

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 22 February 2023

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

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.

Matter of Privilege

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER (Morialta—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (10:31): I rise on a matter of privilege. On Wednesday 8 February, the member for Light asked the Treasurer to provide the house with an update on the South Australian economy. The member for Hartley followed up with a question to ask the Treasurer to clarify South Australia's credit rating, to which the Treasurer replied as follows:

The member for Hartley asks about the state's credit rating...which, of course, was downgraded under the watch of the former Treasurer, Rob Lucas. That's right—downgraded.

This information, however, seems to be contradicted by evidence given to the council's Budget and Finance Committee by his own department, according to the transcript of the meeting on 13 February that was released late yesterday. Starting on page 348, the Chair is recorded as asking, 'Was the credit rating downgraded during the period of the last government?' A department officer replied, 'Standard & Poor's had put us on negative outlook, but the rating hasn't been downgraded.'

The Chair went on to ask, 'Are their concerns that the credit rating is likely to change?' The Under Treasurer replied:

Well, a negative outlook means that they are watching the jurisdiction in respect of our ability to keep our metrics in strong shape, but our experience in meeting with the agencies on the recent trip to the US was that that is largely a global phenomenon due to global economic headwinds.

To remind the house, South Australia maintained its credit rating in the midst of a global pandemic even when New South Wales and Victoria lost theirs.

Further, in contrast to what the Treasurer claimed, South Australia's credit rating was in fact not downgraded at any time under the former government. Instead, research provided to the opposition, which I am happy to provide to the Speaker, advises in relation to credit ratings from Moody's, Standard & Poor's and Fitch that South Australia's credit rating was downgraded on the following dates: September 2013, September 2012, April 1992 and February 1991.

It would appear that South Australia's credit rating has only ever been downgraded under Labor, and the Treasurer would know this. He would recall that he was working on state budget development and economic and policy advice as the deputy chief of staff to the then Premier when the last rating was downgraded by Fitch Ratings in 2013. It appears clear, therefore, that the statement of claimed fact in the Treasurer's answer from 8 February clearly and directly contradicts (a) information provided to the parliament by departmental officials and (b) the official credit ratings record.

In the nearly two weeks since then, the Treasurer has made no attempt, as far as I can see, to correct the record, despite the fact that public comments from his department and reflection on his proximity to events in 2013 and earlier should have drawn his attention to the possibility that his answer was incorrect.

In his attempt to disparage the economic record of the former government, I submit the Treasurer misled the house. He provided no qualification in his answer. He made no attempt to

correct the record in almost two weeks, as far as I can see. I submit the Treasurer has deliberately and intentionally misled the House of Assembly and that a prima facie case exists for the establishment of a Privileges Committee. I ask that you give consideration to the matter of privilege and rule that a motion to establish a Privileges Committee should be given precedence over other business in the House of Assembly.

The SPEAKER: The member for Morialta raises a matter of privilege and I ask the member to furnish me with all materials as may be relevant and might assist in the determination of the matter. I also invite the Treasurer to furnish me with any materials that may assist in the determination of the matter. I reserve my decision on whether the matter raised could prima facie give rise to a matter of privilege.

Bills

STATUTES AMENDMENT (PERSONAL MOBILITY DEVICES) BILL

Second Reading

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 8 February 2023.)

The Hon. D.G. PISONI (Unley) (10:35): I rise to speak in support of this bill. Despite the fact that scooters are controversial—there are those who love them and there are those who hate them—we do need consistency. The feedback I have had in my electorate of Unley about scooters is not so much the use of the scooters but about where they are left.

Of course, the only scooters that are legal in South Australia through these trials are e-scooters owned by a hire company and people use an app connected to a credit card or some other form of debit card in order to use that scooter and they pay per kilometre or per minute. I do not know; I have not actually used one. In my view, it is not a good look for someone who is heading towards their 60th birthday to be on a scooter, but you do see it.

The situation we have now, where you can only legally use an e-scooter if you are hiring one, leads to the irresponsible placement of those e-scooters when the geofence runs out or people feel that they have spent enough on their credit card getting to where they are going and they walk the rest of the way to get home and so they are left over driveways, left in car parks or they have fallen over. People might have prams or wheelchairs and cannot get around them and someone will have to move them for them. That is the biggest criticism that I have heard with the use of e-scooters.

Of course, if people were using their own scooters they would not be left around in the streets; they would, in fact, be in their homes or in their places of business, if they use them to get to and from work every day. If they use it for their leisure, they go out with their friends and meet at a meeting point and they come home, obviously they are going to look after their scooter and make sure it is not left somewhere where it is going to be knocked over or somebody can run it over. They are going to make sure it is left somewhere that is out of the way.

It does not make a lot of sense. I cannot see it being a safety reason why you cannot own a personal scooter because there is no difference between the riding of an e-scooter that is on hire or an e-scooter that is owned by somebody. We know there are other opportunities popping up in personal mobility devices. We see more and more electric wheelchairs, gophers and mobility carts for people who are more senior, which gets them out of the house. There are bikes now and opportunities for people who might be less fit or less able to put that physical effort into riding a bike to still use bikes with the aid of the electric bike, where only some pedalling is required.

I know this bill is focusing on e-scooters but we do need to start somewhere and I congratulate the shadow minister on bringing this bill to the house. I also note—well, I am feeling—that this bill has bipartisan support because I am aware that a government member has written to the JPSC asking for the consideration of chargers in the parliamentary car park for e-scooters and bikes. Obviously, that cannot be done unless they are legal because we cannot certainly as a parliament be aiding and abetting people who are breaking the law. Consequently, I am feeling confident that there is a bipartisan move to see this as being a sensible expansion of new technology for electric vehicles.

I support what the member for Hartley has brought to the parliament. I know from a trip to Los Angeles, where I was a number of years ago, there was prolific use of e-scooters—and they were obviously privately owned; people were looking after them—but that is a city where it is just so difficult to get around and there is so much distance between where you need to be, and so that has been used prolifically.

Of course, here in Adelaide, we are flat, we have plenty of parkland, in many instances we have wide footpaths and we are already seeing e-scooters available for hire through a pay per kilometre system. Why not recognise that they are part of the future and we are a city that is part of the future with our defence industries, our growing IT industries, our research and development being commercialised here. All of these projects and all of these initiatives that were started by the previous Marshall government are really now getting to put South Australia on the map.

Why not support those who want to be on the front foot and the back foot on their scooters, moving through the streets of Adelaide and, of course, minimising the use of the e-scooters which are left virtually anywhere? I would actually like to see those e-scooter companies forced to dedicate through a geofence or some other technology where those scooters can be left. If they are left in the middle of a the driveway, maybe they continue to bill the person until they are moved into an appropriate position.

That would be a very strong incentive for those e-scooters to be placed in an appropriate place on a footpath or another area that is not blocking people using a footpath or a bike path or driveway. For the life of me, I do not understand why that technology is not used. It certainly is available through using GPS, for example. In my view, it is an area that should be considered as part of any regulatory change or permanency of e-scooter hire after the trial is finished. I commend the member for Hartley and I support the bill.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS (West Torrens—Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Minister for Energy and Mining) (10:43): It is a rare occasion where I agree with nearly everything the member for Unley has just said. He is right: there are a number of inconsistencies that make the current situation untenable and if only it was as simple as just passing this private member's bill.

The government is considering its options in this space and there are a number of aspects that I think the opposition have raised which make very valid points. This is one of those rare occasions where you are going to see the government and the opposition supporting the intent of their private member's bill. Alas, we cannot support the bill because the government has to, of course, dot every 'i' and cross every 't' and hold this subject up to the light for scrutiny.

There needs to be a greater level of consultation with South Australia Police and, of course, our compulsory third-party insurance operation. Is a scooter a motorised vehicle or is it a bicycle? There are a number of aspects of this bill that raise a lot of questions, so I thank the member for Hartley for raising this matter. I acknowledge his interest in this matter.

I do point out that these electric scooters were an issue over the last four years and there was no legislation by the previous government to do what the shadow minister is attempting to do now. However, he was hamstrung as the Speaker for a while, but he was the Minister for Police, and he did have a large level of say. I understand he was a senior tactician in the previous government. I do not know why I laughed so loud when I said that. I understand that he could have had the influence to have this done, but of course time escaped him. However, I do commend his hard work here.

I am not opposing this for the sake of opposing it. I am asking the house for its forbearance. The government will return to the house with a government bill on this matter, but the restraints of the government are this: while I agree with almost everything the member for Unley has said, the problem we have is that the trials are still underway. We are still trying to ascertain what is the best fit for South Australia. I acknowledge that other jurisdictions have moved and have moved quickly, but those trials and their implementation have been longer in those other jurisdictions than they have been here.

It is fair to say that disruption in this area of transport causes a lot of unintended consequences. If you look at the disruption in rideshare, what that has done to the taxi industry, it is not dissimilar to what is occurring here, but there are other public implications for the implementation of these scooters. So, while I agree with the sentiment, it is a bizarre situation where the only legal avenue to use these is if they are rented, rather than privately owned. I think we can remedy that relatively quickly, and we will. I know that the member for Hartley is keen to have a vote on this bill, so I am prepared to allow him to have a vote on this bill.

Mr Odenwalder: Today?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Today, if he wants to. I point out to the parliament and to the public that the government will not be supporting this bill, not because we do not support the measure of the member for Hartley but simply because we have not yet received the appropriate advice from the regulatory authorities that would oversee the implementation of this policy. This is a rare case of bipartisanship, the parliament at its best. I apologise to the member for Hartley; I know he wants this reform. I will think of him as we are introducing the bill and making this legislation, and I will think of him fondly as we make these sweeping changes.

I am not trying to cast him into irrelevance; what I am simply trying to do is make sure we get everything right, because the burden on me, as opposed to the shadow minister, is that I am the minister and I ultimately have responsibility for this. I want to make sure that I get it right and there are no unintended consequences.

So, to my young apprentice, I say congratulations on bringing this bill into the parliament. He is making me prouder and prouder every single day. He is my Padawan leader; he is someone whom I am exceptionally proud of in the work that he is doing. I have seen him rise through the ranks, and I am watching him with a keen eye. I will look back fondly at his training. I will look back fondly at the way I have helped him rise through the ranks, and hopefully, when he takes the ultimate destination path that his career is pushing him towards, he can look back fondly at the fatherly advice that I have given him, because I do care about him deeply.

