously injured workers and at the same time contain employer premiums below the legislated target of 2.0 per cent.

Without legislative change, the Summerfield decision is projected to double the number of new seriously injured workers each year and result in a \$1 billion unfunded liability for past claims alone. The Summerfield decision was first handed down in May 2019. An appeal was dismissed by the full bench of the South Australian Employment Tribunal in June of 2020, and a further appeal to the Full Court of the Supreme Court was dismissed in March of 2021.

The former Marshall government had three years to address the difficulties created by the Summerfield decision but instead kicked the can down the road and left South Australian businesses staring down the barrel of a premium increase to 2.2 per cent or more, the highest of any state in Australia. Unlike the former Liberal government, this government took decisive steps to address the scheme's financial situation by introducing the Return to Work (Permanent Impairment Assessment) Amendment Bill to parliament.

Workers Compensation is a complex area of reform which involves striking a fair balance between the interests of both business and workers. The government has listened to the community concerns about the permanent impairment assessment bill and recognises that the financial sustainability of the scheme cannot come at the cost of leaving injured workers without adequate support and compensation.

Following extensive discussions with both business and worker representatives, the Malinauskas government has reached consensus on a new package of reforms. These reforms will ensure the scheme is financially sustainable for years to come while guaranteeing that seriously injured workers receive the support they need. Under this bill, the 'same injury or cause' test which formed the basis of the Summerfield decision will remain the test for the combination of impairments under the act.

This government does not want to see a situation where two workers suffering from identical injuries are treated completely differently based upon whether those injuries arose from one event or a series of related events. Fundamentally, workers with the same level of impairment should be treated in the same way. Through the combination of injuries, many workers will be assessed with a higher level of whole permanent impairment than they were before the Summerfield decision.

This means that there needs to be an adjustment to the seriously injured threshold to better reflect an appropriate level of impairment beyond which a worker is entitled to income support until retirement age and medical expenses for life. The option which provides the fairest result is to increase the threshold from 30 per cent to 35 per cent, with a commensurate increase in the economic loss lump sum payment received by those people who would otherwise be taken to be seriously injured. This higher threshold will not apply to psychiatric injuries, which remain excluded from assessing lump sum payments.

The scheme retains protections for workers who do not reach the seriously injured threshold. Those workers will still receive up to two years of income support and up to three years of medical expenses. For those workers with a permanent impairment greater than 5 per cent of whole person impairment, they will receive a lump sum payment for economic loss and a lump sum payment for non-economic loss.

The transitional provisions provide that the changes to the serious injury threshold would only apply to workers who have not had a final examination date for the purposes of a whole-of-person impairment assessment before that designated date. It also provides that workers who have been deemed as seriously injured or interim seriously injured before the commencement of the amended act will continue to be regarded as seriously injured or interim seriously injured workers as relevant.

Not all seriously injured workers want or need ongoing attachment to the scheme. Under this bill, a seriously injured worker will be given the choice to receive a lump sum payment for economic loss instead of ongoing income support payments. This gives injured workers more options and the freedom to make the best decision for their own health, for their quality of life and for their future wellbeing.

It is equally important that there are safeguards in place to ensure a worker makes an informed decision. Before election to receive this lump sum payment, a worker must first receive professional financial and medical advice. Further, the small number of seriously injured workers with a whole person impairment of 50 per cent or higher must receive the approval of the South Australian Employment Tribunal that the decision is in their best interests.

There will be no option to receive a lump sum for the entitlement to ongoing medical expenses. This is a further layer of protection for injured workers. Should the worker find themselves in the unfortunate circumstances where the lump sum payment has been fully spent, they would still have access to medical entitlements for the remainder of their life, and this ensures that the worker still receives treatment and care for their work injury, regardless of their personal circumstances.

There is no time limit on when a worker could choose to apply for a lump sum payment. They could apply for it as soon as they are deemed seriously injured or some years later. However, there will be no financial advantage for the worker should they make a later decision to elect for a lump sum payment, as the figure will be reduced by weekly payments they receive beyond their first 104 weeks.

In this bill, the provisions in relation to interim serious injury are being changed to ensure there are appropriate processes in place to consider whether and when an injured worker's injury has stabilised so that the worker can undergo their whole-of-person impairment assessment. This

bill also corrects a drafting error which prevents some workers from receiving supplementary income following surgery after their entitlement to weekly payments has ended.

This error has given rise to circumstances where injured workers have been without any income support while recovering from surgery during periods when they have no capacity for work. This is clearly an unintended outcome and forces workers either to delay surgery or bring surgery forward in an inappropriate way. This bill seeks to remove the anomaly by minor amendments to section 41 of the act.

The Malinauskas Labor government shares the concerns of many doctors, workers and legal professionals about changes made to the second edition of the Impairment Assessment Guidelines under the former Marshall Liberal government. The Impairment Assessment Guidelines play a critical role in determining the amount of compensation an injured worker receives. The guidelines should provide an objective, fair and consistent method for assessing permanent impairment arising from a work injury.

The government recognises it is appropriate and proper for parliament to have greater oversight of the permanent impairment guidelines. This bill ensures that future editions of the guidelines will be a legislative instrument subject to parliamentary disallowance. Currently, there are multiple editions of Impairment Assessment Guidelines in operation. This creates administrative inefficiencies as well as uncertainty and unnecessary complexity for those who use the guidelines, such as accredited assessors, lawyers and the South Australian Employment Tribunal. The different editions can also result in different outcomes for some workers.

The bill addresses this by providing that the next edition of the Impairment Assessment Guidelines will apply regardless of a worker's injury date. This is so only a single edition of Impairment Assessment Guidelines will be in operation at any one time that applies to injuries that fall under the jurisdiction of the Return to Work Act.

However, where an injured worker has, before the commencement of the new guidelines, given written notice to the corporation that selects a particular accredited practitioner for the purposes of a whole-of-person impairment assessment for their work injury, the new guidelines will not apply and the version of the guidelines that applied immediately before the new guidelines will apply. This is set out in the transitional provisions.

Following the passage of this legislation, the government intends to consult with stakeholders in relation to a new edition of the Impairment Assessment Guidelines which retains those improvements made in the second edition while rolling back changes which resulted in arbitrary and unfair outcomes for injured workers. I seek leave to have explanation of clauses inserted in *Hansard* without my reading it.

Leave granted.

EXPLANATION OF CLAUSES

Part 1—Preliminary

1—Short title

This clause is formal.

2—Commencement

The measure will be brought into operation by proclamation

Part 2—Amendment of *Return to Work Act 2014*

3—Amendment of section 4—Interpretation

The principal Act draws a distinction between physical injury and psychiatric injury in a number of cases, and this distinction is relevant to some of the amendments being made by this measure. It has therefore been decided to include a definition of 'physical injury' in the Act, which is to be defined as any injury other than psychiatric injury.

Another key concept is the concept of 'stabilised', especially in connection with some of the amendments to be made to the principal Act by this measure. It has been decided to include a definition for this concept and as it connected to the assessment of impairment under the Impairment Assessment Guidelines, it has been decided to adopt the definition used in the guidelines to provide consistency between the Act and the guidelines in their application under the Act.

4—Amendment of section 7—Injury must arise from employment

This is a consequential amendment (relating to the definition of 'physical injury' to be inserted into the Act, and the distinction between psychiatric injuries and other injuries).

5—Amendment of section 21—Seriously injured workers

The principal Act is to be amended so that a seriously injured worker will now be, in the case of a worker whose work injury is a physical injury, a worker whose work injury has resulted in permanent impairment with a degree of whole person impairment assessed to be 35% or more. (For a psychiatric injury, the percentage is to remain at 30% or more).

Amendments are also to be made so that an interim decision that a worker may be taken to be a seriously injured worker will initially have effect for a period of 52 weeks (unless brought to an end sooner). The Corporation will then be able to extend this period if the Corporation is satisfied that the work injury to which the interim decision relates has not stabilised. More than one extension will be possible.

6—Amendment of section 22—Assessment of permanent impairment

It is proposed to change section 22 as it relates to the commencement and application of amendments to the Impairment Assessment Guidelines, or to the substitution of new guidelines. An amendment or substitution of the guidelines will apply in relation to an injury regardless of whether the injury occurred before or on or after the commencement of the amendment or substitution.

Proposed subsection (19) provides for the guidelines to be disallowable.

The opportunity is also being taken to provide for greater consistency between the wording in subsection (8) and (10), by replacing the word 'trauma' in subsection (10) with the word 'cause'.

7—Amendment of section 33—Medical expenses

This is a consequential amendment relating to new section 56A.

8—Amendment of section 40—Supplementary income support for incapacity resulting from surgery

This clause amends section 40 of the principal Act to delete 'under section 33(21)(b)' from subsection (1). This will remove the limited application of the provision, which currently only applies to surgery approved by the Corporation under section 33(21)(b).

9—Amendment of section 53—Redemptions—liabilities associated with weekly payments

Section 53 of the principal Act is to be amended to provide that before a worker enters into an agreement for the redemption of a liability to make weekly payments under Part 4 Division 4 of the Act, the worker must receive financial advice from a qualified financial adviser about the investment or use of money to be received on the redemption. Currently, the worker only needs to receive 'competent financial advice' (which may not necessarily be provided by a qualified person).

In connection with new section 56A, if a seriously injured worker has made an election under that section, the worker will not be able to apply for the redemption of a liability under section 53 for the injury or injuries for which the election was made.

10—Amendment of section 56—Lump sum payments—economic loss

These amendments are being made in conjunction with new section 56A, so that a seriously injured worker will be able to elect under that section to receive a payment under section 56 (subject to the scheme to apply under these new provisions).

(Section 56 provides lump sum compensation for loss of future earning capacity for a worker who has been assessed to have suffered permanent impairment as a result of a work injury. Currently, seriously injured workers are not able to receive an entitlement under section 56 on account of other entitlements provided to them under the principal Act.)

As part of these reforms, the maximum amount of a payment will be the prescribed sum applicable for 34% of whole person impairment, and the total payment that a worker will be entitled to receive under the section will be \$434,863 (indexed).

11—Insertion of section 56A

This clause inserts new section 56A.

56A—Seriously injured worker—election to receive lump sum payment

This new section is the provision that will allow a seriously injured worker to elect to receive a lump sum payment under section 56 (subject to the new provisions contained in the scheme). However, the scheme will not apply in relation to a psychiatric injury or consequential mental harm, or in relation to noise induced hearing loss.

An election will be able to be made once the worker has been assessed and determined to be a seriously injured worker as contemplated by the principal Act. An election will not be able to be made by a worker who is subject to an interim decision under section 21(3) of the Act pending an assessment of permanent impairment under Part 2 Division 5 of the principal Act.

A seriously injured worker who has made an election will cease to be entitled to recovery/return to work services within the meaning of section 24(1) for the relevant work injury, and will cease to be entitled to weekly payments under section 41 of the Act for the relevant work injury.

An election will take effect from the day on which the election is received by the Corporation (unless the matter is the subject of an application to the Tribunal, in which case the election will take effect from the day on which the election is approved by the Tribunal (if so approved)).

Once an election is made, the worker will remain entitled to receive weekly payments under section 41 until the lump sum payment is made under section 56, or the period of 28 days expires (whichever first occurs).

The amount paid under section 56 will be reduced by the amount of any weekly payments received by the worker under section 41, or as a result of an interim decision of the Corporation made under section 21(3).

A worker will not be able to make an election unless the worker has received advice from specified classes of experts, consistent with the approach in section 53 for redemptions.

An election made by a seriously injured worker whose degree of whole person impairment has been assessed to be 50% or more has no effect unless approved by the Tribunal.

A worker who has been assessed as being a seriously injured worker will only be able to make one election under this section.

