

## HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, 1 November 2022

**The SPEAKER (Hon. D.R. Cregan)** took the chair at 11:00.

**The SPEAKER:** Honourable members, we acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional owners of this country throughout Australia and their connection to land and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures and to elders both past and present.

**The SPEAKER** read prayers.

### *Bills*

#### **MOTOR VEHICLES (ELECTRIC VEHICLE LEVY) AMENDMENT REPEAL BILL**

##### *Second Reading*

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 28 September 2022.)

**Ms CLANCY (Elder) (11:02):** I am very excited to rise today in support of this bill to reverse the electric vehicle tax. The EV tax imposed by the former government demonstrates the blatant hypocrisy of the South Australian Liberals. How can a party that claims to be in support of lower taxes and protecting our environment seriously in good conscience introduce a tax on the very vehicles designed to reduce our impact on the environment? When they should have been looking at ways to increase the uptake of electric vehicles, the former government chose to undermine them.

**Mr Pederick:** You're bringing in tolls, are you?

**Ms CLANCY:** Member for Hammond!

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Hammond is called to order. The member for Elder has the call.

**Ms CLANCY:** This levy takes me back to when the Liberal and National Coalition mocked and encouraged the automotive manufacturing industry to leave Australia, a decision with deeply harmful effects to South Australia, including in my electorate, which was once the home to Mitsubishi and Chrysler. Families in my community lost work and skills that had lasted generations.

Good government should be harnessing these skills, supporting these workers and reducing costs to families across the state. Imagine if, instead of finding a way to penalise consumers wanting to buy electric vehicles, the Liberal Party had devoted all that time and energy and attention to instead encouraging a resurgence of manufacturing—at least the components for electric vehicles—in South Australia. What an incredible opportunity the former government had.

When the Liberal Party introduced this insidious tax, the member for Black—then Minister for Environment and Water and now leader of the South Australian Liberals—said the tax was 'necessary'. In a decision that made South Australia the first place in the country to introduce such a tax, he rejected the views of the Electric Vehicle Council and the Conservation Council and said, 'We have to do it. I cannot make any apologies for that.'

Think about that. The now leader of the so-called new generation of Liberals thinks that a tax on electric vehicles is not only a good idea but a necessary one at that. South Australia has some of the largest deposits of copper in the world, a metal in high demand for electric vehicles. The former Liberal government ignored this, ignoring a high potential growth path supplying manufacturing components into the manufacturing sector. South Australia also has an abundance of world-class quality graphite, rare earths and other minerals essential to the construction of electric vehicles.

Instead of devoting time to strategies on how our state could capitalise on this worldwide growth, the Liberals spent time working out how to penalise families, consumers and businesses

across South Australia. Those of us now on this side of the house understand the importance of energy efficiency and we all know that countries across the globe, including Australia, are currently very concerned about energy prices.

I wonder how much more energy efficient electric vehicles are than internal combustion engine vehicles powered by petrol or diesel. Well, we can all stop wondering. The United States Department of Energy have studied the differences in energy efficiency between the different technologies. This is their observation: electric vehicles are more efficient than their gasoline-powered counterparts. An EV electric drive system is only responsible for a 15 per cent to 20 per cent energy loss compared with 64 per cent to 75 per cent for a gasoline engine.

They also found that an electric vehicle transmits 65 per cent to 69 per cent of its energy use to the wheels. That rises to 91 per cent through capturing energy from regenerative braking. In contrast, for petrol-powered cars, only 16 per cent to 25 per cent of energy is transmitted to the wheels, with around 70 per cent lost to heat and dissipation.

Why is this important? There are several reasons, but I will highlight just two. Firstly, energy efficiency is crucial to improved productivity across the economy, underpinning wage growth and improvements in the way we live. Burning fossil fuels to run inefficient vehicles that could instead be powered by household solar power is simply not the best use of these scarce resources. Electric vehicles add up economically and environmentally.

Secondly, the greater energy efficiency of an electric vehicle allows for their simpler construction. There is no need for radiators and cooling systems, exhausts and the like. An electric vehicle has literally thousands of fewer parts than an internal combustion engine vehicle. This means an electric vehicle requires far less maintenance and has far lower operating costs than a petrol or a diesel car.

It is not just that electricity, especially from household solar, is far cheaper per kilometre; it is about lower maintenance costs. Of course we all understand the economies of scale for electric vehicles are not as significant as they are for petrol vehicles yet, causing higher up-front initial costs, but the lifetime costs are lower. That is why electric vehicles are increasingly the preferred choice for businesses running fleets, that and the benefits of being a business that is addressing the overwhelming community demand for business action on climate change.

Obviously, many families are not in the financial position to purchase a brand-new electric vehicle. However, more electric vehicles purchased today, whether they be business or fleet vehicles, provide for more electric vehicles on the second-hand market down the line, allowing for more and more South Australian families to see an electric vehicle as a realistic option to bring down their household budgets.

The lower operating costs should be a factor that acts as a positive, but the Liberals put lead in the saddlebags, weighing down the operating costs and dissuading customers from making an investment choice that would be better for them overall. This policy from the former Liberal government failed on so many fronts and, as always, it will be up to a Labor government to clean up the mess.

Our policies are well considered, unlike the poorly designed policies of those opposite. Our policies help consumers, families and businesses; they do not punish them. Our policies encourage investment in resource development, in manufacturing and in innovation. The Malinauskas Labor government will not put roadblocks in the way of the public when they want to make investment choices. Good governments lift; they do not punish. We must and we will scrap this Liberal tax. I commend the bill to the house.

**Mrs PEARCE (King) (11:09):** We as a state care greatly for our environment and climate and it is clear that we would like to see greater action taken in this space to protect all our amazing regions, to acknowledge we are in a state of climate emergency and to act on it. I am proud that this government recognises this and passed a declaration of a climate emergency earlier this year, because we believe in providing solutions to help reduce emissions, contribute to climate adaptation, create jobs, help preserve and restore the natural environment, and encourage good investments in this space.

We have also had a tough couple of years navigating through a pandemic and are now facing the economic impact, as can be seen with the rising cost-of-living pressures. We must act, and we must acknowledge the role that we can play to do better as part of this recovery. One of those ways we are discussing here today. We intend to abolish the electric vehicle levy act that was introduced by the Marshall Liberal government last year. In the midst of a pandemic, the previous government thought it was a good idea to introduce a tax that would impact those who are wanting to do better for our climate.

One may argue that this tax could act as a disincentive for anyone considering buying an electric vehicle, as from 2027 or when battery electric vehicle sales reach 30 per cent of the new motor vehicle sales in SA they would suddenly face charges such as 2¢ per kilometre travelled in a plug-in hybrid vehicle or 2.5¢ per kilometre for any electric vehicle. In fact, just that has been argued and a survey undertaken by the Australia Institute in 2021 showed that seven in 10 South Australians would be less likely to purchase an electric vehicle if a new road user charge were to be introduced. I hope that our swift action on this matter will help to restore certainty for those who are looking at purchasing an electric vehicle.

Apparently, the tax would have raised \$1 million each year, although I am still perplexed as to how this would be calculated, as it falls well short of reasonable estimates that consider current uptake trends of electric vehicles. Furthermore, it would have bypassed the federal government without any consideration of how it would affect the state government's allocation of GST funds. It made very little sense, and we plan to do better.

We will be contributing to Australia's first National Electric Vehicle Strategy, being led by federal Minister Bowen, which includes focusing on making EVs more affordable, driving more choice in the market, driving EV uptake, reducing emissions, saving money on fuel, and ensuring that we are taking advantage of local manufacturing opportunities. We understand how important it is to take progressive steps in this area with the federal government by our side.

I must say that I am so pleased to see that the federal Labor government has already made electric vehicles more accessible through the removal of the fringe benefits tax and the 5 per cent import tariff for eligible electric vehicles. There are so many reasons to consider purchasing an electric vehicle. It has been estimated that consumers would save \$1,700 per annum by 2030 on the total cost of ownership of electric vehicles over internal combustion engine vehicles. It will also play a vital role in the overall transition from carbon-emitting technologies to a cleaner, greener future that accords with the state parliament's recent declaration of climate emergency.

Passenger cars take up almost 10 per cent of Australia's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Supporting the uptake of electric vehicles will contribute to South Australia's ability to achieve net zero emissions. I am so pleased to see motorists starting to turn their minds towards EVs. In fact, just the other week I had the honour of representing the Minister for Tourism at the Bay to Birdwood, a very special event—in fact, I would say one of our most iconic motorsport events.

I had the pleasure of being able to present the very first inaugural EV Conversion Award, recognising vintage vehicles with electric conversion drivetrains and power sources that entered the run and were able to make it all the way up to Birdwood. I reiterate my congratulations to Eric, who drives a very sweet 1985 Holden Barina conversion. It is no easy feat to convert a vintage vehicle, and to get it all the way up to Birdwood is quite impressive. I sincerely hope to see many more conversion vehicles at next year's event.

Rest assured, we are doing what we can to keep the incentives rolling. We are supporting the RAA to construct the state's first electric vehicle charging network of 500 charging stations at 140 sites in 52 locations across South Australia. If we are serious about seeing the number of electric vehicles increase, we need to take into consideration the demand for charging systems and infrastructure that will arise. I understand that this network is anticipated to be finalised by the end of 2023, and I am excited to see the rollout of this progress.

We are also progressing nine electric vehicle smart-charging trials to demonstrate how EV charging can be integrated into the grid to release electricity cost savings for all South Australians, just to name a couple of examples. Now is the perfect time to be sharing our vision for the future in this space, and it must be centred around making the transition as appealing as possible to many

South Australians looking into investing in electric vehicles. With that, I commend this bill to the house.

**Ms HUTCHESSON (Waite) (11:15):** I rise to speak in support of the Motor Vehicles (Electric Vehicle Levy) Amendment Repeal Bill 2022 as I believe we should be striving for more, not fewer, electric vehicles on our roads. 28 September was World EV Day, a day to celebrate e-mobility and EV ownership and an initiative to create awareness about reducing carbon footprint by adopting this green mode of transport. Given we know there is a climate emergency, given we are seeing terrible floods and bushfires as a result, we need to be doing everything we can to work towards a greener future not only for our children but for all the generations that are to come.

On 27 September, I attended the Belair Primary School year 6 exhibition night. The children had prepared projects with the environment as their theme. Many worked on subjects such as climate change, air pollution, ocean pollution, recycling and more. On speaking with these students, it was clear that they understand we need to be doing all that we can to address climate change—and they are children.

The former Liberal state government's EV levy sent a signal to these future generations. It said: 'Once we are on the uptrend of EV uptake, once we are heading down the right road, let's put our foot on the brakes.' Their message was that we should no longer do everything we can to increase EV uptake and mitigate climate change. The levy was due to commence on the earlier of 1 July 2027 or when battery electric vehicle sales reached 30 per cent of total new motor vehicle sales in South Australia. From the levy's commencement, electric vehicle owners would have been charged 2¢ per kilometre travelled in a plug-in hybrid or 2½¢ per kilometre with any other electric vehicle.

The former Liberal government advertised this as a state tax, a substitute for fuel excise. Fuel excise is a federal tax. This was not a like-for-like tax: it was a new tax. The levy represented the consistent policy failures in relation to climate change that we have seen under both the former federal and state Liberal governments. We had a federal government doing absolutely nothing to help mitigate or, for that matter, adapt to the increasingly prominent effects of our changing climate.

One of the students at Belair Primary School had put together a comparison of political parties in regard to their policy position and actions on climate change. The student had prepared a flyer. Under the LNP heading, she wrote: 'The LNP is set on meeting and beating the 2030 Paris target. They want to see more recycling and less waste. They want to create 10,000 jobs in the process. However, research suggests they have done none of this in their time in government.' Even someone as young as year 5 knew that the other government did not know what they were doing.

We had floods, fires and droughts, and they did nothing. On a state level, the Liberals clearly believed that they should do worse than nothing. They thought that they should disincentivise the market and households from buying electric vehicles and doing their part to decrease fossil fuel emissions. Thankfully, the word 'former' now precedes both those governments. I am proud that there is now a federal government that is taking meaningful action on climate change. I am even prouder to be part of a state government that believes in striving for more, not less. I am proud to be part of a government that believes we should be encouraging the market and households to make a difference to the planet and own electric vehicles, not imposing a new tax on them.

My electorate of Waite is uniquely vulnerable to the effects of climate change with our community exposed to high levels of bushfire risk, especially in the Mitcham Hills area. We know that this is only getting worse. Increasingly higher temperatures and lower rainfall in summer are exacerbating fire season conditions. The 2020 SA Department for Environment and Water report card makes it very clear that the risk is only getting worse.

These climate trends are also threatening biodiversity, with these effects altering the distribution and abundance of native species. With endangered species in my electorate such as the southern brown bandicoot, the science says, and my community knows, that we should be acting as much as we can to mitigate the effects of climate change. Action for my community and for the whole of South Australia looks like a world-leading hydrogen plant. It looks like funding our environment protection agencies, like the Conservation Council and Landcare. It looks like axing this tax.

Our government has been invited to be part of the development process of Australia's first National Electric Vehicle Strategy. We are strongly supportive of a federally led approach in addition to our state-based support and initiatives. The EV strategy will be the road map to achieve the following goals: make EVs more affordable, drive more choice in the market, drive EV uptake, reduce emissions, save us money on fuel and ensure that we are taking advantage of local manufacturing opportunities.

Locally, the Malinauskas government is supporting 7,000 electric vehicle purchases with subsidies of \$3,000 and a three-year registration fee exemption. We are progressing with nine electric vehicle smart-charging trials to demonstrate how EV charging can be integrated into the grid and to realise electricity cost savings for all South Australians, something that is very relevant at the moment.

We are already seeing other external initiatives, such as the RAA constructing the first electric vehicle charging network of over 500 charging stations at 140 sites in 52 locations throughout South Australia. This is supported by the state government, with a grant of almost \$12.4 million. Other private companies are excited that we have changed government. They are excited that we are back on track and heading towards a greener future, excited that we will be repealing this tax.

Planet Ark Power are trialling rapid-charging bays and a battery energy storage system that will store as much renewable electricity as 125 home batteries at the Pasadena Shopping centre. Global company ENGIE are trialling one of Australia's largest vehicle to grid trials at Flinders University, just outside my electorate. In Waite, the City of Mitcham has constructed six EV power stations—two in Blackwood and four in Torrens Park. Passenger vehicles contribute to almost 10 per cent of Australia's carbon emissions. Reducing this is crucial if we are to get to net zero and to protect our environment.

These policies are the momentum we need. This is action. Our bill will repeal both the electric vehicle levy and the requirement for a select committee. It will provide certainty for those looking to purchase an electric vehicle. Let's not slow the momentum. These are the signals we have to send to future generations: we are listening and we are acting. We need policies that make it clear that uptake of net zero should be a floor, not a ceiling. We need policies that show that we are a government that is committed to sustainable development, and we need to demonstrate that we are taking climate crisis seriously and not putting our foot on the brake. I commend the bill to the house.

**Mr FULBROOK (Playford) (11:22):** I rise to speak in support of the Motor Vehicles (Electric Vehicle Levy) Amendment Repeal Bill. In considering this bill, I would like to draw attention to how it exposes the folly and the exploitative attitude of the Liberal Party when it comes to taxation. The Liberal Party claim to pursue an agenda of wanting lower taxes. What they say and what they do when in government are two very different things. This is a prime example of them attempting to increase the tax burden on the vast bulk of the population.

The introduction of the levy on electric vehicles by the previous cabinet, of which the opposition leader was a member, is a shining example of the regressive nature of Liberal tax reforms. First, let us remember this was a brand-new tax. No road user tax or any similar form of levy existed at a state level on ordinary motorists. The previous Treasurer and his colleagues, including the member for Black, sat around the cabinet table and decided it would be a good thing to impose a new tax on South Australians. It makes me wonder if any thought was given to how South Australians facing cost-of-living pressures could be assisted on the tax front. If there was, then clearly this was the wrong answer.

Those to my right decided to bring on a new measure that would add to the tax and cost-of-living burden of South Australians rather than ease the pressure. In what many might regard as a sneaky move, the Liberal Party tried to disguise this new tax as simply being a replacement of an existing tax. In announcing it, they said that electric vehicles do not attract the fuel excise paid by motorists using petrol or diesel-powered vehicles and therefore EVs make a lower contribution to the cost of maintaining our road network.

But they failed to say up-front in the budget speech that fuel excise is levied by the commonwealth and that the SA Liberal Party proposal was to create a new state-based tax. Perhaps they were hoping the public might think it was a like-for-like switch for an old tax, but it was simply

not a replacement: it was a new tax, a new tax on South Australians that had been dreamt up by the Liberal Party.

It is worth asking if there was any thought given to what the effect would be of imposing a new tax when it comes to commonwealth-state financial relations. As members would know, the commonwealth gathers the goods and services tax from the Australian public via businesses and this is then distributed to state and territory treasuries.

We know that the Commonwealth Grants Commission does a professional job in advising the federal government on how the GST revenue should be carved up and distributed amongst the states and territories. In forming their advice, the Commonwealth Grants Commission uses the principle of horizontal fiscal equalisation. This aims to provide equitable services for all Australians, with GST allocations balanced against a jurisdiction's own revenue-raising capacity and the population that it serves.

Therefore, in imposing a new state-based tax in the form of the EV levy, the Liberal Party made South Australians vulnerable to a reduction in GST revenue. It risked creating a situation where there would be no gain in revenue to the state Treasury to actually spend on roads but simply was a shift of a bigger tax burden onto South Australians because the state generally attracts a larger proportion of GST than the straight per capita division.

Moreover, the fuel excise raised by the commonwealth is not hypothecated to road funding. That was another mistake in the claim of the EV levy being a like-for-like swap. If the commonwealth choose to spend it on road funding, then that is up to them. Such road funding from the commonwealth may or may not affect the GST distribution. This depends on the view of the federal Treasurer of the day, who can exempt it from the horizontal fiscal equalisation calculation. This is therefore another hole in the argument put forward by the Liberal Party.

But there are revenues which are hypothecated to roads. These are existing revenues already being raised from South Australians for the direct purpose of improving our road network. Every vehicle on public roads must be registered. Every driver is required to be licensed. It does not matter whether the vehicle is a battery electric vehicle, a plug-in hybrid, a mild hybrid, a petrol, a gas, or a diesel powered vehicle. It is a level playing field and low or no emission vehicle owners are already paying their part.

Registration and driver's licence fees are hypothecated into the Highways Fund, so saying that EV owners are getting a free ride is a myth as a disguise to hit motorists with a new tax. When it comes to the Highways Fund, EV drivers are paying their fair share along with other South Australians. Vehicle registration and driver's licence fees cannot be avoided no matter what type of vehicle you choose.

We should also consider how the Liberal Party treated motorists with the existing set of taxes when they were last in office. Instead of receiving any tax relief, budget papers show motor vehicle taxes increasing from \$634 million in 2017-18 to \$755 million in 2021-22. This is an \$121 million increase or 19 per cent in just four years. The Australian Bureau of Statistics records similar figures, saying that state-based taxes on motor vehicles increased by \$125 million to \$773 million from 2017-18 to 2020-21.

It is reasonable to suggest the Liberal Party squeezed more than an extra \$120 million out of motorists than was charged in the final year of the former Labor government. While they claim to favour lower taxes, the facts speak otherwise. Another good example is the cost of renewing a driver's licence. In the last Labor budget in 2017-18, fees were set at \$215 for a five-year renewal and \$430 for 10 years.

In the last Liberal budget, those fees had increased to \$240 and \$480—a 12 per cent increase over four years when inflation was tracking between 1 per cent and 2 per cent. The fuel excise is a federal tax and so it is telling to consider what the Liberal Party and the National Coalition have done at a federal level on this issue.

Back in 2016, Liberal MP, then federal Minister for Urban Infrastructure, Paul Fletcher drew attention to the commonwealth's revenue-raising capability from the fuel excise and how this would change with the advent of EVs in the national vehicle fleet. Speaking at the Sydney Institute, he

highlighted that the driver of a 12-year-old Holden Commodore was typically paying about 4.5¢ per kilometre in fuel excise at the time. The driver of a Renault Megane, which had far better fuel efficiency, was paying 3.4¢ per kilometre, and the driver of a hybrid such as a Toyota Prius would be paying 1.5¢ per kilometre. In contrast, a driver of a full battery electric vehicle, such as a Tesla Model S, would pay no fuel excise.

Mr Fletcher stressed that he was not accusing Tesla owners of taking a free ride at the expense of other taxpayers. He noted that Tesla owners did pay taxes, such as the luxury car tax and state-based stamp duties, but he did raise the issue that the commonwealth would be faced with a diminishing revenue stream as the nation's vehicle fleet changed from petrol and diesel powered vehicles to hybrids and electric. Having identified what he saw as a problem, the Liberal-National Coalition fell short on generating any coherent plans for reform. Just like their many other policy failures, particularly the failure to develop a policy of energy and climate change, the Coalition took the nation nowhere.

There has been a steady decrease in the proportion attributable to fuel excise among road-related taxes and charges at commonwealth and state level. The most recent analysis by the Bureau of Infrastructure and Transport Research Economics, the 2021 Yearbook, lists these taxes and charges by financial year. In 2000-01, some \$26 billion was raised in excise, registration, stamp duty, tolls and duties. Of that \$26 billion, 53 per cent came from fuel excise. By 2019-20, the most recent year analysed by the bureau, that proportion had fallen to 36 per cent, while the total raised had increased to more than \$32 billion.

Interestingly, that analysis also shows vehicle owners were paying nearly \$2 billion more in road tolls in 2019-20 than they did at the start of the century, with tolls increasing as a proportion of the total from 2 to 8 per cent. This is another reason South Australian motorists should be relieved that voters made the sensible decision to elect a Labor government, a government which has steadfastly resisted imposing tolls on commuters. That is because it is in Labor's DNA to protect ordinary consumers from unnecessary taxes and charges. We are the party that addresses the issue of cost-of-living pressures. We are unlike those to my right. They have proven themselves to be a party of high taxes and new taxes, as the EV levy has clearly shown.

When the Liberal Party do attempt tax reform, they make a mess of it. Who can forget the debacle of the land tax reforms under the previous government? With the EV levy, the Liberal Party tried to introduce a new tax on South Australians, a tax that would add to cost-of-living pressures. Fortunately, the Labor Party was elected to government in March. This is why I stand here today in support of the legislation. It is the Labor Party that will repeal this unnecessary new tax, and in doing so I commend this bill to the house.

**The Hon. A. MICHAELS (Enfield—Minister for Small and Family Business, Minister for Consumer and Business Affairs, Minister for Arts) (11:33):** I also rise to speak in support of the Motor Vehicles (Electric Vehicle Levy) Amendment Repeal Bill 2022. This bill, as you are aware, Mr Speaker, will repeal the proposed new tax by the former Liberal government, which would not only have put a handbrake on the uptake and use of electric vehicles in this state but would have been a handbrake on our local economy.

The levy proposed by the former Liberal government was to commence on the earlier of 1 July 2027 or when battery electric vehicle sales reach 30 per cent of total new car sales in South Australia. From the levy's commencement, electric vehicle owners would have been charged 2¢ per kilometre if they travelled in a plug-in hybrid or 2.5¢ per kilometre for any other electric vehicle. This levy would have been calculated by distance travelled each year and billed as part of the vehicle registration process.

The former government estimated that this would have raised about \$1 million in tax each year, but it is unclear how this was calculated, and it falls well short of reasonable estimates considering the current uptake of electric vehicles in this state. The former Liberal government advertised this state tax as a substitute for the commonwealth fuel excise, which is, of course, a federal tax, so it was in no way a like for like; it was simply just a new tax. No doubt, the fuel excise will come under pressure as more EVs come onto our roads; however, this needs to be properly addressed by the commonwealth government.

The former state Liberal government saw the failure of their Coalition counterparts to put together a policy to address this emerging issue as a way and an opportunity to implement new taxes. It is a tax that would have seen raised funds spent in any manner that the Liberal government pleased. The former Liberal government did not consider how implementing a new tax and bypassing the commonwealth government would have impacted South Australians.

This levy would have been a massive disincentive for consumers to take up EVs, particularly as it proposed a distance-based charge for electric vehicles in addition to registration for EVs. Instead, our government wants to encourage the use of electric vehicles. A survey undertaken by the Australia Institute back in 2021 showed that seven in 10 South Australians would be less likely to purchase an EV should a new road user charge be introduced. In fact, it would have been a massive disincentive if it were to be introduced.

I am proud that we are going about abolishing this levy. It will go a long way to encouraging South Australians to take up the use of electric vehicles. We need to be doing all that we can to encourage electric vehicle uptake not only for this generation of South Australians but for future generations, and we need to remove as many roadblocks as we can. That is the priority of this bill. The Malinauskas government will contribute to Australia's first National Electric Vehicle Strategy, as invited by the federal government, where it announced at a national EV summit in August that it was a developing Australia's first National Electric Vehicle Strategy.