The Hon. D.G. Pisoni: I'll be moving a motion that you're misleading the house, in a minute.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: That is not very nice. I know people get jealous of my affections. There are others competing for my affections, but the member for Hartley is someone I have a fond admiration for. I have met his parents as well and I promised them I would look after him in the parliament and indeed I have.

The SPEAKER: Order! This is straying towards personal reflection, generous though it may be.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I congratulate him on bringing this bill to the parliament. I concur with the member for Unley's remarks. I do ask for forbearance because it is not as simple as the opposition say it is and I think that in their heart of hearts they know this. I will be back to the house with a comprehensive bill that can be supported. I look forward to that bipartisan support. As soon as that bill is ready and the cabinet and the caucus have approved it, I will immediately brief the opposition on it and ask for a speedy passage through both houses of the parliament. So, for today, it is thank you but I am sorry.

Mr TARZIA (Hartley) (10:50): I thank members for their contributions, especially the member for Unley, and for the contribution of the minister of his feedback. His free advice is always certainly appreciated.

I might focus on the positives first. Firstly, I want to thank all those who have been consulted in relation to this bill and all those who were able to help develop this bill. It seems we all agree that there is a mischief here that we need to correct. We all think it is outrageous that these items are able to be hired by a few but people are not able to own them in their own right. Of course, we on this side of this chamber endorse personal responsibility—people taking ownership—and providing for a market where there is clearly one and making sure that of course no-one is left behind and that there are adequate safety measures around that market to make sure that people do not get injured. Other things like insurance have been fleshed out during that debate and it seems that in other jurisdictions that is able to be catered for.

In relation to police resources, I think the police will tell you that they have better things to do than to run around chasing people who are using these devices, sometimes illegally, at the moment and fining often young people for something in the order of near \$2,000 at a time. I think we can all agree that our police resources would be much better allocated in many productive ways and the facts are that, until a bill does succeed in this right, you will continue to see these police resources allocated this way.

We know there is a clear market here in relation to these devices. Many of these we see day to day. The member for Unley alluded to an example of where potentially a member has even asked for chargers for these things. That tells you that the market is here, so the government needs to stop dragging its heels in relation to this. We understand that the government is a bit slower and we, being in opposition and a smaller opposition, are much more nimble and agile and we are trying to help. We are trying to work with the government of the day.

Other states have embraced this technology. We have tried to develop a bill that I think calls on the strengths of that legislation in other jurisdictions, but, all in all, whilst this is a bit sad, I think it is a positive to hear the minister say that a bill will be brought in the short term. We will make sure that we keep holding this government to account about this.

We want to see this bill sooner rather than later because the fact is that this trial has gone on for several years now and it is time for the trial to be put to rest and for us to open up just like every other jurisdiction because the facts are that people can enjoy these interstate and they can enjoy these overseas. We know they are extremely popular, especially for tourists. Take an example such as now when all the world's eyes are on Adelaide at the moment for various artistic festivals. People come here and they want to enjoy these types of scooters.

I thank all members for their contributions. I thank those who were consulted during this process. I thank parliamentary counsel for its rapid speed in developing this bill based on what we thought was a solid example interstate. I commend the bill to the house.

The house divided on the second reading:

Ayes16
 Noes.....24
 Majority8

AYES

Basham, D.K.B. (teller)
 Ellis, F.J.
 McBride, P.N.
 Pisoni, D.G.
 Tarzia, V.A. (teller)
 Whetstone, T.J.

Bell, T.S.
 Gardner, J.A.W.
 Patterson, S.J.R.
 Pratt, P.K.
 Teague, J.B.

Cowdrey, M.J.
 Hurn, A.M.
 Pederick, A.S.
 Speirs, D.J.
 Telfer, S.J.

NOES

Andrews, S.E.
 Brock, G.G.
 Clancy, N.P.
 Fulbrook, J.P.
 Hughes, E.J.
 Michaels, A.
 Pearce, R.K.
 Szakacs, J.K.

Bettison, Z.L.
 Brown, M.E.
 Close, S.E.
 Hildyard, K.A.
 Hutchesson, C.L.
 Mullighan, S.C.
 Piccolo, A.
 Thompson, E.L.

Bignell, L.W.K.
 Champion, N.D.
 Cook, N.F.
 Hood, L.P.
 Koutsantonis, A.
 Odenwalder, L.K. (teller)
 Savvas, O.M.
 Wortley, D.J.

PAIRS

Batty, J.A.
 Boyer, B.I.

Malinauskas, P.B.

Marshall, S.S.

Second reading thus negatived.

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY COMMISSIONER BILL

Second Reading

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 8 February 2023.)

The Hon. D.G. PISONI (Unley) (10:58): While I am on a roll and getting the Minister for Transport to agree with me, I am going to have another try in speaking in support of the Construction Industry Commissioner Bill. In doing so, I thank the shadow treasurer for bringing this bill to the parliament.

Since the election of the Malinauskas government, we know that John Setka and the CFMEU have been given the keys to South Australia. We have seen the aggressive marketing campaign, the political advertising on trams about joining the CFMEU and the concerns that John Setka's estranged wife—who was living in Adelaide—raised about being forced to see that wife basher's face on the tram every time she saw it in the streets of Adelaide. Some would argue that it was a very expensive 'up you' to his ex-wife that was funded by the CFMEU. That is the sort of person that John Setka is. This bill is designed to keep people like that at bay and answerable to the law.

The CFMEU, of course, donated \$125,000 to the ALP election campaign. We saw the immediate increase in political activity by the CFMEU in the lead-up to the election campaign. It was an election campaign that I heard—I heard it from Labor candidates' mouths, 'I don't support what the CFMEU is doing.' That is what they were telling potential voters at the polling booths. That was, of course, an utter lie because if they did not support that they would have made public comments about it, not just private comments that they hoped were only targeted at the people they were talking to.

At the same time, the Albanese government dismantled the Australian Building Construction Commission established by the former federal Liberal government, and now there is little or no support for employers when dealing with workplace issues, in particular within elements of the union movement such as the CFMEU. We know that because of the investment in infrastructure of the previous Marshall government, there is a lot of government infrastructure because of reforms to land tax that brought down the top marginal rate for land tax from 3.7 per cent to 2.4 per cent. We are seeing institutional investment in South Australia in property and we are seeing more private buildings going up than we had seen in previous years.

This bill provides for the construction industry commissioner, who will promote the rights of building construction industry participants, respect for the rule of law and for work health and safety, which is extremely important. It is extremely important that we have legitimate action on health and safety issues in the workplace. I was in an industry for 22 years that required access to building sites, and I am fully aware of how important health and safety is on those sites. But that was not being delivered by the CFMEU.

What is being delivered by the CFMEU is intimidation: intimidation to join the union, and intimidation to extravagant union demands. Look at the precedent that has been set already in South Australia. CFMEU members are being paid to do what every single person who is in employment everywhere else is expected to do, and they do it because they want to do it, and that is get to work on time. They get a bonus for getting to work on time. That is an extraordinary demand and an extraordinary capitulation, I have to say, by the employer, but we do not know the circumstances as to why that capitulation happened. We do not know what threats were made by the CFMEU and John Setka if that extortion was not paid.

The commissioner will facilitate and encourage the fair treatment of building construction industry participants in their commercial dealings with each other or in relation to any other matters generally relating to workplaces. It will act as a one-stop shop for the building construction industry to register any concerns relating to safety, industrial action, allegations of coercion and threatening behaviour, and on many relevant matters. It is such an important role that the commissioner will have

in that area, because it needs to be a safe working environment, and people know they can do business in South Australia without mafia-type tactics. We know about how the mafia operates in some of the American cities, 'Give me the money or we will blow your shop up.' That is exactly the attitude that unions like the CFMEU have when they are negotiating terms and conditions.

The commissioner will:

- facilitate the resolution of complaints through measures such as mediation and making representations on behalf of notifiers, and complaints in accordance with relevant legislation, such as the Building and Construction Industry Security of Payment Act 2009, and the Work Health and Safety Act 2012;
- monitor and advise the relevant minister about practices that may adversely affect building and construction industry participants;
- provide an annual report on or before 30 September every year on its operations, setting out any complaints made by any practices or conditions that have affected builders or contractors within industry;
- have the power to compel individuals to provide information that the commissioner requires to undertake functions under the act, with a maximum penalty of failing to comply of \$20,000;
- have the power to direct matters to state authorities such as SAPOL and the Commissioner for Consumer Affairs following receipt of a complaint or an inquiry from the building construction industry participant if it is the opinion of the commissioner that the matter should be referred; and
- have the power to direct matters to the federal authorities, such as the Commonwealth Ombudsman or the office of the Fair Work Ombudsman, following receipt of a complaint or inquiry from a building and construction industry participant if it is the opinion of the commissioner that the matter should be referred.

These are all very important powers and very important points to ensure we have confidence in the building industry here in South Australia. The commissioner will be able to suspend work health and safety entry permits if satisfied that the work health and safety entry permit holder has contravened the Work Health and Safety Act 2012. That would have to be one of the biggest oxymorons in the way that the CFMEU operates.

Before suspending a permit, a commissioner must give notice to the work health and safety entry permit holder of the proposed suspension and will allow the work health and safety entry permit holder a period of 21 days (or such longer period as the commissioner thinks fit) to show cause as to why the permit should not be suspended.

The commissioner must give a work health and safety entry permit holder written notice of the suspension, and the work health and safety entry permit holder who receives a notice of suspension must ensure that the permit is returned to the authorising authority within 14 days after receiving it. There is a maximum penalty of \$2,000 for failing to do so.

Individuals who give notification or make a complaint to the commissioner are protected with penalties of \$10,000 for individuals or \$50,000 for body corporates should threats, coercion or intimidation occur as a result of the individual giving notification or making a complaint to the commissioner. We know that is the track of trade unions like the CFMEU: intimidation, coercion and threats. We know that. We have seen that in numerous convictions in industrial courts around the country. We have seen it with videos of their meetings and their arm-waving in front of their tram advertising campaign on social media.

A maximum penalty of \$20,000 applies for a person who divulges or communicates personal information relating to trade secrets or business process, or financial information acquired by reason of being or having been employed or engaged in or in connection with the administration of the commissioner. This is very important of course because we know, or certainly we have been advised, that that sort of information, the trade of that information, can be used by unions like the CFMEU to

try to increase the benefits and force employers to capitulate—in other words, blackmail by unions like the CFMEU.