A worker who has entered into an agreement for the redemption of a liability under section 53 of the principal Act will not be able to make an election under this section that relates to the same work injury or injuries.

12—Amendment of section 72—No damages unless whole person impairment of at least 30%

These are consequential amendments.

13—Amendment of section 73—Seriously injured workers—special provisions

These are consequential amendments.

14—Amendment of section 97—Reviewable decisions

This amendment is related to new subsections that are to be inserted into section 21 of the Act relating to the period or periods for which an interim decision that a worker may be taken to be regarded as a seriously injured worker will have effect. A decision not to extend the period of operation of an interim decision will be a reviewable decision under the principal Act.

15—Amendment of section 134—Delegation to self-insured employers

This is a consequential amendment.

16—Amendment of Schedule 7—Prescribed sum—economic loss

This amendment will add extra items to the table that applies for the purposes of section 56, so that the amounts applying as a prescribed sum will include items for whole person impairment from 30% upwards.

17—Amendment of Schedule 9—Repeal and transitional provisions

It will now be possible for the Governor to make transitional provisions, or additional transitional provisions, associated with an amendment of the principal Act by another Act.

Schedule 1—Transitional provisions

1—Interpretation

This clause includes a definition of *designated day*, which will mean a day appointed by proclamation as the designated day for the purposes of the provision in which the term is used.

Various terms used in the Schedule have meanings consistent with meanings they have in the principal Act.

2—Application of amendments—seriously injured workers threshold

These provisions relate to the change to the threshold for a worker who has suffered a work injury that has resulted in permanent impairment to be regarded as a seriously injured worker under the principal Act.

3—General provision—seriously injured workers

Subject to the Schedule and to the other provisions of the principal Act, a person who has already been determined to be a seriously injured worker under the current threshold (being a worker who has been assessed and determined to be a seriously injured worker under Part 2 Division 5 of the Act before the relevant designated day) will continue to be regarded as a seriously injured worker.

A similar provision is included for a worker who is taken to be a seriously injured worker under section 21(3) of the principal Act immediately before the relevant designated day under an interim decision of the Corporation.

4—Elections—seriously injured workers

A worker who has been assessed to be a seriously injured worker under the current scheme will be able to make an election under new section 56A, subject to the provisions set out in this clause. In the case of a worker subject to an interim decision under section 21(3) immediately before the designated day, the worker will only be able to make an election if they are subsequently determined to be a seriously injured worker other than as a result of an interim decision.

5—Interim decisions under section 21(3) of Act

This clause provides for the application of the new provisions relating to interim decisions under section 21(3) of the Act to existing circumstances.

6—Amendment or substitution of Impairment Assessment Guidelines

This clause makes provision for the application of the amendments relating to when an amendment or substitution of the Impairment Assessment Guidelines takes effect.

7—Impairment Assessment Guidelines

This clause expressly provides that the existing Impairment Assessment Guidelines are not subject to the disallowance scheme to be introduced by this measure. However, the new provisions will apply in relation to any amendment or substitution of those guidelines that takes effect on or after the designated day.

8—Supplementary income support

The amendment made to section 40 of the principal Act will apply in relation to surgery approved by the Corporation on or after the designated day.

Mr COWDREY (Colton) (16:16): There is no other way to describe what has happened over the last two weeks, but—

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Brown): Sorry, member for Colton, I might just interrupt you. Can you indicate whether you are the lead speaker on behalf of the opposition?

Mr COWDREY: I certainly can, sir. Shall I begin again?

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Brown): Yes, if you wish.

Mr COWDREY: There is no other way to describe what has happened. This process has been an absolutely shambolic process. This is the very definition of policy on the run. This scheme, the Return to Work scheme, affects just about every South Australian worker and business. It is a multibillion-dollar scheme and Labor want to shove through these changes on the back of a napkin and on a wing and a prayer.

I want to remind the house that just two weeks ago the Premier said that the previous bill needed to be passed as a matter of urgency and this was the way to fix the problem. I have only been here for a short period of time, but in terms of process I have never experienced or seen anything like this before. Make no mistake: this is quite legitimately a dark day for democracy in South Australia.

For the opposition to have been provided no notice of the original bill—nor business, nor industry nor the people the bill was to affect—is an absolute disgrace. But this morning the plot got thicker. We received the draft bill at 9.55am, 10 o'clock this morning, and we were provided the final draft at 1.30pm, just prior to question time. Previous to that, we were provided three dot points in size 14 font, and the government wants us to make a decision on multibillion-dollar scheme with this level of information. 'Trust us,' they say. Then, this morning the minister had the temerity to argue that that document was not three bullet points: it was much more.

The opposition met with various stakeholders on Tuesday, none of whom had been consulted on the original bill nor had any knowledge of the new bill to be introduced. We discussed, in fact, the impacts of the original bill prior to it getting pulled later that afternoon. But, as I said, the

plot got thicker this morning. We learned this morning that ReturnToWorkSA was asked on 7 June 2022 to model various alternative options proposed by the government, options not provided by the corporation. Advice was finalised on Friday 10 June 2022, the day that the briefing was provided to the opposition by the government and ReturnToWorkSA on the original bill. Let me walk you through this in more detail.

The original bill was introduced on budget day—I believe while the budget speech was being conducted in this chamber—and behind the original bill was six months worth of work from the appeal being dismissed by the High Court to where we are now. ReturnToWork was doing their due diligence looking at how to resolve the Summerfield decision: this bill, three days' work.

The original bill was based on a quality assured actuarial review—a peer review conducted by PwC. It was there, based on a resolution of the board of ReturnToWorkSA, to ensure the accuracy of what was being provided for a decision to be made. By contrast, this bill contains internal estimates prepared by ReturnToWorkSA. As the opposition is aware, the only actuarial input into this is an estimation on the number of workers to fit between the 30 and 35 per cent thresholds.

Let me be very, very clear that these comments are by no means a criticism of ReturnToWorkSA and their management. They were given three days to prepare these estimates of government-initiated changes to the bill, to achieve the Summerfield outcomes and to keep premiums under 1.9 per cent—all changes, again I stress, initiated by the government and not the ReturnToWorkSA corporation. As we understand, other options were provided by ReturnToWork but were not progressed.

What is even more galling is to find out this morning that, instead of eliminating the \$1 billion black hole of unfunded liability arising from the Summerfield decision and subsequent interpretation, these measures proposed still leave more than half a billion dollars worth of unfunded liability, and move the solvency ratio to just above 90 per cent—90 per cent is the floor that triggers a review of the scheme based on its being unfinancial. The question remains: is this just a bandaid solution?

The opposition does not have any confidence in these numbers given the process undertaken and the veracity and the criticism of the numbers that are being put forward. This could very well expose business to a great degree of uncertainty, and it is an absolute abrogation of responsibility to deliver good government. We believe that there is a high risk of premiums increasing based on the rough estimates that we were provided. The current bill, as I said, was based just on high-level estimates prepared by the corporation.

The opposition is in no position to be able to provide our position, nor will we be bullied into providing our position on a bill on which we were given two hours' notice. This process, as I said at the start, has been a catastrophic and shambolic process. It has been politically motivated. It has been done without consultation and fundamentally without any supporting documentation to the proposed bill to say that what is being proposed is even achievable.

When you make decisions in relation to multibillion-dollar schemes, I would like to think that this house does so based on evidence, that it does so based on peer review, that it does so on actual qualified actuarial advice. The first bill was simply a change of interpretation, a change of words, to ensure that the interpretation as such was captured. It was a short bill of 1½ pages.

What is being proposed here today across 13 pages, across 15 amendments, is a fundamental change to the operation of the Return to Work scheme, a fundamental change to the existing act. Generally, when you undertake these changes you conduct a review, you consult with people, you perhaps reach out to the Law Society, you perhaps talk to experts in the field, you perhaps understand the position of the board that has a fiduciary duty to ensuring the financial security of the scheme itself. But most importantly, sir, you give people notice. It is not done over three days on the back of a napkin at the request of the unions.

Mr TEAGUE (Heysen) (16:24): I rise to endorse the contribution of the shadow treasurer to the second reading debate, and I listened carefully to the Minister for Police before him introducing this bill.

What an invidious position the Minister for Police finds himself in because there can be no doubting that the bill that has just been presented to this house rises no higher than an attempted

financial fix for a scheme that is so important to workers, employers, unions and advocates statewide. It is important to all South Australians. No-one among those who have presented legislation in the last two weeks is pretending that this is anything other than a process to achieve a financial fix, and a highly unambitious one at that, and I will come to that in a moment.

I will take a moment to speak to those who represent workers and who have an interest in a scheme that is in good health, a scheme that is financially robust, a scheme that is self-funding and a scheme that is auguring towards levies that are fair and remedies that are fair in the awful circumstances in which workers who are injured find themselves in need of availing themselves of the scheme.

What an invidious position for the Minister for Police, coming into this chamber some short days after the responsible minister, the Minister for Industrial Relations, suffered the ignominy of first having introduced a bill at no notice in the other place on budget day—as I understand it and I think the shadow treasurer has just indicated, in the course of the delivery of the budget speech no less—a bill that within days the Minister for Industrial Relations, just yesterday, found himself withdrawing from the other place. Now we find this completely different bill presented to this house by the Minister for Police.

The Minister for Police, I know, has a sincerely and long-held commitment to the workers of South Australia. I know that he has committed a significant part of his working life to that work within the union movement. I do not doubt the sincerity of those commitments to workers. Those are commitments that ought to speak, in terms of legislation that is brought to this house, to measures that might be taken in relation to the Return to Work Act that are about the health of the scheme. It is called Return to Work and, if it is doing its task, it ought to be facilitating the healthy return to work of workers. It ought to be a return to health and, by extension, a Return to Work scheme, and it ought to be in good health.

What we have seen exposed in the last little more than a week, though, is that the new Labor government and, so far the cliché goes, the side of politics that is most closely associated with organised labour has not come to this place with a thought-through series of reforms to this important legislation. It has not come to this place with an explanation about the next generation of the return to work environment.

It has not done so, as one might expect, in the early days of the new Malinauskas Labor government. Rather, it has come to this place, to the other house, with a financial fix to a problem that, it would appear on all indications, it has given no more thought to than the time it took to draft the last piece of legislation that was presented to this place on 2 June.

The shadow treasurer in his contribution has highlighted that what we are dealing with, and are asked to deal with urgently here today, is not only something that has just been landed on us but it has also only just been landed on the ReturnToWorkSA board and organisation itself. In fact, it is only something that has been created in the last days, and it replaces a bill which was completely different in its approach to solving the problem that was perceived being the subject of it.

There can be no doubting that this is simply a short-term attempt to respond to a set of information that has been presented in a very short time frame to solve a financial problem. There is no more integrity than that at the core of this exercise, sadly. It is important to perhaps spell out the time frame because there are people to whom I have referred and those various interested groups that assist and engage with workers—unions, clinicians, employers, advocates—who are interested in this scheme. Their interest extends beyond these financial fixes because it is the scheme they deal with every day of their working lives and we ought to do justice to them.

On 2 June, the Minister for Industrial Relations in the other place presented a bill that no-one really, and I do not think it is too much of an extension to indicate that, knew was coming. It was said to respond to a particular decision of the Full Court of the Supreme Court that was dealing with the circumstances of a worker who suffered an injury to his femur and hip, a man of middle working age who then subsequently developed injury to his lower back.

That was a case that worked its way through the court process to the Full Court of the Supreme Court. The High Court was asked to consider the matter, and late last year the High Court

determined that special leave ought not be granted because the matter was specific to a state interest and special leave was refused. There was at least a background of sorts, a set of grounds upon which to work up a response.