How do we make electric vehicles more affordable? The federal government has already made electric vehicles cheaper through the removal of the fringe benefits tax and the initial reduction to a 5 per cent import tariff for EVs. Furthermore, the federal government announced last week, as part of its 2022-23 federal budget, that it will scrap the 5 per cent import tariff. That is a fantastic effort from the federal government to encourage EVs.

The removal of the FBT in real terms means that an employer purchasing an EV attracting, say, a \$50,000 price tag will save about \$4,700 a year. It is certainly a very positive move by the federal government and one I fully support. I am especially encouraged by the removal of some of these constraints to open the market and encourage more consumers to get into electric vehicles.

One of the issues, of course, is the affordability of electric vehicles, particularly in Australia. It is of utmost interest to me because I would like to see small and family businesses in South Australia take up electric vehicles at much greater rates. What is equally encouraging is that the EV road map will set out the following goals: making electric vehicles more affordable; ensuring we are taking advantage of local manufacturing opportunities, which particularly assists our local businesses; driving choice in the market; and saving money on fuel. All of those are admirable goals.

Further, consultation on the EV strategy is going to explore options for the introduction of fuel efficiency standards. The lack of standards is cited as one of the primary factors impacting the cost and supply of EVs. Rightly or wrongly, manufacturers will prioritise markets that show leadership, and we have seen that across the world with EVs.

The longer Australia takes to demonstrate leadership in this area, the more likely we are at risk of being a dumping ground for older, superseded technology. In addition, there are further barriers that are slowing the uptake of EVs in Australia: choice, in terms of the number of vehicle models in the local market; and cost, particularly with the high up-front cost purchase price of electric vehicles.

In terms of consumer choice and cost concerns, I contrast the situation in the United Kingdom. UK buyers have a choice of 26 low-emission vehicles around the \$A60,000 mark, whereas in Australia this number is just eight models. Further, consumer hesitancy is one of the issues where there is an anxiety about electric vehicle range, as well as performance concerns, and the perception of limited charging infrastructure. Growing the number of electric vehicles undoubtedly will require matching infrastructure to deal with increased demand in the charging requirements of electric vehicle users. Charging stations and their locations, in particular, are key to allaying this road trip anxiety and growing EV numbers.

I am very proud that the South Australian government has awarded a grant of \$12.4 million to the RAA to construct and operate Australia's first statewide electric vehicle rapid-charging network.



Comprising over 500 charging stations at 140 sites, including 52 sites within South Australia, progressing electric vehicle smart trials will demonstrate how EV charging can be integrated to the grid to realise electric cost savings to all South Australians. The RAA plan involves constructing charging networks in supermarkets, car parks, town centres and council-owned sites throughout South Australia, including in regional South Australia.

The Minister for Transport recently attended in the last couple of weeks the opening of the first one of the 18 trial locations in the City West Wilson car park facility here in the city. Plans to roll out the trial are of course going regional, with plans in Renmark, Mount Gambier and other regional centres, which is very important for uptake of electric vehicles.

It is anticipated that smart-charging trials will demonstrate the ways electric vehicle drivers can be incentivised to charge during periods of high renewable electricity generation and low grid demand. That, of course, will support the grid and reduce electricity costs for consumers. It is anticipated that this network is going to be finished by the end of 2023. The government is further encouraging EV uptake by offering 7,000 electric vehicle subsidies of \$3,000 and a three-year registration fee exemption.

Some members would remember the formative years of a TV show that I used to watch called *Beyond 2000*, where we used to envisage in the year 2000 that we would all be in flying, floating cars. We have not got there and it is now 2022, but what we have got is fantastic new electric vehicle technology. We need to do everything we can to support that being taken up by consumers and businesses in South Australia and to see us as a leader in this space. That is why I commend this bill to the house.

**The Hon. A. PICCOLO (Light) (11:42):** I rise in support of this bill. Back in November 2021, the then Liberal state government passed its Motor Vehicles (Electric Vehicle Levy) Amendment Bill. That act introduced a levy on electric vehicles and a requirement for the Legislative Council to appoint a select committee into electric vehicles. The levy was based on a distance-based charge for electric vehicles as an addition for the registration of an electric vehicle. The levy also was to commence on or earlier than 1 July 2027, or when electric vehicle sales reached 30 per cent of the total new motor vehicle sales in South Australia.

From the commencement of that levy, electric vehicle owners would have been charged 2¢ per kilometre travelled in a plug-in hybrid motor vehicle or 2.5¢ per kilometre for any other electric vehicle. It has been calculated that by distance travelled each year, the charge would be levied as part of the vehicle registration process.

The former Liberal government estimated that this new tax would raise \$1 million each year. It is not clear, based on the discussions in this chamber, how that \$1 million figure was estimated and also, more importantly, what the cost to the industry would be of having this \$1 million tax revenue. The former Liberal government also advertised the state tax as a substitute for fuel excise, which is a federal tax. It is not a like for like tax; it is actually a new tax.

Fuel excise will come under pressure as more electric vehicles come onto our roads; however, addressing this should be led by the commonwealth government. Also, given the price of petrol these days, the last thing we want to do is increase fuel excise. It is creating a huge burden on consumers today, and is one of the major factors behind inflation at the moment, impacting on our economy and the wellbeing of our community.

The former state Liberal government saw the failure of their Coalition counterparts to put together any policy to address this emerging issue as an opportunity to implement their own tax, a tax that would have seen funds raised spent in any manner the state government decided and not actually on investing in this new technology.

As part of that bill, a select committee was to be established in the upper house. If this bill is passed, that committee will no longer be required, as the bill removes the requirement for that select committee. This government, our government, will contribute to Australia's first National Electric Vehicle Strategy, to be led by federal Minister Bowen.

SA Labor's proposed repeal bill, which is before us today, repeals both the electric vehicle levy and the requirement for a select committee. By abolishing the levy, the government will deliver

on an election commitment—and, as has been said by members across the chamber, honouring election commitments is very important. We are doing so in this case, as we have also done with numerous infrastructure and other projects in our community. A survey undertaken in 2021 by the Australia Institute indicated that seven in 10 South Australians would be less likely to purchase an electric vehicle if a road user charge were to be introduced.

Importantly, had this tax gone ahead it would have actually been an impediment to the take-up of the purchase of electric vehicles. Apart from the purchase cost itself, there would have been that additional cost on an ongoing basis, introducing a disincentive in a policy area we want to incentivise. That is certainly the view of the community. Looking at current community opinion about what we should be doing to reduce emissions, as well as a whole range of things regarding climate change, the community certainly supports changes that reduce emissions.

While the road user charge was not designed to start for some time, passing this repeal bill is very important because it provides certainty for those looking to purchase an electric vehicle—and I wish to highlight that very important point. The reason for some lag in this nation in moving towards lower fuel emissions and policies to support climate change is that we have had policies that are inconsistent at both the state and federal levels, and that does not send the appropriate signals to the marketplace.

As some speakers have already indicated, for people to invest in a particular industry or product they need to know that the investment environment will be supportive of what they are investing in. Having a policy where you chop and change, particularly as it was at the federal level under the Morrison government, sends out mixed messages, and therefore businesses were not investing in renewables and other industries as they should have been and actually investing in the future. Other nations have been doing so, particularly the European countries, which have been sending out very strong signals about where people should be investing in the future.

It is somewhat sad that, after nine years of federal Liberal government policy in this area, we are now behind the eight ball in a whole range of climate change areas. This bill makes it very clear that we want to incentivise the electric vehicle industry, and it sends a very clear message to businesses that it is okay to invest in that industry because they will get a return on their investment. More importantly, it will drive innovation in this country in terms of improving electric vehicles and reducing their price, because the up-front price is a barrier to people purchasing them at the moment.

I think some other speakers have mentioned this already, but it is very important that, unless we support this bill and give a clear and consistent message to the marketplace, Australia will become the dumping ground of a secondary market. Rather than being a market leader, in this country we will actually follow those vehicles that are less innovative and less productive.

Given that our state—and I think I can say this with some confidence—has led the world in renewable energy, we should also be very clear that our state is very supportive of making sure that we have more electric vehicles on the roads. It is also very important, now that we have a federal Labor government which also sees the merit of this, that federal government policy supports this. The federal counterparts have set a low-emission vehicle target for the commonwealth fleet of 75 per cent of new leases and purchases by 2025. So the federal government itself is actually making it very clear where its future investment will be, and it has also made it very clear to the marketplace where they should invest in the future as well.

Commonwealth Labor has already made electric vehicles cheaper through the removal of fringe benefits tax and the 5 per cent import tariff for eligible electric vehicles. The fringe benefits tax changes mean that a \$50,000 electric vehicle will now be up to \$4,700 cheaper for someone using a salary sacrifice arrangement. An employer could also save \$9,000 a year, an incentive that is critical for fleet buyers and, in turn, the second-hand market.

During the National Electric Vehicle Summit in August, the commonwealth government announced its commitment to develop Australia's first National Electric Vehicle Strategy. The South Australian government has been invited to be part of that development process and is strongly supportive of the federally led approach, in addition to our state-based support initiatives. The electric vehicle strategy will be the road map to achieve the following goals: make electric vehicles more affordable; drive more choice in the marketplace; drive electric vehicle uptake; reduce emissions;

save money on fuel, which is actually a major concern at the moment; and ensure we are taking advantage of local manufacturing opportunities.

Very importantly, as I said earlier, it is sending quite a strong and clear message to the marketplace that electric vehicles are the way of the future. If I recall correctly, and my colleagues can correct me, it was only an election or two ago that Mr Morrison, the former Prime Minister, was saying that electric vehicles would be the end of the weekend, because how could you actually have electric vehicles on weekends or for all the weekend-type vehicles?

Well, he was proven wrong, and he was clearly not in line with where the community was at because he is no longer the Prime Minister. Sadly, he did set this country back almost a decade on a whole range of policies, this being one of them. It is not the only one, though; there are a whole range of other policy areas where he set back the nation 10 years. While Australia did not show leadership it meant that consumers were not getting a choice in this country either, because people were not investing in that area.

Some of the barriers in the slow uptake of electric vehicles, sadly, include that there are a smaller number of vehicles available in this country than in other countries because of the inconsistent message given by both state and federal Liberal governments and that there are higher up-front purchase prices. I think that as innovation drives improvements in those vehicles, as we have seen in other areas, prices will fall.

There is also anxiety about electric vehicle range. I must confess that one of my concerns is to make sure that I am fully charged wherever I am going. But there is a rollout of charging stations right across the state, which I know is supported by both the RAA and other companies. We are also undertaking a trial to improve that, but I think we still have some way to go in improving the community's acceptance that it can safely charge vehicles across the state. That said, any policy like that would only be supported if we removed this tax, because we are again sending quite a clear message.

In regard to chargers, a number of councils have introduced electric vehicle charging stations. I know my own council, the Gawler council, have an electric vehicle charging station in the town near the tourism office, and I am aware that other councils are doing the same thing. Electric vehicle charging stations are important from a tourism point of view. If you want people to come to your town and visit, then you provide the opportunity to charge up.

The electric vehicle charging network map, which the RAA are supporting, shows the towns where you will be able to find charging stations, and they will be confirmed shortly. It is also important to note that a number of companies that provide private car parking are already starting to provide electric vehicle charging stations. It is their acknowledgement that this is where the future is in vehicles, and they are now actually going to invest as a result of that.

Probably the saddest part of this proposal by the Liberal Party to introduce a tax, and by the federal Liberal Party to equivocate on climate change policies, is the setback of our country by almost a decade compared with where we could be. We led the world under Premier Mike Rann in terms of renewable energies. We led the nation, we led the world and we set the standard. For that reason, we are now producing most of our energy needs through renewable energies. Sadly, policies of previous state and federal Liberal governments have done damage to that.

With the proper settings in this state, and also at a federal level, this country can not only lead emissions control but also provide innovation that hopefully will lead to manufacturing this type of vehicle in this country. If there is one thing we need back in this country, it is more manufacturing, and this sort of decisive, clear message to industry will support that.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Badcoe.

**Ms STINSON (Badcoe) (11:56):** Thank you, sir. I hope you will be able to hear me over the hail that is falling on the roof of the parliament right now. Put simply, this is a bill that should never have been necessary, but unfortunately it is and here we are. This is a bill that should not have been necessary because this EV tax was not necessary. Not only is this a demonstration of poor policy but it is also a demonstration of poor politics.

I cannot help but think what conversations were going on when this little policy nugget was being thought up. It does seem like something that maybe came from the former Treasurer's mind. You can imagine him trying to convince his team that this was a great idea, a fantastic idea that was going to bring money in, but do not worry about the message it sends, do not worry about the politics of it and do not worry about what the community would actually think about the message being sent by this: that that was a government that did not care about our electric vehicle industry, that did not care about climate change and that thought that it was perfectly sensible to implement a tax on something that we are trying to encourage, that is, electric vehicles and climate-sensitive travel.

What is more stunning is that this policy was thought up on the eve of an election. The bill was passed in November 2021, a mere few months before everyone went to an election. Certainly, for people in my area and across a number of other electorates, including I think some of our more affluent electorates, one thing that was near top of mind, if not top of mind for those voters, was climate change. Yet this was a government—the former government—that decided that it was a really good idea to announce just before an election a policy that was so clearly at odds with what those people stood for and the aspirations they have in terms of tackling climate change.

Clearly, whoever it was who thought up this policy was quite convincing and convinced those who now sit opposite that this was a great idea, that this was a great policy to put to the electorate and implement just months before they went to the polls. Not only is it bad policy, and obviously I will canvass the reasons for that just as fellow speakers on this side already have, but it was incredibly poor politics because those people who care most about climate change were in some of those seats that most violently swung against the Liberal Party at the last election, and I cannot help but think that those two things are connected.

There were a large number of other policies, health among them, that people looked at and thought, 'Gee, that's not what we want to vote for; we want to have a change.' I do think that this was probably one of those issues that was underestimated. The message that it sent to people was a very clear one and it was a message that really jarred with the values of people in those electorates, particularly in metropolitan and inner city electorates.

They say that common sense is not so common, and I really think that this was a demonstration of that because common sense says why would you tax something when you are trying to encourage it. Why would you want a behaviour, like the uptake of electric vehicles, but you would implement a tax—a deterrent to people to take up that behaviour or to take up that action? This policy absolutely flew in the face of common sense and what any person on the street would say is good policy.

Obviously, taxes are necessary, and governments are responsible for deciding where those are implemented and how taxes are raised. They are integral to the way our system of government works and our system of democracy, but it really does not make sense to tax the things that you want to make more popular, unless you do not want to make them more popular, and you would prefer that there is not a strong electric vehicle industry and that there is not a strong hybrid car industry. Then, of course, you might adopt a policy such as this.

One thing I do know is that people in Badcoe are absolutely passionate about the environment. I would say it is among the top few issues for electors in my area. I know that because obviously I get out there and talk to people in my community and I hear from people frequently about the things that are important to them, and I also live in my community and know what those in my neighbourhood think about these matters.

I thought I might take this opportunity to share with the house directly the words of those people in my community who were so moved by this as to get pen and paper or keyboard and laptop together and pen a little letter to their local MP when it came to the EV tax. Each of these letters and emails that I received was from prior to November 2021. I will read them to you in that context.

Of course, what you will hear is that people in Badcoe are passionate about the environment. They are passionate about tackling climate change and they are also passionate about things like trees and green space. My community is very active on those issues and will get up and fight for those things that they believe are right and the EV tax was one of those things that they fought very hard on. This is one letter:

Hi Jayne,

I'm a constituent of Badcoe living with my family in Glandore. I work from home running my own business and climate action is my number one issue. We are outraged to hear that the government is planning to hinder the take-up of clean electric vehicles with an additional tax burden. This is totally against the community's desire to reduce carbon emissions and address climate change. I can't see any logic to this line of thinking. SA has the best track record of the states for creating a clean energy future, but this decision is out of line with all progress we have had to fight so hard for.

I'm really proud of SA's clean energy reputation, especially under Jay Weatherill, one of our best premiers. Please scrap this completely unnecessary tax and instead provide better incentives for solar and battery storage to power our EVs. Currently, the cost of EVs is out of reach for many Australians. Recently, I had to reluctantly buy a second petrol car, but would have preferred an affordable EV but it was too expensive. Let's provide incentives to take up EVs, like all other countries are doing, instead of putting this unnecessary barrier in place.

That is from Mike of Glandore. There is another one:

Dear Jayne,

The first thought that came to my mind when I read the headline that the Treasurer in SA is planning to tax EVs is that it must be true, as some claim, that politicians of the major political parties must be in the pay of the polluting fossil fuel corporations. Emissions from vehicles powered by fossil fuels are not only producing pollution that is a great contributor to climate change but are also responsible for the large number of pollution-related diseases that have increased greatly in recent times.

Responsible governments need to be introducing policies that encourage more people to use public transport and to use vehicles that are not causing pollutions, like electric vehicles, or those generating less pollution, like hybrid vehicles. Only irresponsible governments would try to penalise those who are trying to reduce our carbon footprint. Energy generated from fossil fuels is more expensive and is threatening the public health and contributing to climate change and undermining the viability of future generations.

That is from Andy in Forestville. Here is another one; there is no shortage of them:

Dear Ms Stinson, I am a concerned Australian who is keen to see a cleaner future for our nation. Electric vehicle uptake is inevitable and well overdue. Why would you even be thinking of taxing electric vehicles—

and then there are six exclamation marks after that—

I can only assume that it is for financial revenue—

correct—

Surely the same taxes that exist in importing current cars will just continue with an extra financial burden. Please encourage our representatives across this nation to support keeping our continent clean by supporting the ban on taxes on electric vehicles.

That was from Kate in Glandore. Here is another one:

Hi. I am writing to urge you to oppose any tax on electric vehicles, as proposed by the—

—now then—

South Australian government. It makes no sense to encourage the very necessary uptake of electric vehicles on the one hand and discourage it on the other hand through this tax—

I could not agree more—

The rapid and wide uptake of electric vehicles is a vital component of the fight to reduce greenhouse gas emissions locally, federally and internationally. The Marshall government has, to its credit, continued many of Labor's renewable energy policies, though of course it's up to its usual tricks in other areas. I urge you and your colleagues to stand against this regressive and senseless tax and point out to the government its inconsistency with its other more positive policies on climate change and renewable energy. Best regards, Jack [of Glandore]

Another letter reads:

Hi Jayne, I am a Clarence Park resident—

which I might say used to be in the electorate of Badcoe; it was when this letter was written but is now in the fabulous electorate of Elder—

I just wanted to let you know that I am appalled by the recent state budget decision to apply a road user tax on electric vehicles. This is the most short-sighted, ludicrous money grab for some time. At a time when other countries are incentivising this very obvious green option, the Liberals in general have offered little support, but this is a step further—totally ridiculous. Regards, Bill Saunders [from Clarence Park].

There is one more. It just keeps going:

Hi. Hopefully, as my representative I can trust that you will not support taxing electric vehicles—

yes, you can—

Climate action is an imperative, and supporting the transition to electric vehicles that we can power with green energy is a clear and achievable goal. It would be great if other support for electric vehicles was also implemented, as is being done across the world. Thank you, Wendy [of Forestville]

Wendy, I have good news for you. Yes, you can trust me to not support a tax on electric vehicles. Wendy, you can trust Labor to fight against a tax on electric vehicles, and you can trust Labor that we are doing what we can to tackle climate change with sensible policies, and that does not include taxing electric vehicles.

Those are six letters. I will not tax you any further by going through the other several dozen.

*Mr Odenwalder interjecting:*

**Ms STINSON:** I know—I am here all evening. I will not labour the point further by going through the many, many more dozen letters that I received from members of my electorate who are very passionate about this issue, but I really do not think they are alone in that. I think there are certainly many other electorates where, for them, climate change is a top issue. I think we saw that in the state election and even more so in the federal election, where we saw people really vote with their feet on that issue. Indeed, on the east coast we saw quite a lot of Independents get up who were running on very, very strong climate change agendas. Yet we previously had a government that clearly did not see that coming or did not calculate the gravity of the passion that people have, and the determination that South Australians have around climate change, and decided to implement this policy.

So what was this levy? What was this thing that the previous government was proposing that this bill seeks to cancel? Well, the levy was a distance-based charge for electric vehicles in addition to the registration for an electric vehicle. The levy was to commence on the earlier of either 1 July 2027 or when battery electric vehicle sales reached 30 per cent of the total of new motor vehicle sales in SA. I for one hope that comes sooner rather than later.

From the levy's commencement, electric vehicle owners would have been charged either 2¢ per kilometre travelled in a plug-in hybrid vehicle or they would have been charged 2.5¢ per kilometre for any other electric vehicle. This levy would have been calculated by distance travelled each year and billed as part of the vehicle registration process. The former Liberal government estimated that this new tax would raise \$1 million a year, but it is unclear how that was actually calculated, and it falls well short of reasonable estimates that consider the current uptake trends of electric vehicles.

The former Liberal government also advertised in their promotions that this state tax is a substitute for fuel excise, which once again makes no sense because that is of course a federal tax, so this was not and never was a like-for-like tax: it was simply a new tax. Fuel excise will obviously come under pressure as more electric vehicles come onto our roads; however, addressing that should be dealt with by the commonwealth government. Put simply, this always was a cash grab and a very poorly thought out one at that.

What does this bill do, this bill that the Labor government is now putting forward? What does it do? This bill will repeal both the electric vehicle levy and the requirement for the associated select committee. Abolishing the levy will deliver on our government election commitment, and I do not know if anyone is aware, but we are pretty serious about delivering on our election commitments. We made a few of them, and we are getting on and delivering them.

**Mr Tarzia:** The north-south road, north-south corridor, Keolis Downer. We're still waiting.

**Ms STINSON:** Yes, you're naming a few there that we are on to. We are very serious about delivering on those election commitments. I know in my community I am getting on and delivering the commitments that I made to my community in terms of upgrading infrastructure, in terms of safer roads, and I am very keen to deliver on this one because, as I have said, climate change is a key article of faith really with my community.

Others have mentioned that a survey was conducted by the Australia Institute in 2021. That showed that seven in 10 South Australians would be less likely to purchase an electric vehicle if a new road user charge were to be introduced, and there is a reason why several of my colleagues have mentioned that because that is a pretty persuasive piece of statistics. Seven out of 10 South Australians less likely to purchase an electric vehicle—that would put a real dampener on the uptake of EVs, and that of course flies in the face of exactly what this government is trying to do in encouraging electric vehicle uptake.

It is difficult and there are barriers in the way. People are concerned about cost, as they should be, and I can completely understand that. We want to be making this much easier not harder, and certainly the EV tax would have done that, and certainly the Australia Institute survey, which says that seven in 10 South Australians would be less likely to purchase an electric vehicle with this tax, cannot be ignored.

The levy introduced by the previous government would have been a major disincentive to purchasing an electric vehicle. We know that. While the road user charge would not have commenced for some time, passing this repeal bill now, as soon as possible, will provide certainty for those who are looking to purchase an electric vehicle. We do not want people having any uncertainty or any mixed messages about what our position is on electric vehicles. If you can, we want you to go out and buy one. It is good for the environment. It is good for a growing sector of our manufacturing and car manufacturing sector.

There are average annual savings estimated for electric vehicle adopters for fuel costs and maintenance costs. UBS Global estimates that consumers will save \$1,700 a year by 2030 on the total cost of ownership of electric vehicles over internal combustion engine vehicles. This bill will support the uptake of electric vehicles by preserving those financial benefits. Those will be the kinds of savings that people can expect to get not only now this EV tax is being removed as a disincentive but also as a cost that those who do take up this form of transport would have been forced to pay.

Electrifying our transport fleet is a vital part of the overall transition from carbon-emitting technologies to a greener, cleaner future that accords with this parliament's recent declaration of a climate emergency. Passenger cars make up almost 10 per cent of Australia's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions—10 per cent! Supporting the uptake of electric vehicles will contribute to South Australia's ability to achieve net zero emissions.

I am really pleased to be part of a Labor government that is putting its money where its mouth is and that it is actually acting where ever we possibly can when it comes to climate change, and there are a number of things that we are already doing. One thing we are implementing is the 7,000 electric vehicle purchase subsidies of \$3,000 and the three-year registration fee exemption. In addition, we are supporting the RAA to construct the state's first electric vehicle charging network of over 500 charging stations at 140 sites in 52 locations throughout South Australia.

We are also progressing nine electric vehicle smart-charging trials to demonstrate how EV charging can be integrated into the grid to realise electric cost savings for all South Australians. I am pleased that constituents in my electorate will be benefiting from each of those initiatives. As far as the EV charging network is concerned, as we continue to grow the number of electric vehicle drivers they will undoubtedly demand charging systems and infrastructure which helps to allay road trip anxiety and which delivers charging at the lowest possible cost.

The South Australian government awarded a grant of more than \$12 million to the RAA—which is right on the edge of my electorate at Richmond—to construct and operate Australia's first statewide electric vehicle rapid-charging network. That network will comprise 536 fast and rapid chargers across 140 electric vehicle charging stations. That, and several other initiatives—pages and pages of other initiatives—is why I am really pleased to be part of the Labor government. I am pleased to be standing here representing the views of my community and voting with my feet to repeal this unfair tax.