The commissioner will be appointed for a term not exceeding three years and at the end of the appointment will be eligible for reappointment. The opposition has consulted the building and construction industry employers, Master Builders Association of South Australia and the Housing Industry Association in developing this bill, so I support the bill and congratulate the shadow minister.

Mr ODENWALDER (Elizabeth) (11:09): I move:

That the debate be adjourned.

The house divided on the motion:

Ayes24
Noes.....17
Majority7

AYES

Andrews, S.E.	Bettison, Z.L.	Bignell, L.W.K.
Brown, M.E.	Champion, N.D.	Clancy, N.P.
Close, S.E.	Cook, N.F.	Fulbrook, J.P.
Hildyard, K.A.	Hood, L.P.	Hughes, E.J.
Hutchesson, C.L.	Koutsantonis, A.	Michaels, A.
Mullighan, S.C.	Odenwalder, L.K. (teller)	Pearce, R.K.
Piccolo, A.	Savvas, O.M.	Stinson, J.M.
Szakacs, J.K.	Thompson, E.L.	Wortley, D.J.

NOES

Basham, D.K.B.	Bell, T.S.	Brock, G.G.
Cowdrey, M.J. (teller)	Ellis, F.J.	Gardner, J.A.W.
Hurn, A.M.	McBride, P.N.	Patterson, S.J.R.
Pederick, A.S.	Pisoni, D.G.	Pratt, P.K.
Speirs, D.J.	Tarzia, V.A.	Teague, J.B.
Telfer, S.J.	Whetstone, T.J.	

PAIRS

Malinauskas, P.B.	Batty, J.A.	Boyer, B.I.
Marshall, S.S.		

Motion thus carried; debate adjourned.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (MINISTERIAL DIARIES) AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 2 November 2022.)

Mr ODENWALDER (Elizabeth) (11:16): I move:

That this order of the day be postponed.

The house divided on the motion:

Ayes24
Noes.....15
Majority9

AYES

Andrews, S.E.	Bettison, Z.L.	Bignell, L.W.K.
Brown, M.E.	Champion, N.D.	Clancy, N.P.
Close, S.E.	Cook, N.F.	Fulbrook, J.P.
Hildyard, K.A.	Hood, L.P.	Hughes, E.J.
Hutchesson, C.L.	Koutsantonis, A.	Michaels, A.
Mullighan, S.C.	Odenwalder, L.K. (teller)	Pearce, R.K.
Piccolo, A.	Savvas, O.M.	Stinson, J.M.
Szakacs, J.K.	Thompson, E.L.	Wortley, D.J.

NOES

Basham, D.K.B.	Brock, G.G.	Cowdrey, M.J.
Hurn, A.M.	Marshall, S.S.	McBride, P.N.
Patterson, S.J.R.	Pederick, A.S.	Pisoni, D.G.
Pratt, P.K.	Speirs, D.J.	Tarzia, V.A.
Teague, J.B. (teller)	Telfer, S.J.	Whetstone, T.J.

PAIRS

Boyer, B.I.	Gardner, J.A.W.	Malinauskas, P.B.
Batty, J.A.		

Motion thus carried; order of the day postponed.

*Motions***RIVERLAND FLOOD RESPONSE**

Ms HUTCHESSON (Waite) (11:23): I move:

That this house—

- (a) recognises the immense efforts of the South Australian emergency service sector during the emergency response to the 2022-23 River Murray flood event;
- (b) acknowledges the State Emergency Service, Country Fire Service, Metropolitan Fire Service, South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission, Volunteer Marine Rescue and Surf Life Saving South Australia for their service to the community; and
- (c) shows its appreciation to the staff and volunteers who worked tirelessly to protect and support affected communities.

I stand here today wearing both yellow and orange in recognition of our CFS and SES emergency services volunteers. Whilst the colours clash considerably, and I apologise for those watching at home, I know that in action these colours work together tirelessly, helping, supporting and protecting our whole community every day of the week. There is no better example of this than the work that has gone on in our River Murray communities.

It is usual for these volunteers, along with our comrades in the MFS, Fire and Emergency Services Commission, Volunteer Marine Rescue and surf lifesaving communities, to respond to an emergency, whether it is in the middle of the night, on a hot and windy day like today or a cold and miserable one. It is often a short, sharp response: arriving on the scene, dealing with the immediate threats, often rescuing someone in trouble and then returning to wait for the next call-out. Their work in our River Murray communities, though, has been different. We had warning that the emergency was coming and time to prepare, but this has also meant that the effort has been long and drawn out. Yet they turn up when they are needed, and continue to do so, working hard in difficult circumstances.

In 2022, we saw the third consecutive La Niña event that resulted in record rainfalls across the upper Murray-Darling Basin in New South Wales and Victoria. This only added to what has already been a saturated catchment area. The result saw the River Murray water flows reaching

major flood levels in December. Many areas of the flood plains saw floodwaters reach them for the first time in 70 years, and it is almost certain that changes to the river channel and flood plain in that time led to unforeseen and unexpected differences in flood behaviour.

Expectations of flood levels reaching 135 gigalitres per day were well exceeded due to ongoing rainfall in the upper catchment resulting in an eventual peak flow of 185 gigalitres per day. On 21 November, the police commissioner declared a major emergency that stayed in place until just two weeks ago; that is three months. For three months, various arms of our emergency services—paid and unpaid crews—have worked hard across the area, and they are still working. Whilst the peak has now past, areas of the flood plain remain inundated with floodwaters and are expected to stay that way for quite some time.

It is known that 3,295 residential properties have been impacted by the floods and, whilst the bulk of these are holiday homes and short-term accommodation, 103 properties are people's homes. Families now without their own home are having to relocate to other family, friends and crisis accommodation, always knowing that they will be facing a massive clean-up when they are finally allowed to return home.

Local businesses have also been impacted, including tourism hotspots such as caravan parks and camping grounds. Primary producers have also borne the brunt. Over 4,000 hectares of agricultural production land was impacted, including vineyards and other primary production. Our government is there to help these producers through grants available, to assist with the recovery and the clean-up, and they are going to need all the help they can get.

South Australians pull together in times of need, supporting each other in many ways. Foodbank have been supporting flood victims. In fact, I saw firsthand the work they were doing when I attended Foodbank headquarters in Edwardstown last year with several of my parliamentary colleagues. We helped pack some boxes that were heading to the communities. Foodbank, in conjunction with the RAA, had a mobile food hub that was delivering supplies to those in need—again, volunteers hard at work supporting others.

On Sunday, I along with many here took part in a charity soccer match in order to raise money.

An honourable member: Hear, hear!

Ms HUTCHESSON: I know. The match was organised by PIRSA. We were captained by the member for Gibson, a very accomplished soccer player—much better than me, for sure—and our team comprised the member for Davenport, the member for Adelaide, the Minister for Education, the Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, and Justin Hanson MLC from the other place.

Like my orange and yellow outfit, whilst the colours clash, we came together with members opposite, including the member for MacKillop and the member for Hartley, along with members from the other place, public servants and members from our emergency services. Our opposing team was the South Australian Produce Market, Pick a Local, Pick SA! and Foodland team, comprising primary producers, SA local business owners and staff.

It was an absolute honour to play on the hallowed turf of Hindmarsh Stadium. Whilst the weather was hot, our performance was even hotter coming away with the victory, 5-2, and raising well over \$150,000 in much-needed funds to reduce the distress and hardship of primary producers and small related agricultural businesses impacted by the floods. Sadly, one of our SES players took home an injury, and I wish him all the best in his recovery. This player had only just returned from the Riverland a few weeks prior, having been up there helping the community. He, like all our staff and volunteers, has worked tirelessly and they all deserve our thanks.

The work carried out was and continues to be extensive. It includes managing the incident at all levels, providing up-to-date information to the affected communities, engaging with community in the field, including street corner meetings, doorknocking and community meetings, often dealing with residents who are upset, worried and needing extra support. Surf Life Saving SA were on the scene with inflatable life craft, allowing them to doorknock properties that were inundated and also provide valuable intel. With their skills and abilities, they were an important assistance to the effort.

Sandbagging was an immense task, with over 493,000 sandbags distributed—that is a lot of man-hours filling those bags. Building levees and swiftwater rescue make up just a small portion of the work that was carried out. There were 5.28 kilometres of DefenCell levees that were installed across the river communities, trying to keep the water at bay. The effort was assisted by 220 staff and volunteer emergency service personnel from interstate, amassing 58,000 volunteer hours. Locally, more than 350 SA personnel were there to help, with a very conservative estimate of 66,000 hours contributed by the IMT and SCC personnel.

While these heroes were up helping our river communities, they were battling off mosquitoes with the knowledge that they could have been carrying disease, often walking in and around water of poor quality, not knowing what may lie beneath, but they continued to help. It is known that 1,188 kilometres of roads have been impacted during the flood. As waters recede, the full extent of this damage will become clearer, but our government will be ready to help and get these communities connected and up and running.

As you can see, the effort was immense, and we are forever in the debt of those who answered the call. In speaking to both SES and CFS crew who have returned from being out there, hearing about their experiences and understanding the scope of the work done and still needing to be done, I have nothing but the utmost gratitude to them all.

Whilst we are acknowledging our incredible emergency services personnel, who give so much to keep us all safe, I would like to take this opportunity to recognise the 40th anniversary of the Ash Wednesday fires, which was remembered last Thursday 16 February. On 16 February 1983, more than 180 fires broke out across South Australia and Victoria. In our state, over 200,000 hectares were burnt, 383,000 houses destroyed, and 28 lives lost, including three CFS volunteers.

Last Thursday, we paid our respects to Andrew Lemke from Lucindale, Peter Matthies from Summertown, and Brian Nosworthy from Callendale, who paid the ultimate price for protecting our community. Emergency services staff and volunteers such as these and all who attend the floods and all who answer the call head out with these risks in mind. To all of these staff and volunteers: we appreciate you, we thank you, and, like the colours I am wearing, it is when we all come together that South Australian spirit shines through, and you are a glowing example.