If it were perceived that the Summerfield decision was such a bogey in terms of the financial threat to the scheme, there was an opportunity to work up a response over time. As the shadow treasurer has adverted, there appears to have been done some robust financial analysis at least around the financial consequence of the measures that were the subject of the 2 June bill that the Minister for Industrial Relations presented in the other place.

The controversy that emerged immediately upon that bill coming to light ranged from the different views that one might take about the actual consequences of Summerfield in the context of earlier decisions, including the 2018 decision of Preedy, on whether or not it presented such a dramatic challenge, all the way through to a robust capacity to analyse the actuarial advice about the consequences both short term and long term.

At least you could have a thoroughgoing conversation about the bill, leaving aside the surprise and the circumstances in which that bill was presented to the house. Indeed, a heated discussion ensued and it was not just us expressing outrage on this side of the house; it was literally every single stakeholder interested in this process that was, to some extent or other, taken by surprise, not having an opportunity properly to engage, not consulted and otherwise left perplexed by what the government had done clearly with a view not to the scheme, or not to the workability of it, but purely an attempt to provide a financial fix in circumstances where, one might presume, the government had received advice that there will be the risk of a threshold for the levy being breached.

The section 137 test at the moment sets that breach limit at 2 per cent. Firstly, it might have been an indication that we are heading in that direction and, secondly, that the scheme might, as a consequence, find itself unfunded sufficiently that it might trigger a section 170 review over the course of the years to come. So far, it is open to at least some robust consideration about the proposed, let's call it, blunt instrument, bandaid or financial fix presented by that bill.

We all did our best to come to grips with it and to engage and to read the responses of those who were doing the same rather diligently. In fact, as late as 9 June, the Law Society, in its by then considered and thoughtful and worked-through response, was still indicating—and this is in its 9 June letter to the Attorney—that it was astounding that the society was not, it appears, even at that date, consulted on the bill that had been presented to the house a week earlier.

So we had a bill that might excite different views, which had had a bit of a run-up start. It was open to analysis, in terms of the consequences of its passing, but it was presented as a complete surprise to everybody, so everybody had to catch up and respond. The result of that response was no less astounding. I think the shadow treasurer described it as a shambolic process. It was indeed.

The opposition was first afforded a briefing on Friday 10 June. Members will remember that we had the long weekend, and it must have been an animated long weekend. It must have been a particularly animated weekend—I can only imagine. Over the course of the 11th, 12th, the public holiday on Monday the 13th and yesterday, 14 June, in amongst allusions by the Premier to notions of his evoking the accord capacities of former Prime Minister Bob Hawke, we saw the bill the subject of robust criticism.

We know that Labor's state executive called for it to be withdrawn, the unions were at one in being both outraged at the lack of consultation and in their calling for it to be withdrawn. We saw a set of circumstances that were far from reasonable and by no means an example of how to go about conducting engagement between employers and their advocates let alone all the rest of those who are associated with the scheme.

We got as far as yesterday because yesterday, after having done our best to work out what can be done with this bill, we then discovered, again at no notice, that that bill has been withdrawn. Now we have not an augmentation of that bill, which bear in mind had been at least thought through against a background of some months lead-up apparently—and we have only had it for about an hour—but a completely different bill.

This is not the bill you got out of the bottom drawer that says, 'By the way, we have been thinking about how to reform the Return to Work scheme, and this is the way to do it. This is thorough. This is fantastic.' No. This is something that is admittedly only a financial fix, and it has been cooked up at such short notice that nobody can possibly stand behind the finances that it purports to lead to. I really sympathise with everybody who is associated with the outcomes of the contents of this bill.

For a start, if the threat that it was looking to address was ever-rising levy fees that might have breached 2 per cent or might have even gone even higher, then the promise of this bill is far from ambitious. It is saying, 'Well, maybe this will afford us another moment before it heads towards 2 per cent, but it's hard to say by how much or when.' Again, as the shadow treasurer stressed, there is no criticism of the good people at ReturnToWork.

They have been placed in this invidious position because of what was a miscarried process from the beginning, from 2 June, to be forced apparently—because no-one has seen anything resembling this in the days prior to today—to come up with something entirely different and then we will try our luck and see how that might go. Well, I can indicate this much: those on this side of the house are interested in a robust scheme that is auguring towards downward pressure on levies and fairness to workers in a way that can be sustained.

Let's have a look at the way the scheme has gone over the years of its existence, and I will say that it has managed to operate in a premium environment that is relatively nationally competitive. It has achieved that much, so I think we should aim to continue to be nationally competitive, and I think we can do better than simply looking to avoid breaching the 2 per cent. I stress, as it would appear to those representatives of the business community yesterday who were finding this as a more acceptable alternative to what had first been presented, that we are entirely with them.

We cannot with any surety say that you have secured a good set of figures through this document because we will just have to live in hope. Nobody knows, and no thorough analysis has been done. I am not really certain what this is going to do, and I do not think that anybody in all sincerity can say any different at least for now. It may be that some work can be done over a pretty short period of time to provide us with greater certainty; otherwise, we are in the government's hands, and all that can be said for the moment is that, as a financial fix, this is a botched job.

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS (Cheltenham—Minister for Police, Emergency Services and Correctional Services) (16:45): I thank the members for Colton and Heysen for their contributions to the second reading debate. Should the house wish, I look forward to the committee stage.

Bill read a second time.

Committee Stage

In committee.

Clause 1.

Mr COWDREY: I make the point up-front that the questions that I will be presenting are to do with the impact of the changes as opposed to the changes themselves, given the time frame. I have not had the ability to spread them out by clause so, with the indulgence of the minister, hopefully he is happy to move forward on that basis.

The ACTING CHAIR (Mr Brown): Given the nature of the debate on this bill and the way it was introduced, I think we can have a bit more leeway than usual, so I invite you to make your contribution on clause 1.

Mr COWDREY: Why was this bill introduced in the lower house as opposed to the other place?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: Further to the member's previous remarks, we are happy to do what we can to facilitate a fulsome contribution during the committee stage. I note that the government has made a decision to introduce the scheme sustainability bill into this place, the House of Assembly. As I remarked in my contribution on the suspension of standing orders, we do so on the basis of seeking the expeditious passage, subject to the house's authority. As inconvenient as it

may be, it is the intention of the government to proceed through all stages this evening before we rise.

Mr COWDREY: Does the minister think it is appropriate to provide less than five hours' notice for a bill that substantially alters the operation a multibillion-dollar scheme?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: I note that we are now debating the bill and I will seek to assist the member and members of the opposition in any way I can through this committee stage.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: When will the increase in WorkCover fees start? When will we see an increase in average WorkCover fees?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: Member for Unley, I assume you mean the premium rate?

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Yes.

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: That will be from 1 July 2022.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Are you able to identify if those increases in the premium rate will be uniform or will some industries receive higher increases than others?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: The long-term existing financial practice will not be changed with respect to the application of levies across industries.

Mr COWDREY: Does the minister believe businesses truly understand the impact of 1.9 per cent premiums, or what would be a 10 to 12 per cent increase in real terms for business on their gross payrolls, given the urgency the government is pursuing with this bill?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: Thanks, member for Colton. I have infinite trust and infinite belief that the business community, large, small, or family, are well in control and well of an understanding of their own financial means, their profit and loss and their own economic circumstances.

Mr COWDREY: Minister, who was consulted as part of the compromise agreement?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: Various stakeholders have been consulted on this bill, including employer associations, industry associations and employer representatives. At the same time, various employee organisations, stakeholder organisations and trade unions have been consulted prior to this bill coming before the house today.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Can the minister advise whether the 1.9 per cent average rate targeted under these changes took into consideration the national wage case increases today?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: Insofar as there is no capacity or no involvement in the setting of the average premium rate nor the break-even premium rate in respect of the national wage case, the answer is yes.

Clause passed.

Clause 2.

Mr COWDREY: Minister, what specific unions were consulted as part of the process you just outlined?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: I will undertake to seek a fulsome list, as far as I can, between the houses for the member.

Mr COWDREY: The new bill was prepared by parliamentary counsel at 8.55pm, the draft I am referring to, on 14 June 2022. Was the bill approved by cabinet prior to its introduction to the house through an extraordinary cabinet meeting or other mechanism, and when was it considered by cabinet?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: With due respect to the member for Colton, who has not had cabinet experience, I can say that I will not be speaking about cabinet processes, nor when and by what time and what date cabinet meets or otherwise. What I can say is that, no different from any other government, cabinet receives cabinet submissions and we endorse them thereafter and nothing has changed with respect to this or any other business that has been brought by this government to this house.

Mr COWDREY: Was Business SA present as part of the negotiations with the Premier and unions, or were they brought in after the deal was already agreed?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: I do not accept in any way the premise of the member's question that a deal has been done. Consultation was undertaken with respect to the bill that we are currently in the committee stage of. It has been well ventilated publicly that Business SA was one of the employer organisations that I have referred to previously.

Mr COWDREY: Perhaps I can rephrase the question. Was the proposal struck together with unions and then presented to Business SA post an agreement being reached?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: Short of giving a running breakdown and minutes of every discussion and every negotiation or consultation that has taken place with respect to this bill, I can refer to what has been publicly ventilated, and that is the support of Business SA for this piece of legislation that we bring by way of the scheme's sustainability bill. As for timing and where in the time line and who said what, I will not entertain that as part of this.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: During the consultations, did any employer groups raise concerns about levy increases with the proposed amendments?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: It would not surprise the member for Unley that one of the primary aims of this bill is to reduce the levies that would have otherwise been imposed on business as a result of three years of inaction by the former Liberal government—three years of inaction. I trust that, in that time, the member for Unley, as a minister in the cabinet, would have received advice. I assume he would have received advice about the implications and, if he did not, then that is a matter for the Treasurer.

In the last two weeks, businesses have certainly not talked about the impact of levy increases on their business operations. The advice and representations that we have received in government I trust would be identical to the representations that the former government would have received whilst they did not act on this for a period of three years.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Is the minister then saying that no employer groups raised concerns about employment opportunities or job losses because of increased costs through the amendments presented here today?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: No, that was not my answer.

Clause passed.

Clause 3.

Mr COWDREY: I know the minister touched on this, but perhaps he can specifically provide a yes/no answer. Were other business industry groups—such as the Master Builders, the Housing Industry Association, the Tourism Council, the Wine Industry Association, the Motor Traders Association—consulted as part of the process? When I say 'part of the process', were they privy to the negotiation over the weekend?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: I will take that on notice and provide any information I can between the houses.

Mr COWDREY: Minister, was Business SA provided with any supporting documentation or modelling to support the 1.9 per cent premium cap guarantee provided by the Premier?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: Discussions and consultation that have taken place with respect to this bill have been comprehensive. The modelling in various forms has been well ventilated in those discussions. The financial implications from both a funding ratio and an average premium have also been well ventilated in those discussions. I have no reason to believe that that would not have been the case with all that took place in that consultation.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: You mentioned modelling in your answer. Are you able to table that modelling in the parliament? Was that modelling done internally or were consultants engaged and, if so, who were the consultants?

The ACTING CHAIR (Mr Brown): That is three questions, I think, member for Unley. Anyway, go ahead, minister. I will count them as one.

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: I will undertake to provide between the houses what I am able to on the first point of the member for Unley's question. On the second point of the question, regarding who undertook the modelling, ReturnToWorkSA undertook estimates and those estimates were informed by Finity, Finity being the long-term actuarial consultant and external actuary of ReturnToWorkSA.

Mr COWDREY: When you say that modelling was produced by Finity, was that purely restricted to the number of people within that band of 30 to 35?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: Just to clarify with respect to the question from the member for Colton, my answer was not that Finity provided modelling; it was with respect to the internal estimates as per the member for Unley's question. Finity provided the basis for it, and within that they do provide, I think, on a twice-annual basis their external actuarial assessment. As for this work, the estimates were undertaken internally by ReturnToWork and, of course, informed by the work and additional work undertaken by Finity.