**The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON (Ramsay—Minister for Tourism, Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (12:17):** If there was ever an example of those opposite being behind the times and out of step with the rest of the world, surely the best example is their November 2021 Motor Vehicles (Electric Vehicles Levy) Amendment Act. While the rest of the world made strategic policy decisions

to incentivise the uptake of electric vehicles, the Marshall Liberal government sought to do the opposite—introducing a new tax which was poorly calculated and clumsily executed and which actually disincentivised the purchase of electric vehicles in South Australia.

In Britain, France, Denmark and Japan, amongst many other places around the globe, governments were designing a policy which would not only incentivise the uptake of electric vehicles but which would also place deadlines for the removal of petrol and diesel-powered cars from the new car market. At the same time the new Marshall Liberal government's tax was due to begin rolling out in 2027, in Japan they would be getting close to their 2030 deadline for petrol and diesel cars.

Not only should the previous government have looked around the world to assess whether or not their policy actually made any sense but they could have also taken a look around the rest of their own country to see what policies, incentive trials and strategies were being implemented in other states. In 2018, the ACT was quick to move with an EV strategy. In July 2021, as the South Australian Liberals were developing their policy for a new tax, the Northern Territory was introducing incentives for electric vehicle purchases. At the same time, in 2021 the Tasmanian Liberal government, while not top of the class by any measure, made sure to rule out the introduction of a road user tax for electric vehicles because of their environmental, social and economic benefits.

Even then, the Liberals here in South Australia still did not get it. Perhaps they should have been seeking to represent the constituents who voted them in. They should have listened to what South Australians were saying, that seven out of 10 people would be less likely to purchase an electric vehicle if a road user charge were introduced. This is exactly the opposite effect that the rest of the world was trying to achieve. What this act did was put us completely out of step with not just the rest of Australia but the rest of the world.

While the Liberals were not listening to their constituents, the state and federal Labor governments were. The federal ALP plan, released during the election campaign, Driving the Nation, outlines a number of initiatives to increase EV sales in Australia, including but not limited to establishing a national charging network, setting a low-emission vehicle target for the commonwealth fleet, and removal of the fringe benefits tax and import tariff for eligible vehicles. Previous speakers have outlined in greater detail these very detailed policies driven for the future.

The South Australian Malinauskas Labor government has been invited to be part of the development process of this rollout and is strongly supportive of a federally led approach in addition to our state-based support and initiatives. That is because while the previous state government's excuse for their new tax was a substitute for fuel excise, what they failed to grasp is that fuel excise is a federal tax.

They were out of touch with their constituents, out of touch with other states and out of touch with the rest of the world. They had calculated this new tax poorly and they had not considered how implementing this new tax and bypassing the federal government would have affected the state's allocation of GST. No wonder it has taken the Malinauskas Labor government to stand here today to repeal it. It is very hard to say sorry, but sometimes you just have to do it.

This repeal bill will repeal both the levy and the requirement for a select committee. The bill will provide certainty for those South Australians switching to an electric vehicle or considering it. We know South Australians are considering this. They actually feel very strongly about it. You just heard from the member for Badcoe, who had dozens of letters written to her that said that we have got this wrong. This is exactly the opposite way we should be trying to support people to buy electric vehicles.

The lack of incentives and standards for electric vehicles is cited as one of the factors impacting the supply and cost of EVs. Manufacturers prioritise markets that show leadership. The whole world is talking about this. This is the conversation that is taking place now. Of course, we know how the Liberals feel about manufacturing of vehicles because they killed it here in South Australia. I can tell you that South Australians will never forgive you for that. Every government around the world subsidises manufacturing of their car industry and they know that electric vehicles are the future.

In the UK, where the government has set targets for the abolition of new petrol and diesel cars by 2040, they have introduced incentives for the uptake of EVs. Consumers now have a choice



of more than 26 low-emission vehicles under \$60,000. That is 26 vehicles in the UK at this price point; the number is only eight in Australia. Because of this lack of action and unacceptable and unappreciated proposals of tax, we risk becoming a dumping ground for old technology. We need to act quickly to get in lock step with the rest of the world.

I want to touch on how this impacts on my portfolio of tourism. Let me be clear: tourism operators and tourists themselves are focused on this state, they are interested and they want to know what South Australia is doing. We certainly know that sustainable transport is a hotly discussed issue. The Tourism & Transport Forum, which is the peak body for the tourism industry, has been heavily involved in the consideration of this new transport technology, whether that be electric or hydrogen vehicles, sustainable aviation fuels or people's love of the potential *The Jetsons* option of flying cars in the future. They are talking about it, they are showing leadership, they are having the conversation.

Back in 2017, the TTF released its paper 'The Future of Mobility' and in that paper they identified a case study of a Western Australian plan for an electric highway and, in Queensland, an electric superhighway to encourage the uptake of electric vehicles. This is the future. You have to plan for the future, and just as we planned for National Highway 1, which gets us all over our beautiful country, we have to plan for a future that is going to be more sustainable.

In 2020, the Queensland Electric Super Highway was launched, connecting Coolangatta to Cairns, with fast-charging electric vehicle stations, opening up one of the great tourist drives to electric vehicles. In May this year, the New South Wales government identified self-drive regional destinations across the state, and has plans to install 3,500 charging stations across New South Wales. The Tourism Industry Council of New South Wales has commended this initiative. At the very start of 2022, an article in *The Australian*, 'EV chargers are becoming tourism table stakes' noted that EV charging stations are fast becoming the new swimming pools, where accommodation providers across the country are taking heed of consumer demand for options for electric vehicles.

Dr Jerry Schwartz, Australia's largest private hotel owner, whose portfolio includes the Fairmont Resort Blue Mountains, the Victoria Hotel Melbourne and the Crowne Plaza Hunter Valley, installed EV chargers at several of these rural and city-based hotels as far back as 2016. People are looking ahead and seeing the interest in this, not just for our international tourists but for Australians as well.

In South Australia, we have seen some leadership in this area, particularly in the electorate of Schubert, where business is seeing the benefit to their region of incentivising electric vehicles. Joseph Evans, winemaker and owner of Ballycroft Vineyard and Cellars, installed two EV chargers after a holiday in the US in 2015. He said:

I'd go to touristy places in California and you'd always see EV chargers there, and I thought, 'Yep, I've gotta do that.'

He was looking to the future. Of course, we have some similarities, particularly around the Napa area, with the same tourists we want to attract here to the Barossa. The installation of the solar panels and charging stations have been good for business. He said, 'I've definitively attracted customers who would have never come to my winery otherwise.' That puts us on a map. It says to people, 'If you're interested in sustainable transport and interested in wine, South Australia is the place to come.' We also have people like JET Charge's Tim Washington, who says in the same article:

Having a charging station also lets people know that the EV revolution is coming, and the businesses that cater to them will already be on the front foot.

We know that businesses in Australia and in South Australia seven years ago were already identifying, as a unique selling proposition, having an electric charging station, that they were thinking about the future. They want us to be in step with the rest of the world, and that is why there was shock and awe when those opposite introduced a new tax deterring the uptake of these vehicles.

I am very proud to be a key member of the Malinauskas Labor government and particularly proud for the tourism industry. It made me so surprised that this decision was made. I think we all know that the previous Treasurer was a key participant in this. It seems to fly in the face of exactly

who we are in South Australia. South Australia has led in the renewable energy space for decades. I think at one point—and it still may be the case—we were second only to Denmark with the amount of renewable energy, whether it be wind or solar and now, of course, the big battery that we have as well. This is something that we could hang our hat on, where we could say to the world, 'We have done it.'

We have great conditions, a mix between wind and sun. Not only that, we made a decision in South Australia that we were going to be at the front of this. We saw the future, and the future was about renewables. We see that coming through lots of different industries. This is a prime example in transport, where we see the electric vehicle coming on more and more. We know transition not only takes time but opportunity, incentives and also the support and willingness of the government of the day. We know that there was interest. It actually fits our brand. It fits who we are as South Australia because we have already spent decades becoming strong on renewables.

This previous legislation just turned its back. It turned its back on who we are, who we want to be and what makes us attractive not just to tourists but to people wanting to live here. That renewables piece has been important to our brand in South Australia, whether it be the food that we grow, the wine that we make or the beautiful land that we invite people to come to visit. You just have to think to yourself: how did you get it so wrong? How did you not read the room and not look at who we are and lead it forward? I am very proud to be part of a team that is repealing this act to make sure we are going ahead.

I would like to recognise some of the operators who have already supported this with an electric charging station. I particularly want to raise my acknowledgement of the RAA, which has the grant from the South Australian government to do the first statewide rapid-charging network. That means we will have 536 fast and rapid chargers across 140 electric vehicle charging stations. That is not just in the CBD: there are rural, regional and metropolitan services.

We also know that people have had some concerns about travelling longer distances, so the locations include Renmark, Mount Gambier and by our state borders as well. The network will be finalised by the end of 2023. I want to recognise the RAA's leadership in this area and their focus. Of course, they are incredibly involved in the tourism industry. I appreciate their thoughts. They know that tourists are looking for this as well.

We are also pleased that there are grant recipients such as AGL with Wilson Parking, Chargefox, JET Charge with NRMA, JOLT Charge and City of Adelaide with UPark. Since we have gone into government, we have expanded that with some additional recipients who are going to be part of this EV smart-charging trial, and they are ENGIE with Flinders University, JET Charge with Rocland and Planet Ark Power with Foodland Pasadena.

We need not only to think that this is a good idea but to make it happen, and there are going to have to be lots of different ways how we support the transition, but we would not be here today talking about this legislation had not those opposite got it so wrong. I cannot believe that you could not read what the future was offering. I feel it was a mistake that was made. I am so glad we are here to change that. Just like there was a mistake with the 'old mate' campaign, you have to stand up when you have it wrong, and you have to correct it because this is for the future. I support the bill.

**Ms THOMPSON (Davenport) (12:33):** I rise, too, to support the Motor Vehicles (Electric Vehicle Levy) Amendment Repeal Bill 2022. This bill will repeal the new tax that the previous Liberal government introduced because this government does not support pointless taxes. When it comes to electric vehicle take-up, we need incentives, not disincentives. The levy is a distance-based charge for electric vehicles as an addition to the registration for an electric vehicle, a penalty for those who want to reduce emissions and save on energy costs. Is this really what we want to be doing right now when people are facing soaring energy bills?

It was put by those opposite that electric vehicle owners would be charged 20¢ per kilometre travelled in a plug-in hybrid vehicle or 2½¢ per kilometre for any other electric vehicle—a ludicrous money grab. That is what we have just heard from the member for Badcoe when reading out letters from her own constituents. Why was this tax applied, allegedly as a substitute for fuel excise, which is a federal tax? It is not a like-for-like tax and would contribute nothing to new roads or infrastructure here in South Australia.

It is true that fuel excise will come under pressure as more electric vehicles come onto our roads, but addressing this should be led by the commonwealth government and is certainly no reason for a new state tax. This government is taking the opportunity for South Australia to lead the way rather than imposing taxes that would hurt the growth in EVs. The levy introduced by the previous government would have been a major disincentive to purchasing electric vehicles. Passing this repeal bill as soon as possible will provide certainty for those looking to purchase an electric vehicle.

A survey undertaken by the Australia Institute in 2021 showed that seven in 10 South Australians would be less likely to purchase an electric vehicle if a new road user charge were to be introduced—seven in 10 South Australians who would choose petrol or diesel vehicles over electric due to the tax imposed by the former government. Surely this point alone is enough reason to scrap this tax. So, 2¢ or 2½¢ per kilometre may not sound like much, but with the rising cost of living every cent counts.

Abolishing the levy will deliver on another government election commitment because the Malinauskas government is a government that delivers on its commitments and listens to South Australians. This government is not just axing this tax but also encouraging the uptake of electric vehicles. UBS Global estimates consumers will save \$1,700 per annum by 2030 on the total cost of ownership of electric vehicles over internal combustion engine vehicles. Electrifying our transport fleet is a vital part of the overall transition from carbon-emitting technologies to a greener, cleaner future that accords with state parliament's recent declaration of a climate emergency.

Our state government is delivering 7,000 electric vehicle purchase subsidies of \$3,000 and a three-year registration fee exemption—incentives not taxes; help not additional costs. This government is supporting the RAA to construct the state's first electric vehicle charging network of over 500 charging stations at 142 sites in 52 locations throughout South Australia. The South Australian government awarded a grant of almost \$12.4 million to the RAA to construct and operate Australia's first statewide electric vehicle rapid-charging network.

The network will comprise 536 fast and rapid chargers across 140 electric vehicle charging stations in rural, regional and metropolitan service locations. There are plans for 26 sites in Adelaide, including 10 in the CBD. The RAA will start the design and construction of the EV charging network in supermarkets, car parks, town centres, council-owned sites and hotels and motels across South Australia. It is anticipated the network will be finalised by the end of 2023.

The rural and regional sites will provide certainty for EV owners travelling across our state and will kill the myth of the former federal government that the rise of EVs will end the weekend. Additionally, our government is progressing nine electric vehicle smart-charging trials to demonstrate how EV charging can be integrated into the grid to realise electricity cost savings for all South Australians.

As part of these government-supported trials, smart-charging stations will be installed across metro and regional areas, including shopping centres, off-street car parks, hotels, motels and holiday parks. The smart-charging trials will demonstrate ways that electric vehicle drivers can be incentivised to charge during periods of high renewable electricity generation or low grid demand. This will support the grid and reduce electricity costs for all consumers.

Some trials involve vehicles providing electricity back to the grid, acting as batteries on wheels. New business models are also being trialled that will improve charging service availability and improve financial sustainability for operators. This will include tapping into new revenue streams, such as frequency services in the National Electric Market, which will reduce operator reliance on charging service fees for financial viability. In total, there are nine recipients of the \$3.2 million grant funding.

The trials will deliver a total of 142 new fast and rapid electric vehicle charging bays for South Australian motorists and attract around \$4.8 million of private investment in the development and construction. The SA government will not generate any income from these trials. The trials will provide information on how the smart chargers are used and inform the future direction and infrastructure investment as the charging network expands and develops.

It is fantastic to see that three of these trials are being delivered very close to or in my electorate of Davenport. The first trial is the JOLT trial in Marion, just outside my electorate. This trial will tap into drivers' instincts to seek a bargain at the bottom of the fuel cycle. Using roadside LCD advertising displays and in-app notifications, JOLT will promote low-cost surge pricing to activate consumer behaviour to 'turn in and save' during incentivised times.

The key objective of this trial will be to quantify the impact of charging incentives on consumer behaviours and demonstrate the role that EVs can play to balance electricity supply and demand loads during the day. The second local trial is being run by ENGIE in three of the car parks at Flinders University, within my electorate of Davenport. This is one of Australia's largest vehicle to grid trials, with ENGIE integrating 22 managed smart-charging stations into a campus-level virtual battery to demonstrate how EVS could be harnessed to support SA's electricity system during peak demand periods.

The final trial is with Planet Ark Power at the Foodland Pasadena Shopping centre. This trial includes the installation of 14 fast and rapid-charging bays and a battery energy storage system that will store as much renewable electricity as 125 home batteries. The trial at Pasadena will incentivise EV drivers to enter the shopping centre to boost their charge, which could be through pricing, length of charge or validation of charging reward.

The smart chargers will fully charge an electric vehicle in 15 to 45 minutes as a customer enters the shopping centre and activates the EV boost—just enough time to complete a shop at Foodland, browse the local specialty shops or grab a coffee or lunch. Once completed, the battery storage system here will be the first of its kind built at a South Australian shopping centre. These are three very exciting trials and I encourage all EV owners in the south to utilise those facilities and motorists across Adelaide to look for similar trials underway in their communities.

There are over 6,500 vehicles in the SA government fleet. In total, these vehicles travel around 110 million kilometres, equating to 21,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>. There is a requirement for SA government agencies to transition to plug-in electric vehicles if they are cost effective on a total cost of ownership basis or if the additional cost can be managed by improving fleet utilisation. The benefits of the orderly transition of our government fleet to electric vehicles will be twofold. It will meaningfully contribute to lowering our state's carbon footprint and help us to achieve net zero emissions. Additionally, it will help saturate the second-hand market with electric vehicles, reducing a lack of availability and reducing the up-front cost for people looking to purchase an electric vehicle.

This is the direction our government needs to take to secure a better future for South Australians: incentives not taxes. I commend this repeal bill to the house.

**Ms SAVVAS (Newland) (12:43):** I am very pleased today to stand to discuss the benefits of repealing the EV levy act and corresponding select committee into electric vehicles. This is something that has been raised with me on a very regular basis by constituents in the Newland electorate, particularly the way that the levy and equivalent provisions in the federal parliament have made the transition to electric vehicles inaccessible for working people.

A survey undertaken by the Australia Institute in 2021 showed that seven in 10 South Australians would be less likely to purchase an electric vehicle if a new road user charge were to be introduced. This is a major disincentive to purchase an electric vehicle and in many ways has made it entirely inaccessible for the majority of South Australians. Repealing this levy will provide certainty for those future planning, those wanting to transition to an electric vehicle in the future.

The levy introduced by the previous government would have been a major disincentive to purchasing an EV. We, of course, are putting our money where our mouth is with this bill and have made the incredibly important decision to also electrify our transport fleet. While the road user charge will not commence for some time, passing this repeal bill as soon as possible will provide certainty for those looking to purchase an EV.

Electrifying our transport fleet is a vital part of the overall transition from carbon-emitting technologies to a greener, cleaner future that accords with the state parliament's recent declaration of a climate emergency. I would like to acknowledge both the Hon. Rob Simms in the other place

and the Minister for Climate, Environment and Water for their role in that decision, a no-brainer for our new government and one that is sadly overdue.

We know that passenger cars can make up almost 10 per cent of Australia's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Supporting the uptake of electric vehicles will contribute to South Australia's ability to achieve net zero emissions. There are over 6,500 vehicles in the SA government fleet, and this will have a significant impact on achieving that target. In total, these vehicles travel around 110 million kilometres, equating to over 21,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>.

Not too long ago, I was in local government when we made the big decision to commence electrifying our local government fleet, and it is important to acknowledge what an impact that has not just on the state's environment but also on the purchasability of EVs, whether that be second-hand or at a government auction like Pickles or equivalent.

A resident named Eleanor actually came to visit me a few weeks ago to discuss exactly this, asking whether government vehicles would be transitioning or not. She is a state government employee and, although due to previous levies and taxes not able to buy an electric vehicle of her own, would like to contribute in some way by at least using EVs while on shift. Eleanor is just one of many residents who have contacted me regarding the inaccessibility of EVs for regular people, having emailed me saying:

Electric vehicles are still out of reach for many people. We need to incentivise EVs to bring down the cost and make the new technology affordable and accessible for more Australians.

I could not agree more.

There is a requirement for SA government agencies to transition to plug-in electric vehicles if they are cost-effective on a total cost of ownership basis or if the additional costs can be managed by improving fleet utilisation. The benefits of an orderly transition of our government fleet to electric vehicles would be twofold. Firstly, it will meaningfully contribute to lowering our state's carbon footprint and help us achieve net zero emissions. It will help saturate the second-hand market with electric vehicles, reducing a lack of availability and reducing the up-front cost for people looking to purchase an electric vehicle in the future.

I would also like to make mention today of our EV charging network, noting the inaccessibility for those who would like to purchase an EV and use a public charging station. It is a barrier that I have only very recently become familiar with, when making the decision whether to purchase either a hybrid or electric vehicle of my own. I, like many others, realised there was an additional barrier, because I rent the property that I live in.

If you do not have the ability to affix a home charger for an electric vehicle in a garage, there is a further layer of inaccessibility, and it very much acts as a disincentive for those wishing to purchase an EV. I actually did make the decision not to purchase an EV, because of the lack of charging stations and the inability to charge at home in my garage, and had to go with a hybrid vehicle despite very much wanting to transition to electric vehicles.

I believe this is a significant barrier for renters, particularly without the provision of widely accessible public charging stations in the metropolitan area. It is another thing that I have been contacted about significantly in the last few months, with residents asking whether there were a number of electric charging stations in our local area, whether there would be more coming soon and whether there would be certainty about where they would be located so that people could future-plan their own decisions in terms of purchasing vehicles.

In some ways, it is very much a chicken-and-egg scenario, but I do believe that uptake cannot and will not increase without an increase in public charging stations. That is why I am so very proud of the partnership with the RAA to construct and operate Australia's first statewide EV rapid-charging network. This network will comprise 536 fast and rapid chargers across 140 electric vehicle charging stations in 52 rural, regional and metropolitan service locations. While the exact locations are yet to be finalised, I understand there are now plans for 26 sites in Adelaide, including 10 in the CBD.

Personally, I am looking forward to finding out where the east and north locations may be, but I am particularly excited to see the provision of a charger in the nearby north-eastern hills at Woodside, where I have many friends and family. Noting a lack of conventional petrol stations on the

hills route down Chain of Ponds, I hope this will provide an attractive alternative for those in Woodside, Birdwood and surrounds on the way down to Tea Tree Gully.

The RAA will start the design and construction of the EV charging network in supermarkets, car parks, town centres, council-owned sites, hotels and motels throughout South Australia. It is anticipated that network will be finished by the end of 2023. I very much look forward to it and hope to see the provision in the future of a greater range of charging stations around the Tea Tree Gully area, making it more accessible for residents in my local community to access electric vehicles and also future plan their vehicle purchases moving forward. I commend the bill.

**Mr ODENWALDER (Elizabeth) (12:51):** I also rise to speak in support of the Motor Vehicles (Electric Vehicle Levy) Amendment Repeal Bill. As the member for Ramsay outlined quite succinctly, the Liberals opposite really have failed to read the room here. We have a very good track record in this state of pursuing renewable energy and, if I understood the member Ramsay's contribution correctly, we are second only to Denmark in our use of renewable energy.

We should be very proud of the reforms made by the Rann government and carried on and expanded through the Weatherill government. This is a reason for South Australia to be proud. We did have the interregnum, where we went backwards for four years. We saw the introduction of a bill to raise a new tax on electric vehicles, a completely regressive tax on new vehicles, but thankfully we now have a Malinauskas Labor government in this state that is willing to repeal that bill and further encourage the use of electric vehicles in the state.

In passing, I read with interest the other day Minister Koutsantonis—and he, of course, can speak for himself—hinting at plans to overhaul South Australia's public transport system. These are not concrete plans yet; these are aspirations. I think once you encourage the uptake of electric vehicles and the installation of charging stations, as the member for Newland has outlined, then you really open the way and reach a tipping point eventually where electric vehicles are very much the norm and you can then switch to enabling the public transport fleet to go fully electric. I think that is something that we should strive for, and I think the minister did hint at that in his comments to *The Advertiser* on 27 October. To quote the minister, he said:

We want more infrastructure in South Australia and we are always going to be chasing more resources from the Commonwealth government—

This is in the context of the federal budget—

and the challenge for us is to have projects ready to go.

In other jurisdictions, they're spending money on bus fleets and passenger rail, so we've got to make sure we have opportunities to encourage more public transport use.

He goes on to say that we want to partner with the commonwealth in pursuing these aims. The minister went on to say:

...public transport is a game changer. We can keep spending billions and billions and billions of dollars on road infrastructure, (but) the truth is if people catch trams, trains and buses, everyone saves—we save money on taxes, we save money on insurance and carparking.

Of course, he also said he would absolutely like to see more investment in decarbonisation of our public transport system, and I think that is the future.

What we are doing when we encourage the uptake of electric vehicles is we encourage the installation of electric vehicle charging stations and make that very much the norm across the metropolitan area and across South Australia. We can then begin the project of decarbonising properly our public transport system. Ultimately, what we really want is people using public transport.

I see individual drivers driving electric vehicles—as well as self-driving vehicles, which is a whole other topic—as really a stepping stone into what we really should be doing, and that is encouraging more people into mass transit. It makes sense for the environment, it actually makes sense in terms of infrastructure spending, and I think that is something we very much need to be encouraging.

But of course those opposite do not agree. They also claim to be the party of good economic management. This has been proven to be wrong time and time again, as you know, Deputy Speaker.

They claim to pursue an agenda of wanting to lower taxes, but really what those opposite have done during the interregnum was to increase the tax burden on the vast bulk of the population. The introduction of the levy on electric vehicles that this bill seeks to repeal—and which was a decision of the cabinet, I should say, at which time the opposition leader, the member for Black, was a member—is an example of the regressive nature of tax reforms that those opposite seek to pursue.

This is a brand-new tax. As other speakers have said, this was a brand-new tax. Let people make no mistake about that. No road user tax or any similar form of levy existed at a state level on ordinary motorists before the original bill was brought to parliament. The then Treasurer, Rob Lucas, and his colleagues—including the now opposition leader, the member for Black, and including the now transport spokesman, the member for Hartley—sat around the cabinet table and decided it would be a good thing to impose a new tax on South Australians. Not only is it a new tax, it is a tax on electric vehicles. It is a tax on people pursuing what this state is very widely known for, and that is the pursuit of, ultimately, carbon-free transport.

But did those opposite give any thought to how this might impact on South Australians? I do not think so. Those opposite decided on bringing in a new measure that would add to the tax and the cost-of-living pressures on South Australians, not ease the pressure. We have seen over recent weeks more and more pressure, particularly on fuel prices, across the board in terms of power prices—an increasing burden on South Australians.