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (11:32): I speak on the motion on the emergency response to the flood event and note:

That this house—

- (a) recognises the immense efforts of the South Australian emergency service sector during the emergency response to the 2022-23 River Murray flood event;
- (b) acknowledges the State Emergency Service, Country Fire Service, Metropolitan Fire Service, South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission, Volunteer Marine Rescue and Surf Life Saving South Australia for their service to the community; and
- (c) shows its appreciation to the staff and volunteers who worked tirelessly to protect and support affected communities.

Certainly, another group we need to speak on today is the South Australian police force, who did so much good work during this event. It got interesting at times, but all our emergency services had to get involved. It was a major event that impacted the full length of the river, whether you were at Renmark or Milang or at the mouth. I salute all of the communities, whether they were registered volunteers or community volunteers, but also the tireless work of all the staff, whether they be earthmoving contractors, earthmoving operators, council staff—everyone who worked tirelessly to get the job done.

There were many thousands of tonnes of clay moved to put the levee banks in place. As I have said in this place recently, you go to Renmark in the member for Chaffey's electorate and you really see how it truly is an island. They built massive levee banks to get it above the 1956 flood level. It was a huge amount of work because the cost of Renmark getting wet feet would have been absolutely huge. It was a massive amount of work.

I remember talking to the council CEO about where he was getting his clay, and he said, 'Wherever we can'. They were putting in a dynamic effort, working with contractors, working with

council, and getting on board to get the job done, but in doing that working alongside the SES, the CFS, the MFS and the police to make sure that that work could get done. That work flowed down the river, so to speak. I saw a massive levee bank being built in Cobdogla, saw many vehicles—whether they be trucks or earthmoving equipment—from other areas around the state that put their shoulder to the wheel—council trucks and other contractors who moved in to help out their contractor mates to do the job to protect river communities.

It happened throughout Waikerie, where work was done building a levee bank to save the recreation grounds down by the ferry. Works were done throughout Mannum, as we know, and that helped save Mary Ann Reserve. We had some interesting times with the back flow of stormwater coming in and the rowing club essentially had to be sacrificed because we could not get divers down, because the flow rates were massive, to help plug the stormwater pipes that were working in reverse: instead of running the water out to the river, the river water was running back. It will be a massive effort to support the Mannum Rowing Club to ensure it gets support to refresh and renew, and those discussions are ongoing with the Mid Murray Council.

Certainly with Mypolonga, the Martin family, Ash Martin—I know that Reece McArdle was on the grader when I was there one day—did a great job and shifted probably well north of 8,000 tonnes of clay in building a barrier about 600 metres long to protect the lower part of Mypolonga, including the school grounds. It was intriguing, and I have mentioned here before the work done earlier on when we identified there was a problem with protecting community pumps. It was not the big Central Irrigation Trust pump that pumped the water for SA Water for the town, it was the power infrastructure that was built on the ground, but the pumps were built above the 1956 flood level—it was a real dichotomy.

In a short time, pulling from the same burrow pit that was used in 1974, once we got those fast track clearances—and I have spoken here before of working with the departments: John Schutz from DEW, Con from SA Water, and others—we could make sure we could get the clay in. It is like an island, about 800 metres in from that other levee bank in Mypolonga.

In Murray Bridge, with the DefenCell—and I had a lot of communication with Chris Beattie from the SES to make sure we could get a DefenCell in place to protect not just the rowing club but also the community club in Murray Bridge—I attempted to get it in place to help support the pumps for a farming family that is just under the Swanport Bridge. People would have seen it many times coming across, but it is also where the racing club pumps are, and that got topped up with a volunteer effort with sandbags.

Certainly the kilometres of DefenCell that went in place was a real asset in completing works on Randell Street, the main street of Mannum, as were buttressing works around those big levee builds, which were about 10 metres across at the bottom to give a good solid base. They are a real innovation, and probably close to all of it is gone by now in Mannum—I was there the other day and it was nearly all gone—as recovery starts and there is a lot of work to do with places that went under water. I commend everyone who was involved. The SES had people come in to sandbagging stations from right across the city. I met people on various days who had come from various SES stations up here in the city.

The CFS did great work during this event, assisting communities with sandbag filling and protecting communities, making sure the water got pumped. I have never seen so many different versions of pump trucks in Mannum; there was always water we had to get to the other side of the levee. The MFS were involved as well, doing great work assisting communities.

The SES had their high clearance trucks there, and the Army was there with four trucks throughout the Riverland, two based up in the member for Chaffey's electorate and two based at Murray Bridge. There was also another helicopter that came in and I had the opportunity, with the Minister for Emergency Services, to go up in the SES helicopter with—

Members interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: You have to ask; I was a bit cheeky and put in a request to Chris Beattie to see if there was an opportunity, and managed to go up with the minister and the member for Finnis. This was just after the peak, so I got to see the full impact right across the swamps that had let go.

Speaking about the swamps, the contractors did what they could north of Murray Bridge, but a lot of those agricultural levees were always going to fall over at the 180 gegalitre a day level.

There was so much work done south of Murray Bridge, and the Jervois community. When the government said it was too dangerous to stay there, I had an interesting conversation with one of my staffer's friends, Jess, a policewoman. She said, 'We don't want to have politics about keeping people on the bank,' because they were going to say to people, 'You have to get off the bank', with the Emergency Management Act. I said, 'Well, we're just building a levee; that's all we're doing'.

To their credit, working with them and Scott Denny, the superintendent, and Chris Beattie and other authorities we got the job done. There were so many other people, individuals and families, who helped each other along those levee banks, putting sandbags in place. In conclusion, I just want to thank our emergency services for everything they have done with this flood event.

I also want to acknowledge that Surf Life Saving has lost their president. With your indulgence, sir, Kevin 'Brakey' Watkins died last week after his battle with a long-term illness. Kevin was an active surf lifesaving member for 55 of his 70 years, after gaining his Bronze Medallion in 1967. He was incredibly passionate about surf lifesaving, so it was only fitting when he became state president of the volunteer organisation. Vale Kevin 'Brakey' Watkins, and thank you to everyone involved in emergency efforts—not just with floods or fires but on our beaches as well.

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS (Cheltenham—Minister for Police, Emergency Services and Correctional Services) (11:43): I rise briefly to support this motion. In doing so I put on the record, as I and many other members have in other forums and times, my immense appreciation and thanks for the work, contributions and efforts of our volunteers and staff in responding to this major emergency across our river communities.

Members of this place have already, in this debate, spoken about their own personal experiences through this emergency. The member for Hammond, the member for Chaffey, the member for Finnis, are all local members who were supporting and advocating for their communities during this incredibly difficult time. I have seen firsthand the demonstration of the resilience of their communities and the absolute, unabridged unity of their communities who have worked to support each other during these times.

But today it is important, as it is on each and every occasion that becomes available to us, to thank the CFS, SES, MFS, Surf Life Saving South Australia, Volunteer Marine Rescue and our SAFECOM logistics functional support team, as well as so many others across a wide variety of government agencies who have stepped up, and continue to step up, in response to this flood, these generational floods that have had a profound impact on the homes, properties, incomes and livelihoods of so many people across these communities.

I think it is fair to say for all of us in this place that taking the opportunity today to thank those people for their contribution in no way minimises or underestimates the significant body of work that is still taking place, and that of course will continue to take place, in these communities. Recovery, even before the response to this emergency became apparent, was always the focus of government, the focus of members and the focus of agencies.

This was always going to be an emergency that was slow in coming but inevitable and profound in impact, but we acted also on the basis that the waters would recede and the damage would be there and the recovery phase would be absolutely critical. So many of those volunteers and staff that we thank today are still involved in the recovery phase.

I also want to acknowledge that there is a small, albeit not insignificant, number of individuals who have been volunteering as part of their service to our community or working for local councils or working for government who have had their own properties, their own assets or their own homes impacted by floods. Sir, I know that that is a story that you know only too well from your community, where you see service, more likely than not during bushfires, where volunteers may in fact lose their own homes or properties or assets whilst they are defending the life and property of other people.

Can I say, on behalf of the government and with my own pride and humility as minister, thank you to our volunteers. Thank you to our staff and to our agencies who have done such an

extraordinary job—such an extraordinary job—in supporting, protecting and assisting our river communities in recovering from this flood that we have not seen for a generation.

Mr WHETSTONE (Chaffey) (11:47): I rise to put overwhelming support to this motion. It is critically important that we do acknowledge our emergency service personnel, whether they be paid or whether they be volunteers, no matter what colour uniform they wear or what part of the river communities they come from. Everyone rallied, and they rallied exceptionally well.

Living on the edge of a river, we understand the vagaries of what high flows mean, and inevitably some of those high flows do turn into floods. When we do recognise that there is a flood event coming, we have to act, and the emergency services, the river corridor communities and their support bases all came together. I think it was an outstanding collaboration of all walks of life that came to the defence against what was the might and power of Mother Nature.

We have experienced this before, and we will experience it again. I am a little aghast at some people using a climate change explanation around floods. If it was climate change in 2022, was it climate change in 1974? Was it climate change in 1931, was it climate change in 1956, or was it climate change in 1870? We will have to find out one day, I can assure you.

I think it is important we recognise that the vagaries of Mother Nature and the weather continue to challenge us every single day. Whether living in the city or living in the country, there are those challenges and we have to rise up and prepare, just as those emergency services and volunteers did.

To put it into perspective, back in 1956 we saw 341 gigalitres and back in 1974 we saw 182 gigalitres. One thing that has not been definitive in this past flood is the actual number. There were vague numbers of 180, 190 and 195 coming into the border. It is very hard to measure those flows, particularly on the border because that is where it crosses over the border and enters a very vast and wide flood plain commonly known as the Chowilla flood plain.

That flood plain is about 12 kilometres wide and the significant amount of water coming into South Australia then spreads and we see those flood waters impact. It rose to about 4.2 metres. As it makes its way down the corridor, we have different landscapes and we have different flood plains. As it flowed into some of those more narrow landscapes, particularly below Lock 2, the river rose up to between 7.5 and 7.7 metres. That had significant impact on those communities, particularly the shack and smaller communities in that middle section of the river that could not put up levee banks. All they could do was move their possessions to first or second levels. The river height did pose challenges and every community had a different set of circumstances.

My electorate of Chaffey goes from the border down almost to the outskirts of Mannum. During the last six months of my travels around the electorate, I have seen the vast challenges to those different river communities. The first port of call of the high river into South Australia was not only the Chowilla flood plain but it was also the town of Renmark.