Mr COWDREY: As a point of clarification before I move on to the next question.

The ACTING CHAIR (Mr Brown): Next clause?

Mr COWDREY: Just a point of clarification in regard to that answer before the next question. To be clear, ReturnToWork has not received a final or quality assured actuarial advice in regard to the actual proposal to this point and its impact on the fund, solvency and ratio?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: Perhaps in the spirit of providing questions as opposed to the clause, I might try to give a more fulsome answer to that, which may not relate necessarily just to this clause itself. The current calculated break-even premium for 2022-23 has been determined by ReturnToWorkSA's scheme actuary, Finity. This actuarial work has been peer reviewed by PwC.

The Summerfield decision has materially impacted the outstanding claims liability and the funding position of the scheme. In the absence of legislative change, the average premium rate set by ReturnToWorkSA would need to incorporate a loading on the break-even premium to return the funding position of the scheme to the legislated target level of at least 90 per cent assets to liabilities.

In the absence of legislative change, it is estimated that the APR would be 2.20 per cent. ReturnToWorkSA and Finity modelled that the removal of the Summerfield decision would reduce the break-even premium by 0.22 per cent and reduce the outstanding claims liabilities by \$450 million based on a January 2023 effective date. Subsequently, the government requested that it be provided with the estimated impact of alternative options.

A range of options were assessed by ReturnToWorkSA management. The estimates provided were informed by modelling by the scheme actuary, Finity. The modelling was to assist with estimating the impact of the proposed initiatives within the time provided. Finity has been the scheme actuary for 14 years. It has extensive knowledge—second to none, in fact, in my view—of the Return to Work scheme and comparable interstate insurance schemes.

ReturnToWorkSA's assessments of the legislative amendments proposed in this bill are that they would reduce the break-even premium and improve the funding position of the scheme. The impact of the legislative amendments in this bill has been estimated by ReturnToWorkSA as follows:

- an estimated reduction in the break-even premium of between 0.11 per cent and 0.17 per cent compared to the current break-even premium without legislative change of 2.01 per cent to 2.08 per cent;
- an estimated improvement in the scheme funding ratio to around 95 per cent compared with the current funding ratio of 87 per cent;
- an estimated average premium rate range of 1.87 per cent to 1.93 per cent compared with the current range of 2.15 per cent to 2.25 per cent; and

- an estimated average premium rate of 1.90 per cent compared with a current estimated average premium rate of 2.20 per cent without legislative change. ReturnToWorkSA has advised that the average premium rate is determined annually based upon relevant circumstances at the applicable time. All else being equal, there is no expectation that these estimated premium rates would increase in future financial years. As I said in somewhat of a more fulsome answer, as we jump around between subject matter and the clauses I am happy to provide that information, hopefully assisting the member.

Clause passed.

Clause 4.

Mr COWDREY: I think we have now determined that there was actuarial advice in regard to the issue, not actuarial advice in regard to the solution that has been proposed. There was internal modelling conducted and provided based on a degree of information coming from the actuary, but there is no formal actuarial advice in regard to the solution that has been put forward in the bill. On that basis, does the minister intend to seek quality assured actuarial advice from Finity in regard to the updated position based on this bill should it pass? Will the government be seeking a peer review of that work?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: The member for Colton's question was on the premise of a number of assertions that I do not accept. To be as clear as I can, in addition to my further answer, Finity provide contemporary actuarial advice to ReturnToWorkSA twice a year. That informs the setting of the levy and other matters. From time to time and on issue by issue, ReturnToWorkSA may, through their usual channels, seek further actuarial advice. I refer to my previous answer about a peer review undertaken by PwC in respect to this matter.

Mr Cowdrey interjecting:

The CHAIR: Order! The minister is answering the question.

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: As for the assumptions and estimates and modelling that influence this bill, the government are comfortable and trust the advice that we have received.

Mr COWDREY: To clarify, the minister will not be seeking further advice from the actuary or a peer review?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: I refer to my previous answer in respect of the work undertaken and the body of work that informs this bill. Again, for the member's clarity, I refer to my fulsome response to a previous question, particularly in respect of the path and journey by which this bill has come to the house.

Mr COWDREY: Will the minister provide an ironclad guarantee to business that these changes will not see the rate rise beyond 1.9 per cent?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: As far as my previous answer went through in quite extensive detail in regard to the projected break-even premium rate, the projected average premium rate, should the former policy of that then Marshall Liberal government be sustained—that is, do nothing—on 1 July would increase to 2.2 per cent. I have provided significant detail in my answer regarding projections, and also there is no expectation that these estimated premium rates will increase in the future.

Mr TEAGUE: In light of that answer, can the minister inform the house how long any thoroughgoing actuarial advice—

Members interjecting:

Mr TEAGUE: In light of the answer the minister has just given, has the minister obtained any advice about how long it would take to conduct a proper actuarial analysis that is capable of being peer reviewed?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: That is not material to my previous answer, nor have I personally sought, as the member for Heysen queried, time frames regarding hypothetical independent assessments of modelling.

Mr TEAGUE: Has the minister satisfied himself that the levy rate rises will not exceed those that have been indicated by the advice that has been obtained?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: Yes, this government is absolutely satisfied that this bill will limit and mitigate against levy rises in a way that would not be possible and will not be possible unless this bill passes. We are entirely satisfied with the advice that has been received and furnished in the construction and the bringing of this bill before the house.

Mr TEAGUE: Just so we are all clear, and so that the house and the State of South Australia are clear, what is the high point of that advice? If we were to look to what the minister has satisfied himself about, what would the minister describe as being the high point of that advice?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: If this bill passes before 30 June, or by 1 July, the government is advised that Finity will be able to incorporate the changes into their more fulsome actuarial assessment that will be undertaken as a matter of course in that coming four or five weeks. If I may, so as not to mislead the member: not 1 July but 7 July, if the bill passes by 7 July.

Clause passed.

Clause 5.

Mr COWDREY: A reasonably simple question to start in regard to this clause: where does 1.9 per cent sit South Australia nationally?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: I will undertake to get that information to the member as soon as practicable.

Mr COWDREY: The ReturnToWork board is obliged to take reasonable steps to ensure the Return to Work scheme is fully funded. Has the ReturnToWorkSA board been involved in negotiations to achieve this objective under the new bill?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: The ReturnToWorkSA board obviously work within their governance structures and the CE and management of ReturnToWorkSA and the board have been entirely at the forefront of the advice that the government has received in bringing this bill to the house. The board and management of ReturnToWorkSA have done considerable work, and I thank them for that.

Mr COWDREY: When was the ReturnToWork board advised of the compromise deal and its impact on the solvency of the fund?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: I will take that on notice.

Mr McBRIDE: In regard to clause 5, new section 21(2)(a), what is the number of psychiatric injuries that are on the books in an annual year that are affected by these types of terminologies being written in the act here?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: I can advise the member that the definition and the phrasing within the bill will not change the threshold for psychiatric injuries. Further to the member's question, around 10 to a dozen injured workers each year are certified at above 30 per cent WPI from a psychiatric injury perspective.

Mr McBRIDE: Regarding clause 5 again, new section 21(2)(b), in the case of physical injuries and numbers of workers on an annual basis, how many does that section cover each year?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: I am advised that it is projected that there will be approximately 45 fewer injured workers as a result of the move from 30 per cent to 35 per cent on a per annum basis.

Mr McBRIDE: So, in the whole of section 21, what is the minister's understanding about injured workers and their duration of WorkCover and what is that change? Is it negative or positive? Is it lengthened, or is it shortened by any of these, or is there no change?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: Within the very finite proposed changes this bill brings, there are approximately 45 fewer individuals each year who would qualify for being seriously injured. Under the act, being seriously injured and being deemed seriously injured has a different suite of

entitlements than not being seriously injured. So, for the purposes of that strict definition around 45 fewer individuals each year would be on seriously injured benefits, as opposed to the suite of other comprehensive benefits that the scheme provides.

Clause passed.

Clause 6.

Mr COWDREY: I will dive a little more into the assumptions underpinning some of the modelling. How was the estimate arrived at that one-third of seriously injured workers will elect to take lump sum payments and has this been independently verified?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: I am advised that ReturnToWorkSA's advice to government informed the assumption that around one-third of individuals would opt in.

Mr COWDREY: Yes, I understand that, but what was the assumption underwriting that advice to government in regard to the number of workers who may elect to have received lump sum payments rather than ongoing payments?

Members interjecting:

The ACTING CHAIR (Mr Brown): I didn't say it did. Minister, when you are ready. We are making very good progress. Special thanks to the member for MacKillop for asking questions on the actual clause that we are on.

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: Thank you, and I thank the advisers for that support as well. I am advised that ReturnToWorkSA brought a multitude of previous experience and previous claims experience when redemptions in the scheme were a more fulsome part—and these are not redemptions but redemption-like payments, or payments out of the scheme.

ReturnToWorkSA (formerly WorkCover SA) operated extensively for a long period in a scheme which had these like payments in the form of redemption that formed a part of it. The advice that the government has received from ReturnToWorkSA is that, informed on that past experience, the future expectation is that about one-third of injured workers will opt in to the payment out of their eco loss.

Mr COWDREY: Were there high and low scenarios modelled? What was the gap in between those two?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: If there is anything further on that that I can provide potentially between the houses, I am happy to.

The ACTING CHAIR (Mr Brown): I will allow one more question from the member for Colton.

Mr COWDREY: That is very kind of you. How many cases does ReturnToWork expect per year to meet the 35 per cent seriously injured worker threshold compared with the number that we are currently meeting of the 30 per cent threshold sans Summerfield?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: I am advised that pre the Summerfield decision, the expectations or projections from ReturnToWorkSA are that there would be 100 individuals or workers who would be categorised or deemed seriously injured. From there, I am advised that post Summerfield approximately 200 workers would be expected to be seriously injured. With the proposed changes that the government brings to move from 30 to 35 per cent, as I advised or answered the member for MacKillop, it is the expectation that 45 fewer people will be providing—

Mr Cowdrey interjecting:

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: The member would be reasonable in bringing that assumption. I am advised they are the mechanics of the numbers on this one.

Clause passed.

Clause 7.

Mr COWDREY: In regard to the redemptions offered to seriously injured workers who had been eligible under the existing scheme for weekly payments, we have been provided with an estimate that there would be a saving of \$100 million based on that one-off offering. How many workers remain a part of that cohort and what is the suggested uptake in terms of total number to provide us with \$100 million in savings?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: I am advised that there are approximately 300 old act injuries that are currently deemed as seriously injured. They are the old act, to which the member's question pertains, the projections of which inform the \$100 million. I will take some further advice and come back to the opposition or the member between the houses, but I would not want to assume an incorrect percentage on that one. Perhaps if the member can clarify the question regarding the \$100 million, I might be able to get some more specific advice while I am in the chamber.

The ACTING CHAIR (Mr Brown): The member for Colton is clarifying his earlier question.

Mr COWDREY: The cohort that is available for the redemption payment are those who were seriously injured but under the old scheme. You have outlined that that number is 300. I am seeking to understand the assumptions that underpin the \$100 million savings that have been put forward. So the total number that you are basically estimating to elect to take the redemption but also what the uptake rate essentially is.

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: Thanks for clarifying and thanks, Acting Chair, for allowing me to ask a question. I will come back to the member with any further detail that I can on that. Other than the 300, as I have expressed already, old act seriously injured workers is the cohort in question here.

Mr COWDREY: In regard to the redemption payments that are being proposed to be offered for those workers on the old scheme, would those payments be subject to tax?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: The only thing worse than misleading the house is to give tax advice in this house. As the member for Colton would no doubt know from his experience, each individual's circumstances from a taxation ruling is different. As required by the existing act as well as other iterations in the past regarding redemptions of economic loss, taxation advice and financial advice is compulsory to have been received before sign-off. As a matter of general approach, redemption-like payments are taxable.