It was something of a sneaky move, I think. As others have pointed out, it was something of a sneaky move that the Liberal Party, those opposite, tried to disguise this as a replacement for an existing tax. I say again: this was a new tax. It was a tax that did not exist before and it was a tax that the then Treasurer, the now opposition leader, the now transport spokesman and all those sitting opposite who were in the cabinet room—and, indeed, who were in the party room—during the last parliament, supported.

In announcing this measure, they said that electric vehicles do not attract the fuel excise paid by motorists using petrol or diesel-powered vehicles; therefore, EVs would make a lower contribution to the cost of maintaining our road networks. But what the then Treasurer failed to point out was that fuel excise is levied by the commonwealth, and that the proposal put forward by those opposite was to create a new state-based tax.

I think they were hoping that members of the public would be duped by this—that they would see it as a like for like and a perfectly reasonable outcome. But as we saw from the emails received by all of us, and those read out by the member for Badcoe, the members of the public were not fooled by this. It was a new tax. They saw it as a new tax. They knew that no such tax existed before the introduction of that bill, and they saw through what those opposite were trying to achieve.

As you know, Deputy Speaker, the commonwealth gathers the goods and services tax from the public via us purchasing goods and services, of course, and then distributes it to state and territory treasuries. As the member for Playford has outlined, the Commonwealth Grants Commission uses the principle of horizontal fiscal equalisation. This aims to provide equitable services for all Australians, with GST allocations balanced against an individual state or territory's own revenue-raising capacity—taking, of course, population into consideration.

Therefore, imposing this new tax—and I say again that it is a new tax, in the form of the EV levy—those opposite made South Australians vulnerable to a reduction in GST revenue. They were not up-front about this at the time. They tried to sell it as a like for like and they tried to sell it as a simple alternative to existing taxation measures: it was not.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Elizabeth, would you like to seek leave to conclude your remarks later?

**Mr ODENWALDER:** I will conclude if I have time, sir. I support the bill. This is a new tax. I support the bill and commend it to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Hon. J.K. Szakacs.

*Sitting suspended from 13:00 to 14:00.*

**APPROPRIATION BILL 2022***Assent*

Her Excellency the Governor assented to the bill.

**SUPERANNUATION FUNDS MANAGEMENT CORPORATION OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA  
(INVESTMENT IN RUSSIAN ASSETS) AMENDMENT BILL***Assent*

Her Excellency the Governor assented to the bill.

**NATIONAL ELECTRICITY LAW (SOUTH AUSTRALIA) (CONSUMER DATA RIGHT)  
AMENDMENT BILL***Assent*

Her Excellency the Governor assented to the bill.

**SHOP TRADING HOURS (EXTENSION OF HOURS) AMENDMENT BILL***Assent*

Her Excellency the Governor assented to the bill.

*Petitions***ALDINGA RECREATIONAL FACILITY**

**The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL (Mawson):** Presented a petition signed by 1,303 residents of the Fleurieu Peninsula and greater South Australia, requesting the house to urge the government to provide adequate funding for an indoor recreational and therapeutic aquatic facility in Aldinga.

*Parliamentary Procedure***ANSWERS TABLED**

**The SPEAKER:** I direct that the written answer to a question be distributed and printed in *Hansard*.

**PAPERS**

The following papers were laid on the table:

By the Premier (Hon. P.B. Malinauskas)—

Annual Reports 2021-22—

Auditor-General's Department—Report 9 of 2022

Government Boards and Committees Information, South Australian  
Infrastructure SA

Premier and the Cabinet, Department of the

Premier's Delivery Unit

Productivity Commission, Office of the South Australian

By the Deputy Premier (Hon. S.E. Close)—

Annual Reports 2021-22—

Controlled Substances Act 1984—Return of authorisations issued under  
section 52C

Director of Public Prosecutions, Office of the

Legal Practitioner's Disciplinary Tribunal

Ombudsman SA—Audit of compliance with the Criminal Law (Forensic  
Procedures) Act 2007

Privacy Committee of South Australia

Return to Work Corporation of South Australia

State Records Act 1997, Administration of the



Summary Offences Act 1953—Return of authorisations to enter premises under to section 83C

Victims' Rights, Commissioner for

By the Minister for Climate, Environment and Water (Hon. S.E. Close)—

Annual Reports 2021-22—

Dog and Cat Management Board

Co-Management Boards—

Dhilba Guuranda-Innes National Park

Ikara-Flinders Ranges National Park

Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park

Yumbarra Conservation Park

Regulation made under the following Act—

Radiation Protection and Control—General

By the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport (Hon. A. Koutsantonis)—

Essential Services Commission of South Australia—2022 Ports Access Regime and Price Determination Review: Stage One—Final Report—August 2022

Regulation made under the following Act—

Maritime Services (Access)—General

By the Treasurer (Hon. S.C. Mullighan)—

Primary Industries and Regions, Department of – Report on Outcome of the Review of the 2013 Management Plan for the South Australian Commercial Marine Scalefish Fishery—September 2022

Annual Reports 2021-22—

Dairy Authority of South Australia (Dairysafe)

Electricity Industry Superannuation Scheme

Forestry SA

Parliamentary Superannuation Board, South Australian

Police Superannuation Board

Southern Select Superannuation Corporation

Superannuation Board, South Australian

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

Law Reform Institute, South Australian—Autonomy and Safeguarding are not Mutually Inconsistent: A Review of the Operation of the Ageing and Adult Safeguarding Act 1995—Report—September 2022

By the Minister for Trade and Investment (Hon. N.D. Champion)—

Trade and Investment, Department for—Annual Report 2021-22

By the Minister for Planning (Hon. N.D. Champion)—

Annual Reports 2021-22—

Adelaide Cemeteries Authority

Architectural Practice Board of SA

State Planning Commission

Surveyors Board SA

West Beach Trust

*Ministerial Statement***NATIONAL ENERGY CRISIS**

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier) (14:05):** I seek leave to make a ministerial statement.

Leave granted.

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** The commonwealth budget delivered on 25 October forecasts that electricity prices will increase in the National Electricity Market by 20 per cent by the end of this year and a further 30 per cent the next financial year—a potential cumulative increase of 56 per cent. In addition, federal Treasury expects retail prices of gas to increase by 20 per cent this year and a further 20 per cent in 2023-24.

Price increases of this scale are completely unacceptable to the community and will have significant adverse impacts on households and businesses, worsening pressure on the cost-of-living crisis, reducing real disposable income and impacting economic growth. As noted by the commonwealth, the Australian Energy Market Operator and the Australian Energy Regulator, the illegal invasion of Ukraine by Russia has caused a global gas supply crisis, which has increased prices to extraordinary levels. Australia, including South Australia, is not immune to these price rises.

Electricity price rises have been exacerbated by a related global increase in coal prices, and in Australia the increasingly unreliability of aging coal-fired power stations and problems with coal supply. South Australia has a higher level of renewable generation, and price rises here are expected to be lower than in the Eastern States, which rely on coal-fired powered fire stations. However, while lower, the predicted rises are severe.

Accordingly, the government has established a National Energy Crisis Committee of Cabinet, which will be chaired by me as Premier. The cabinet committee will be supported by a task force, which will help develop a response to the forecast electricity price increases with the aim of implementing measures that can reduce the scale of increase and mitigate the impact on the community.

The National Energy Crisis Taskforce will be co-chaired by the Minister for Energy and Mining, Minister Tom Koutsantonis, and the Chief Executive of the Department for Energy and Mining, with a membership including the Chief Executive of Hydrogen Power South Australia, Treasury and Finance, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and other members as determined with support from the Department for Energy and Mining and expert energy market consultants.

In addition, South Australia is working collaboratively with the commonwealth, other states and territories and national market bodies the AER, the AMC and AEMO. The Malinauskas government is pleased that the commonwealth has reinvigorated the energy ministers process and welcomes the leadership of energy ministers by the commonwealth Minister for Climate Change and Energy, Chris Bowen.

This is a national energy crisis, and we welcome the statements from the commonwealth that Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese; Treasurer, Jim Chalmers; Minister for Resources, Madeleine King; Mr Bowen and colleagues; will consider all our options in addressing the challenge of this crisis. The commonwealth has considerable regulatory powers, and South Australia will welcome those powers being exercised in the pursuit of affordable, reliable and cleaner energy.

It is also important to dismiss the claims that renewable energy is the cause of the price increase. The cause is the increase in the prices of coal and gas and the internationalisation of prices domestically despite Australia's bountiful supplies.

In the Quarterly Energy Dynamics report, published last week by the Australian Energy Market Operator, this trend is quite clear. That report notes that in South Australia the average price of gas in the third quarter of 2021 was \$11.51 per gigajoule. In the same quarter this year, it was \$27.29; that is, there has been a 137 per cent increase. AEMO found that thermal coal export prices in July 2021 were below \$A200 a tonne. In the third quarter this year, they averaged \$612 a tonne.

These prices are then reflected in the wholesale price setting of the National Electricity Market. AEMO records the average marginal price set in the NEM according to the form of generation. For black coal, the average price in the third quarter of 2021 was \$61 per megawatt hour. In the same quarter this year, that was \$197 per megawatt hour, or more than three times higher. For gas, the average increased from \$134 in quarter 3 of 2021 to \$330 this year, an increase of nearly 150 per cent.

In contrast, there was a very different position in the NEM, where renewables set the price. For wind, the price changed from negative \$41 in quarter 3 of 2021 to negative \$1 this year, clearly reducing overall pricing rather than stoking increases. For solar, the price reduced from \$33 in 2021 to \$31 this year, again showing that renewables are driving prices down.

These figures show that the Malinauskas government's policy to build a hydrogen industry and encourage more renewable energy investment will both decarbonise our economy and drive down prices for consumers and businesses. My government is committed to assessing all possible options available at a state level to protect South Australia from the worst impacts of the national energy crisis.

#### *Parliamentary Committees*

#### **PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE**

**Mr BROWN (Florey) (14:14):** I bring up the eighth report of the committee, entitled Noarlunga State Emergency Service Unit.

Report received and ordered to be published.

**Mr BROWN:** I bring up the ninth report of the committee, entitled Adelaide Botanic High School Expansion.

Report received and ordered to be published.

**Mr BROWN:** I bring up the 10<sup>th</sup> report of the committee, entitled Roma Mitchell House Asset Protection Upgrade.

Report received and ordered to be published.

#### *Parliamentary Procedure*

#### **VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** I acknowledge in the gallery the presence of Mr Alex Kollias, who is working as a work experience student in the member for Elder's office. Welcome to parliament.

#### *Question Time*

#### **FEDERAL BUDGET**

**The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS (Black—Leader of the Opposition) (14:16):** My question is to the Premier. Did the Premier ask the Prime Minister to provide cost-of-living relief to South Australians in Labor's federal budget? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

**The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS:** Labor's federal budget failed to deliver a single cost-of-living measure for South Australians, their families, households and businesses, despite warning that power prices will skyrocket by up to 56 per cent over the next two years.

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN (Lee—Treasurer) (14:17):** I am pleased to report to the parliament that we did engage with the commonwealth in between the time of the recent federal election and the delivery of the federal budget last Tuesday night. I am also pleased to say that there were at least two very important cost-of-living relief measures that were provided in the federal budget.

There are millions of Australians who rely on, to varying degrees, sometimes a very significant degree, the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. It was a very welcome move, I think, that the federal budget included a lot more money to provide far greater subsidies for many more

medicines for Australians. That is really important particularly for those people on low and fixed incomes, including those people on low and fixed incomes who are receiving those from the federal government.

I was also pleased to see that the federal government made good on their election commitment to provide substantially increased support for parents utilising childcare arrangements. Once again, millions of families will receive an important boost in what is a very significant cost. I think we can all agree across all sides of the chamber that not only is it done in an effort to try to reduce the cost of accessing child care and what that does to a family budget but it is also designed as a major Labor productivity measure and that is to try to get hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of primary caregivers back into the workforce or, if they are not re-entering the workforce, if they are already in the workforce, enable them to participate to a much greater extent in the labour force.

They are two very significant measures, costing the federal budget billions of dollars over the forward estimates and that will mean more money in the pockets of Australians, including South Australians.

*Members interjecting:*

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** I note that there are members interjecting. They don't believe that a substantial reduction, it seems, a substantial reduction in the price of medicine—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Chaffey is called to order.

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** —which is provided under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Flinders!

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** It seems that they don't believe that that will make a difference to millions of Australians. Well, I beg to differ because I know in my electorate with a significant proportion of adults who are retired and/or on low and fixed incomes it will make a substantial difference.

I also know that for many other families in my electorate, just like in many other parts of South Australia, working families with young children seeking to access child care, a substantial increase in childcare subsidies will make a significant difference both to the family budget but, as I explained before, also allowing a primary caregiver—let's be honest, usually, not exclusively, but usually women—to get back into the workforce or to participate more greatly in the workforce. That is a good thing and I am very glad that the federal budget delivered those measures.

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The leader has the call.

#### NORTH-SOUTH CORRIDOR

**The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS (Black—Leader of the Opposition) (14:20):** My question is again to the Premier. Premier, who will pay for the completion of the north-south corridor? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

**The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS:** The Torrens to Darlington stage of the north-south corridor did not appear on any of federal Labor's budget papers.

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Treasurer has the call.

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN (Lee—Treasurer) (14:21):** Of course, the answer, generally and slightly more specifically speaking, is Australians and South Australians. They will be the ones who will be paying for this because it will be paid for both with taxes raised by the commonwealth

government and it will be paid for through taxes raised by the South Australian government. If you want the answer to who is paying for it—well, all of us and many other Australians are. That's the simple truth of it.

*Mrs Hurn interjecting:*

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** The member for Schubert interjects, 'That's so smart. 'No, it's just accurate, basic and simple. That's what it is: accurate, basic and simple and if that's hard for the member for Schubert—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Schubert!

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** —well, thank goodness she's not in the shadow treasury portfolio.

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Chaffey! Member for Schubert!

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** If that's hard for the member for Schubert, maybe she should have been one or two rows back this early on in proceedings for her career, if that's so difficult for her to understand.

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** When governments pay for things, it comes from revenue—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Schubert is called to order.

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** —usually raised from the constituents of that government. If you would like any other explanations about how government budgeting works, well, we are here for the next hour.

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Flinders, order!

#### NORTH-SOUTH CORRIDOR

**The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS (Black—Leader of the Opposition) (14:22):** A supplementary question to the Premier: has the Premier sought assurances from the Prime Minister that the federal government will contribute 50 per cent of the funding required to complete the north-south corridor.

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN (Lee—Treasurer) (14:22):** I'm pleased to report to the house that there is no change in the funding arrangements between the state and the federal governments on the north-south corridor. There has been no change from the state government in the total budget for the north-south corridor completion, the Torrens to Darlington project—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Morialta!

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** —and we are still waiting, as we have explained in this place and also many times out in the community. We are still waiting—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Member of the Hartley!

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** —for work to be provided to the government. We already know, for example, that the plans that were left to us by the other side, who of course were insisting right up to 18 March of this year that the project was 'shovel ready'—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Chaffey! Member for Flinders!

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** —it was ready to go, and of course on coming to government the opposite was true.

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Morialta!

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** The opposite, of course, was true. It wasn't shovel ready. It wasn't yet ready to go to tender. Do you know why? Because they hadn't even finalised the scope.

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** They didn't even know what they were planning to build. The only thing—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier is called to order. Member for Hartley!

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Treasurer has the call.

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** The only thing they seemed to come up with, that they were destined to deliver—which of course we had to decide to get rid of—was the extraordinary plan to take traffic out of a left lane of a motorway, fly it over a large intersection—

**Mr Tarzia:** You're an engineer! He's an engineer. He's an engineer now.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Hartley is warned.

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** —including over several residences and land it in the middle of Anzac Highway and, in doing so, in bringing it down to Anzac Highway, have two lanes merge into one and then—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Hammond!

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** —land in the middle of a corridor and have to ask motorists not to merge left—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Unley!

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** —but to merge from the right. It's just extraordinary. So that was what apparently was shovel ready. To mix the metaphor, something was ready for a shovel with what they prepared—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order, member for Unley!

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** —but certainly the project wasn't shovel ready, it wasn't prepared to go to tender. But I am happy to confirm that there hasn't been any change—

**Mr Whetstone:** You're not an engineer—that's what you can confirm.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Chaffey is warned.

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** —to the funding arrangements between the federal and state governments. Indeed, the federal budget is predicated on a fifty-fifty cost-sharing arrangement between the two governments.

**SPORTING AND INFRASTRUCTURE GRANTS**

**The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS (Black—Leader of the Opposition) (14:25):** My question is to the Premier. Will the Premier reveal the full list of sports and infrastructure grants to the public and, if not, why not? Sir, with your leave, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

*Mr Brown interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Florey!

**The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS:** On 4 May, the Premier told this house, and I quote:

...we seek to uphold the highest standards when it comes to disclosure and transparency...to ensure that all...probity measures are applied.

Yesterday, the Auditor-General revealed to the Economic and Finance Committee that he was not aware of a publicly available source of information that includes the full list of the \$133 million sports and infrastructure grants.

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier) (14:26):** I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question, and I welcome it because it's another opportunity for us to reiterate our firm commitment to delivering on our election commitments. We went to the—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Hartley, you are on one warning. Order! The Premier has the call.

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** Throughout the state of South Australia in the lead-up to the election, we made very clear and specific commitments to the people of South Australia, often with very finite and prescriptive dollar commitments attached to them, particularly when it comes to investments that we are making in local communities. We saw throughout the entirety of the pandemic the value of community in our state and the fundamental importance of healthy interactions amongst community members, not just in a sporting context but in other community activities as well, and we believe that they are worthy of investment, that they are worthy of support.

Whether they be commitments in the north-eastern suburbs of Adelaide, the southern suburbs of Adelaide, the northern suburbs of our city or even in our regions, we saw those as being meritorious and worthy of presentation to the people of South Australia at the election. Of course, we know what that election result was. I don't raise that in any sort of effort to glorify the election result, but merely to say that we see that result as being a profound responsibility that has been invested in us to get on with the business of delivering those election commitments. Following the election and having made—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Flinders!

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** —so many substantial policy commitments, we made a very deliberate decision that we were going to hand down a budget in approximately eight weeks' time. That is unusual.

*The Hon. N.F. Cook interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Hurtle Vale!

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** The last time we saw a change of government in not just our state but in the country, before that, was in 2018. When that state election occurred, which happened to be in South Australia that the change of government occurred, the budget wasn't handed down until some months later. We made a decision to do it some eight weeks later and one of the reasons why we decided to do that—and there were multiple reasons—was we wanted to get the budget in place to start executing the delivery of our election promises, including the very specific commitments that we made to sporting groups around the state, and that's why—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Colton! Member for Chaffey! The Premier has the call.

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** That's why our budget prescriptively provides all of those allocations. In terms of the transparency around that—

**Mr Whetstone:** There is none.

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** —there is full transparency around each of those election commitments and, indeed, many of those members opposite are well aware of them because they themselves advocated for them. In fact, on the other side of the house—

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

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is a point of order from the member for Morialta, which I will hear under 134.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Thank you, sir. It was actually a fairly specific question in relation to a list. The Premier is going into individual examples and debating, but there is—

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

**The SPEAKER:** Order, member for Mawson!

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Mawson is called to order. Member for Flinders!

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** But the Premier hasn't gone near the question of a list.

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Mawson is called to order. I have the point of order. I give the Premier some latitude because he is the Premier. Some context has been offered to the house. I bring the Premier back to the substance of the question.

**Mr Cowdrey:** On what page of the budget paper is it listed?

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Colton!

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** The opposition asked about transparency of these commitments and these policies and the allocation. That is somewhat surprising because—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Flinders!

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** —the Liberal Party of South Australia know all too well just how transparent these commitments—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order, member for Florey!

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

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Chaffey, you will cease your exchange with the member for Florey. One of your colleagues is seeking to raise a point of order.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Thank you, sir, 98: you made an excellent ruling before, leniency, but seeking now the Premier come back. The Premier is now, in seeking to characterise the opposition, doing the very definition of debate in this house.

**The SPEAKER:** I have the point of order. I am not certain that I made a ruling, just offered some guidance as is a first step in—



**The Hon. J.A.W. Gardner:** But he ignored it, sir, which is very bad.

**The SPEAKER:** Perhaps.

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier has the call.

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** Our transparency regarding the sporting club commitments is so overwhelming that it gave the opportunity—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** —for you to copy.

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Colton!

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** You copied the policies, whether it be in King, whether it be in other electorates around the state. We were so transparent about our commitments—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Morialta!

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** —that we gave you the opportunity to copy them. It is just unfortunate for the opposition that it was too little and too late.

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

**The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS:** Supplementary question.

**The SPEAKER:** I see the leader on a supplementary and then the member for Florey.

#### **SPORTING AND INFRASTRUCTURE GRANTS**

**The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS (Black—Leader of the Opposition) (14:31):** A very simple supplementary to the Premier: where can the public go for a full list of these sports and infrastructure grants?

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members to my left, you cannot immediately attempt to supply the answer, otherwise I cannot hear the Treasurer.

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN (Lee—Treasurer) (14:31):** As the Premier was saying, these proposals were given substantial public airing in the lead-up to March of this year—

**The Hon. J.A.W. Gardner:** Then why won't you list them now?

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Morialta is warned.

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** —to such an extent, it appears that they were persuasive enough for many people when walking to the ballot box. That's how public they were. Of course, if they weren't public, people wouldn't have been able to consider those proposals from their local MPs and from their candidates when deciding who they thought would be best to represent them, particularly in this place. It remains true that it's possible—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Chaffey is on one warning.

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** —that everybody cast their votes in the complete absence of understanding this, which would be an even more remarkable reflection on those opposite. But I don't believe that to be the case. In terms of providing a list, I stand to be corrected. My understanding

was that this information had previously been sought by those opposite. I had assumed that it had been provided; if it hasn't, we will provide it.

### FEDERAL BUDGET

**Mr BROWN (Florey) (14:33):** My question is to the Treasurer. Can the Treasurer provide the house with an update on the recent federal budget and the implications for South Australia?

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN (Lee—Treasurer) (14:33):** It gives me great pleasure to talk about what was revealed for the benefit of South Australians in the release of the federal budget on Tuesday of last week. Of course, we were very pleased to see that the federal budget contains a significant number of new projects for South Australia, including one that I think enjoys bipartisan support; I'm not 100 per cent sure. It's the \$120 million Majors Road interchange—

**The Hon. A. Koutsantonis:** No, it doesn't.

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** Has that changed?

**The Hon. A. Koutsantonis:** It's changed. It's no longer his number one priority.

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** Anyway, it's funded by \$60 million, a 50 per cent funding arrangement to be shared with the state government for the Majors Road interchange with the Southern Expressway. I am also pleased to report 50 per cent funding towards the \$400 million project that will remove the Glenelg tramline level crossings with Marion Road and Cross Road, which is good news. There is \$200 million representing that 50 per cent funding share from the commonwealth and \$400 million to fund key freight routes in regional South Australia, because it doesn't matter if you're in the Riverland, if you're on North Terrace, if you're in Texas or California, everyone knows that regions matter—everyone knows the regions matter. The \$400 million towards that—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** —is most welcome.

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** And, of course, as we have just been discussing, the commonwealth remains committed to funding its share—50 per cent share—of the north-south corridor project. We are also very pleased not just in the transport area but also in the health area that South Australian Labor has been successful in convincing a federal government of either persuasion but, tellingly in this case, a federal Labor government, to be funding significant health infrastructure, and \$200 million towards a significant upgrade of medical facilities in the southern suburbs, centred around the Flinders Medical Centre, is most welcome.

Speaking of most welcome, there was a significant increase that the commonwealth made to the projections of the national GST pool, an extraordinary revision up from what was already in some people's mind a significant estimate of an increase in the pool of 9 per cent this financial year from the previous year. That has now been revised to 12 per cent—and I can feel my colleagues around me already banking in how that is to be accounted for. That's for the current financial year, and Treasury is working through the budget papers and also the assumptions of other state and territory colleagues to determine what that will mean for the remainder of the four-year forward estimates with regard to GST revenues.

I was also really pleased to see—and I know the Minister for Housing and Urban Development and also the Minister for Human Services were also pleased to see—in particular the announcement of a national housing accord reached between the federal government, state and territory governments and also the national housing construction industry, aiming, as a headline aim for the nation, to deliver one million new dwellings over a five-year period, with the federal government increasing their election commitment of 30,000 affordable houses to be delivered by an extra 10,000 on the basis that the states and territories combine to deliver 10,000.

So 50,000 additional affordable homes for Australia is very good news, particularly for those people without access to secure housing. We are looking forward to playing our part in delivering that initiative, as we will for all of the other initiatives involving South Australia in the federal government.