As the member for Hammond said, Renmark is an island. It is an island in the middle of a flood plain that is front and centre to Mother Nature. All that river wanted to do was run Renmark over. It wanted to continue on its merry way. We know that rivers and floodwaters like to go straight ahead; they do not like to turn corners.

I pay tribute to all my river communities, whether it be Renmark, Paringa, Berri, Barmera, Loxton, Waikerie, or moving down to Mid Murray. They did an outstanding job and they came together and learnt from one another. They rallied together to understand how they could best defend what was a raging river sent on its way from our eastern seaboard, the catchment of the Murray-Darling Basin.

Over a number of years, the landscape has changed. What was flood plain back in 1974 is now farming country. We have seen farmers and communities defending their turf, defending their properties, with the majority of them now building levees, whether they be permanent or temporary. But when levees are built, the water is then directed straight ahead. It is directed past their properties and inevitably it is all directed towards the Murray Mouth. Along the way we saw a lot of destruction and heartache, and through all of that we saw emergency service personnel not only managing

communities and infrastructure internally but giving the leadership that was needed to keep those communities as safe as possible.

They were not the only ones to do that. There was also some great historical knowledge. Some of those elderly people had experienced some of those past floods. Particularly in the Riverland, we saw a lot who had experienced 1956, more who had experienced 1974 and they painted a picture of what happened in yesteryear, which gave us a much better understanding of what we needed to do and what we needed to do better. There were some vagaries, some problems and some mistakes made.

The forecast river flow events did not match historically what the river height was because we had seen more and more constraints put into our river corridor. The river corridor is very complex. What I would say to give anyone an understanding of what people had to encounter was that, over time, we have seen that those constraints have been put into the river corridor—whether it be environmental regulators; whether it be causeways, and roads, and bridges; whether it be housing development. We have seen a number of those constraints that have added to the height of the river, but they have also added to the complexities of being able to manage the flows and of course in relation to what the river height meant.

If we look upriver where there is a much more complex system in the Edward, the Wakool and the Lachlan, we saw river flows up there—as a number, about 180 GL—but the river was running at about 0.8 of a metre higher. To understand that, to better prepare, we did see a number of rejigged numbers out of the government departments that was very frustrating for people building levees, very frustrating for people moving pumps and very frustrating for those who were moving their possessions out of their homes, out of their shacks, because it was a moving target.

As a government, they did not get it quite right but, as we progressed, it became better and better. It became more accurate, just like South Australian Power Networks. They were very tardy in the beginning and I was very critical, but I commend them for responding and they became better as the waters proceeded through South Australia and the river corridor. When it really did matter and when the river came to a peak, they had got their act together and responded accordingly.

I must quickly touch on some of the levee systems. I remarked on Renmark, which had 36 kilometres of levee. They did a very good job not only of building it—the local businesses, the councils planning and monitoring and engaging the engineers—but also doing the ongoing daily monitoring so that we understood if there were any weaknesses, any erosion—particularly wind and high flow—and we were there to respond, and we did.

I think everyone who was part of that, particularly the CEO of the Renmark council, should be commended. All the council should be, but he was a leader in South Australia through local government in planning and making sure that we were best prepared. Moving along quickly, I must pay tribute to the two lives lost—one at Taylorville, one at Loxton—which is very, very sad.

We now move into the recovery phase: the clean-up, the roads and the ferries to be reopened. People must remember that they have to register for the clean-up because there will be a lot of homes, a lot of shacks, that will be demolished. There will be a lot of asbestos and a lot of waste. I would urge the government to make sure that they do put enough resources into the clean-up, they do put enough resources into the recovery, because this will be a scar if not dealt with properly; it will be a long-festering scar that the river corridor and communities will have to put up with.

I want to thank the emergency accommodation. The Humanihut that was brought up to the Riverland was outstanding work. Not a lot of it was used, but they did a great job. DefenCell, which is about eight kilometres, is worth its weight in gold. There are many, many more people I would like to thank, but from the border to the mouth, I think the South Australian emergency services should hold their heads high. They did an outstanding job in keeping people as safe as they could and as dry as they could, and we will prepare for the next flood because it could be next year.

The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL (Mawson) (11:58): I too rise to commend this motion to the house and to thank all of our emergency services workers—volunteers and paid staff—and also other

public servants across myriad portfolios who pretty much dropped everything and raced up to the Riverland to do what they could to help those in need.

I think it has been said before that the worst of times brings out the best in communities and in states. I was up in the Riverland with the Natural Resources Committee in November, as the preparations were underway as the flood waters were headed downstream towards Renmark and the rest of the Riverland. It was terrific to see all levels of government working together and local people and emergency services all coming together to brace for what we knew was going to be one of the biggest floods in the Riverland's history.

Every time I turned on the telly or saw social media over the period of these rising floodwaters and the devastation and the disruption that followed, I was really heartened to see the member for Hammond and the member for Chaffey sitting at times around the cabinet table, alongside our Premier and our ministers. Not only is it the right thing to do, it is also what communities want to see. They do not want to see politics brought into natural disasters. They want to see everyone working together on the one page.

There is no better person, in many respects, than a local MP in terms of knowing what the situation is on the ground and then feeding that into government but also hearing from government what is happening and then dispersing that information. So I want to congratulate the member for Hammond and the member for Chaffey for the way they went about things.

I remember driving along in the car and hearing the member for Hammond being interviewed, and thinking, 'This is sensational, that we've actually got everyone working together.' Unfortunately, it did not happen during the Kangaroo Island bushfires, with the exception of the member for Chaffey, who came and knocked on my office door over there and said, 'Let's go and have a bit of a chat.' He was the agriculture minister at the time. That is the way it should be done.

I think that there is still a lot of work to be done because, like a bushfire, once it goes through it leaves behind a trail of destruction, of damage and of mental health issues, and we need to make sure that we do everything we possibly can, as a government, to assist those people who have lost so much along the length of the river. I remember when we were up there in early November and people were being fairly optimistic about it. As the reality drew closer and the water level started rising, I think you could see a change in the response of individuals and of home owners, who could see that everything that they loved, this place so full of memories and everything else, was under threat.

I am sure the Riverland communities and those further downstream impacted by these floodwaters will be looking out for each other. It is a really important thing to do, that peer-to-peer response. What we know is that the more these people hear from leadership, which is local MPs, local government and state government, the better they will feel about things because they will know that they have not been forgotten. Sometimes, the worst thing that can happen is months or years after a disaster, when everyone else seems to have moved on while you are still wallowing in the fact that your home is not the home that it once was because of the destruction caused by the natural disaster, in this case a flood. I am sure that, from the Premier down and all of his cabinet colleagues, they have got that front and centre.

Again, I want to thank everyone in this place and in the upper house who played any role at all in this. The emergency services minister I think would have spent most of his Christmas and new year period in the Riverland, from what I can see on social media and in the media. They were up there, they were letting people know that they were there, that they were listening and they were ready to act, and I think always providing those updates so that people knew what was happening. I know in those early days it was hard because there was a prediction of X, and a week later—sometimes, as it got closer, it became a day later—X turned into Y. But everyone was trying to keep the communities as updated as possible.

To all the people from the emergency services, thank you very much. We look at the SES, the Country Fire Service, the Metropolitan Fire Service, the South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission, the Volunteer Marine Rescue and Surf Life Saving South Australia for the service that they provided to a community when it was in its greatest need, and it is to be commended by all of us here. I throw my full support behind this motion and all those who helped out in the floods.

Mr BASHAM (Finniss) (12:04): I, likewise, rise to support this motion and to thank those volunteers from the SES in particular who helped the community of Milang and particularly the community of shack owners at Milang. They were the only really affected properties within my electorate. Most of the lake and Goolwa and the channel itself were high enough out of the water not to be a problem, but it certainly was an area that I was very concerned about as far back as November when I asked a question in this place around the likelihood of issues within this area.

I was very concerned, particularly understanding how the lake itself over summer regulates itself, that we see strong south-easterlies on a very regular basis blowing water from the eastern side of the lake into the western side of the lake. A great example of that was seen as we looked at the numbers for Milang versus Meningie. There were often days when there was a half a metre difference in the height of the water at those two points and that was just because the wind was blowing that water across the two lakes straight at Milang. It was certainly something I kept monitoring right through December.

We got to the end of December and we started to see lake levels rise at Milang up to 1.1 metres by the end of December, which was 10 centimetres above anything the previous estimates had forecast. Certainly, it started to concern me where that was heading, and I appreciated that when I reached out to the Minister for Emergency Services he engaged the Department for Environment and Water to have a look at that area and do some modelling to see where the predictions were and whether they were accurate. Sadly, we discovered they were not, and it was likely that the levels would reach 1.3.

Sadly, that all happened between the 3rd and the 5th and on the early morning of the 5th the water at 1.3 went over the bank and into the shacks themselves. Unfortunately, those shack owners had very little preparation done because they were not expecting that water. They were very much anticipating a lower level.

But the town and the SES on the 5th certainly banded together and had a massive working bee to fill sandbags that day to protect themselves from any further inundations. The interesting thing about Milang is that it was sheer wave action that forced the water over the top of the minor levee bank that sits in front of the shacks. The shacks probably sit at around 1.2 and the levee itself is probably about 1.4, but the 1.3 waves hitting it were enough to get over the top, so we saw quite a large amount of water go in on that early morning of the 5th.

That led to complications of the septic system being inundated with water. It led to the power system being turned off because of the amount of water that went into people's hot water services, etc., that were outside their shacks. SA Power Networks made the quick decision that it needed to turn that power off, which then further added to the effluent issues because they could not operate their septic systems and pump the water out, so it made those shacks uninhabitable for a period of time.

Not many permanent residents live in those shacks, but there are a couple. It certainly was a challenge for them not having power for a week or so and not having the facilities to use in their shacks for toilets and showers, etc., was also a big challenge for them. I must again thank those SES volunteers who were there many times. I made daily trips. On one day, I went three or four times from Victor Harbor to Milang in response to issues as they arose to try to help those shack owners with those issues.

I would like to particularly thank the Milang Marine Search and Rescue Squadron. They also had problems of their own. Their clubrooms facility is right on the lake itself. They, too, were battered by those waves. After the worst of it, I was talking to them, and they do see an upside. They now have a beach that they did not used to have, where they may actually be able to launch boats from just outside their facility. That was the slight upside that they saw.