Mr McBRIDE: Regarding clause 7, which amends section 33(21)(a), could the minister define what the change here actually means to WorkCover, and is it a saving or an extra cost to the system?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: This section, member for MacKillop, allows and provides for the payment of economic loss and the retention of medical expenses. There is no capacity, to use a previous phrase, to redeem out medical expenses. It was a feature of previous schemes. What that has a possibility of doing for an injured worker is compromise future appropriate medical treatment or medical support based upon the current or economic circumstances of that injured worker.

They may expend that money that was paid out as a medical redemption and, as a result of the Medicare arrangements that are made, cannot easily access at a free level or at a socialised level appropriate medical care. What this carve-out does—economic loss can be paid out, medical expenses cannot, but return to work and recovery services do cease. They are things like job finding, job matching and résumé building, for example. It could also be things like gardening support for an injured worker.

Mr McBRIDE: As a supplementary based on that answer, do those extra costs fall back to WorkCover, and then do they fall back to the employer as a cost of that WorkCover process, or is it something that is going to be a process across the board that an injured worker is allowed to recover these costs to get back into work?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: To clarify for the member for MacKillop, those expenses I referred to are all features of this existing scheme, so they are not a new entitlement.

Mr McBRIDE: In regard to medical expenses, because we are obviously talking about the act—and this is not to do with the actual changes, but the question does relate to medical expenses—is the minister or his department aware that there is the potential for an injured worker to claim

medical expenses that do not arise from work; if so, does the minister or the department have any idea of the figures involved here?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: To clarify, it is not my department. But, absolutely, within any scheme there are possibilities for activity not pursuant to code or not pursuant to entitlement. ReturnToWorkSA, as well as providers, have extensive and important processes in place to ensure that those costs are minimised, mitigated and appropriate action is taken. Specific to your question, I have absolute confidence in the vigilance of ReturnToWorkSA in that regard.

Clause passed.

Clause 8.

Mr COWDREY: Can the minister confirm that the unfunded liability as a result of the Summerfield decision was estimated to be around \$1 billion with a ceiling of \$1.2 billion and a floor of \$800 million?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: Yes, I am advised that at 30 December there was a band. As the member would no doubt be aware, there are multiple projections and multiple assumptions made by the actuary. That liability was in the range of \$831 million to about \$1.5 billion as a result of the decision.

Mr COWDREY: With regard to the three—if you like, a better return—cost saving measures for the scheme impacted in the unfunded liability that has just been outlined, can the minister outline the estimated cost saving for each of the three measures to essentially offset that unfunded liability?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: For clarity of the member's question regarding unfunded liability, that was a liability attached to not scheme unfunded liability but liability attached to the Summerfield decision.

Mr Cowdrey: So 590, which you can attribute to the scheme?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: As for a more fulsome response to the member's question, I refer to my previous answer in respect of one of the earlier clauses, where I went through in some detail the projections of various scenarios attached to action or no action with respect to these changes.

Mr COWDREY: With all due respect, the minister outlined impacts on the break-even premium, as opposed to the actual cost savings as a total net from each of the cost saving initiatives that are contained within this bill. I am after the quantum or the total value or estimated total value of the cost-saving measures that are provided in the bill.

The ACTING CHAIR (Mr Brown): A clarification question, is it, member for Colton?

Mr COWDREY: If you wish to interpret it that way, sir.

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: With respect to the specific answer to the member's question about these projections, there is an estimated reduction in claims liability of approximately \$400 million, a lowering of the break-even premium by 0.1 per cent, which equates to a best estimate of an ongoing annual savings of between \$40 million and \$45 million.

Mr COWDREY: As requested, are they set out by each initiative as opposed to accumulated together?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: If there is any further information that I can provide on notice, I will undertake to do that.

Mr McBRIDE: In clause 8, which amends section 40(1), 'delete under section 33(21)(d)', what is the number of workers affected by this change and what savings will be found this area because you are only deleting rather than adding?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: This is an anomaly in the drafting that is being remedied, hopefully with the support of this house. There no savings measure to this. This is just one of those matters that was, through drafting nuance, an unintended consequence.

Clause passed.

Clause 9.

Mr COWDREY: Minister, perhaps you can try to explain something to me. This bill seeks to codify the Summerfield decision to ensure that more workers are captured. The level of liability attributed to that, as you have said, is somewhere between \$813 million or \$839 million up to \$1.5 billion. If the total quantum of savings from the savings initiatives outlined in your bill is \$400 million, what is the outstanding liability still needing to be attributed to the fund, and how possibly is the break-even premium going to be held below 2 per cent in the longer term?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: Perhaps working back to front to that question with many parts, my answer with respect to the break-even premium is that I refer to my previous answer. With respect to the member's question, namely, assuming that this bill codifies Summerfield, that is not the case: Summerfield is now the law. The part of the act that Summerfield has applied is not changing.

Mr COWDREY: Has scenario modelling been conducted with regard to the highs and lows of saving initiatives potentially delivering, and have they been offset versus the potential liability attributed with the Summerfield decision being effectively incorporated in the act, for the lack of a better term?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: I just want to be really clear on this. I know that the member is not trying to be tricky with his wording, but what the government is seeking to do is not to touch the Summerfield decision. We are bringing other matters that will address not only workers' entitlements but also the average premium.

As for the highs and lows, I did refer in a previous of answer to this matter that there were highs and lows. I referred to that in my responses to the member's previous questions. I am sorry, I will not refer to the clause because we are a little laissez faire in this regard. However, yes, there were highs and lows with respect to the advice that was received by government from ReturnToWorkSA, and I have informed the committee and the member in my previous answer about those.

Mr COWDREY: With respect to the proposed increase from where the rate currently sits at 1.7 per cent, I understand that the corporation sets the rate only annually, but the anticipation is for the rate to sit at 1.95 per cent, and you touched on it earlier, following the passage of the bill. I am seeking your clarification on exactly that number.

Given that it is going to be reasonably complex to do it, I imagine, off the bat, are you able to provide on notice to us a comparison figure by industry of the current premiums of 1.7 per cent, where the rate sits at the moment, and 1.95 per cent, or the proposed rate, taking into account the initiatives that are being put forward?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: Just to clarify importantly for the member and for the benefit of this house in committee, 1.9 per cent is a future amount and 1.8 per cent is the next financial year. We are talking a much further future decision. This bill will set a frame, which has informed decision-making that we have made, that will limit future increases to a band, or otherwise as I have referred to previously. The member's question to me is: can I take those series of matters on notice? I will certainly undertake to provide to the member what I can between the houses.

Clause passed.

Clause 10.

Mr COWDREY: In regard to effectively what is the band that now sits between 30 per cent and 35 per cent, obviously with this bill you have set out the lump sum economic loss payments for that band. Those have, I assume, been projected on increases based on the 30 per cent and below. How many people does ReturnToWorkSA estimate to sit in that 30 per cent to 34 per cent band moving forward?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: Further to my previous answer to both you and the member for MacKillop, about 45 injured workers will sit in that band.

Clause passed.

Clause 11.

Mr COWDREY: What stakeholder groups outside unions were given a copy of the new bill?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: I have answered this question and also provided some advice to the member about my future undertaking in regard to that, and I refer to my previous answer.

Mr McBRIDE: In regard to clause 11 and the insertion of section 56A, seriously injured workers receiving a lump sum, could the minister tell us what the changes will be in payments either decreasing or increasing to WorkCover by these proposed changes?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: I am sorry; can I just ask with indulgence the member for some clarity around that question.

Mr McBRIDE: Clause 11 refers to a seriously injured worker and the election to receive a lump sum payment. If the lump sum payments are increased by a quantity or amount of lump sums going out, there will be an extra cost to WorkCover. If they are lessened—if there are fewer workers applying for this process—I imagine there could be some savings.

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: I am advised that there is a release in outstanding liabilities to the scheme in respect of this proposed change.

Mr COWDREY: The member for Heysen is seeking a point of clarification.

Mr TEAGUE: I just did not hear the answer. If the minister would not mind—

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: There is a release in outstanding liabilities as a result of this proposed change, this clause.

Mr COWDREY: How does the higher inflation environment impact the scheme's funding ratio?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: All those inflation and other economic assumptions are absolutely taken into account by the actuary in their provision of advice. With respect to 'at this point in time', I would need to take that on some further notice, but also know that it is probably not hugely specific to this clause. I did answer it—I answered the question then I reflected upon the answer.

The ACTING CHAIR (Mr Brown): I might add that if the minister was going to pull up, that would have been a question that is not particularly related to this clause, but yes, that is correct.

Mr McBRIDE: In regard to the answer by the minister in regard to my first question, he said there is a release. Could you just give some more clarity about it? I will assume that you are suggesting there could be a bit of a backlog of WorkCover applications to receive a lump sum. If there is a backlog, what sums of money are we talking about?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: In respect of the terminology, the release in future liabilities is very specific terminology. It is, for another way to put it, just a reduction in the future liabilities of the scheme. This clause will reduce the future liabilities for ReturnToWorkSA.

Mr McBRIDE: If I were an injured worker and with the changes here in this draft bill at this stage, should I be worried by the fact that my payment might be lessened with these processes and I will receive a smaller payment and, if so, what sort of percentage?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: I am helpfully advised that, should this bill pass, it is the operational intention of ReturnToWorkSA to, before the act is proclaimed, write to all affected individuals that would be impacted by this clause. So there would be plenty of notice and plenty of time well and truly before the act is even proclaimed.

Clause passed.

Clause 12.

Mr McBRIDE: In regard to clause 12, it reads 'Amendment of section 72—No damages unless a whole person impairment of at least 30%'. Could the minister enlighten the parliament on what these changes mean in clause 12, and are there savings or extra costs involved?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: This change will lift the threshold for the potential to opt in or elect for common law, so simply 30 to 35 per cent as is consistent across the rest of the act—but not

for psychiatric injuries, which remain at 30 per cent. For psychiatric injuries and those workers who are assessed as WPI for psychiatric injuries, their circumstances do not change.

Clause passed.

Clause 13.

Mr McBRIDE: In regard to clause 13, where it reads 'Amendment of section 73—Seriously injured workers—special provisions', are there special provisions that are being added here in this draft legislation? What are the costs or extra savings by these extra provisions?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: My apologies; with indulgence, could I ask the member to repeat his question.

Mr McBRIDE: I know you were interrupted. You were distracted. Regarding clause 13, this is an amendment of section 73—Seriously injured workers—special provisions. Are there extra provisions and are there extra reasons for this process to cost more or are there savings?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: This clause provides for new section 56A, such that a worker would not be entitled, further to the member's question, to both a section 56A election for lump sum payment and election for common law damages, so it would prevent the election of a 56A lump sum and the election for the pursuit of common law damages.

Clause passed.

Clauses 14 and 15 passed.

Clause 16.

Mr McBRIDE: Clause 16 is an amendment of Schedule 7—Prescribed sum—economic loss. There is a table that describes percentages on the left-hand side and sums of between \$370,000 to \$434,000. Is this table a recent addition or is it an old one and are there savings in this table or are there extra costs in this table?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: Member for McKillop, I can advise that they are new for the purposes of providing sums for the election of a lump sum for those injured workers between 30 and 34 per cent, so, insofar as that cohort of workers is concerned, that is consistent with the setting of sums from 29 per cent and below.

Sitting suspended from 18:00 to 19:30.

The CHAIR: We just had a question from the member for MacKillop on clause 16. Are there any other questions on this clause? No.

Clause passed.

Clause 17.