### SPORTING AND INFRASTRUCTURE GRANTS

**The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS (Black—Leader of the Opposition) (14:37):** My question is to the Premier. Will the Premier release the sports grants cabinet submission to the Auditor-General? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

**The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS:** Since the election alone the opposition has already approved the release of eight cabinet documents in full to the Auditor-General. Over the last four years, 154 cabinet documents were released in full to the Auditor-General. Yesterday, the Auditor-General confirmed that he is still waiting for the sports grants cabinet documents to fulfil his legislative obligations and that he has been refused all cabinet documents that he has requested from the Labor government. What is the Premier trying to hide?

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier has the call.

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier) (14:38):** The answer to the question is that, as has been enunciated both publicly and also, if my recollection serves me accurately, in this chamber on multiple occasions, we value very deeply the importance of cabinet solidarity, the importance of cabinet—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier has the call.

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** —confidentiality. The policy—

*Mr Telfer interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Flinders!

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** —that is being implied in respect to the release—

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

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Morialta is on one warning.

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** —of cabinet documents that this government applies is entirely consistent with what the former government applies, which is of course that the Premier of the day or, in respect to the opposition, the leader of the respective political party has the responsibility to authorise the release of cabinet documents and they have to make that decision. The reason why they have to make that decision is, as the Leader of the Opposition fully appreciates, the only people in our state who are entitled to cabinet documents are members of the cabinet themselves. We think that—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** —there are very good reasons for that principle which is well established, which those opposite I think would truly appreciate, which have been in place for hundreds of years and are worthy of preservation.

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Unley!

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** Now, the Leader of the Opposition—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** —may well say, and this is a legitimate point to make, well, we—on your side of the house that is—are happy to release cabinet documents, which begs the question: why would you be comfortable with that? I get the sense that in no small part that is a function of the culture that exists on that side of the house versus this one, because—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Colton knows better.

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** —if you have a cabinet and a party room that are leaking like sieves anyway, you may as well put it all out there. You may as well put it all out there, whereas on this side—

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

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Colton, if you wish to interject, then raise a point of order. The member for Morialta certainly has done so correctly, and I will turn to him.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Standing order, 98: debate. The Premier started out with a discussion about cabinet confidentiality. He is now going into vaudeville.

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Member for West Torrens! I give the Premier some latitude because he is the Premier. I will listen carefully.

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** On this side of the house, there is no culture of leaking against one another. On this side of the house, when things are meant to be kept in confidence, that's exactly what we intend to do. Of course, it stands in stark contrast to the value and the opportunity to be able to—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier has the call.

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** With the opportunity to be able to apply a degree of compare and contrast, on this side of the house we see concerted efforts—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Colton, you are warned. The Premier has the call.

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** On the other side of the house, we see a concerted effort, if not an ingrained culture, in leaking, in putting information out in the public realm that isn't supposed be out in the public realm—

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

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is a—

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** We see membership lists—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Chaffey, you are warned for a second time. Order, member for West Torrens!

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Standing order, 98. The Premier is debating and doing so in a way that completely undermines public confidence in the Auditor-General.

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Colton is on one warning. The Member for Morialta is also on one warning. I have the point of order. The Premier is familiar with standing order 98. I bring him to the substance of the question.

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** Again, to compare and contrast, the culture for leaking on that side of the house is so bad now that they seek to dress it up as a data breach.

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** They think Optus makes them look good.

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Premier, please be seated.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Under standing order 98—

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Morialta!

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** —the Premier should know not to debate. He is debasing this parliament and making question time a farce.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Morialta, I have the point of order. There was a good deal of interjection from both sides making it difficult to hear. I will listen carefully to the Premier. I bring the Premier directly to the substance of the question.

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** What is meant to be confidential on this side of the house remains confidential. It's an important principle and we intend to uphold it.

#### **SOUTHERN EXPRESSWAY**

**Ms THOMPSON (Davenport) (14:43):** My question is to the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport. Can the minister update the house on the proposed footprint of infrastructure works for the Majors Road project access to the Southern Expressway and any alternative views of that footprint?

**The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS (West Torrens—Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Minister for Energy and Mining) (14:43):** Thank you for this important question about an important project that was quite frankly until 19 March this year a bipartisan project. It's interesting to note that the former environment minister gave up nearly 13 hectares of woodlands to the BMX and soccer facilities that took out hundreds of pieces of vegetation, but that's different. It is timely for me to provide an update to the house on this important project. A flyer endorsed by the member for Black claims, and I quote:

Habitat for native species—

not the ones that he bulldozed for the BMX facility and the soccer fields; these are the other species that he is worried about—

...are at threat of being decimated with the removal of thousands of plants to make way for the proposed roadway.

I invite the member to make those same remarks here in the parliament.

The Liberals' 2019 plan proposed to impact a minimum of 13,000 square metres of Glenthorne National Park, including 8,000 square metres of established vegetation and significant trees. That was the project that the then member for Black, as a shadow minister leading up to the 2018 election, said was his number one priority.

**The Hon. P.B. Malinauskas:** Number one priority.

**The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS:** Number one priority. Contrast that with our design: the light touch. People know my views on vegetation and fauna. Our design is to ensure that all of our infrastructure projects have a light touch and do not sever communities. Our design does not impact any of the trees planted since the national park listing within Glenthorne National Park land, and it does not impact any significant or regulated trees within Glenthorne National Park.

There is a potential for a small group of Glenthorne National Park land—less than 3,000 square metres—to be acquired from the project, which is part of what would have been road reserve along the Southern Expressway. This is already disturbed land, not native habitat and, importantly, there will be no impact to Glenthorne Farm. In the flyer that the Leader of the Opposition distributed, he claims:

Trails are under major threat of being ripped up and segments of the precinct marooned from the integrated trail network with the new Sam Willoughby BMX facility, its accompanying toilets and car park all being at risk of isolation...

It is true to say that the former Liberal design would have done all those things. Community representations and concerns have been listened to, and the current design—our design, Labor's design—has no impact on any of those. The new design actually incorporates new bike connections to Glenthorne National Park, making it easier and safer to journey to the park by bike. Connections into the Sam Willoughby BMX bike facility and the O'Halloran Hill Recreation Park by vehicle have also been enhanced.

Also, the current design, unlike the members' opposite design, does not cut through the national park, and no part of the park will be isolated. The flyer also indicates that Labor has no intention to duplicate Majors Road or the bridge and dictates that this makes the project economically reckless. It appears the member for Black has got it wrong. Our design does duplicate a significant section of Majors Road and is fully duplicated over the Southern Expressway.

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier is called to order! Member for Hartley!

*The Hon. P.B. Malinauskas interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I see the member for Flinders.

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The house will come to order. Members may be interested to know that Gold Trip has won the Melbourne Cup. I also provide a brief update to the house on the—

*The Hon. P.B. Malinauskas interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier is called to order.

*Mr Whetstone interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Chaffey! Members may be interested to note that the Parliament House Open Day saw 696 visitors attend the house. Thank you to members present who volunteered, and a special acknowledgement of the house Education Office. Natalie and Edgar, thank you especially. The member for Flinders has the call.

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMALGAMATIONS

**Mr TELFER (Flinders) (14:48):** Thank you for getting there, Mr Speaker. My question is to the Minister for Local Government. Minister, what is the government's final position on what constitutes a positive response to the City of Mount Gambier and District Council of Grant amalgamation plebiscite? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

**Mr TELFER:** In parliament, the minister repeated:

The government will carefully consider the results of the plebiscite. It will consider how voters across both councils voted, how voters in each council voted and, in the case of the District Council of Grant, how voters in each of the three wards voted.

Subsequent to that statement, the minister has said in the media that a result will be the cumulative of the two councils.

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier) (14:49):** I thank the local member for the question, because it is a legitimate one and one that I believe is going to become increasingly topical in the days ahead as we find out the outcome of the plebiscite.

I had the fantastic opportunity to be down in Mount Gambier on Friday of last week. I think that, from memory, it is something like the fifth time I have been in Mount Gambier this year. I have committed to the people of the Limestone Coast to make sure that I have a frequent presence for as long as I have the privilege of holding the office that I currently do.

The Limestone Coast is full of potential, and apart from Mount Gambier being our second biggest city in South Australia there is a great chance to enhance not just the prosperity of the local community but the state more broadly, which is why we have taken an active interest and why we have made over \$100 million worth of commitments. It is also transparently available to the people of South Australia to pursue in the lead-up to the election and it is also accounted for in the budget.

With respect to our interest, though, it goes beyond just the election commitments. It is an ongoing interest about maximising opportunity where we can find it, and that includes facilitating a really historic moment by providing every ratepayer in the Grant district council area and the Mount Gambier city council area the opportunity to have a say through a direct vote about whether or not they want to simply examine council amalgamation. To go to the specifics of the minister's question—

**Mr Telfer:** I'm only the shadow, sir.

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** Sorry, the shadow minister's question. My apologies. We have been very clear about this, as has the Minister for Local Government, that there is going to be a ballot. We will fully release the outcome of that ballot, and the yes/no vote will be broken down in the Mount Gambier council area, and then separately we will release what the yes/no ballot outcome is in the Grant district council area. As the member mentioned in his question, there will also be a breakdown of the vote in the respective wards.

In terms of what constitutes a yes or a no vote in the pursuit of the examination, it is the total vote. The total vote will determine whether or not there is the examination. What is important for the shadow minister to be aware of, and indeed everyone casting a ballot if they haven't done so already, is what will transpire in the event of a yes vote.

In the event that there is a yes vote there will be an examination done through the Local Government Boundaries Commission in conjunction most likely with the Productivity Commission, and then separately to that but concurrently with that we will also undertake a broad ranging and wide community consultation throughout the Grant district council area and the City of Mount Gambier. We don't know what the outcome of those two separate exercises will be. They are sincere and they are genuine in wanting to explore what the potential benefits of amalgamation are and what the potential costs of amalgamation are so that everyone can fully digest that and assess it.

However, here is the simple view that the government has: why not ask the question? We've got to have the courage to ask the question, and if we ask the question of those that this decision will be affected by the most and they come back and say, 'No, we don't even want to examine it,' then so be it, no harm done. But, of course, if they do want the examination to take place we will actively facilitate that as a government.

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

#### LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMALGAMATIONS

**Mr TELFER (Flinders) (14:53):** My question is to the Minister for Local Government. Can the minister explain the process he plans to follow in the coming months in relation to the proposed Grant-Mount Gambier amalgamation?

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier) (14:54):** The government's position on this—and this is something that the Minister for Local Government and I have worked on actively, and I do want to thank the Minister for Local Government, along with the Attorney-General, who have worked collaboratively with me and my team in order to facilitate this vote.

I'm quite happy saying that this is something I have taken an interest in. It came on the back of our country cabinet in Mount Gambier and is something that I asked the Minister for Local Government, in conjunction with the Attorney-General, to pursue. It's a policy that the government wholeheartedly supports because, as I was saying before I ran out of time earlier, this is something that we believe is necessary and timely.

We are demonstrating an ability to get legislation through this parliament, although it might not always be supported by the opposition, that is committed to actually asking the tough questions within the community and that includes this because, as the shadow minister well knows and as the Leader of the Opposition well knows, council amalgamation in any form, in any guise, that has ever occurred throughout our land has been controversial, but we are not going to be a government that shirks the tough questions and isn't willing to contemplate reform around the place. That's why we have gone about this in a thoughtful and measured way, seeking to work with the local community.

As I was explaining earlier, in the event that the vote is a no vote, the process stops and we move on and we focus on other areas of reform that this government has, including in and around the South-East, where we have \$100 million worth of election commitments that we are providing for. However, if the vote is a yes vote, then, as I mentioned earlier, we have those two separate processes that we would seek to set in train this year.

We would want to get the process happening as quickly as possible. It's an important one. We want to work with the community in that regard. We are asking the question. We don't see any harm done in that. Those opposite see a political opportunity—so be it. What I acknowledge—

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

**The SPEAKER:** Order, member for Morialta!

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** What I want to acknowledge on this side of the house—

*Mr Pederick interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Hammond knows better.

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** —is the genuine interest that has developed in and around Mount Gambier as a result of this undertaking. I would like to acknowledge the efforts of the member for Mount Gambier, who himself acknowledges the merit in simply asking the question. What the outcome will be is a matter for the people of Mount Gambier and the Grant district council to decide, but I think this is a responsible approach. I think it's a mature approach. To the extent that the opposition is willing to support it, that is of course up to them, noting of course that I'm not aware of too much evidence up until this point of those opposite actively publicly endorsing the proposition.

#### KIDS IN SPACE

**Mr FULBROOK (Playford) (14:57):** My question is to the Deputy Premier. Can the Deputy Premier inform the house about the recent Andy Thomas Space Foundation Kids in Space event?

**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) (14:57):** I'm delighted to answer this question about the Andy Thomas Space Foundation event that I attended recently, which was the culmination of an effort to first of all establish a pilot program and then to roll it out across Australia, called Kids in Space, a primary school program working with primary school kids who, as we all know, tend to absolutely love space and through space love being involved in STEM education, therefore enthusing them to continue to study those skills areas and those topics.

The event itself was completely delightful, of course, because it was full of primary school kids, who are always a lot of fun to spend time with. I gave a speech before I went and saw all their exhibitions and I wish I had done it the other way around because they were even better than I had imagined they were going to be.

I talked a lot in my speech about how important space is for climate change and environmental management and so on and then I went out into the area where they had all their displays of the projects they had been working on. They were utterly dedicated to threatened species



management, native vegetation management and responding to climate change and emergencies in ways that I hadn't even imagined might be possible. As always, our young people leave us behind in their creativity and also their dedication to looking after the planet.

I was delighted to see that two of the schools were given awards that day. One was by virtue of everyone who was looking, mainly the other schoolkids but also some adults, voting on which project they thought was the best one and West Beach Primary School won that one, which of course the member for Colton is probably already aware of but will be very pleased to know.

Also, Ngutu College, a school set up relatively recently by the former principal of Alberton Primary School, Andrew Plastow, which is largely for Aboriginal kids, won the Space Communicator's Award. The people who work in the Space Discovery Centre go around and choose and Ngutu College was the school that won that award.

It is terrific that we were able to do that with 10 primary schools here. What is very special about being able to now take that out to the rest of Australia is that it is not only demonstrating yet again that South Australia leads in space—of course, we are the centre of gravity for space in Australia—but we have been able to do that in partnership with an organisation called Makers Empire, which I first came across at Virginia Primary School in 2014, when I was previously industry and innovation minister.

Makers Empire was then a very small company, but it is now reaching out internationally and selling its product, taking what is otherwise a very complex CAD technology, the software, to make designs that are able to be 3D printed and turning it into the kind of software that even junior primary schoolkids are able to use. Not only have that company grown exponentially and are able to provide their services to schools around Australia and now internationally but they are also now being very philanthropic and engaging in projects that are just simply about encouraging kids to further embrace technology as part of their education and therefore their future.

For them to be able to participate in the Kids in Space program across Australia demonstrates exactly the power of South Australia, which is a dedication to young people, a dedication to education and to innovation, all of which are essential for our future economy.

#### LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMALGAMATIONS

**Mr TELFER (Flinders) (15:01):** My question is to the Minister for Local Government. Is the minister aware of the step-by-step process the boundaries commission is required to undertake, including the minister's response requirements, and can he explain it to the house?

**The Hon. G.G. BROCK (Stuart—Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Roads, Minister for Veterans Affairs) (15:01):** Thank you to the shadow minister for that question. The Premier has very adequately explained the plebiscite and the process that will be going through. What will happen is that we are asking the people of Mount Gambier and the District Council of Grant whether they want to explore the opportunity to—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Florey! Member for Flinders! The member for Chaffey is on two warnings. The minister has the call.

**The Hon. G.G. BROCK:** We are asking the people of those communities, both the Mount Gambier city council and the District Council of Grant, whether they want to explore the opportunity to have a discussion about a potential amalgamation of the two councils. The Premier has explained that very clearly. We have explained that across all media, and I know there are different stories from people going down there and trying to state something different.

The Premier has indicated that if a positive vote comes back in, we will then look at the opportunity to put that to the independent arbitrator, the Local Government Boundaries Commission. They will look at that very closely and do an analysis of the whole process and, at the same time, have lots of consultation and do the due diligence about whether it's financial, whether it's economical. Then, as the Premier has also indicated, the Productivity Commission will look at that.

As the shadow minister was the President of the Local Government Association, he will know the processes to be gone through. The Local Government Association is very aware that there are no forced amalgamations. Independent of all politics, the boundaries commission will go out, I think on two occasions, and consult with all stakeholders. It will then be referred to the Productivity Commission, and that will come back to the government, whether it's a yes or no. At the end of the day, we will then make the decision whether we propose anything further.

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMALGAMATIONS

**Mr TELFER (Flinders) (15:04):** My question is to the Minister for Local Government. Does the minister support forced amalgamations? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

**Mr TELFER:** The government has said it will accumulate the votes of both council areas in the South-East council plebiscite, rather than each council areas both being considered separately, and thus could have a recommendation to amalgamate that one of the individual councils do not support.

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier) (15:04):** We have been very clear about this. How much more evidence does the shadow minister want of the fact that we don't support forced amalgamations—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Morialta!

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** —than of course us having an utterly transparent, democratic process where absolutely everybody gets a say? The minister—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Morialta is warned for a second time. The member for Flinders is called to order. You have asked this question; the Premier is answering.

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** The Minister for Local Government has been on the record about this repeatedly, and if the shadow minister had been paying attention to what his counterpart has been saying—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Flinders! Member for Flinders, you are warned.

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** —he would know all too well what the answer to the question is. I would simply illustrate this point: that the very tenor, the very tone of the questions that the shadow minister is asking—in fact, all of the messaging that the shadow minister has been projecting on this issue ever since—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Flinders, you are on one warning.

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** —the government started to facilitate this question.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Premier, there is a point of order from the member for Morialta, which I will hear under 134.

**The Hon. J.A.W. Gardner:** Thank you, sir. Standing order 98 rules out debate. The Premier is now parsing and analysing the question and the stream of questions. That is debate. The question that the Premier is required to answer was in relation to forced amalgamations and, specifically, Grant to Mount Gambier.

**The SPEAKER:** That may be, but we are early in the answer and some latitude is offered as a matter of custom and has been offered by previous Speakers to both the leader and the Premier. Some context has been permitted. I understand the Premier is intending to introduce some context, both more generally in terms of government policy and in the course of answers that have been put to the government. I do emphasise the importance of standing order 98 to the Premier.

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** Let me characterise this another way in order to provide the context that is required for the definitive answer to the member for Flinders's question. We are now having a vote of the Limestone Coast community, or part of it—Mount Gambier, the Grant district council. That vote is the biggest community consultation that has ever happened in the state about a community consultation. We are having a vote to determine whether or not we consult the community.

**Mr Telfer:** That's not right.

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** That is right. The member for Flinders—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order, member for Flinders!

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** —doesn't comprehend the fact that—

*Mr Telfer interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Flinders!

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** —we have committed our policy, which is that if there is a yes vote—which is a big 'if'; I'm not a savant and I don't know what the outcome of the ballot will be—if we were to assume for just a moment that residents in Grant and Mount Gambier collectively decide to vote yes, then what will ensue is a community consultation.

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order, member for Flinders!

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** As I have explained repeatedly, as has the Minister for Local Government, we will both concurrently conduct an exercise that is more scientific in its basis through the local boundaries commission and the Productivity Commission, and then separately there will be a community consultation run by the government, which is within our purview. We will have a community consultation if this community consultation determines that it is necessary.

*Members interjecting:*

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** That's right! It begs the question—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order, member for Morialta!

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** —what are those opposite worried about?

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Morialta, you are on three warnings.

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** How could you not possibly support the proposition?

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Flinders, you are warned for a second time. The Premier has the call.

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** How could you not possibly support the proposition?

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Unley! Member for Morialta, you are on three warnings. You well know the standing orders. The Premier has the call.

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** We are out there talking to people on the ground, as I have on a repeated basis.

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** I think I have been down there—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** —as Premier more than my predecessor was—throughout a whole term of government, I might add.

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Morialta!

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** Nonetheless, we are out there talking to people. We are hearing what they are saying. We have an interest in that community, and we are facilitating them to have a say on their future. I say that's a good thing to do, and I think the people at the South-East agree.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Morialta is on three warnings, with seven minutes remaining.

### **BE BUSHFIRE READY CAMPAIGN**

**The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL (Mawson) (15:09):** My question is to the Minister for Emergency Services. Can the minister inform the house about the Country Fire Service's Be Bushfire Ready campaign?

**The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS (Cheltenham—Minister for Police, Emergency Services and Correctional Services) (15:09):** I certainly can, and I appreciate the question and thank the member for Mawson for his interest, particularly given the way that fire has affected his community and the way that he continues to represent them in their recovery phase.

Mr Speaker, you know that our climate is changing. You see the effects that climate change is having on the way fire is behaving. It's only very recently that I have come across information from the United Nations which shows that, as we speak and as we currently face risk, the Arctic is facing wildfire risk. That's quite an astonishing fact that serves me no pleasure in bringing to this house's attention, but it gives some context about the changing environment that we see fire in.

The reason that fire is changing, and that the nature and frequency of these catastrophes are changing, is that the human input into our environment is changing as well. Man-made human-led climate change is having a profound impact on the way that disasters are being responded to, but, most importantly, it does have an impact on the way that disasters need to be prepared for by our community.

Recently, a report, entitled Spreading like Wildfire, from the United Nations, predicted that by 2030 there will be a 14 per cent increase in the number of bushfires and wildfires across the world, 30 per cent by 2050 and a further 50 per cent by the turn of the century. Less insidious but perhaps more insidious is the anxiety that that brings to communities now. We know that even though bushfires and wildfires don't pose the greatest financial impact on our state or on our nation when it comes to natural disasters, I think by most measures they bring the most anxiety, the most fear and the most trauma felt by those communities who lived through those fires and must recover from those fires.

Today, five districts around the state start their fire season, and yesterday the very first district, the north-eastern pastoral district, was declared an extreme fire risk under our new Australian Fire Danger Rating System. Despite the fact we have hail literally coming down on us here in Adelaide today, we are seeing very significant fire risk already permeating across this state. Knowing this means it must be important for every member of our community to be bushfire ready.

That's why, starting today, we will see a significant paid advertising campaign being led by the CFS that brings to the community's attention the importance of being prepared for fire. Simple questions will be asked of our community, things like, 'What will happen, and what will you do if your power goes out? What will you do if your phone loses coverage? What will you do if you are in a

metropolitan area, but you have left your children in the care of loved ones when a bushfire comes through?'

This Be Bushfire Ready campaign is not just targeted towards people who live in these regions but it's also targeted very firmly towards people who are holidaying or travelling through areas of bushfire risk. We know that, as we are recovering from the pandemic, domestic tourism is becoming more and more frequent, so we are calling upon people, whether they live in an area which is prone to fire risk or in fact if they are travelling from a peri-urban or urban region, that they become familiar with what they need to do in the case of a fire because complacency is a real danger here, in addition to the fire risks. So be bushfire ready, plan now and don't wait for it to be too late.

### MANNUM ROAD

**Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (15:13):** My question is to the Minister for Regional Roads. Will the minister fix Mannum Road? With your leave, and that of the house, sir, I will explain.

Leave granted.

**Mr PEDERICK:** In response to a question I asked in parliament, I received a letter from the minister dated 5 September, which states: 'At this point in time, there is no requirement for further works along Mannum Road.' On 20 October, a motorcyclist was involved in a serious accident along Mannum Road after the front wheel of his bike struck a pothole.

*The Hon. A. Koutsantonis interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order, member for West Torrens!

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order, member for Hammond! The Premier is called to order.

**The Hon. G.G. BROCK (Stuart—Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Roads, Minister for Veterans Affairs) (15:14):** Thank you to the member for his question. Obviously, he doesn't listen to the radio. I had an interview on the radio after the member for Hammond brought this to my attention.

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Hammond is called to order.

**The Hon. G.G. BROCK:** First-up, I have had discussions with the CE of the department. As the member would understand, last week work was being carried out on Mannum Road, on that intersection. I had the opportunity to listen to the partner of the person who was on that motorbike. I felt for his safety; I felt for her concerns about the welfare of her partner. Quite frankly, it was pretty traumatic listening to what had happened there. I spoke to—

*Members interjecting:*

**The Hon. G.G. BROCK:** If I may, Mr Speaker, I had the radio interview. As I say, it was very traumatic listening to her and also for this gentleman on the motorbike hitting that pothole. We have spoken to the department. The department were out there last week, straightaway. They were onto the repairs of Mannum Road. They have been out there again this week, including yesterday. Because of the torrential rain, the issue is that they have to make the decision whether they continue to repair the road and do patches. I have seen photographs of the patches they have already done. As the member understands, if we do any major repairs on anything on the roads where there is moisture underneath, it is not done correctly.

My concern was for the person in particular. As I said, it was very traumatic listening to her talking to ABC down in that area. It was very disturbing, quite frankly. If, for argument's sake, people had reported that issue straightaway to the roads infrastructure people, which is open 24 hours a day—and on that radio interview I indicated that if people see something, rather than making a political gain out of the whole thing, please do ring the 1800 number. I will repeat it again; sorry, it's 1800 018 313—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

**The Hon. G.G. BROCK:** —or email [dit.engagement@sa.gov.au](mailto:dit.engagement@sa.gov.au). We can then get them to it and get this fixed up. I have the greatest respect for that person, and I'm glad that that person did not get any more hurt. I encourage people to report any issue straightaway.