There is also some work that will have to be done right across that foreshore to protect it going forward. There has been quite a lot of erosion into the bank. If we had another event like this for that length of time, it would be much more severe because there is no longer that protection of the bank sitting in front of the shacks and sitting in front of the rescue squadron's clubrooms as well.

I very much think it is fantastic to see that community spirit. On the fifth there was a call-out to the community to help—a working bee to fill sandbags. They had a pallet of sandbags sitting there on 29 December when I went across there, and almost none of them had been used by the afternoon of the fifth. There was a public meeting that evening. I think they had used three pallets of bags and had to get extra sand delivered to fill those bags. It was a great effort by the community.

I also particularly want to thank the Alexandrina Council for their efforts during that time. It was a challenging location to get bags to put in front of the shacks, because it was not wide enough to drive vehicles down. They found someone with a telehandler that was able to actually lift them through the shacks to make it easier to get them to the front, so it really sped the process up.

Thank you to all those people involved. This was very much a community effort and very much an important thing. It is amazing how these natural disasters bring the community together. It is always a credit to those communities in the work that they do to support themselves as well as have the SES come in and assist them. Thanks to all those involved, and hopefully it is a long time before we need to go down this path again.

The Hon. N.F. COOK (Hurtle Vale—Minister for Human Services) (12:12): I certainly would like to contribute to this motion recognising all the efforts of emergency service providers as well as all other staff and volunteers who have contributed towards the safety of the river communities. While locals talk of the floods of 1956 or 1974, this flood was unique in a number of ways. Compared with previous emergencies, we certainly had more people, more homes and more businesses in the affected areas.

If we talk about emergencies such as the Pinery and Kangaroo Island bushfires, for example, there was little notice as the catastrophe hit. That is the same for bushfires pretty much universally. With this one, the focus has to be drawn over a long period of time in planning, whereas bushfires are a quick activation and a focus on clean-up and rapid relief. With the flood, we did have time to prepare and we had more tools at our disposal to help people.

I have listened to the contributions of members, and I think there is definitely this theme of thanks. I wanted to pick up on one thing from the mostly excellent contribution of the member for Chaffey. I found it really easy to find the updated predicted flow levels. It was very clear. It is found at waterconnect.sa.gov.au. This has been the website where flows and anticipated heights have been posted and amended since about 2007. The 17 February flow rate was 42 gigalitres at the border. Further down the river, it is heights rather than flows. The anticipated flows that were given to us were between 190 and 220 gigalitres consistently. The peak landed at around 190 gigalitres on 23 December at the border, so I am very pleased that it was not at the higher level of anticipated flows.

While the SES, CFS, SAPOL and many others have particular roles in terms of responding to the immediate threats of floods or fires, I would like to talk a bit about the South Australian Housing Authority, or Housing SA, which takes a lead role in emergency relief, including the rapid activation of emergency relief centres—and we had three of those along the river.

As well as setting up emergency relief centres, they showed quick action for rough sleepers along the river, identifying very quickly the rough sleepers and getting them into accommodation that was safer for them. I know that happened with dozens of people along the river, and I thank them for that. The emergency relief centres ensure that people have a safe place to go and be supported with counselling, food and finances, amongst other things. In a time of crisis just a cup of tea is so much more, and I saw that every time I visited. Volunteers help by providing cups of tea, creating a moment to breathe and then space to work through various challenges people were being faced with.

Our first centre opened in Berri in late November and, as a flood worked its way down the stream, we opened two more in Mannum and Murray Bridge. I visited many times across the crisis and once I had established an itinerary I did my best to reach out to local members of parliament—Tim Whetstone, member for Chaffey; and Adrian Pederick, member for Hammond—and we had a really great engagement across the period of time that these flood relief centres were being activated and put in place. I thank both those local members for their response and their reception to what we were trying to achieve.

I will not go on about it for very long but I was disappointed with the federal member, Tony Pasin. He had been on the radio being critical of not being reached out to, being critical of not being communicated with. The one time I got an answer from him, I would just call it berating that he provided me with that made little sense. There was no contribution to being able to serve the community better—unlike our state members of parliament who did a terrific job. In fact, I had people apologising for his vacation of the space. He just did not contribute at all in a positive way, and that was disappointing. Local MPs were bipartisan and cooperative, and I tried to address things as quickly as I possibly could so that we could generally provide help.

I thank the groups for giving up their community spaces to allow emergency centres to operate. I visited the Berri Senior Citizens Club just prior to handover. It was really heartening to watch the community socialising together. They were very welcoming and supportive of lending their space while we worked through the floods. We have handed that space back now for, once again, cards, indoor bowls, afternoon teas and raffles. I look forward to popping up there and having a look at it in its full flight.

Sporting clubs are often the beating heart of the community and the Mannum Roos footy club, home of the mighty Ramblers in Murray Bridge, are no different. They facilitated space and, again, made visitors feel very welcome. They volunteered themselves, helping out around the building. Uniquely, the Mannum site also became a space for caravans and RVs for those people needing to be on higher ground. It created its own little community and demonstrates the resilience of locals who seem to work on the theory that if life gives you lemons you make lemonade.

All locations facilitated and worked with the department as we needed to be responsive and flexible. While the centres were open normally around the hours of 9.00 to 5.00, seven days a week, they actually were ready to respond 24 hours a day, and they did. There was an occasion where assistance was needed in the wee small hours as a levee was breached, and staff were on hand to open up the centre as required to ensure immediate action, and that happened within the hour.

In addition to emergency relief, the flood relief hotline for people to call was available if they could not get to the centre. Housing SA coordinates the centres but there is a range of people from a whole heap of government departments who come in to provide assistance on request. We had all levels of staff helping, from admin all the way to exec directors, who volunteered to relocate to the regional towns and help local communities.

They came from various departments, from DHS and Housing SA; AC Care assisted as well, which is an NGO; the Attorney-General's Department; DCP; Department of Treasury and Finance; another NGO, Uniting Country; and the Department for Environment and Water. We had the Salvation Army, Foodbank, disaster ministries and the Red Cross, whose beautiful volunteers knitted comfort teddies to provide to children.

The Lions Clubs were ever present. They are always there in times of need. We had rural business financial counselling and Good Shepherd giving advice on no-interest loans that were available, and I give a shout-out to Woolies and Foodland along the river, who provided vouchers. Also, Humanihut, as has been mentioned, were set up ready to provide accommodation.

Some of these staff had experience after working on the Pinery bushfires, but for others it was their first time doing emergency relief work. One thing was very clear: all staff I met had found the experience meaningful. They were motivated and felt proud to be part of helping with their own skill set. Every one of these people brought something special and unique to the space, and every one of these people deserves our gratitude and respect.

I would also like to mention that Sounds by the River, which was moved due to the floods from the Maryann Reserve up to the golf club went off really, really well ensuring that the community did not miss out on its much-needed tourism. They got through some initial hiccups, shall we say. Aware that moving the event would impact those who had made the Mannum Roos footy club their home, I understand that local people were provided with some free tickets to attend and were very, very pleased with the night.

We had families being displaced at Christmas. We had staff leaving their own families to support them. Thanks must be extended to those not just working in the centres but also to those who supported their loved ones to go and be useful to ensure their home ran in their absence.

I visited all the emergency relief centres numerous times, and my highlight was attending their handover meal when incoming staff would meet with the outgoing staff. They would exchange notes and talk about people who needed assistance, and often at the venues they would bump into those people who needed the assistance. It was really great.

The emergency centres were calm, organised and their applications for help were processed in a timely and compassionate way. This comes with the customer service experience and knowledge of how to assist with a variety of responses from those in stress. The emergency relief centres are now in a process of transitioning to recovery centres as we enter a new stage of our emergency management process. I would like just very quickly to give you the numbers:

- emergency relief centres and phone lines had 3,500 contacts;
- they helped with 493 personal-hardship grants worth more than \$330,500;
- 144 accommodation grants worth over \$250,000;
- 52 private rental assistance supports worth more than \$170,000;
- 300 travel relief assistance packages worth \$90,000; and
- 10 Essential Services Grants for nearly \$20,000.

The help continues to be asked for and continues to be delivered. While I would not wish an emergency like this on anybody, what I would wish for is another team like I witnessed working through this flood.

Ms THOMPSON (Davenport) (12:22): I, too, rise to recognise the South Australian emergency service sector to whom we are very grateful for their incredible efforts during the recent and ongoing River Murray flood events.

The impacts of this flood are difficult to comprehend. More than 3,000 properties and businesses have been affected. There is significant damage to essential infrastructure, including more than 1,000 kilometres of road. Tourism businesses, like caravan and camping parks, the houseboat industry and hospitality providers have experienced major disruptions and closures. More than 4,000 hectares of agricultural production, including vineyards and other primary production, have been damaged or destroyed.

Then there are other consequences like mental health concerns and other health issues that come with risks to water quality and our wastewater systems. I recently joined Minister Cook on one of her many visits to Mannum to personally thank some of the hardworking staff and volunteers.

A huge percentage of the homes that were flooded were in Mannum. I spoke with the Mayor of Mid Murray Council, Simone Bailey, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mayor Bailey for her leadership and the hard work of her council throughout these floods. Mayor Bailey says that, when she took on the role as a new mayor in November last year, never did she expect to be heading into the worst flooding disaster that her community had ever seen.

She said that there would be few in her community who have not been impacted in some way through the direct flooding of their homes and businesses, the loss of livelihoods or the emotional strain of facing the unknown. But she also says that throughout the disaster, even in their toughest moments, the community has pulled together to look after their own, filling and stacking sandbags, supporting local businesses and donating food and accommodation. People were looking out for each other.

The hardworking emergency crews that have come from the local area, across the state and also around the country have been instrumental in responding to the crisis. More than 500 volunteers have given tens of thousands of hours of their time to help. Mayor Bailey tells me that just like the council staff and paid staff from other organisations, volunteers have worked like crazy, often putting in long hours in tough conditions.

She says if it was not for their support the communities would have been far worse off. She says there would have no doubt been more houses lost if it were not for their efforts. She spoke about their particular efforts rapidly setting up pumps to save the Mannum Rowing Club. She told me about the efforts of emergency services crews who saved a man who had fallen into the cellar of the local hardware store.