Mr McBRIDE: Clause 17 provides that 'the Governor may, by regulation, make provisions, or additional provisions'. Does this new Return to Work Scheme (Scheme Sustainability) Amendment Bill 2022 cover our emergency services workers, particularly with psychiatric-type issues, being mindful that I do not think at this stage that it does?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: The provisions in respect of psychological or psychiatric injuries are unchanged by this amending bill we have before the house. As for this clause, it is a general provision in the drafting that provides for future contemplation of regulation to manage transitional provisions. I would assume and trust that, should there be a need or any identified need for those regulations in the future, then consultation will occur in the usual process. But to the heart of your question: not so much this clause. Psychiatric injuries are unchanged by this, and this is just about the future, possible regulations and the transitional provisions.

Mr McBRIDE: For clarity, and not to harp on it, I have a constituent issue in the seat of MacKillop who is a CFS volunteer. Just hypothetically, I am this volunteer and I am suffering post-traumatic stress disorder and a 50 per cent impairment. The current changes to this Return to Work Scheme (Scheme Sustainability) Amendment Bill do not really give me any more cover than we had under the old system.

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: That is correct: there is no change to the circumstances whatsoever. There is a full suite of protections. Obviously, in those circumstances a very complex set of treatment would be not only necessary but proper. All encouragement and support would be there for that constituent, hypothetically, at 50 per cent WPI for the psychiatric injury as well. You can rest assured that certainly someone in those circumstances, as it is really, but for approximately 45 people per year, will be in an unchanged position subsequent to this bill passing this parliament.

Mr COWDREY: I have one question in regard to the fund solvency ratio. Previously, the minister provided the committee with historic references to the fund solvency ratio from November 2021 and some prior to that. To my understanding, those ratios have been provided by the actuary or confirmed by the actuary. Has the advice regarding the fund solvency ratio that you provided in regard to post the impacts of this bill come from the fund actuary, or has that advice come from internal return to work modelling?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: That figure was provided by ReturnToWorkSA and informed by the modelling of the scheme actuary, Finity.

Mr COWDREY: Will the minister provide any modelling, any actuarial advice (or summaries of) or any peer-reviewed work undertaken to assure the house of the veracity of the government's claims relating to the levy increases?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: The member for Colton would know that ReturnToWorkSA routinely publishes their actuarial advice, and I have every reason to believe that that will be published in accordance with current practices.

Clause passed.

Schedule and title passed.

Bill reported without amendment.

Third Reading

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS (Cheltenham—Minister for Police, Emergency Services and Correctional Services) (19:36): I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

I would like to thank the members for Colton, Heysen and MacKillop for their considered questions during the committee stage and also their contributions to the second reading debate. I would like to thank the stakeholders particularly for their contribution to the formulation of this bill that we now have before the house, which I hope will soon see passage this evening.

I want to thank and acknowledge the work undertaken by business groups, by peak associations and by industry associations with respect to the meaningful contributions that they have made to bringing this matter before the house in a meaningful way that will make a pragmatic and meaningful difference to the operation of the scheme for both injured workers and business in this state.

It may be the last time that I have an opportunity before his bon voyage to thank Martin Haese from Business SA not only for his contribution during this consultation but also for his service to Business SA and to businesses more broadly in South Australia in the years that he has been at the helm of Business SA.

I would like to thank the trade union movement and trade union leaders for their equally important contribution to the consultation and development of this bill that we have before us. The advocacy of the trade union movement is critically important to our democracy. Their advocacy is unwavering for their members, for workplaces and for workers more broadly. For that I say thank you and I acknowledge their contribution to this bill.

Most importantly, I acknowledge that the core mission of trade unions is to not see this bill and this act utilised: it is about safer workplaces and preventing workplace injuries in every circumstance that they can. I acknowledge their efforts and I thank them for what they do here in South Australia.

I want to acknowledge the important leadership that the Attorney-General has shown through the phases and iterations of this bill. Much has been said by the opposition about the Attorney's contribution to this. His contribution has been outstanding, important and has shown exceptional leadership, as has the Premier, who is leading with and for Labor values: bringing people to the table, hearing people and making informed, pragmatic decisions based upon that feedback and that consultation. With that, I commend the bill to the house.

Bill read a third time and passed.

APPROPRIATION BILL 2022

Second Reading

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 14 June 2022.)

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I draw your attention to the state of the house, sir.

A quorum having been formed:

Mr TEAGUE (Heysen) (19:42): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Appropriation Bill. I will refer in a moment to some of the more particular local measures that are contained in the budget which, so far as they concern the Hills, I will just advert to in terms of welcoming what appears to be commitments to continue the work in particular in relation to much-needed infrastructure improvement on the South Eastern Freeway and on some important local roads. I will come back to that in a moment.

It is important to note some context at the outset. We have a new government that has been elected, having made what are really very significant capital commitments in the course of the election campaign—more than \$3 billion in all—really very ambitious capital commitments. We will watch carefully to see that not only are those commitments expressed in the budget as the government has been quick to proceed to express, but that they are in fact carried out.

We have already seen at least four significant examples of what might provide South Australians with really quite significant concerns about the translation from election commitment to budget provision to delivery. Firstly, we have seen in the lead-up to the budget—on 26 May, as I understand it—what became an announcement in relation to the north-south corridor: the completion of the north-south corridor and the most significant capital commitment in the state.

It is hugely important to infrastructure in this state. On 26 May, we had an indication that there would be a delay in the delivery of the completion of the north-south corridor. So that we are clear, on 26 May was the now oft referred to 495-word preliminary advice obtained from departmental staff with a proviso that more was to come, and on 27 May there was a decision about the delay of that project.

South Australians will be right to be concerned about the linkage between an early decision to delay a significant project. We know it is not controversial. The result is that there is a billion dollars not spent in the course of the forward estimates—\$500 million on the state side and we are not drawing the \$500 million co-contribution from the federal government.

The flimsy, as I would characterise it, justification for that delay will lead a reasonable South Australian to be, at the very least, put on notice that, hang on, is this a budget repair mechanism under the guise of a project re-evaluation? I think 'reprofiling' is the word that has been used. So doubts about the delivery of the north-south corridor emerge even before the budget is announced on 2 June.

Secondly, and of significant importance, I am sure, to those who were considering how to cast their vote in March, we heard much about the commitment of the Labor opposition to a program to deliver early childhood education to three year olds and to do so in the course of this first term. We have seen only in the time since the election an endeavour to provide a context, to moderate, to lower expectations and to perhaps prepare the groundwork for what may or may not resemble some sort of early childhood arrangement for three year olds.

The budget, we know, provides in this case—and in fairly glossy terms; it is there in the overview contained in Budget Paper 1—just \$2 million for a royal commission into early childhood education and care. We have heard and we know that it is a fair observation to make that it is the job of political parties in opposition and then coming into government to develop policy and then to take that to the electors.

It is already insufficient to say, 'We've got a bright idea about three year olds and early childhood education, but we're going to outsource how that might be delivered to a royal commission process. We'll fund that and at the same time we'll lower expectations about what might ultimately be delivered.'

South Australians might compare and contrast that with the commitment the Marshall Liberal team in opposition took to the 2018 election to bring year 7 into high school—perhaps in many ways a significantly more ambitious agenda in terms of school education—which was a commitment to achieve a particular outcome based on having done the policy work. It was a commitment that was delivered, and we see that that has now come into practice. We see year 7s going into high school now, which is an example of the Marshall Liberal government having made good on what was fully formed policy delivered in the course of the Marshall Liberal government.

By contrast, what we see here is a shining promise and glossy photographs of early childhood education, but the rubber is hitting the road in the budget only in terms of a \$2 million commitment to a royal commission that might or might not make some recommendations that might lower expectations. In the meantime, the rhetoric has been dialled back. That is the second one that might provide doubts to South Australians in relation to the government's capacity to deliver.

The third, and it is unsurprising that I would raise this in the context of where we are in terms of assessing the early days of this new government, is the Adelaide Aquatic Centre. We have heard a lot of talk about the commitment—indeed, the splash was both metaphorical and literal. As is true of so many of the commitments made by the Malinauskas Labor opposition ahead of the election, there was a significant dollar figure attached to a description of a project, often in circumstances where a relatively fully formed solution was either in train or in some form in prospect.

Here we had the Malinauskas opposition coming along and saying, 'Never mind what the Adelaide City Council thinks, never mind what contributions might come from the feds, never mind what work the state has already done and never mind the potential for overreaching and overcommitting the state. We're going to commit to this Adelaide aquatic project and the state will bear the whole cost and on we go.' We do not see the proof in the pudding in the budget. Again, South Australians will do well to be sceptical about the capacity for delivery, in circumstances where there was a big announcement, but not an appreciation for the context in which the delivery might occur.

The fourth example, and really the most significant, is the campaign waged by the Malinauskas opposition with respect to fixing ramping in South Australia. We saw, even in the course of the campaign, an attempt to make the great big claim and commitment and then to couch that in more modest terms, to provide a great big message to the public of South Australia but, on the other hand, attempt to introduce some fine print in promising that there will be some solving of what was built up to be a crisis that Malinauskas Labor, if elected, could resolve.

Unfortunately, we saw some indications about the mischaracterisation of the problem prior to the election. The Electoral Commissioner of South Australia found that the campaign was inaccurate in terms of its claims and belled the cat on the Malinauskas campaign, albeit in the final days. What we have seen since that time, ever since ramping commenced under the previous Labor government, is that ramping has in fact continued to get worse. The recovery that was underway has not improved in these early months and South Australians will be keeping a very close eye on measures that are said to fix ramping.

Nothing in the budget commends itself to addressing what is, with no doubt at all, a symptom of the need to restore and to deploy funding in the health space across the board, so I welcome commitments, such as they might be effectively deployed, to provide additional resources for our hardworking ambulance officers. I certainly wish the government well, in terms of measures that

might be applied to ramping, but I will understand if South Australians are keeping a very close eye indeed on the actual results that are delivered as the result of this work.

The budget that we have seen handed down early is a budget that provides a consistent set of messages in relation to headline items. It is consistent in terms of identifying a desired outcome and giving it a tag, attaching a dollar figure to that desired outcome and then providing us with not a great deal more. As has been observed in the health space, as recently as earlier today, the success or failure of measures in government is going to be a great deal more complex than simply announcing an attractive sounding topic, attaching an amount of money to it and then expecting that an outcome will be delivered as a result.

In the short time available to me, I adverted to measures in the Adelaide Hills. I am pleased to see that \$10 million has been allocated to improvement at Main Road, Cherry Gardens. It is a very important improvement that needs to be done and I commend the previous member for Davenport, my colleague Steve Murray, for his advocacy over the course of the last term in that regard. Cherry Gardens has come into Heysen with the redistribution, and I will certainly be most interested to see that those works are done expeditiously and to work with the new member for Davenport in that regard, who, as mayor, was certainly aware of the issue. That work is very important to be done.

I note also that there is further capital provision for the continued extension of the managed motorway projects on the South Eastern Freeway. The South Eastern Freeway works that were completed in the course of the Marshall Liberal government were generational. They were significant indeed. To have conducted a complete rebuild of the freeway from the tollgate through to Stirling, together with the third lane between Stirling and Crafers, was much needed, was overdue and was a significant capital investment. The works that will continue the subject of the budget are also much needed. I would be pleased if they were brought forward, but I will be very interested to see them deployed over the course of these coming years, over each year of the forward estimates as provided for.

Just a word further in relation to the energy debate and the provision in the budget for the investment of in the order of \$593 million towards a state-owned hydrogen plant. I may take opportunities to reflect further in that regard. This, to me, is at risk of yet further virtue signalling. It is a parallel amount of capital investment that we saw in relation to the leasing and then the accelerated purchase of the diesel generators towards the end of the last Labor government, which was characterised on review as having been an ill-judged endeavour.