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

#### *Grievance Debate*

### **SPORTING AND INFRASTRUCTURE GRANTS**

**Mr TARZIA (Hartley) (15:17):** Government secrecy is the enemy of the people. It breeds incompetence, which is also then kept secret. The Auditor-General's role is independent. It is to objectively audit and report on the receipt and expenditure of public money and to conduct audit work and report on various aspects of government. At the moment, the Auditor-General's ability to conduct his duties is being hindered by this government. The Auditor-General has a crucial role in maintaining proper process and public faith in government. It is extremely important that the government provides documents whenever they are asked.

Arbitrary exceptions to process increase the risk of undermining standards and eroding good culture. Avoiding practices that public servants are expected to carry out for all other public expenditure transactions risks undermining good practice. Do not ask just me, Mr Speaker, ask the Auditor-General—specifically, when he recently made a few comments in the Auditor-General's Report 2022.

These words are a particular reference to what can only be described as a scandal of the highest order, a scandal that has evoked particular concern from the Auditor-General, a scandal that we on this side of the house have committed to exposing since the very beginning. Seven months later, guess what? We are still talking about it. We will continue to probe this issue. That payment is understood to be around \$133 million of sporting and infrastructure grants, all organised, drafted and approved outside standard public processes. Public practice that is expected did not occur, and the Auditor-General refers to this on a number of occasions.

The organisation of sports and infrastructure grants took place behind closed doors, in locked back rooms, the process of which was discussed in hushed tones amongst those opposite—and those opposite only. We know that because when we FOI'd the councils that received the money, and guess what? Some of them had no idea what the money was about—fancy that, when the councils own most of the facilities.

Where do the grants go? We know where these grants went. They totalled around \$133 million, and of this \$95.1 million went to sports grants and \$38.2 million went to local infrastructure upgrades. When you dig a bit deeper, they are all fantastic initiatives for what I presume to be immensely grateful communities, but where did the funding go exactly? I can tell you right now, Mr Speaker: 96 per cent of it went to seats that Labor held or gained—69 of 72 sporting grants received.

Let me be clear, I am not necessarily criticising the merits of some of these grants or the clubs or the volunteers associated with them. I am criticising the shameless and disgraceful way and process by which this government and those opposite are using public trust and public money for strategic political gain. We ask the most basic questions of ministers in this chamber, ministers who are paid over \$350,000, and they cannot even answer the most basic questions. Were you the patron of vice-patron of a club? Did you step out of the cabinet meeting when these grants were allocated?

*Ms Stinson interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Badcoe!

**Mr TARZIA:** They cannot answer the most basic questions, and it is outrageous. When asked recently in a committee, the Auditor-General told us that South Australian taxpayers should be confident that there is transparency and an equitable process being undertaken in the assessment of these grants; but, of course, he was not able to confirm that. Do you know why? Because he has

asked for a number of documents and members on that side of the chamber will not even present these documents. When the Auditor-General was asked in the committee if he could rule out—

*Mr Odenwalder interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Elizabeth!

**Mr TARZIA:** —anything along the lines of, say, misconduct or conflicts of interest, he did not have the answers. Do you know why? Because he has not been provided with the very documents to make that assessment. The Auditor-General is unable to confirm to the people of South Australia that these grant payments were authorised with the most basic degree of integrity and probity because this government refuses to give the Auditor-General the evidence that he needs.

We know that ministers had roles of significant authority in a number of the sporting clubs that received funding. If they signed a grant for these clubs, then it goes beyond all reason to assert that this would not be a conflict of interest. If this Premier, these ministers and this government have nothing to hide, then release the documents to the Auditor-General and all will be revealed.

#### RAMSAY ELECTORATE

**The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON (Ramsay—Minister for Tourism, Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (15:22):** I was recently honoured to attend two milestone events with our Italian community, celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of both the Molinara Cultural and Community Club and La Festa di San Giuseppe Association. The Festa di San Giuseppe Association was founded in 1972 by a group of Italian migrants to provide a place for the growing Italian community in Salisbury and also to celebrate their devotion to St Joseph and to have the opportunity to come together to uphold their cultural and faith-based traditions.

This association has played a very active role in the Salisbury community. The Feast of St Joseph, as it is known, is the principal feast day of St Joseph, husband of the Virgin Mary, and is usually celebrated on 19 March. This feast day is celebrated all over Italy, but especially in Sicily, where St Joseph is regarded by many as the patron saint. The association is the organising committee for their annual festa that has taken place in Salisbury every March for the past 50 years.

The association also carries out various fundraising activities throughout the year, such as quiz nights and dinner dances for Christmas Day and Father's Day. They also support the operations of the St Joseph Italian Community Centre in Paralowie.

I particularly want to thank Rocco Carpentieri, the president of the association, and his team for their efforts to organise the celebration held on 22 October. I also want to thank the founders of the association—Domenico Reitano, Gerry Rossi and Tina Schultze—and the past and current members for their outstanding commitment and contribution. I would also like to acknowledge Brett Mattiske from Mattiske Funerals and Dino Mussolino from the Hi-Tech Group for their generous sponsorship and support of the event.

The event was attended by Tony Zappia, member for Makin; Adriano Stendardo, the Consul of Italy in South Australia; of course, our mayor, Mayor Gillian Aldridge from the City of Salisbury; the Deputy Mayor of the City of Salisbury Chad Buchanan; Father Shibu; Sister Jessika; and Sister Eida.

We also launched a very special book commemorating the 50 years of the association. It talked about the history and the devotion to culture and traditions, but it also talked about the stories of migration and the success that people have made from coming to South Australia.

On Sunday 30 October, I was privileged to attend the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Molinara Cultural and Community Club. Molinara is a municipality in the province of Benevento in the southern Italian region of Campania, about 80 kilometres north-east of Naples. The club was established on 17 March 1972 by a group of migrants from Molinara, providing a place where their families could meet and spend time together. In fact, Premier Don Dunstan, a former Labor Premier, officially opened the club on 3 July.

The club is based at Lyons Road, Windsor Gardens, and hosts lots of social activities and has about 400 members. The club's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary was scheduled to take place last year but, like

many others, was deferred due to COVID. Speaking at the event was the founder and president, Cavalleri Joe Marcus Baldino, and I also acknowledge his brother, John Baldino, who continues the presidency.

It was a very emotional day on Sunday as people recalled the family events that were often hosted at the centre. There would be an engagement party or a christening. I went there for a friend's 21<sup>st</sup> about 25 years ago. It is a well-used club by many, many people. It is great to see how strong the club still is. Really, it is strong because of the many volunteers who come out. We were served some fantastic homemade pasta, some of the best you could try. It was a really special day.

When we think about our Italian community, we think of those not just here in our Adelaide metropolitan area but the Italian communities also in the Riverland, Port Pirie and Whyalla areas. The 2021 census told us there were 16,000 people who were born in Italy who are living in South Australia. However, more than 103,000 people have Italian ancestry. So our Italian ancestry community is probably one of the largest of our multicultural communities in South Australia. I thank them for choosing South Australia for their life here.

### EDUCATION WORKFORCE

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER (Morialta—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (15:28):** I would like to take the opportunity, on the day after the release of the NAPLAN results and several days after we have celebrated World Teachers' Day here in South Australia, to commend and to thank our South Australian education workforce, numbering over 40,000 people across all sectors. They dedicate their lives to serving our children and young people, to giving them the foundation and skills they need to prosper through their schooling and to succeed and thrive in life.

Teaching is a calling. It is a profession that many people admire. It is a profession filled with people who are good, who work hard, who despite 2½ years of pandemic have kept children and young people's needs at the focus and at the centre of what they do, and it has not necessarily been an easy time for many. Indeed, as I know the minister would observe if he was speaking at this moment, when many people were able to work from home, we asked of our teachers that they continue to go to school and give our children their support. That was what the health advice said, that was what the scientific advice said, but it was certainly a time of great anxiety throughout 2020 and 2021.

In 2022, when the rest of the community has enjoyed the benefits of removed restrictions, reduced restrictions and more freedoms, the consequential effect in our schools has been inversely disruptive. I would suggest that in the experience of many students and many teachers in South Australia 2022 has been easily the most disruptive and difficult year of the pandemic.

Despite three years of those complex challenges facing our teaching workforce, they have maintained a focus on supporting our children to be everything they can be and they have maintained a focus on standards, giving our children and young people the skills that they need. World Teachers' Day was a wonderful celebration. I commend Educators SA and, indeed, everyone involved from all the professional associations in education for the celebrations on Friday, and thank all our schools and preschools who marked it as well.

Yesterday, the NAPLAN results came out, and there have been a range of different public commentary on those results. I have taken the time to study those results in depth and I offer some reflections, which I am sure our teaching workforce would be interested in. Can I say to the house and to the people of South Australia that there are some things to be celebrated. It is a mixed bag, but there are some things to be very strongly celebrated.

Our year 3 and year 5 students in South Australia had the best ever scores in the history of NAPLAN in South Australia in their reading and their writing, and our year 3 students had the best ever scores in the history of NAPLAN in South Australia for their spelling. We have been doing this test since 2008, and the people setting the test at ACARA endeavour to have the same standard throughout so that one year is comparable more or less with the year before. Therefore, the mean score for South Australian students in each of those environments went up in the last year to the point where it is better than it has ever been.



That is intentional work that has been done by teachers in our education department and work that was inspired by reforms of the Marshall Liberal government with help from a trial that was offered when the Deputy Premier was the education minister, in 2017 to be sure. It was a commitment from the Liberal Party at the time, implemented in government, to have a year 1 phonics check for all our year 1 students to check that they were not slipping through the gap.

More than a check, it was an entire body of work and professional development and training and introduction of a new unit in the Department for Education's learning improvement division, now curriculum and learning division, called the Literacy Guarantee unit—a unit that has been described by advocates, such as Sandra Marshall from Dyslexia SA and many others, as the envy of other states around Australia.

The introduction of decodable readers and the abolition of the running records program, which was based on the outdated whole language approach to teaching reading, were undertaken during the four years of reforms. Many people were concerned about them and many people were against them. In ensuring that we were able to undertake those reforms, reforms which I congratulate the new government on their commitment to continuing, we have put our youngest children in schools in the best position to get effective reading instruction, and it is showing in those NAPLAN tests.

That foundation provides confidence, now that reading reforms are embedded in our education department, that those students will be able to access the range of the curriculum through their primary years. Our results in NAPLAN should continue improving—they must—and that is the basis on which the government will be judged. Indeed, as we work now to enhance numeracy skills and other skills, those reforms will, too, have a chance to succeed because we have the basics right in the early years.

I congratulate all those teachers who have worked so hard to change their practice over the last four years and, even more, those who have always been doing world's best practice. It is a good set of results from that point of view.

#### **DAVENPORT ELECTORATE**

**Ms THOMPSON (Davenport) (15:33):** Road safety, and access to road infrastructure, is a huge priority for my electorate of Davenport, so I would like to speak about some of the activities happening in my electorate that my community is particularly excited about.

On Sunday, we were able to announce and release the latest design concepts for the Majors Road on/off ramps onto the Southern Expressway. It was particularly exciting because our community has been patiently waiting to see what these roads will look like. Some of the surrounding community groups and sporting clubs involved in that area did have some concerns around how the roads might affect their clubs and their activities, and that was due to some incorrect and false information that was being spread throughout the community.

It was really great on Sunday to be able to show the facts, to get the true information out there into our community and to show that there will be very little to no impact on those surrounding assets. There will be no impact at all on the BMX facility. There will be no impact at all on the soccer facility. There will be no impact at all on the mountain bike trails that surround the Majors Road/Glenthorne Park precinct.

There will be very little or no impact on the Glenthorne National Park, and that is because the new ramps will be built within the existing road reserve. That also means that very little vegetation will be removed, and where limited vegetation is removed there is a guarantee of it being replaced twofold, and I know that user groups, like the Friends of Glenthorne, are particularly excited about that. That was a big win for them. They have been very engaged in this project and were very pleased to see those designs released on Sunday.

I would like to acknowledge the Department for Infrastructure and Transport and the great work they did engaging with our community. They ran a variety of workshops in the local shopping centres and in the local area. They heard from a lot of people about what their concerns were, and they were able to reassure them that the information they were hearing elsewhere was not accurate, and they were able to reassure them again on Sunday with the release of those designs. It is really

exciting now that we can start looking forward to construction starting before Christmas, and hopefully the project being delivered by the end of 2025.

Another very exciting project happening in my community is the upgrade of Main Road, Cherry Gardens. That was an election commitment of mine. We have committed \$10 million to the upgrade of that road, which was deemed the fourth riskiest road by the RAA earlier this year. It is fantastic that we are finally able to deliver the upgrade the local community has been asking for for years.

Fatalities and pretty awful accidents have happened over the last few years on that road, so the community is particularly keen to see it widened and resurfaced and also new guardrails being installed along that section. It will be a challenging project because it is quite a steep road and they will be cutting into the embankment. It is fantastic that the local residents who live along that stretch of road are so on board with the project and so keen to work with the department to get it happening as soon as possible.

Another road safety project we are working on at the moment is Grants Gully Road at Chandlers Hill. This one was brought to my attention by Watkins winery, which has a fantastic cellar door. There is also a new winery opening right across the road called Main & Cherry. We are very excited to have two cellar doors in my electorate. Those two wineries work really well together, so it is going to be a fantastic place for locals and families to enjoy the cellar door and the beautiful farm space around those cellar doors.

The wineries were concerned that the road that runs between them is an 80 km/h road. There have been quite a few accidents up there, and with people going between the two wineries, potentially after a wine or two, there could be some serious accidents. It was fantastic to get our police minister out there to have a look and chat to the winemakers. He has confirmed that we are able to reduce the speed limit to 70 km/h. That will commence from December, so we are really looking forward to that. We are really looking forward to Main & Cherry opening before Christmas so that we can all go along and check out some new wines and buy some new gifts for our friends and family.

Happy Valley Drive is currently under construction as well. It is really exciting to see safer pedestrian access being installed at the moment, which will help people get into the reservoir. It was something that the former government missed out. When they opened that reservoir, they did not think about the safe access to enter the reservoir, so it is great that finally people will be able to cross the road safely and enjoy those reservoir facilities.

#### CHAFFEY ELECTORATE

**Mr WHETSTONE (Chaffey) (15:38):** It gives me great pleasure to talk about things that are happening in Chaffey during spring, and what better to talk about than some of the flower and rose festivals that have graced the regions over recent times.

It is great to talk about a couple of those great institutions, such as the Waikerie and Districts Community Flower Show. It is the 40<sup>th</sup> Waikerie and Districts Community Flower Show, and I was very honoured to be there for the opening and to talk and interact with some of the local gardeners. Obviously it has been a very challenging year for anyone who is a gardener or a flower lover with the inclement weather and just a strange year.

The Waikerie flower show runs in conjunction with the Riverland Rose and Garden Festival. Glennis Crawford, who is a stalwart of that institution, is ably assisted by Chris, Barb, Marg, Peter, Sharon, and Alison Smith. I want to pay particular tribute to Alison, who has been the patron of the flower show for many years and is an avid gardener.

Many people in this chamber would understand that the Riverland is the best place in the state to grow flowers, to grow roses, because of its warm and dry weather. The difficult season did not hinder any of these passionate persistent gardeners, who put all their efforts into this flower show that gives us an opportunity to have a look at some of the great cut flowers, roses, the Australian native category, potted flowers, floral art, children's exhibits and floral photography.

On the back of that, it was also great to attend the opening of the Riverland Rose and Garden Festival, previously the Renmark Rose Festival. It has really hit its straps, I must say, and has a great committee. It is now supported by not only local South Australians but international people who come to visit this rose festival, which is great to see. It gives the Riverland another opportunity to showcase what we do so well up there and what we saw through the opening of the festival and this year's ongoing showcase.

It coincided with the 2022 World Federation of Rose Societies' World Rose Convention, with the President of the World Federation of Rose Societies, Henriette de Briey, a French lady who was very knowledgeable, in attendance to officially open the festival. The festival runs for 10 days and has grown into an iconic event not only on the Riverland calendar. People come from far and wide to have a look at some of the dedicated gardens in our beautiful region. The Riverland is not only an asset for South Australia but its world reputation is an asset, as it does particularly roses so well.

Riverland towns obviously contribute to this festival. The festival is not only a celebration but also about providing a much clearer understanding of some of the new varieties and some of the new opportunities for those avid gardeners who wish to upgrade and put new varieties and new colours into their gardens. It is also a major boost for the Riverland economy. Obviously, accommodation has been booked out for many months, and what we see now is the event flowing into the local regional economy. Accommodation providers, all the shops, the food providers and the businesses benefiting from this festival are absolutely over the moon.

The event is run by volunteers. It has had a few issues over recent times with COVID restrictions, but I take my hat off to the committee, as they have risen to every challenge, particularly through COVID. There were 31 open gardens around the region. I want to thank the committee, which does an outstanding job: Richard Fewster, John Chappel, Amy Martinson, Frankie Dunhill, Michelle Dominic, Marg Howie, Lorna Taylor, Jovita Pannach, Murray Harvey, Anne Berriman and Glenda Cass.

I would also like to pay tribute to the Remark Club, which won Best Bar Environment and Best Function/Event Venue in the 2022 Clubs and Community Awards. In the Australian Hotel Association Awards, the Loxton Hotel won Best Redeveloped Hotel (Country) and Best Bar Presentation (Country) and was Best Gaming Venue runner-up. Congratulations to those community events and congratulations to both the Remark Club and the Loxton Hotel. They do an outstanding job.

### LE CORNU SITE

**Ms STINSON (Badcoe) (15:43):** I rise to update the house and my community on progress at No. 10 Anzac Highway in Forestville, which is better known to our community as the old Le Cornu site. I am sorry, member for Adelaide, this is not the notorious Le Cornu site that you might be familiar with; this is a site where things are really happening. Earlier this year, preliminary plans for the site were announced by the successful consortium known as Locale.

Excitingly, the time has arrived for my community to now formally have its say on the proposed revamp of this iconic location. I can inform the house and my community that there will be a community drop-in session at the Adelaide Showground on Saturday 19 November when people can get information and express their views. It will be held from 9.30am until 2.30pm and it will be right where the Gilles at the Grounds markets are held in the Brick Dairy Pavilion at the Showground. I will be there and so will representatives from Renewal SA, Chapleys, Peet and Buildtec, the groups that make up the Locale consortium developing the site.

There will be some enlarged images and maps for people to look at to understand the project and what it might mean for them. They will also be able to ask questions of the Locale and Renewal SA representatives, and me if they like, and there will be the chance to provide feedback, which is really important, that will be taken on to inform the further progress of this project. If people cannot make it on the day, never mind, there is also an online avenue to submit feedback and that will be set up through the Renewal SA site. For those who might not be so tech savvy, you can always get a paper and pen and write in as well.

The public consultation begins Saturday 19 November and runs until 11 December. Locals will receive a postcard in the mail this week with all the details. I am really urging people to get involved in this process. This is the formal avenue to finally have your say. Obviously, I have received a great deal of feedback, and I continue to, and I will provide that to the consortium through this process as well but the plans have evolved and I am encouraging my community to check out what is planned right now, what the proposal is right now and provide their views on that. It is only by taking action that we can ensure that this development is right for our community and for those who will live, work and play right there in the future.

Locale consists of well-regarded independent grocers, the Chapleys of Pasadena and Frewville Foodland fame; the residential builder, Peet; and SA-based firm, Buildtec. What has been put forward by Locale is different from anywhere else and I am hopeful this is going to be something that really benefits and lifts the inner south. The mixed-use retail and residential development will have a focus on artisan and locally produced food, with a central European style piazza or market square and outdoor dining at its heart.

Maybe the gem in this \$250 million master plan is a rooftop urban farm where fresh local produce will bring residents and visitors together. It will also be a focal point for the new green school which is to be run by Youth Inc., who already have a training centre in Hindley Street, which I recently visited. This green school is going to engage students with an interest in climate change, including horticulture and the food industry. There will also be apartments and townhouses, meeting the high demand for housing in our area. I am delighted that 15 per cent of that housing has been allocated under the government's affordable housing program.

My community—and by that I mean Forestville, Keswick, Everard Park and Ashford—who have an interest in this project, are passionate about our environment and addressing climate change. This is not the first time today I have talked in this place about that passion of my community. I am pleased that there is almost 30 per cent green space in total slated for this site. Now, 12.5 per cent green space is what is required under legislation, but this project has almost 15 per cent green space on a ground level and another 15 per cent green space in elevated spaces like the podium urban farm and the rooftop greenery.

That is a great start and a model for other developers to follow, but I have to say I am persuaded by the arguments put forward by many in my community who would like to see a consolidation of that green space for a park or a reserve, particularly on the Leader Street side. I have held several meetings since the plans have gone out and the feedback has been really clear: locals want usable, open green space on the Leader Street side.

I have articulated that view to Renewal SA, the Chapley Group and hopefully soon directly to Peet, and I have raised it with councillors too. I hope that the developers will take that feedback very seriously. I am sure it will come through in the drop-in session. Finally, can I urge people to get active: you have to give your views on this if you want to make your feedback on green space heard.

### *Bills*

#### **MOTOR VEHICLES (ELECTRIC VEHICLE LEVY) AMENDMENT REPEAL BILL**

##### *Second Reading*

Adjourned debate on second reading (resumed on motion).

**The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS (West Torrens—Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Minister for Energy and Mining) (15:49):** I close the debate with my remarks and thank all members for their contributions. This was a key election commitment of the then Malinauskas Labor opposition at the most recent March election.

It is fair to say that the South Australian public want to see the South Australian government incentivising the take-up of electric vehicles, not disincentivising the take-up of electric vehicles. There has been a lot of debate, a lot of controversy over this tax. The previous government said that they would be a low-taxing government when, in fact, the reality was they increased taxes dramatically over their time in office, including land tax, and then introduced a brand-new tax on motor vehicles.

I can proudly inform the house that with the passage of this legislation, the final nail in the coffin of the tax-and-spend Liberal agenda of the last four years is over. To be fair, the opposition have asked a series of questions that they want answered, which I think is a good and collaborative way to go about this debate. The first question is obviously with regard to the Motor Vehicles (Electric Vehicle Levy) Amendment Act, the intention to obtain financial contributions for the maintenance of roads from electric vehicle users: how does the government intend to substitute the road maintenance?

I point out to the house that the motor vehicle owners, including electric vehicle owners, already contribute to the maintenance of roads through annual motor vehicle registration charges under the Motor Vehicles Act 1959. Under the Highways Act 1926, money collected from registration fees is paid into the Highways Fund and, among other things, contribute to the maintenance of roads. This continues following the passage of the Motor Vehicle (Electric Vehicle Levy) Amendment Bill 2021.

The current annual registration charge for an electric vehicle is \$141 for 12 months' registration. This is the same charge applied to four-cylinder internal combustion engine vehicles. When the Motor Vehicle (Electric Vehicle Levy) Amendment Act was introduced there was no revenue budgeted to be across the forward estimates from the charge of electric vehicles under this act. This reflected the delayed commencement of the charge being the earlier of 1 July 2027, or when the sale of battery electric vehicles reaches 30 per cent of new motor vehicle sales in South Australia. This assumes that the majority of electric vehicles on the road will not be hydrogen fuel cell but will be battery.

I think it is fair to say that the government's point of view on this is that this is largely a commonwealth issue to address. Having states come up with their own levy to charge on electric vehicles could see a variety of poor outcomes on behalf of South Australians. We do not want to see a bidding war between states where one electric vehicle charge is lower than the other per rated kilometre.

That is why the national fuel excise is a national tax that is charged nationally across all jurisdictions. When states enter these fields, like with payroll tax, you have a discrepancy across jurisdictions which quite frankly gives you very different outcomes that affect the efficiency of taxation and affect the outcome of horizontal fiscal equalisation in terms of either GST payments or other payments from the commonwealth government.

Our view is that, despite this tax not raising any money any time soon, it is a disincentive on the uptake of electric vehicles and assumes that electric vehicles will be the winner out of this race. I have to say that coming back from Japan, meeting with most successful carmaker in the world, in the Asia-Pacific, Toyota, their view is that battery vehicles will not win this race. Their view is it will be hydrogen fuel cell vehicles. They are also electric vehicles. You could impose a commonwealth excise on the hydrogen rather than on the kilometres travelled. This is basically a toll.

The other question is: what is the government's plan to recover this revenue shortfall from the reductions in the fuel excise? Again, there was no money budgeted over the forward estimates. We are talking forward estimates, sure, but let's be frank about this: this also assumes a level of uptake. Until fuel standards are improved nationally, South Australia and Australia will not receive the electric vehicles that we hope to receive from the rest of the world.

Fuel standards are what drive the uptake of electric vehicles. Fuel standards are driving the uptake of electric vehicles and hybrid vehicles in the Asia-Pacific, in Europe and North America. My advice is we have the worst fuel standards of the OECD, which means that we are getting the dregs of the motor vehicles the manufacturers are producing. We are not getting the electric vehicles that we hoped to.