On New Year's Eve, these angels in fluoro were pumping water to save their main street. And it wasn't just the emergency services; it was community members and it was council staff. Mayor Bailey acknowledged the council CEO, who she jokingly refers to as a city boy, who worked the midnight to 6am shift on New Year's Eve keeping watch over a levee and the generators so that he could give his staff the night off.

The peak flow has now passed the River Murray, but areas of the flood plain will remain inundated for an extended period. There is a long road ahead to clean up and rebuild, but because of the efforts of good people and volunteers, the communities remain resilient, strong and connected.

We applaud the efforts of the staff and volunteers of the SES, the CFS, the Metropolitan Fire Service, the South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission, Volunteer Marine Rescue and Surf Life Saving South Australia for their outstanding service to the community. Thank you for your tireless work protecting and supporting affected communities.

The Hon. A. MICHAELS (Enfield—Minister for Small and Family Business, Minister for Consumer and Business Affairs, Minister for Arts) (12:26): I rise briefly to speak in support of the member for Waite's motion. As many people before me have said, we have been out to have a look firsthand at the local communities and the impact that this flood has had in that region.

In the last few months, I have been around Murray Bridge, Mannum, Waikerie, Blanchetown, Renmark, Berri and a range of areas along the river to see the thousands of homes and the hundreds of businesses that have been affected by these floods. We have seen land used for crops going under water, shops in the main streets being flooded, and also hundreds of businesses that have been impacted, not necessarily because they have been inundated but because of power cuts or lack of access, etc.

For businesses in particular up along the river, the timing really could not have been worse. As the peak of the flood waters snaked down the river, it hit families during Christmas time. It also stopped businesses in their tracks during what is usually their busiest time of the year. We normally have tens of thousands of South Australians and interstate tourists flocking along the River Murray during summer holidays, and it severely impacted their trade.

I want to thank all the local members for their support of their local communities, and local councillors. Mayor Simone Bailey also took us around a couple of times, and I want to thank her in particular. Local communities really did band together to support each other through this really hard time. While waiting for the peak to come, in that awful wait time, people along the river were incredibly optimistic, getting themselves ready for what they knew was going to be a very difficult time.

I know that lots of people helped each other moving caravans, moving stock in shops, etc. Those local volunteers were incredibly well supported by our SES, CFS, MFS and SAFECOM. I want to thank them for the work that they have done. There were countless selfless individuals who put their time and their energy into helping their local communities, and that was the incredible part of the floods, and that will need to continue as those areas recover.

I want to again just thank the local MPs for their efforts, the mayors, councillors and council staff, working on the ground supporting their communities and working in partnership with state government agencies throughout this disaster. Obviously levee banks being built have saved countless homes and businesses from being inundated. I have worked really quite closely with the RDA at Murraylands and Riverland who have done really well supporting their local businesses as well as other local chambers of commerce throughout the region.

I want to recognise the sacrifices made by dozens of staff from a number of government agencies, particularly over that Christmas period, who were at our relief centres in Berri, Mannum and Murray Bridge. That includes staff from SAHA, DHS, PIRSA and Services Australia, and we had staff from the Office for Small and Family Business as well at those relief centres. I want to thank

those people. The Red Cross did an incredible job, playing a key role in disaster recovery and had some wonderful volunteers that I got to meet at the relief centres.

Mr Deputy Speaker, as you are aware, we did come in quite quickly with some plans to help in particular the businesses but also the individuals with support packages, rolling out a \$194 million package with the federal government. That has included targeted grants, allowance payments, travel support, housing assistance, financial counselling and mental health support, which has been really important.

I am very grateful for everyone who has been involved in the rollout of the comprehensive support for businesses. That has included a number of targeted grant programs as well as free financial counselling. That has been really important through Rural Business Support and, as I said, representatives at the relief centres from the Office for Small and Family Business.

In terms of grant support, as of last Friday I am pleased to say that 96 applications were approved for the Early Business Closure Grant. That provided up to \$20,000 for each business owner. We have had more than \$1.5 million go out the door for that grant program. Two hundred and thirty applications have been processed through the Office for Small and Family Business for the generator grants. That has meant a value of \$344,000 going out the door as of Friday last week.

We have recently launched the Small Business Industry Support Grant. That is where businesses can prove a reduction in turnover of 30 per cent or more. That is to support those businesses that did not actually necessarily need to close, like down the main street Mannum: on one side they were impacted directly by the floods; on the other side they had access issues rather than being forced to close because of the floods. That is a grant of \$10,000. We have had 18 businesses be approved so far and many more to come. We also have the Small Business Flood Recovery Grants being rolled out at the moment. That will help businesses with clean-up costs of up to \$50,000, which is really important for them.

I know some of these grant applications have taken a little bit of time to process. I know we added additional resources to the Office for Small and Family Business. Most applications have been processed within a matter of days; some have taken a little bit longer because of the complex business structures and waiting for information from applicants to be able to get that through the department. I want to thank them for working really hard in processing these applications as quickly as possible to help those businesses. We have got more than \$2 million out the door to help those small and family businesses in the region. We expect many more grant applications to be processed in the coming weeks and months as well.

Like I said, even those who were not directly inundated with water have had severe impacts on their businesses, and those financial losses are significant, and we understand that. We are doing as much as we can to support these businesses as a state government and working with the federal government and, of course, working with local government, RDAs etc. to be able to offer those supports to small businesses.

On that note, I just want to thank the member again for bringing this motion to the house and commend her for that.

Mr TEAGUE (Heysen) (12:34): I rise to commend the member for Waite on bringing this motion to the house and at this time, early in the new sitting year and still in the course of what the member for Waite has described as the 2022-23 River Murray flood event. It is well to remember that, while levels have peaked and we are seeing now some reduction, a welcome reduction, as flows continue, the important work of recovery—both in terms of immediate aid to those displaced and to individuals and businesses as well as to the landscape—will be the work of the year and years to come.

It is indeed perhaps a singular achievement and reason for recognition of all of our South Australian emergency service sector that in the course of what has been described, at least by some voices, as the worst natural disaster in the state's history, we have not seen the kind of loss of life and injury that one might expect in such a natural disaster, certainly in those that we have seen elsewhere. Indeed, when one compares to the last and perhaps most significant natural disaster to

affect our state—the 40th anniversary of which we recognised last Thursday, 16 February, the Ash Wednesday fires in 1983—that comparison stands in stark contrast.

But what we have seen is a day-to-day, week-to-week, month-to-month steady and dedicated commitment of South Australian emergency services volunteers working alongside local members and government response to what is an event that many residents and businesses will not have seen in their lifetimes. We go back at least to 1974, and comparisons are made to 1956 in terms of the flood events, so there is no doubting its significance.

Sadly, too often, we have occasion in this place to recognise in particular the efforts of the CFS. As the member for Heysen, I am often talking about the vital and necessary response that the CFS volunteers provide to Hills communities in circumstances of fire events and fire disasters. I want to just single out on this occasion the superb work of the SES, under the leadership of Chris Beattie. Chris is someone whom I have had the privilege to get to know along the way. He is a person I hold in very high regard as leader of the SES.

In a way, I had an opportunity for a preview of the way in which the SES goes about conducting its vital response task in September last year, on the occasion of what was a local disaster risk that was in many ways averted by the response of the SES, together with the reassurance that it provided in being on site and ready to respond. The Echunga dam near-failure was a circumstance that, happily, ended successfully, with a minimum of damage, and particularly with a minimum of fuss—a response coordinated by the SES with the assistance of other emergency services, including the CFS. The way in which they went about it was typical of that service, and Chris in particular.

As these flood response measures have been taken over recent weeks and months, we have heard from members on both sides of the chamber speaking from a variety of perspectives, including those on the ground, those in government with a responsibility to provide housing responses and business support, and all the range of public assistance, that where there is an emergency that is faced by people throughout our communities in South Australia, we have an important government response, and we also have an able and dedicated community volunteer emergency response.

I wholeheartedly commend the motion in all its respects. May we take these opportunities to indeed show our appreciation to staff and volunteers who work tirelessly, and particularly on this occasion in their response to the 2022-23 River Murray flood event.

Ms HUTCHESSON (Waite) (12:40): I would like to thank all the members for their contributions this morning. It would not be possible to help all the communities in the River Murray area without the help of all the volunteers and staff who came together and continue to come together.

I would like to draw attention to the relief centre volunteer program and the participants who took part in that and how much help they have provided. The relief centre contribution was incredible, as I said, and the instrumental leadership of Kelly Lambert, Tina Snowden, Leanne Jury and the state coordinator, Shane Pritchard, allowed residents to get the help they needed. They were ably supported by so many public servants and NGO workers, and I would like to take a minute to acknowledge those workers.

I am going to read through a list so that their names will be remembered: Tanya Glynn, Sherri Winter, Ruth Crooke, Meredith Nelson, Jill Wood, Tammy Walters, Claire Mazuran, Glen Orr, Kanwalpreet Kaur, John McKinley, Deepa Azad, Denise Scappaticci, Jo Stolz, Krysti Moon, Debra Thompson, Peter Yusuf, Lucy De Dominicis, Caroline Lock, Helen Kelly, Sarah Wilson, Tim Heffernan, Ramiro Iglesias, Annie Rawlings, Tanya Harder, Vicky Marker and Shannon Willmott.

Also, Tina Benbow, Pauline Smith, Emma McGregor, Jacob Zea, Janice Watson, Kellie Ayris, Monika Madaras, Leanne Hyland, Lyn Manners, Lynette Fiegert, Kristie Goodridge, Natalya Grace-Jones, Terrence Wilson, Marcus Eakin, Alana Kanafa, Glen Michels, Jo Stanley, Susan Rose, Bronte Elston, Fraser Thompson, Maria Nelson, Peter Gdodakis, Belinda Rudd, Elizabeth Hudson, Marnie Weatherald, Penny Thompson, Rhys Davies, Ben Sullivan and Stephanie Ferguson.

In addition, Andrea Hayes, James Kennedy, Nicole Vukajlovic, Carli Pfitzner, Kimberley Kranz, Rob Sharrad, Lia Fenwick, Kathryn Hollingworth, Anthea Lorenz, Eleanor Bray, Svetlana Bower, Michelle Steicke, Evan Garnaut, Tom Geyer, Roz Hartley, Caroline Bliman, Lysha Brinsley,

Annie Adams, Mel Aylett, Tamara Coulthard, Liz Sampson, Kimberly Amos, Chelsea Lodge, Kristelle Amos, Melissa Ramsey, Trish Rollins, Justine Tuip, Sarah Gay, Matthew Hunter, Devon Milton-Hutchinson, Tiana Pope, Jodie MacKintosh, Ari Start and Anne Crouch.