The hydrogen plan that was put in place by the Marshall Liberal government was significant indeed. I certainly will continue to argue for the promotion of private investment in that space, and I would encourage the government to rethink the hydrogen plant. It is a topic that I will come back to. With those words, I conclude my remarks.

Ms HUTCHESSON (Waite) (20:02): I rise to speak on the Appropriation Bill, in support and with excitement about the commitments the Malinauskas government has made to the people of South Australia, and I congratulate the Treasurer and his staff on this budget. It is clear that the now government spent a lot of time listening to the community. Our commitments are designed to help, to support and to fix the issues. The last few years have been difficult to navigate, there is no denying that, but we need a plan for the future to set South Australia on the road to recovery and we have delivered that.

The electorate of Waite is blessed to have many parks and private land that is richly populated with native vegetation. It is important to my community that we as a government do all we can to protect it, not just for our own enjoyment but for the importance of biodiversity. I am pleased that the government will move to introduce a biodiversity act. This act will ensure that we fully integrate conservation into how we live sustainably and indeed prosper in the long term.

I am glad that we will be establishing a \$3 million biodiversity coordination unit to help tackle pests, weeds and abundant species, as well as creating a register of past, ongoing and planned revegetation and biodiversity restoration projects. Our parks have major problems with wild olives and woody weed, among other pest species, and it is important that we act now to get on top of things before it is too late.

We are fortunate to have many volunteer groups in my electorate that care about our natural environment and work hard to maintain and improve it, groups like the Friends of Belair National Park, the Friends of Waite Conservation Reserve, the Friends of Shepherds Hill Recreation Park, Friends of Sturt Gorge, and the list goes on. These groups will benefit from our government's investment into Friends groups of \$3 million to help continue their work going forward.

Investing in our environment is a key Labor policy. We are committed to listening to the community when decisions affecting the environment are being made. I am pleased that we will be increasing funding to the Conservation Council of South Australia by \$1 million. The Waite electorate is proud to be the home of the Chief Executive of the Conservation Council, Craig Wilkins. I was fortunate to doorknock Mr Wilkins and recently met with him to discuss local environmental concerns and opportunities to educate our electorate to better think about their own gardens, and also the protection of our natural environment. I look forward to working with Craig going forward.

My own suburb of Upper Sturt sits at the top of Belair National Park and as such many of our local properties are rich with native vegetation. Heritage agreements on private land has been a longstanding mechanism for protecting the natural environment. I know these residents well and have already visited some of their properties to see the scope of work they have every day to do their best to protect the natural vegetation. I am glad that our government will commit an additional \$6 million to support new and existing heritage agreements.

We are also home to the Sturt Upper Reaches Landcare Group (SURLG). The group works tirelessly to protect and enhance our natural environment. As a member of the Upper Sturt Soldiers Memorial Hall Committee, we are fortunate to house a Landcare site, so I see firsthand the work they do. I am glad the Malinauskas government will help fund Landcare with \$1 million, to help coordinate on-ground planting, weeding and other conservation works. The Sturt Upper Reaches Landcare Group has also recently established the Bandicoot Superhighway, a project that aims to create a safe passage for the southern brown bandicoot—a project that I am quite interested in.

Last week, the president of the group, Danny Rohrlach, was awarded the Hills Green Achiever Award, recognising his outstanding work with SURLG over many years, and his significant contributions to the Bandicoot Superhighway and OliBel projects. I would like to extend my congratulations to Danny. I have spoken on only a handful of our environmental policies but those that are of importance to my electorate of Waite and will benefit from the state budget 2022.

I know firsthand that our children do not all learn the same way. We have students who show skills and interests in trades long before they are ready to graduate. Time and time again, when talking to my community, to grandparents and parents, many suggested that their child wanted more from their schooling and that they had other interests, often especially gifted in using their hands. My son has excelled since starting his apprenticeship, and I know he would have benefited from the ability to attend a tech school.

I am very glad to be part of a government that understands that not all children will seek out a university career and that they, too, have a lot to contribute to society and will benefit from our commitment to build five technical colleges, including one in Tonsley. Tonsley already houses the wonderful TAFE, so to have a school so closely located will allow the two to work together to support aspiring tradies.

I am also glad that our government will properly fund TAFE, as will the federal government. It was clear that the former government's agenda was to privatise the TAFE system, moving to close many of our TAFEs, including Urrbrae TAFE, and it was only through the activism of my local community, parents and students of Urrbrae that it was saved. Schools and TAFEs working together provide great outcomes.

When I was at school, I was a keen hockey player. I played for both my school and the Forestville Hockey Club. That was over 30 years ago, so you can imagine my surprise to be invited to visit the current Forestville Hockey Club and to find out that it was still the same clubroom that it was when I stopped playing in 1993. It was fantastic to join my parliamentary colleagues, the member for Badcoe and the member for Elder; the now federal member for Boothby, Louise Miller-Frost; and our candidate for Unley, Ryan Harrison, in announcing a new home for the club at Unley High School. Whilst this is no longer in my electorate, many in my community are members of the club or attend

Unley High School and will benefit from this project. Sport is an important part of a healthy lifestyle and I know the club will only prosper from this project.

When I was doorknocking, road safety was an ongoing concern for many in my electorate. I echo my neighbour, the member for Davenport, and now the member for Heysen, in their support for the upgrades to Main Road, Cherry Gardens. This road continues into the Waite electorate and I know many of our community members use it to head south. It is a very dangerous road. I took the opportunity to go for a drive through there last week after visiting Minton Farm Animal Rescue. The road is not very wide, the barriers hang off the edge and there is no forgiveness for oversteering. I am glad that we have committed the funds to fix this most risky road, and I congratulate the member for Davenport on her advocacy for this project.

It is now well known that I am an active CFS volunteer. In January 2021, I was on the fire ground in Cherry Gardens. At one point, our crew, with a farm firefighting unit and a deputy group officer, were cut off down a dead-end dirt road. The fire had started late in the day and, as such, it was well after midnight when our crew retired for the evening. After dark, it is left for ground crews to battle bushfires, dealing with gully breezes and changes of wind direction on their own. Currently, our aerial firefighting fleet are not able to offer assistance once the sun sets, so crews are left in the dark without the backup of a fleet.

Our government has committed to a night-time firefighting investigation with \$250,000 to work with the Civil Aviation Safety Authority, building on lessons from the Victorian trials to investigate night-time firefighting capability for South Australia. This is a great initiative because unfortunately fire continues to rage overnight, and it is often a good time to get on top of an outbreak without the heat of the day.

I am also glad to see support for our farm firefighting units with a \$2 million grant scheme to help landowners to purchase equipment to create firefighting units. These units are able to respond quickly but also providing invaluable on ground support and knowledge to CFS crews supporting these landowners is the right thing to do.

We have also listened to our paid firefighters. Their need for new trucks and truck maintenance was well campaigned during the election period. Labor listened then and we are listening now, committing \$14.1 million over four years for 12 new trucks as well as undertaking a ventilation audit. There has been a lot of talk about the implications of diesel particulates on the health of firefighters. An audit to determine the current situation is well warranted, and we are committing \$250,000 to conduct the audit with particular emphasis on diesel particulates.

The government has consulted and listened to the people of South Australia. We have based our policies and commitments on what they have told us, and we have considered all these by bringing together this budget. It is an important time for South Australia, it is an important budget and I commend the bill to the house.

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (20:11): I rise to speak to the budget bill, the Appropriation Bill, and note that with the addition of the Supply Bill the total state budget for the coming 12 months is \$23½ billion. It is interesting to note that with a change of government there are a lot of projects that come over that we started, and thankfully most of them are ongoing.

I want to start by talking about some of the things that came particularly to the Murray and Mallee. These were all projects around the River Murray. There is \$19.7 million over three years for the River Murray in South Australia. The constraints measures project is commonwealth funded, and I have often said in this place and elsewhere that the proposed interconnector between Lake Albert and the Coorong should be dug out and built.

There are a lot of conversations around whether that should happen and I have always said that, if it stacks up environmentally, it would be a lot better than using hundreds of gigalitres of water every time you try to flush out Lake Albert because it has to come out of the narrows at Narrung, where there has been a big causeway built apart from where the ferry crosses at the narrow neck of water. I understand there is going to be flushing soon, but that is probably because the river is as high as I have ever seen it. It is good to have those rains in Queensland and New South Wales flowing down. It reminds me of 2010, when that fantastic brown water from the Darling side of the river came down to save our bacon, basically.

The constraints measures project is welcome. It would be nice to see where that lands so that we get the right outcome for the Coorong. It is interesting to note that one of my staff has a shack on the Coorong and he said to me, 'I grabbed a handful of water out of the Coorong the other day and took a drink. It is not too bad in the northern lagoon.' That is saying something. That is showing how much salt is not there.

There is also \$11.6 million over two years for the Healthy Coorong, Healthy Basin program to improve water bird habitat throughout the Coorong and the Lower Lakes, which is another very worthwhile project for the area, and \$2.1 million over four years to employ an eminent jurist as the commissioner for the River Murray. We have always had to fight for the River Murray on the bottom end of the system. Members of my party and I had to put up a grand fight way back in 2007-08 when the Labor government of the day proposed to put a weir in at Wellington. It would have killed the bottom of the river, and I am glad that we were successful in blocking that proposal.

In regard to other matters in the state budget, I look at the budget overview and there are some lofty ambitions that the government have in place. They are talking about 350 more paramedics and ambulance officers, 101 more doctors, 300 more nurses and 326 extra hospital and mental health beds. This is budgeted inside the extra \$2.4 billion in additional health infrastructure over five years. Let's see the day when all these staff turn up because, apart from trying to find these people in the system—and I welcome it if we can, absolutely—I know that a lot of people are attracted interstate. Good programs will have to be put in place to support our valuable health services right across the state.

When we look at some of the programs around hospitals and infrastructure, I note the work that we did putting in emergency beds right across the city and the \$7 million we put into the Murray Bridge emergency department. We have the new emergency department. I do not know how that is synergising at Mount Barker with the proposed new hospital, which is welcome. There is \$220 million that will service my constituents from towards Mount Barker in the Strathalbyn area. It will be very handy for those constituents.

The Hydrogen Jobs Plan is very ambitious. The government have got it out at \$593 million. We think there is a \$500 million black hole there. It will be interesting to see how that goes. I think it is great to have this ambition and we support hydrogen plans, but the private sector would play a big role in getting there anyway.

In regard to housing, I note the public housing improvement program in the budget of \$177.5 million over four years. Any investment in public housing is welcome. Any housing is very hard to get hold of at the moment, especially in regional areas. It is very hard to get rentals and very hard even for investors to buy a property. Gone are the days when you would see a property for \$280,000 in Murray Bridge and you would try to talk it down \$20,000. You probably have to add \$30,000 or \$40,000 to be the successful purchaser.

That will only be exacerbated with the new Thomas Foods abattoir, which we supported with a community infrastructure spend of \$14 million alongside \$10 million from the federal government for roads, gas, water and power access. There will not be many houses across regional communities. I note that, not that many years ago, Labor unloaded about 7,000 public houses across the state. We do need to right that wrong.

I noted the member just then talking about the emergency services and 12 trucks for the MFS. This is a project we were involved in early on. I salute those trucks coming on board. You have to have good emergency services vehicles, whether it is for the SES, the CFS or the MFS and for surf lifesaving as well. They need good equipment and are always in need of an upgrade. They are expensive machines. These trucks will be about \$1 million each, and then there will be other moneys around that for the upgrade and maintenance programs around the trucks.