Again, this tax was designed by the previous government not to raise any money anytime soon. The shortfall, quite frankly, is a difficult question to answer and, again, it depends on the uptake. I am not trying to be difficult about this. I do not think the government can budget for a shortfall in revenue on the basis of a tax that would not collect any money. The other question is: how will the government substitute the investment to government-funded EV charging infrastructure that this levy would otherwise have financed?

This is an important question. With the uptake of the internal combustion engines over the last century, governments did not incentivise the uptake of fuel stations. We did not pay for the infrastructure for BP, Shell, AMPOL and the other companies to roll out the infrastructure: these were market-driven designs. Another thing I would point out, one of the reasons we got rid of the smart-charging scheme that the previous government had, which was a subsidy for the most wealthy in this state, is that we cannot allow motor vehicle dealerships to sell electric vehicles without the appropriate charging infrastructure.

Basically, in South Australia now you have to pay an extra fee as part of purchasing an electric vehicle to get smart-charging infrastructure. SAPM will offer a discounted tariff and will incentivise that, but when you pick up your brand-new electric vehicle from any dealer in Australia they will hand you the emergency backup, what you would call a jerry can of petrol, which is basically the backup cord you use in an emergency and which becomes the mainstay of charging. That is not the appropriate way for us to have a rollout of electric vehicles.

We need to change the conversation here. If you are buying electric vehicles, you should also be purchasing, as part of that vehicle, smart-charging equipment and infrastructure from the dealership—it should come together. The idea that we would somehow have the taxpayer pick that up I think is unfair.

But, credit to the previous government, they did roll out \$12 million for charging infrastructure. They went through a process and gave that money to the RAA. I do not know if the RAA are commercialising this model. It was done just before caretaker. We are having a look at this procurement. The aspiration of the program was to roll out charging infrastructure across South Australia in public places, in the public realm, which makes a bit of sense.

Ultimately, I do not know what the financial model will be for electric charging because currently a lot of people are expecting it to be free and, ultimately, that will change. We have been conditioned in this country that every time we go home we charge our mobile phones and we charge our electronic equipment that can be used by battery. That is not what we need with motor vehicles. Remember, a lot of the motor vehicles being built today have ranges of between 600 and 700 kilometres on battery charge when the average South Australian is doing 20 to 30 kilometres per day.

We do not want everyone going home all at once and charging their batteries; we want smart systems in place where cars know when to charge, when the grid needs it being charged so they can be sponges to the grid rather than drains on the grid. With those few words, as we head into the Auditor-General's examinations, I thank members, I thank the opposition for not wanting to go to committee on this bill, and I commend the bill to the house.

Bill read a second time.

*Third Reading*

**The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS (West Torrens—Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Minister for Energy and Mining) (15:59):** I move:

That this bill be now read third time.

Bill read a third time and passed.

*Auditor-General's Report*

**AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT**

In committee.

**The CHAIR:** I declare the examination of the report of the Auditor-General 2021-22 open. I remind members that the committee is in normal session. Any questions must be asked by members on their feet. All questions must be directly referenced to the Auditor-General's Report 2021-22 and agency statements for the year ending 2021-22, as published on the Auditor-General's website. I welcome the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition.

**The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS:** I refer to the Auditor-General's annual report for the year ended 30 June 2022, Part A: Executive Summary of that report, referring to page 16 and section 4.2 of that

report. This refers to the difficulty that the Auditor-General had in accessing documents in relation to the sports and infrastructure grants. Can the Premier advise why his government is still refusing to release the sports grants cabinet submissions to the Auditor-General as requested by the Auditor-General?

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** Because cabinet documents are only entitled to be had by members of cabinet.

**The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS:** I refer to the same section, the Executive Summary, page 15, section 4.1. Why is the government preventing the Auditor-General from fulfilling his legislative obligations in seeking to audit the sports and infrastructure grants process? This is a description provided by the Auditor-General. He cannot fulfil his legislative obligation as outlined on page 15 of this report because of his inability to access these documents.

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** I have familiarised myself with the page number referred to by the Leader of the Opposition but, if you do not mind me asking, where specifically on that page can the Leader of the Opposition quote that assertion being made by the Auditor-General?

**The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS:** Under section 4.1, it says:

I am professionally bound to ensure I meet specific requirements before issuing an opinion. I must obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to provide a basis for an audit opinion. What is sufficient is a matter of judgement and risk for the auditor.

There is some more information about convention, and then:

Accordingly, giving an audit opinion on whether a transaction has been conducted properly and in accordance with law occasionally necessitates accessing evidence about what Cabinet authorised and the information that informed its decision.

This enables the Auditor-General to fulfil his legislative obligations. He has not been able to do this in relation to the sports and infrastructure grants because he has been unable to get the documents required to provide that opinion. Why is he being prevented from doing so?

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** There are a couple of elements there. I am not aware of anything within the Auditor-General's Report that we are talking about where it says the Auditor-General is inhibited from fulfilling their legislative responsibilities, as is being asserted by the Leader of the Opposition. Nonetheless, in the second part of the question the Leader of the Opposition asks why we are not providing cabinet documents. This is something that we have traversed, obviously, in question time, as it has been traversed in the public realm in the media, and I certainly appreciate the appropriateness of asking the question in this specific forum within the parliament.

The government has a view around the release of cabinet documents. We are very keen to furnish the Auditor-General with all the information that they require in order to be able to assess expenditure of taxpayers' dollars, as is provided for by the substantial reports that have been made available by the Auditor-General himself. Having said that, it is also the government's view that cabinet documents are within the exclusive purview of cabinet members themselves. There is a principle that underpins that, and that is worthy of preservation.

The opposition has formed a view around the commitments that we made at the election to sporting communities. I simply submit to the opposition, and anybody else for that matter, that a commitment to a local sporting community is no different from any other policy commitment that is made in the lead-up to an election, whether it be from the Liberal Party or the Labor Party. There were numerous commitments made by both sides of politics in the lead-up to the election, most of which were pretty prescriptive about cost. There might be some that were uncosted thought bubbles, like Crystal Lake or whatever, but there were others that were quite defined and a cost was put next to it by the Liberal Party, as it was by the Labor Party.

By and large, that is what is being delivered in the budget, and we are committed to doing so. The cabinet's job as the executive arm of government in no small part is charged with the task of seeing to the realisation of those commitments, those policies, and that is what we are very keen to do and go about as diligently as we possibly can.

**The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS:** I refer to the same section again, 4.1, and the paragraph that I previously quoted, which is from the Auditor-General's viewpoint:

...giving an audit opinion on whether a transaction has been conducted properly and in accordance with law occasionally necessitates accessing evidence about what Cabinet authorised and the information that informed its decision.

This being cabinet's decision. Does the Premier agree with the Auditor-General's statement here?

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** What I agree with is something I know the Leader of the Opposition agrees with because that was certainly the policy that the former government had and the current government has, and that is that cabinet documents are exclusively entitled to cabinet members and for there to be any exception to that it needs to be approved by the cabinet. It is the policy the former government had; it is the policy that this government has. In terms of audit opinions and the like, all the expenditure that the government undertakes is consistent with delivering on its policies and done in a way that we understand to be entirely appropriate.

**The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS:** Page 15 of the Executive Summary is the beginning of section 4.2, which goes on to the next page. It describes the process through which the Auditor-General would go to access documents such as cabinet submissions. In 3.2 it says:

Upon receiving a request under section 3.1, the Chief Executive of DPC will provide access to the Cabinet submission, subject to the approval of the Premier.

Premier, on that basis, what recommendation did you receive from your chief executive regarding releasing cabinet submissions to the Auditor-General when they were requested?

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** To the best of my recollection, I was provided with basic advice that informed me about the options that I had available to me, and I made the judgement that I did.

**The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS:** Just to clarify, there was no recommendation from the Chief Executive of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet providing the Premier with a direction that he was advised to go in—a yes, you can release these documents or, a no, you cannot. Is the Premier saying he was given a range of options or a continuum of advice that he then made that decision himself?

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** I am advised that the advice that I received was that it was a decision for me to make and me alone. When I say 'me alone', it is a matter that I actually actively discussed with the cabinet as well.

**The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS:** The same page and same section again, 4.2, refers to Premier's circular 047. Are you aware of and do you agree with Premier and Cabinet Circular P047 'Disclosure of Cabinet documents to investigative agencies'?

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** Just to get some clarity around the question, is the Leader of the Opposition asking about whether or not I agree with the circular?

**The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS:** Yes. Are you aware of the existence of the circular and do you agree with its contents?

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** I am aware of the contents. I am aware of the circular. I have familiarised myself with the contents of the circular. It is my expectation that, as best as practicable, members of the executive arm of government and the government more broadly observe those circulars. Circulars, of course, are subject to change from time to time; that is the nature of them. But the Premier's circular No. 47, up until this point, has not changed.

**The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS:** Premier, relating to the same comments from the Auditor-General in relation to Premier and Cabinet Circular P047, are you aware of any circumstances in which the Auditor-General can be provided cabinet submissions that are outlined in circular 047 and, if so, can you share them with the house today?

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** Yes, the Auditor-General can be furnished with cabinet documents with the approval of the Premier.



**The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS:** In the Auditor-General's Report in section 4.2 again, and in relation to circular P047, the Auditor-General provides a piece of information that he believes that the government intends to revise this circular. Can you explain why this is the case and when that revision will be undertaken and what that revision might look like?

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** Yes, I am familiar with the reference that the Leader of the Opposition refers to. Just to be clear, if the Leader of the Opposition does not mind, I will quickly quote it:

At the time of this Report we understand that the SA Government plans to review, and potentially change, this policy. We are not aware of a specific date by which this is likely to occur.

I understand it is standard practice for circulars to be reviewed on a periodic basis and I understand that all circulars are currently going through a process of review. This one is no exception, and I understand there is an aspiration for that process to be concluded this year.

**The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS:** Premier, can you tell us who is leading that review? Is it you in your role as Premier, is it the chief executive of the department, is it the head of Cabinet Office, or is it another public servant within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet?

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** I understand that, in a strict sense, it is the responsibility of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, led by the chief executive. Of course, if there were to be an amendment to a Premier's circular, that would ultimately require my authorisation in terms of within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. Obviously, the chief executive has a role to play, but also the Cabinet Office essentially leads the grant work in terms of the effort that is being undertaken into those reviews or analyses.

I might add for the record that that process is, I understand, a relatively routine one. As it currently stands, I have made no request of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet to make any specific amendment to Premier's circular 047. Just to be clear, that is not to say it cannot change. If I receive recommendations or if something draws my attention to a need to change, then that is something I will turn my mind to.

**The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS:** In relation to the same topic, would the Premier support revisions to circular 047, which decreased disclosure and transparency requirements?

**The CHAIR:** There is a level of argument in that question. Are you happy to—

**Mr Tarzia:** It's an informal process. It's in committee.

**The CHAIR:** The question still has to be replied to. There is a level of argument in that question. I did not object to what he is talking about. He is happy to raise it, but he has to make it a direct question—and I do not need advice from the member for Hartley, thanks.

**Mr Tarzia:** It's always free.

**The CHAIR:** It's always free, yes.

**The Hon. D.G. PISONI:** Point of order, sir.

**The CHAIR:** The member for Unley; I can't wait.

**The Hon. D.G. PISONI:** It is actually against standing orders to respond to interjections, which is what you have just done.

**The CHAIR:** Member for Unley, unless you have something really valuable to add, I would rather you did not say anything.

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** The assertion from the Leader of the Opposition was that there was a change to the circular that diminished—I am trying to remember the exact word—

**An honourable member:** Transparency.

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** —transparency. What I would simply draw the Leader of the Opposition to is that if you look at Premier's circular 047, the last time the circular was approved—and this is on page 6 of the circular—was 18 February 2019. So if there has been a revision to

Premier's circular 047 that in any way degrades transparency, then of course that has been at the hand of the former government.

In that former government, ultimately the person responsible for the Premier's circular was the former Premier but was in no doubt aided by the advice of someone who has a familiarity with the cabinet process, including someone who may have worked in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, and none other than the Cabinet Office. More than that, if my memory serves me correctly, the now Leader of the Opposition was also charged with the unique responsibility of being the cabinet secretary. So if there was a change to Premier's circular 047 that diminished transparency, I suspect that the Leader of the Opposition was well aware of it and might be able to answer his own question.

**The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS:** The Premier has misunderstood the question, but I am going to move on out of compassion. I refer to page 16, dot point 4.2. This is the same section again. The Auditor-General states:

We have not received any information in relation to requests for documentation of the current government...

Premier, are you able to advise how many requests for cabinet submissions you have received—'you' being the current government—from the Auditor-General since the election?

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** I am loath to give a specific number because I would not want to mislead. I am happy to take that on notice. However, I understand that this number has been furnished in the public realm maybe as recently as yesterday—was it in Economic and Finance or Budget and Finance yesterday?

**The Hon. S.C. Mullighan:** Economic and Finance.

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** That number might have been furnished by the Auditor-General himself in the Economic and Finance Committee yesterday. What I am in a position to confirm is that I do not believe we have authorised the release of any cabinet documents as per the principle that I explained earlier.

**The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS:** When taking that on notice, Premier, could you provide a figure on how many requests for cabinet submissions you have received and then maybe break them down if possible—if there is a differentiation here—into the number that were approved and the number that were refused?

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** I am more than happy to, but, again, I have no reason to believe that information, should it have been furnished yesterday in Economic and Finance, would be inaccurate, but nonetheless we will undertake that exercise. I am more than happy to take that on notice, including the specifics that the Leader of the Opposition has asked for.

**The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS:** Premier, I refer to the same section on page 16, dot point 4.2. Under what circumstances would you release documents to the Auditor-General?

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** On all circumstances to which the Auditor-General is entitled to documents. Of course, that is, I can only imagine, pages upon pages upon pages of government documents that the Auditor-General has access to. Of course that does not require my approval. The only time that I would imagine it requires my approval is when the Auditor-General is seeking to get access to documents to which he is not entitled.

**The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS:** Premier, I refer to the same section again. Do you believe there will be circumstances when you release cabinet documents to the Auditor-General in the future?

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** There is a policy that guides this practice, namely, Premier's Circular 047, and it is our intention to comply with that policy.

**The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS:** I move to page 19, dot point 5.1.4, with the title, 'What the Auditor-General's Department Needs.' The Auditor-General states that he has made a request to receive an increase in his annual funding budget of \$1.569 million to fund 10 new positions and related operating costs. Premier, will you guarantee that you will provide the Auditor-General with sufficient resources to undertake his legislative obligations?

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** The Auditor-General's function is an incredibly important one. The Auditor-General's examination, not just this form but generally, of the government's expenditure is an essential part of ensuring that the government is doing the right thing, and it is a role that I value and I know that the Treasurer values.

The Auditor-General outlines the savings task that has been imposed upon their office not just in the most recent state budget but over a sustained period of time, and I would like to acknowledge that the Auditor-General has been incredibly diligent with the expenditure of taxpayer funds, as the Auditor-General himself knows in the report. It is not an easy operating environment for the government at the moment, if it ever is. It is particularly challenging at the moment, as the Auditor-General himself acknowledges within the report.

When we make decisions in the state budget around saving tasks, whether it be within the Auditor-General's office or within the Department of Treasury and Finance, which itself took a pretty decent haircut and I certainly know there has been a rather substantial haircut in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet as well, which is currently being delivered upon, that has consequences.

These are difficult decisions to make, but the Auditor-General is an important independent office. Naturally, the Auditor-General's remarks that are contained within the report regarding their own circumstances in some respects are not unique at all because every government agency, as far as I know, seeks to make additional funding requests. That said, the nature of this report and what the Auditor-General said is worthy of contemplation and of course that will be provided for in the budget to be handed down in June next year.

**The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS:** Moving on and back to page 13, section 3.3.6, Authority and proper process, where the Auditor-General outlines that governments and Public Service employees must act within the powers and limits set by the law, he goes through the key areas of state legislation that govern that. Premier, looking at those legal instruments that are outlined by the Auditor-General, can you assure South Australians that no conflict, misconduct, maladministration or corruption occurred in the administration of the sports and infrastructure grants and, if so, can you provide evidence for this or should we take you at your word?

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** It is a pretty extraordinary question in some respects. The budget is an important process. It rightly enjoys a lot of scrutiny, as do elections, and we are getting on with the task of delivering upon our election commitments and doing it in such a way that we believe is in the best interests of South Australia. Of course, every effort has to be undertaken to ensure compliance with the law. That applies to every citizen in the state and parliamentarians are certainly no exception.

**The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS:** In section 3.3.5 on page 12, the Auditor-General says:

We have already seen in our local media reporting that making certain funding decisions exposes a government to accusations that such payments are designed for political purposes and lack the established safeguards—

*The Hon. P.B. Malinauskas interjecting:*

**The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS:** It is page 12. There is a section 3.3.5. It provides commentary about media reporting and finishes off with the statement:

...accusations that such payments are designed for political purposes and lack the established safeguards against bias or subjective assessment.

Can the Premier assure South Australians that the Ministerial Code of Conduct was not breached in the assessment, approval or administration of the sports and infrastructure grants process?

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** I note the Auditor-General's reference to media commentary. The media are no different from the Auditor-General in that they perform an important function within our democracy. The media are, in every respect, independent parties—independent of government—and that is necessary and important. They scrutinise the government in a different way, but with a similar independence that the Auditor-General themselves have.

However, what I might mention, if the media do not mind me saying so, is that that does not necessarily mean they are always right. It is no different from how parliamentarians are not always

right. The Auditor-General has formed the view that they should make reference to local media reporting. I guess that is the Auditor-General's prerogative.

In terms of election commitments, yes, of course, they are subject to the political process. To the best of my knowledge, I do not think the Auditor-General has asked for cabinet documents pertaining to our health commitments that we made at the election or the commitments we made around big infrastructure projects worth many multiple times more than the sporting infrastructure commitments.

I am not aware of the Auditor-General asking for cabinet documents relating to our education policy commitments but, rather, asking for cabinet documents, I understand, that pertain to those election commitments that some media outlets have decided are more questionable than others. On what basis that judgement is made in the media is unknown to me. That is for them to explain.

What I would say is that I do not necessarily accord with the opinion of former Prime Minister John Howard, who said there are core promises and non-core promises. We take the view there are only promises. It does not matter if they were to a small sporting community or to the people of South Australia more broadly with a major policy on trade schools, for instance, or health policy, they are all commitments that need to be honoured. We are determined to do that.

One of the reasons we established the Premier's Delivery Unit was to make sure that we can, as diligently as possible, account for all the election commitments that we made and then seek to deliver on each and every one of them. Regardless of their size, they are all important, particularly to those people the commitments were made to.

**The CHAIR:** The time allocated for the examination of the Auditor-General's Report for this part has now expired. I now call on the Treasurer and the member for Colton. I remind members that this is a normal session of a committee. All questions must be asked by members on their feet and all questions must be answered by members on their feet. All questions must be directly referenced to the Auditor-General's Report and agency statements for the year ending 2021-22 and as published on the Auditor-General's website.

**Mr COWDREY:** I begin with Part A, section 3, starting at page 6. Treasurer, can you explain the full extent of your role, your office's role and the role of your department in assessing, approving and administering the sports and community infrastructure grant processes?

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** I am a cabinet minister who participated in a cabinet decision in order to give effect to the commitments that we had made at the election and incorporate those into the state budget.

**Mr COWDREY:** On the same section, did you sign any of the sports and community infrastructure grants cabinet submissions?

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** The member would understand that is not a question I am going to answer.

**Mr COWDREY:** Treasurer, again on the same question, did you approve or provide spending authority for any sports and community infrastructure grants?

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** Perhaps for the member's benefit, cabinet provides the expenditure and the appropriation authority. It is then up to the responsible ministers to administer those moneys being paid to the recipients who have been approved to receive those moneys by cabinet. My understanding—I am happy to check the fine detail on this—is that that was principally undertaken by the Office for Recreation and Sport, and in a number of other instances that was superintended by the Department for Infrastructure and Transport.

**Mr COWDREY:** I understand the direction of my questions, given your answer in question time last week that alluded to the fact that no matter if in character, grants that were paid—whether they looked to be in the nature of those that were community or sporting infrastructure grants—there were other departments in place that were capable and had the ability to provide grant payments and that DIT and ORSR were not the only two agencies that provided and executed grant funding. Please forgive me if I do continue with this line, as Treasury is the appropriate agency, potentially.

Did you delegate responsibility for the approval or administration of any of the sports and community infrastructure grants?

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** I cannot recall off the top of my head other agencies that were involved in the administration of paying moneys to the recipients who were authorised by cabinet but, as I said in my previous answer, I am happy to take that question on notice and if there are other agencies that did that I am happy to come back to the member and provide that detail.

**Mr COWDREY:** Again, with reference to the same section, Treasurer, did you declare a conflict of interest at any point in the process for the administration of the sports and community infrastructure grants process?

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** As I have answered to the member previously and to the house, I am confident that I have met all my responsibilities under the Ministerial Code of Conduct, and no-one has put any information to me that makes me think otherwise.

**Mr COWDREY:** I will reference Part A, section 4 on page 15 of the report. The Auditor-General makes this comment:

...giving an audit opinion on whether a transaction has been conducted properly and in accordance with law occasionally necessitates accessing evidence about what Cabinet authorised and the information that informed its decision.

Treasurer, do you agree with this comment?

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** I think the Auditor-General is best placed to comment about how he thinks he is best placed to meet his legislative obligations to the parliament. He may have a view that he needs to access certain information or documents in order for him to fulfil that function but, beyond that synopsis of the circumstance of the Auditor-General preparing commentary for his annual report, I do not really have a view.

**Mr COWDREY:** So the Treasurer of South Australia has no view as to whether the Auditor-General, in giving an audit opinion of whether a transaction has been conducted properly and in accordance with the law—as transactions are provided in large part by your department, you have no view as to whether those comments align with your views?

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** Well, you have a conflation of a number of things here in an effort to try to demonstrate a political point. You are asking me a question, recognising that I am Treasurer and have the Department of Treasury and Finance that I am responsible for and that reports to me, that is responsible for many, many transactions and authorisations within the public sector. That, of course, we all recognise to be the case, but where the conflation comes in is by your own use of the term 'a transaction or a spending decision', and it is here that I reiterate the advice that I previously provided to parliament. The authorisation, the approval of transactions, the spending decisions occurred at cabinet within the public sector framework. That is where the authority for expenditure and, if need be, appropriation is provided, so that is within the public sector framework.

It seems to me that the opposition is conflating that process with a desire that, when a member of parliament or a candidate standing for parliament or a political party is communicating to an electorate what their priorities would be should they be elected after a state election—what their election commitments are, for example—the formation of that election commitment, the putting forward of that proposal by a candidate standing for election, it seems the inference is that that needs to occur within the public sector framework.

On that, if that is the contention of those commentating on the delivery of election commitments by this government, I am a bit surprised because, of course, what we see here is quite plain: a political party and members of it made a series of election commitments. After forming government, the cabinet approved the expenditure to give effect to those election commitments. Then, as far as I can tell from the Auditor-General's Report, the ministers and agencies responsible for giving effect to the cabinet decision, i.e. for reaching agreements in order to disburse moneys to those approved recipients occurred, and—as far as I can tell, again, from what the commentary is in the report from the sample that the Auditor-General tells us in the report he has taken—that has been done in accordance with the appropriate controls and public sector financial management framework.

I realise that in some quarters there is a broad desire to conflate the making of election commitments and the appropriate spending decision of funding authority and carrying out of that decision within the public sector framework. There is a desire to conflate that process with what we have seen in the past, including what the Auditor-General says in this same section of his report—for example, when he commented about the previous government's Regional Growth Fund, or when we cast light on the application of the previous government's grassroots funding program in the Office for Rec and Sport almost exclusively going to Liberal-held seats; the only exception to that, I think in round 2, was for one grant to go to an Independent, formerly Liberal-held seat.

The desire to conflate what is happening here and what has been commented on here in this report with that past process I think is completely misguided and unreasonable. I realise why the opposition are doing it—because they think this is some way to score a political hit—but I just do not agree with the conflation.

**Mr COWDREY:** It is very easy to tell when the Treasurer is a bit touchy. In regard to the same section—

**The Hon. S.C. Mullighan:** I thought that was pretty balanced from me, to be honest. I was a lot touchier in question time.

**Mr COWDREY:** Fair enough. Treasurer, did you request that the Premier not approve release of the cabinet submissions to the Auditor-General?

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** I am not commenting on that. The Leader of the Opposition questioned the Premier about this in the previous half an hour and I think the Premier was pretty fulsome in his responses as to how this process was undertaken.

**Mr COWDREY:** I refer you to the same section, Part A, section 3. Outside of yourself, Treasurer, who in your ministerial office has access to cabinet submission documents?

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** I would have to come back to the parliament with whatever information I can provide on that. I know I will get this wrong, but I will try: I think there is a system that is used by Cabinet Office called Shrike. It is the bird that continues to swoop down on people who work in the State Administration Centre without consequence, I think.

There are a number of people who are authorised within ministerial offices. For example, pretty much every ministerial office has a cabinet officer who is a member of the administrative team who liaises with Cabinet Office and provides access to cabinet documents for the minister's benefit, but is also responsible for submitting documents from time to time if a minister is submitting them to cabinet, so they would have access. I assume there would be a number of the minister's own appointed staff, including Chief of Staff and advisers and perhaps other administrative staff, but I would have to come back with a specific answer on that.

**Mr COWDREY:** In regard to Part A, section 3, figure 3.2, how many grants referred to in the totals in that figure were paid to incorporated organisations? Who were the recipients and to what value?

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** I will take that question on notice. As I said in question time, I perhaps was mistaken, but I had thought that the opposition had asked for this information previously and the government had undertaken to provide that information to the parliament on notice. I am willing to believe the member for Colton. If that has not been provided, then we will provide that.

**Mr COWDREY:** On the same reference, what checks did the Labor Party undertake to ensure that organisations that were provided grants had the capacity to deliver the outcome or project that funds were provided for?

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** For the vast majority of these, that concern is satisfied because in many cases the relevant local government authority is the recipient in these grants.

**Mr COWDREY:** You may take this same question on notice, as per the one previously. Were any grants provided to private individuals and, if so, who were the recipients and to what value?

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** Not that I can recall, but I will check.

**Mr COWDREY:** I refer to the report at section 3.3.6. Can you assure South Australians that no conflict, misconduct, maladministration or corruption occurred in the administration of the sports and community infrastructure grants processes?

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** I have not seen any information that gives me cause to believe that it has.

**Mr COWDREY:** Again on Part A, section 3, yesterday a quote attributed to the Premier appeared in *The Advertiser* online. I quote:

Every single cent of expenditure that comes from taxpayer funds to deliver on our election commitments...is fully transparent and fully available for everybody to see, including the Auditor-General.

Where does this publicly available list exist, Treasurer? The Auditor-General was not aware of a list citing each sport and local infrastructure grant, outlining who received the payment, how much was paid and for what outcome. Can you direct me to the website or the URL?

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** I think the quote was 'every cent' that is allocated towards government initiatives, including election commitments, so the first port of call for the member to look at would be the Appropriation Bill. This sets out to the dollar, if not to the cent, allocations of moneys that were available for purposes for all government programs, broken down by agency. Then, as the member would be aware, there is an extensive opportunity with the tabling of the Appropriation Bill for the parliament then to examine it.

I probably could not think of a better and more transparent way of presenting all the dollars and cents the government allocates for its programs than by that process, because of course every single member of the public is represented in this one place in parliament so that they all have access to it.

**Mr COWDREY:** I have a follow-up question to that, Treasurer. Are you saying that the quote provided by the Premier was meant to be read to its absolute literal sense by the people of South Australia and that there is no such publicly available list outlining how much money was provided to each sporting club or local infrastructure project and that you are confirming that there is no publicly available website listing each and every grant paid?

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** No; we can go back and check the *Hansard*. You put a quote to me using the specific words of the Premier, and I responded to that quote. If you had a particular context for that, which is a carrying on of the bemoaning of not having a list in front of you about that list of recipients of those moneys that were authorised by cabinet, as I have already said, I am happy to make that available to you.

**Mr COWDREY:** On radio in May nearly a half a year ago, Treasurer, you committed to shifting your broader election commitments and policy documents from an external Labor website to a state government website. Has this occurred yet and, if not, why not?

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** Do you have the quote from me there in May, because I do not believe I made that commitment. I am not the minister responsible for government websites. I am happy to stand corrected, but what I recall I said was that it was my understanding that, at that time in May, the new Labor government was going through exactly the same process and suffering exactly the same criticism that the previous Liberal government went through after they were elected in March 2018 of moving their online presence away from a state political party-based website to a government website, for example. That was the context of my comments in May. I think I said that I undertook to get back to the person who asked me that question on talkback radio where that is up to.

I can assure the member for Colton that amongst the responsibilities that have been conferred on me by the Premier, managing government websites is not one of them, although there is of course the Department of Treasury and Finance website. But, as you might imagine, even though that is a website managed by the department that reports to me, it is not necessarily the department that is responsible for managing all government information across all government departments.

What it does have, for example, is the budget papers under a section on that website called Budget and Financial Management. If this is yet another allusion to you not having access to that list of grants, as I said on a number of occasions, including during question time today, I thought that was provided. I understand from the member's remarks that it has not been provided, and I undertake to provide that.

**Mr COWDREY:** I will leave aside my interpretation of the comments provided on radio. Perhaps, again, it was commentary to the extent that it was an orthodox thing for a website to be removed and shifted across to another website, but it certainly was not an attempt to hide from South Australians what our commitments were.

I think the confirmation was from the Treasurer—and again, I do not want to put words in his mouth—but, to my knowledge, that has not occurred yet, that those election commitments are available for anybody. The crux of where we are going here, with regard to this issue and more broadly, is that a pattern is beginning to emerge. As mentioned in the editorial of *The Advertiser* this morning, scrutiny when it suits seems to be the way of this government, does it not, Treasurer?

I will shift to Part C, page 540, under the section dealing with the Fines Enforcement and Recovery Unit. What steps have been and will be undertaken by the department to collect outstanding debts through the Fines Enforcement and Recovery Unit? Can you elaborate on the different collection management strategies and actions that have been put in place over the past 12 months?

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** I thank the member for his question. I can direct his attention to page 541 in the third to last paragraph, as follows:

The FERU has engaged a panel of external debt collectors to help collect outstanding amounts, particularly those that are more difficult to recover. The outstanding amounts collected by debt collection agencies since the start of the arrangements in 2016-17 total \$32.8 million.

As for the details of the methods by which those external debt collectors use to recover those debts, I am happy to take that question on notice and provide some information to the member.

**Mr COWDREY:** I refer to Part C, page 537, looking at commonwealth grant funding arrangements, specifically the ongoing provision of GST payments. Is the Treasurer confident that he can secure an extension from his colleagues in Canberra to the 'no worse off' guarantee for GST funding?

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** I would certainly hope so. That is the bare minimum that would be acceptable to South Australia. We should note that what is occurring at the moment is that a new arrangement, which was agreed I think in 2018 or 2019 by the former Morrison Coalition federal government, changed the legislation governing the GST to allow for a change in how the national collections were disbursed amongst the states, away from what had been in place since the GST was first implemented to an arrangement which favours Western Australia and does so on an entirely unreasonable and unjust basis.

The complaint from Western Australia—notwithstanding the fact that in the early 2000s after the GST was first introduced they were a net beneficiary of horizontal fiscal equalisation (HFE), something conveniently forgotten by Western Australia—about there being up to a three-year lag effect of accounting for royalty payments and the changes to GST relativities meant that at times they could be both deficient of mining royalties, if there had been a downturn in either commodity prices or demand for those commodities, and an adjustment to their GST receipts to take account for that.

To get out a 10-pound sledgehammer to crack a very fine veneer of a membrane on a beer nut, the federal Coalition government decided to impose a regime where the main principles of HFE were put to one side and a new beneficial arrangement for Western Australia was entered into. This year, for example, more than \$4 billion in GST that would have otherwise gone to all other states and territories is being directed away from those states and territories, every single one of them other than WA to WA.

At the same time, the WA government is recording a \$6 billion budget surplus and, at this point in time, maybe South Australia will be the only jurisdiction that gets close to recording a surplus



in the current financial year. At the same time, Western Australia is getting record revenues from royalties on its commodities. So it is unfair.

There is a temporary bandaid which has been applied to all states and territories where there is a 'no worse off' guarantee and that is that, while those extra GST revenues are being ripped off the other states and territories and given to Western Australia, the commonwealth will come in and top up those states and territories losing that GST out of its own budget, and that only continues until the end of the 2026-27 financial year. So from 2027-28 onwards, we will be worse off.

I had previously provided advice to the house that that would mean that in a financial year under the current circumstances we would be about \$280 million worse off. That figure has now been revised to about \$320 million a year worse off. If the 'no worse off' guarantee is extended, that would be a bare minimum to protect the financial interests of South Australia. Ultimately, some sort of better reform would be preferred by other states and territories, but I am not sure whether there is the appetite of the federal parliament to do that.

**Mr COWDREY:** This is one of the areas in which we are completely in lock step: the fact that the bare minimum is to ensure that that guarantee continues. The only detail lacking in your commentary is, of course, the federal Labor Party's unwavering commitment to that change as well. Outside that issue, can I move to one at page 473, Part C. I will just clear up that statement: the federal Labor government supported the original changes to the HFC equalisation.

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** Changes by the Coalition. The entire parliament and federal—

**Mr COWDREY:** The federal parliament, almost exclusively together. At any rate, moving on to page 473, Part C, Super SA, the commentary highlights that Super SA is still making the administration and system changes needed to bring fund selection into effect for members. Is this an issue, given the choice of fund is due to be rolled out this month, and are there delays in the project?

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** Not that I am aware of, but I will take that on notice and double-check for the member.

**Mr COWDREY:** Are you able to advise whether fund selection is available as of November 2022?

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** That was the aim. I have not checked between yesterday and today but, as I said, I am happy to check that. I know that when we were talking about this during estimates, the Chief Executive of Super SA was quick to assure us that this was achievable, but I will check. I am advised that it is still the case: it is on track for November, assumedly between now and the end of the month.

**Mr COWDREY:** Following on, a question a few pages later on page 495, Part C, that section highlights the restructure in asset classes at Funds SA. Are you able to provide further commentary and advice around what drove the asset class restructure and how many customers were impacted?

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN:** Certainly, Funds SA in general terms recorded investment losses over the course of the most recent financial year. They were certainly not alone as a fund manager in doing so. The early advice I received from Funds SA as to why—I will provide a bit more context around that. In the last financial year, they recorded investment losses. They were not alone in doing that across other fund managers. However, they and of course me, and we all, would be a little concerned that their overall investment returns were slightly lower than even other industry participants. They were slightly worse performing last financial year than other fund managers, for example, of superannuation funds.

In the previous 12 months, where they had very strong investment returns—from memory, of over 23 or 24 per cent—they had outperformed a lot of those fund managers. I am not trying to say it all evens each other out. My understanding is that part of what is attributable to that overachievement, and then underachievement of the following financial year, is the asset allocation favouring international equities, for example, against infrastructure investment. That was the advice that was first provided to me by the chair, Paul Laband. He has assured me that he and the Funds SA board continue to be engaged and work on reassessing their asset allocations.

While it was good for the 2020-21 financial year, and they outperformed because of that higher than normal exposure to international equities, of course now it has led to what they believe is a level of underperformance against other Australian benchmarks because of that asset allocation of the weightings between the two. That was the sort of early advice I got from them. You will see that this gets a little bit of examination in the annual report and associated documents but, to provide some further information, once again I am happy to take that on notice for the member.

**The CHAIR:** The time allocated for the examination of the Auditor-General's Report for this section has now expired. I now invite the Minister for Sport and Recreation and the member for Hartley.

**Mr TARZIA:** Minister, I refer to the Auditor-General's Report, Part A, section 3.2, titled 'Payment of sporting club and local infrastructure grants because of election commitments'. Did the minister personally approve any of these sporting grants referred to by this report?

**The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD:** I thank the shadow minister for his question. Can I firstly just say that sport and recreation clubs in South Australia are institutions that are run through the hard work of volunteers who contribute so much to communities. They so selflessly contribute so much to communities and are often the places that bring people together and provide a really lovely sense of belonging and help to improve people's physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing.

They are incredibly important organisations, and I am sure that the shadow minister would agree that over the last couple of years through some really difficult times they have managed to bring people together despite sometimes people having to be physically apart. They have maintained that role at the heart of communities.

I am really proud that, amongst a wide range of election commitments, there were commitments made to sport and recreation organisations. As the Premier spoke about, they sit amongst a very broad range of election commitments, and those commitments represent the vision and the policies which we took to the election and which were ultimately endorsed by the people of South Australia.

Those commitments came about because a range of local members, and also indeed candidates at the time, engaged deeply with their local communities, including with those volunteers I spoke about in sport and recreation organisations, and they responded to need those particular sport and recreation clubs identified. I am sure that the shadow minister would agree that those volunteers do need to be heard and we need to respond to them.

I am proud that the vision we took to the election includes that response to a number of those sport and recreation organisations. I think it has been canvassed very well in this place both in question time and during the course of the Auditor-General's Report examination this afternoon—and indeed on previous occasions in this house—the processes that were gone through in ensuring that these election commitments that were made to the people of South Australia are being delivered on. I think the Premier spoke about these promises being ones that will absolutely be fulfilled.

As I have also spoken about in this house on several occasions, I have been very clear about the processes that we went through, and I am very clear that I have upheld all the relevant responsibilities and processes in relation to the commitments that were made.

**Mr TARZIA:** Referring to the same line, did the minister delegate the approval of any of these grants to anyone else and, if so, who did she delegate it to?

**The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD:** Again, I think that I have been very clear on several occasions here and I will say it again for the shadow minister's benefit. In terms of the delivery of the election commitments, I have upheld all my responsibilities in an appropriate manner.

**Mr TARZIA:** Referring to the same line, did the minister sign any of the sports and infrastructure grant cabinet submissions?

**The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD:** Again, I think that the Premier and Treasurer have both given answers to similar questions. The processes of cabinet, as the shadow minister knows from his time as a minister, are confidential. The deliberations of cabinet are confidential, and it is part of my responsibility, a responsibility that I take incredibly seriously, to make sure that I uphold that

confidentiality about cabinet processes, deliberations, discussions, etc. I will continue to uphold that confidentiality and to act appropriately always in relation to any of those deliberations and it is incredibly important that I do.

**Mr TARZIA:** Referring to the same line, can the minister please explain the full extent of her role, her office's role and the role of her department in assessing, approving and administering the sports and infrastructure grants?

**The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD:** In relation to the election commitments, I think I have gone through the sequence of events, but I am really happy to speak about them again. We took to the election a range of commitments to our community that were part of a vision we offered to the people of South Australia, and those commitments related to a range of activities and programs, etc. I am really proud that members and candidates engaged with communities about those particular commitments and deeply engaged in a very open and transparent way with their communities about those commitments. What we are doing now, as the Premier and Treasurer have spoken about, is delivering on those commitments, as we should.

**Mr TARZIA:** Referring to the same line, did the minister personally approve any of these sporting grants the report refers to that were within her own electorate?

**The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD:** I think I have actually answered this question already, both today and on a number of occasions. I take my role as minister very seriously, and I always act in the appropriate manner and adhere to the code of conduct and any other relevant acts, etc. that of course I should adhere to. I take that responsibility to do so very seriously, and I will continue to take that responsibility very, very seriously.

**Mr TARZIA:** Minister, referring to the Auditor-General's Report, Part A, section 3.3, the Auditor-General asserts that 'the payment of public money should only occur after all public sector processes are completed'. Does the minister agree with this assertion from the Auditor-General?

**The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD:** I think this goes to an answer that I have previously given to the shadow minister and that is that we were very open and very transparent about the vision that we took to the election, to the people of South Australia. That vision is filled with commitments to the South Australian people and we are getting on with delivering those commitments.

**Mr TARZIA:** Referring to the Auditor-General's Report, Part A, section 3.3.4, titled 'No government records of why projects were chosen', does your office have any records or assessment criteria available as to why certain projects were chosen?

**The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD:** Again, it is a very similar question to ones that the shadow minister has previously asked both today and on previous occasions in the parliament and my answer remains the same, and that is that we took these commitments to the people of South Australia and we are getting on with delivering those commitments.

**Mr TARZIA:** Referring to the same line, paragraph 4, dot point 1, would the minister be willing to table here today her approval for individual grant amounts and, if not, why not?

**The CHAIR:** Can I have that question again, please, because I think the question presupposes something that the minister made a comment on earlier.

**Mr TARZIA:** I will ask it and then maybe you can allow the minister to reply. The question was a straight question: would the minister be willing to table here today her approval for individual grant programs and, if not, why not?

**The CHAIR:** The minister has advised the committee, and the minister can correct me if I am wrong, they were cabinet decisions. Therefore, if you are asking the minister to release that information, I think the Treasurer responded to that earlier.

**Mr TARZIA:** Sir, with all respect, how the minister responds is her prerogative, is it not?

**The CHAIR:** I am happy if the minister responds. I am just making sure I understand your question and that the minister is able to respond.

**The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD:** I do think that I have already answered this question. I think it is a very similar question to the one that you asked one or two questions into the session. I do think I have already answered it. Again, it is not just today that you have asked questions along that line. I think you have asked in many different ways questions along those lines, so I do feel that I have already answered that question. I think also the Treasurer and the Premier have answered those questions today both in question time and during this Auditor-General's Report examination and, indeed, at other times during question time and also at other public forums.

**Mr TARZIA:** Referring to the Auditor-General's Report, Part A, section 3.3.6, titled 'Authority and proper process', paragraph 5 outlines the framework of the Public Sector Act 2009. Dot point 4 advises: 'avoid conflicts of interest, nepotism and patronage'. Does the minister believe any grant payments fall short of this advice?

**The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD:** I have definitely answered this question before and I will say again that I take my responsibilities incredibly seriously and always adhere to the appropriate code of conduct and processes, etc., as a minister should.

**Mr TARZIA:** Referring to the Auditor-General's Report, Part A, section 4, titled 'Access to Cabinet records', did the minister ever receive a request from the Auditor-General to access these documents?

**The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD:** I think that question is one that was put earlier by the Leader of the Opposition to the Premier, from memory when I was tuning in, and I believe that he has answered that question.

**Mr TARZIA:** Referring to the Auditor-General's Report, Part A, section 3.2, does the minister or anyone in her office have access to the SmartyGrants portal that the Office for Recreation, Sport and Racing uses to administer grants to sports clubs?

**The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD:** I certainly understand the history in relation to access or particular access to that particular system, which is quite a complex system. I have some understanding of what the previous arrangements were for the previous minister. I am really happy to take that question on notice and come back with an answer.

**Mr TARZIA:** I might ask one more question before I hand over to my colleague, the member for Heysen. Minister, referring to the Auditor-General's Report, Part A, section 3.3.4, did the minister ever correspond with the Premier's Delivery Unit?

**The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD:** Again, I think that the Premier and Treasurer have answered that question.

**Mr TARZIA:** Sorry, I am just confused because the question was to the minister, not to the Treasurer or the Premier.

**The CHAIR:** You asked the question. As you indicated to me a bit earlier, member for Hartley, the minister can choose to answer as she wishes. I am letting the minister choose as she wishes.

**Mr TARZIA:** Would the minister be willing to table any of that correspondence today?

**The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD:** I think I have already answered that question. In saying that the Premier and Treasurer have answered those questions, I think the Premier gave fulsome answers about his particular responsibilities in relation to the question of that nature that was put to him.

**The CHAIR:** Member for Hartley, do you wish to pass the baton, so to speak, or, if you are a Crows supporter, handball it to the member for Heysen?

**Mr TEAGUE:** I refer to the Auditor-General's Report 10, at page 20 going over to page 21, and under the heading '2022-23 Budget policy measures and parameter variations' overall but, as far as it relates to DCP, paragraph 3.4.5.

**The CHAIR:** This is report No. 10 at page 20 and it is 3.4.5, 'Department for Child Protection has required funding for additional resources in recent budgets'; is that correct, member for Heysen?

**Mr TEAGUE:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** What is your question?

**Mr TEAGUE:** I am just getting to the question. I wanted to give you the benefit of the appropriate report to refer to. This harks back to a similar line of questioning at the budget estimates that you might recall, minister. The Auditor-General there refers to additional resources having been required through operating expenditure policy initiatives over recent years and to the 2022-23 budget providing for \$129 million for additional resources. Is that likely to be exceeded, noting the Auditor-General's observation at the top of page 21 that:

...we expect it [the department] will face challenges meeting its operating expenditure targets in the 2022-23 Budget.

**The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD:** Thank you, shadow minister, for the question. I will just start to speak more generally about the need for the—I think \$128.9 million is the actual figure that you are referring to. When you speak about the \$129 million, I presume you are rounding up.

*Mr Teague interjecting:*

**The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD:** Yes, thank you. That additional funding over five years is to fund the cost of caring for children who have entered care. What I would say in relation to your question about the distribution of that funding over that period of time is a similar answer to one I provided to you in estimates, and that is that child protection is an incredibly complex area. It is becoming increasingly complex as an increasing number of families in our community deal with deeply complex interconnected issues. I know we have canvassed those issues here previously.

Many families are dealing with intergenerational trauma with a prevalence of domestic violence; in fact, we know that at least 70 per cent of child protection cases have a domestic violence element. They are dealing with substance misuse, often with mental health challenges, sometimes with housing challenges, and so often with poverty. These are deeply interconnected, deeply complex issues. Every time I think about the growing number of children and families who are coming to the attention of government, it is deeply worrying that now one in three children will have been notified to the Department for Child Protection by the time they reach 18.

It is deeply worrying, again, the complexity of the issues. In terms of the question around the budgeted figure, what I can say is I am really glad that we made a decision to invest in this way into supports and services for children in care. Of course, what we must do alongside the provision of that funding, if we are to begin to work toward reducing the number of children in care, is cast our minds to other investments that we are making in that broad child protection and wellbeing space.

So I would refer the shadow minister to some of the other commitments that we have made because it is incredibly important and it goes to the heart of his question. If we are to make sure that we can reduce the number of children going into care and that expenditure in the long term—and it certainly will be in the long term because, as I said, it is a very difficult and complex area—we need to also do other things that actually support families and support vulnerable children. There is certainly some funding in the Department of Human Services budget in that regard.

There is also \$3.2 million that we have committed, on coming to government, to provide additional supports for young people as they transition from care. This is an incredibly important investment because, in terms of beginning to look at how we might reduce the number of children in care, we have to look at that really important transition point when children or young people are exiting care.

It is an incredibly important time to provide them with support around issues like access to employment, access to education and access to training. It is a really important time to deeply support them as they traverse the task of securing secure housing for themselves. That commitment, we hope, will begin to see an impact on that number of children who enter care, which also goes to the budget figure that the shadow minister spoke about.

We know that children who do have a care experience can be particularly vulnerable when they exit care. We want to make sure we are supporting them to have the best possible chance of having success in those areas that I spoke about and also give them the best possible chance to access all those opportunities that I spoke about.

In terms of other investments that have to be considered when we consider the shadow minister's question about that particular budget figure, we are also investing \$1.9 million into a community visitor for children and young people in residential care—again, ensuring that they have somebody they can raise particular issues with and be heard about. We really hope that supports them in their care journey and enables them to feel supported as they access those sorts of opportunities I just spoke about.

We are also investing in carer advocacy services to make sure that those carers who generously open their hearts, their homes and their lives to children and young people in care are supported so that we can continue to keep children in family-based care—in foster care and kinship care—and begin to grow the number of carers in that space.

Along those lines, we have also committed additional funding to Grandparents for Grandchildren. Again, that sits alongside that budget investment the shadow minister asked about, because we want children and young people to be supported in those family-based care situations. Providing additional support to Grandparents for Grandchildren means that we are strengthening that ability for grandparents to have a voice and to have their voices amplified and acted upon about the issues that are really important to them and that will help them to keep their grandchildren—and, indeed, in some cases their great-grandchildren—with them so that they can continue to have all the benefits that come with family-based care.

One other investment we are making alongside the \$128.9 million investment you asked about, to make sure that we are beginning to address some of those issues that mean there is that need for children to be in care, is to provide funding to the CREATE Foundation to absolutely work to amplify the voices of children and young people who have had a care experience so that they can help to inform us about the best possible pathways forward to ensure that children and young people—particularly, vulnerable children and young people—are afforded the best possible opportunity to physically, mentally and emotionally thrive.

Again, in answer to your question, it is incredibly important that we consider the other investments I have detailed, the investment in programs with families that are administered through the Department of Human Services. It is really important that we look at that investment across the whole child protection system.

In child protection, all these investments are deeply interconnected, and rightly so, because on that continuum of the system there is complexity at every single point. It is incredibly important that we address all the issues that may assist to keep children from being in care, to make sure that children and young people are supported and have a voice when they are in care, to make sure that those generous people who provide family-based care—whether they be foster or kinship carers, including grandparent carers and great-grandparent carers—have the best possible support so that they can continue to keep those children in family-based care.

It is also so that we can learn about what is best for children and young people who are in care and give children and young people the best chance of ensuring that they are safe and supported. We are making sure that their voices are heard in this process as well. I am really happy to talk further about how all of the investments fit together.

**The CHAIR:** You will not today, minister, because the time allocated for this part of the Auditor-General's examination has expired. Thank you, minister, and thank you, member for Heysen.

Progress reported; committee to sit again.

At 17:37 the house adjourned until Wednesday 2 November 2022 at 10:30.

*Answers to Questions*

**WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECKS**

In reply to **Ms PRATT (Frome)** (7 September 2022).

**The Hon. N.F. COOK (Hurtle Vale—Minister for Human Services):**

I am advised that workers, such as those in my office who are in administrative positions, are not undertaking 'child-related work' as defined in the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016 and its Regulations. As such, I am advised that staff in my office are not required to have a working with children check although records are maintained of those who do have this check.