In regard to road infrastructure, it is interesting that there is \$7.83 billion allocated for roads across the state, but there should have been at least \$1 billion more than that. The north-south connector has most of the northern and southern ends completed or close to completion. I note a lot of the overpasses, especially on the Darlington section, were built by Bowhill Engineering in my electorate of Hammond. They built half of those major overpasses there at Darlington. I think the

other contractor came from Tasmania of all places. It is a big project and it is so good to see a little company like that, with about 40 employees, get that local work here in South Australia.

As the shadow minister for regional roads, I noted with interest the government trumpeting the \$467.4 million for regional roads in their state budget speech that the Treasurer gave the other day. That is welcome, but what he did not say was that just over \$2 billion of regional road programs are in the pipeline already, and it appears—and we have to go through budget estimates and put questions on notice if we do not have time—that most of those projects are ongoing.

I look at the Strzelecki Track. As I have indicated here only in recent days, I worked in the Cooper Basin 40 years ago, and to have the Strzelecki Track bituminised all the way through is going to be a major boon, not just for the oil and gas industry but for pastoralists to get their cattle and sheep south to abattoirs or for anyone just getting supplies up north. I was talking to some people who travel those roads, especially the road train operators, and they almost mourn the day when the bitumen comes through because it means you can essentially ride a bike or drive a Mini up there. That is half the challenge with going bush: you take all the spare tyres and the plugs so you can make it.

It will be a real boon in productivity so that this state can service our own basin, noting that the Cooper Basin flows over into Queensland. I was up there a couple of years ago when Adventure Way was rebuilt between Innamincka and the Queensland border. It is a 29-kilometre section, and they were carting about 5,000 tonnes of ballast from Whyalla to put in the base of that section, because once you get to the border at Queensland it is bitumen all the way through to Brisbane. So, once we get that link up, it will be another vital link.

It was interesting during COVID. If you could not go through New South Wales and Victoria, which obviously we could not for a long time, a lot of people were taking that track through, and some people were doing it in vehicles that really were not suited. It will be a great boon for the state and the country.

Also on the list that will be ongoing is the greater state bypass at Truro, a \$202 million project working alongside the federal government. We instigated this project and it will be a great boon for the Sturt Highway. The traffic is already getting funnelled around that highway, that northern route, taking a lot of freight off the freeway. Anything bigger than a B-double—and there is a lot of freight bigger than B-doubles now; you have the B-triples, B-quad road trains, AB-doubles, all sorts of combinations—heads around the top, but you can get interesting feedback.

Yes, we do have a heavy freight route through Murray Bridge, and people suddenly see these bigger combinations coming past, but it literally does get thousands of tonnes of freight off the freeway. Down the track, I would like to see both that highway, the Sturt Highway through to the border (about 190 kilometres), and the Dukes Highway, which I live on at Coomandook, duplicated. The trouble with both those projects is that the longer we leave them—and they are \$3 billion each now—they are just going to get more expensive over time.

Another major work announced by our government, at \$250 million, is Hahndorf traffic improvements. It would be great to get freight off the main road at Hahndorf, as it would make it a lot easier to get around. It is a fantastic little town with a lot of visitation, a great tourist town. The Horrocks Highway is a \$96 million project. It is one of those northern roads that heads up around Clare and it certainly needs work.

The Murray Bridge to South East Links business case is still ongoing, with \$5 million allocated to it. This involves investigation of the duplication of the Swanport Bridge. As I have indicated, I have been around a couple of days—and it is a bit sad in itself—but when I saw the Swanport Bridge opened in 1979 and drove over it as a 17 year old, I thought, 'Wow, all this hype about a new bridge and it's a single lane each way.'

Finally, there is some talk around the duplication of that bridge, and part of the South East Links business case is looking at the duplication past Tailem Bend. You get nailed down to a single lane bridge and then dual lane to Tailem Bend. What it will do is open up that first five kilometres out towards the Mallee Highway turn-off. There is a railway bridge there, which is going to cost some money because it will need duplicating and lifting, but then that opens up that next 190 kilometres to

duplicate, heading to the border. I believe the Dukes Highway is the fourth busiest highway in the country.

The old Murray Bridge refurbishment is a project we started. We put \$36 million in the pot, and that is something I will be exploring during estimates. It is pleasing to see that another \$10 million has been added. It is a big project, updating the piles, painting the bridge for the first time in about 30 or 32 years and doing some drainage work on it. There was a bit of consternation in the community when they said, 'Oh, it's going to be reduced to one lane,' and all that sort of thing. I just said to the media, 'You either have one lane or you have no lanes, it's as simple as that.'

It is working very well. The company has three shifts of people at each end monitoring the lights and the traffic. It is interesting that about 8,000 or 9,000 vehicles a day go over that bridge, and that is actually about 500 more than they have measured go over the Swanport Bridge, that internal traffic through Murray Bridge.

The Port Wakefield overpass and the highway duplication is another big project, at close to \$125 million. It is a great project hooking into the seat of Narungga and other areas heading up through the Mid North. Then we have the South Eastern Freeway's Managed Motorway project of \$75 million, more vital work that needs to be done. These are just some of the projects. There is the Joy Baluch Bridge, \$200 million to duplicate that bridge in Port Augusta.

However, there is much more work to do in terms of regional roadworks. There are thousands and thousands of kilometres to work on. We lifted a lot of roads; we had eight in particular that we lifted from 100 km/h to 110 km/h, and we are very proud of the Ngarkat Highway and Browns Well Highway linking Loxton through to Pinnaroo and then down to Bordertown—200 kilometres of road upgraded there.

I am keen to see more money spent in the regions, and I will be investigating some of that during the budget process. I am very proud of what we did in government, delivering \$1.5 billion right across the state, bringing year 7 into high school and, just in my local electorate, the multiple projects that we did there in the four years. It was at least \$215 million, with health projects, education projects, roadworks and assisting businesses like Parilla Potatoes to expand.

At the end of day, as I spoke about earlier, health matters in the regions are vitally important. It is hard to get staff in the regions; it is hard to get staff just about anywhere these days with the way things are. It is good to see that the memory unit and the aged-care beds at Strathalbyn have opened, and that was about a \$16 million project in Strathalbyn. It is a fantastic set-up there.

Kalimna is a project dear to my community of Strathalbyn's heart because it was community-fundraised land, and the community then raised funds for the building. The former Labor government, before we were in government, essentially kicked people out of there and said it was not safe for people to use. The building is still there. As far as I can see in the budget papers, what form of aged-care support that building will take is still being investigated, because that will be vital for the people of Strathalbyn.

Certainly, in regard to health care (just quickly as the time counts down), in getting the Strathalbyn hospital and the other country hospitals that are co-located with aged care open after COVID, and managing during COVID, we obviously have to be very careful with our elderly. But we also have to manage those emergency departments to make sure that that our community gets access, and I look forward to those days. It will be interesting in estimates. I commend the bill to the house.

Mrs PEARCE (King) (20:31): I am proud to stand here today and speak in favour of the Appropriation Bill. This year's budget is delivering big, and it covers everything the community made a clear priority at the election, that is, to take health seriously, to support our children to get the best start in life and to ensure that we recover from the pandemic stronger, rather than returning to business as usual. I am proud of this budget because I believe it covers those priorities and begins the important work of delivering on them.

People rightly want to feel comfortable, knowing that if they call 000 in an emergency they would receive the assistance they need. I heard this day-in and day-out whilst in my community. It was at the forefront of everybody's minds, whether for their own potential needs or out of concern for

their family and friends. It also came from those who work in the health sector, who kindly shared with me the impact the pressure was having on their health and wellbeing.

By committing \$2.4 billion over five years in additional health expenditure and budgeting for 350 extra ambulance officers and paramedics, 326 extra hospital and mental health beds, 300 more nurses and 101 more doctors, I am pleased to advise that we have heard your concerns and are back on our way to help fix the ramping crisis and get things back on track.

With \$630 million going into new education initiatives over the next five years, we are preparing the next generation of South Australians for the future. To name just a few of some of these commitments:

- we will have five new tech colleges around the state;
- we are better supporting mental health and learning supports in schools;
- we will be appointing an autism lead teacher in every public school; and
- we will be holding a royal commission into early childhood education and care to best achieve universal quality preschool programs for three year olds and four year olds in South Australia and how to best ensure all families have access to out-of-school-hours care for both preschool and primary-school-age children.

We are getting our state back on the map by focusing on an industry that will support us for generations to come, namely, the future of hydrogen in our state. With an investment of \$593 million to establish a new hydrogen facility, we can harness the power of hydrogen, be it in flexibility of power generation or in hydrogen export opportunities. It is an incredibly exciting position to be in. We are one of the most ideal locations to be investing in this field, and by doing it now we have a real chance of being industry leaders not only nationally but internationally as well. That is great for jobs, both now and well into the future, for families in our state.

There are many great investments being made in the state budget, and we did not get here without the feedback and insight from some incredible people from my community—people like Jean and Greg Downton, who have been running a support network for those with MND and their partners in the north-east for some time now. They have a coffee, lunch and a chat at The Grove once a month to check on everyone's wellbeing, share their knowledge and support one another and just generally give one another support through what is an incredibly difficult time.

I join these catch-ups as often as I can with the member for Wright to hear firsthand their experiences to see what we may be able to assist them with. I am pleased to hear that just this month the group met with Denise, a support coordinator at MND SA, and they shared with me how much of an impact her support will make on their lives. Just imagine the impact the \$2.4 million announced in this budget will have to help those who are living with this cruel disease.

I know that this is significant not only for this group but for many in my community. I recall how strongly the community wanted to support those suffering MND, particularly last year when we tragically lost Annette, who had provided quality education during her 20 years as Director of Greenwith Kindergarten. We heard you, and I am so pleased we are providing further supports to those who are diagnosed with MND.

When it came to helping our ambos, no-one made quite as strong an impression on me as David (Cess) Glasspool. Many ambos know him in the community not only because he is a paramedic but because he runs the very important support network for them, Walk.Talk.Share.Inspire. This is focused on squashing the stigma about seeking help when we feel the burdens that can impact the lives of paramedics. Whether work related or life outside work, the group encourages people to get outside and be active in the community of like-minded people to help build support and morale around each other.

Cess felt particularly strongly about supporting our ambos as we saw the figures of ramping rise at such a substantial rate. Cess not only advocated strongly to support his comrades but he went the extra mile, notably driving his Mini around to provide refreshments and words of encouragement for paramedics who were working around the clock, unable to take breaks throughout their long shifts.

The commitments made to my local neighbourhood were not without passionate advocates from my community, advocates like Andrew, who publicly campaigned for a bus shelter in front of Saints Shopping centre. Those in this chamber may remember hearing him on ABC radio when they heard his story. Andrew rightly pointed out that the need for a shelter in that location was due to it being a hub not only for essentials but for medical services available at the centre as well. It was Andrew's work, alongside the strong community campaign to save bus stops in our community, that helped develop this commitment to help improve and encourage public transport in our community.

These are just a few of the fantastic locals who helped make a difference in my community and who also provided invaluable feedback that helped shape what has been delivered by the Treasurer. To them I say thank you, just as I would like to thank every nurse, doctor, orderly, paramedic and caterer who works within our health sector for stepping me through how important investment in this sector would be for our community; every parent I met at a school gate, school award ceremony, community catch-up, shopping centre visit and on the doors, along with representatives from school leadership teams to get feedback on how we can best help give our children a leg up; every person in our community who took a stand against privatisation; and every person who stood up for the Adelaide 500 to get it back to the streets of Adelaide.

In fact, to every constituent in my community, thank you. Thank you for taking the time out of your day to share your priorities with me and to share your ideas on how we can make our community even better. Your contribution to our community is incredibly valuable and, if it were not for you looking out for each other and making your voices heard, we would not be seeing such important investments being made in our community. I am looking forward to working with you all to see this through.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr Odenwalder.

At 20:40 the house adjourned until Thursday 16 June 2022 at 11:00.