All these employees and volunteers gave their time to help their community, just like all of our emergency services volunteers and staff, and we cannot thank them enough for all of the work they have done, and for putting their lives on the line in some cases. I commend the motion to the house.

Motion carried.

AMBULANCE RAMPING

Mrs HURN (Schubert) (12:44): I move:

That this house—

- (a) notes that the Malinauskas Labor government has presided over the worst ambulance ramping in South Australia's history;
- (b) condemns the Labor government for failing to deliver on its promise to fix ambulance ramping; and
- (c) expresses its deep concern at the impact that ambulance ramping and poor patient flow has on frontline health workers, as well as South Australian patients.

One of the litmus tests of successful governments of any political persuasion is doing what you said you would do, delivering what you said you would. In the country, we talk a lot about character, and one of the things that really does bring it undone is saying one thing and doing another, failing to act with a sense of integrity. Voters care a lot about it, and history shows that over a series of elections. They do not want their politicians, particularly the Premier, saying one thing before the election and delivering another after the vote. Unfortunately, that is what has happened with ambulance ramping.

It brings me no joy to bring the house's attention to this issue of record ramping and the genuine impact that it is having on the people of South Australia, on our health system and on our frontline doctors and nurses. But for many, many reasons, I felt compelled to do so. I felt compelled on behalf of the countless frontline workers who are crumbling under this seemingly insurmountable pressure of our emergency departments that are overcrowding under the record ramping of ambulances lining up outside our emergency departments day after day after day. They are telling us that things have never been worse.

It brings me no joy to have to speak about this today but I felt compelled on behalf of the voters who have contacted our offices, certainly on this side of the chamber, about frustration that the Premier's very clear promise to fix ramping in this state—the central tenor of the entire election campaign—is now seemingly sliding further and further down the Premier's priority list. It has been replaced by things like celebrity invitations and events.

That is something that the people of South Australia care about, and I felt compelled to speak about this issue today because there are patients who are being left out in the cold, there are patients who are left lying on footpaths for hours and hours on end, waiting for an ambulance to rock up on time—the very types of gut-wrenching stories that those opposite exploited day after day after day during the recent state election campaign.

I felt compelled to let South Australians know that, despite what was a really aggressive political campaign from those opposite—'Vote Labor like your life depends on it,' they said, 'and when you need help, an ambulance isn't going to rock up'—it was tapping into that central fear that South Australians have. All this, despite those opposite saying that they had the plan to fix it, that they had the plan to fix ramping in this state. I felt compelled to tell South Australians that under the Labor Malinauskas government things have never been worse. That genuinely saddens me, and it saddens everyone on this side of the chamber. I thought it was important, for the benefit of the house and the benefit of South Australians, that I outline some of the statistics.

Since March 2022, ambulances and our patients and paramedics have been stuck at hospitals, outside the ED, on the ramp for over 37,000 hours. That is the equivalent of nearly 1,500 days. That is over four entire years that our ambulances, our doctors and our nurses have been waiting for these patients to come in so that they can treat them, and all of this despite the

central promise to fix it. The past nine months have been the worst on record. I hear those opposite basically trying to insinuate that we are fudging the statistics, and I wish we were—I genuinely do—because, if you look back over the last nine months, they are the nine worst months of ramping that South Australia has ever experienced.

If you compare our last full month, February 2022, 1,500 hours were lost. Fast-forward to where we are now: it is nearly double, over 3,000 hours. Those opposite say, 'Look at what elective surgery looked like at that time.' That was when you were telling South Australians to vote like your life depends on it—1,500 hours, and now it has doubled. That is an absolute disgrace and that is why we are compelled to move these motions on behalf of the people of South Australia, on behalf of the doctors and the nurses who are raising these genuine concerns with us.

It is actually quite an emotive thing. I remember looking back at a video that the then opposition leader, the member for Croydon, the now Premier did. He was explaining some of the situations that he had experienced, some of the stories that he was being told by mothers who were left waiting, cradling their young baby, waiting for an ambulance to come. Those stories have not stopped. It was really disingenuous to behave in such a political way over such an issue.

I do not know what those opposite now tell their constituents. How do they explain that to the people of South Australia, to the people who voted them in, or is it that those opposite have decided that they, too, are going to deliberately brush this down their priority list because it is no longer politically convenient to talk about some of the dreadful situations in our emergency departments and in our health system? 'It's not politically convenient anymore to talk about ramping, so let's just forget about it.'

We knew that it was the number one issue that South Australians voted for in March last year. They sent a very, very strong message to every politician: they expect health to be front and centre. What we see post election is a Premier with completely wrong priorities, and that does concern us on this side of the house. I do understand that this would be very hard for those opposite to listen to because they went to their communities with the now Premier promising people that they would fix it. They said it when they were doorknocking, they said it when they were at their street-corner meetings, they said it when they were holding their supermarket stalls at shopping centres right across the state. 'We will fix ramping,' they said.

You could not drive through any single town, down any single street, from metro Adelaide to the country regions of our state, without seeing the promise up in lights: 'We will fix ramping.' I genuinely do not know what they say now to our paramedics. I do not know what they say now to the people who voted them in on the basis of this promise. 'I am sorry that our doctors, paramedics and nurses have never operated under such extraordinary pressure. I am sorry that people are still dying waiting for ambulances, despite the fact that this was our central election campaign. I am sorry that when we told you that we had the plan to fix it, what we meant was that we know how to run a marketing campaign to get you to trust us, to get you to believe us, to get you to believe in our Premier who claims to have the plan.'

Now, when you start to wind back those layers, you realise that it is all a facade. This is the absolute difference between the Labor government and the Liberal opposition—and it does not matter which side of the house we sit on—and that is that we are always up-front and honest about the challenges. We were up-front and honest about the challenges that we were facing with ramping in South Australia and we acknowledged that it was an issue. We invested in our health system. COVID played a significant part, and there was much more to do when we left office—make no mistake about it; there was so much more to get on with—but it was this government and this new Premier who promised South Australians that he had the plan to fix it.

It was all those opposite, all of those local MPs who played a role in one of the most disgusting fear campaigns that has ever been seen in South Australia's history, forcing these dreadful situations into the spotlight of the media here in South Australia, absolutely using their political weight to get political mileage out of a really emotional issue.

Regardless of whatever excuses members opposite feel comfortable with, regardless of what they say to their constituents, we will continue to shine a light on this, and it does disappoint me that I am standing here with this motion today, because I want there to be improvement. I want patients

to get the care they need when they need it. I don't want our patients, doctors and nurses to be crumbling under the weight of such serious overcrowding, because it is not good for anyone. It is certainly not good for our state and it is certainly not good for our loved ones, for our family or for our friends.

But, it was Peter Malinauskas and the Labor government who promised South Australians they had a plan to fix it; unfortunately the results are showing the complete opposite, more than doubling since our last four months in office.

Ms THOMPSON (Davenport) (12:55): I move to amend the motion by the member for Schubert as follows:

Delete (a) and (b) and insert:

- (a) notes that under the former Liberal government's watch ramping drastically increased by 485 per cent between 2017 and 2021;
- (b) reaffirms the Malinauskas Labor government's commitment to addressing the ramping crisis inherited from the former Liberal government through delivering a generational \$2.4 billion investment to rebuild the health system;

Insert:

- (d) commends our frontline health workers for their continued hard work and acknowledges the Malinauskas government's steadfast support for health staff across the system.

The Liberals left the health system in disarray and now spend their time criticising us for doing the hard work to turn around the system.

Members interjecting:

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, can you just take your seat for a second. The member for Schubert was heard in silence.

Ms Stinson interjecting:

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, please, member for Badcoe!

Mr Pederick interjecting:

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I don't need advice from the member for Hammond. If there is one more interruption, those members will be going to lunch early. The member for Davenport.

Ms THOMPSON: The Malinauskas Labor government inherited a health system under significant pressure, driven by a lack of investment in beds, staff and services under the former Liberal government. Their inaction or blatant neglect of the health system resulted in ramping increasing 485 per cent during the Liberal's term in government.

In March 2018, the first month of the Liberal government, ramping was at 750 hours. In their final month of government ramping had escalated to 2,729 hours. The Liberals had no plan or policies to address ramping and hospital system capacity. In contrast, the Malinauskas Labor government's number one priority is addressing the ramping system we inherited.

Members interjecting:

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Ms THOMPSON: The member for Schubert asks, 'What do we say to our paramedics and what do we say to our communities now?' We say that we are delivering a generational investment to rebuild the health system.

Our government is taking every possible step to reduce strain on emergency departments. We are reducing pressure on ambulances and freeing up hospital beds for those who need them most. We say that we are opening every hospital bed possible to improve patient flow, and we are investing a record \$2.4 billion to open more than 550 additional beds, recruit hundreds more doctors, nurses and ambos and build and upgrade key health infrastructure to provide the capacity our health care system needs.

In my electorate of Davenport we have partnered with the federal government to deliver \$400 million of funding for a once-in-a-generation upgrade to the Flinders Medical Centre. This major project will deliver at least 160 beds across the FMC and the Repat. We are delivering on these commitments in partnership with our health workers. This is in stark contrast to the approach under the previous Liberal government, who failed to listen to frontline workers of the ramping crisis—our doctors and nurses who repeatedly raised their concerns, but were ignored for years.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr Odenwalder.

Sitting suspended from 13:00 to 14:00

Parliamentary Procedure

PAPERS

The following papers were laid on the table:

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

Dog and Cat Management Board—2022 Review of the Dog and Cat Management Act 1995—Final Report

By the Minister for Human Services (Hon. N.F. Cook)—

Inclusive SA—Annual Report 2021-22

By the Minister for Local Government (Hon. G.G. Brock)—

Local Council By-Laws—
District Council of Franklin Harbour—No. 2—Local Government Land

Parliamentary Committees

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

Mr BROWN (Florey) (14:01): I bring up the 25th report of the committee, entitled Majors Road Intersection Upgrade.

Report received and ordered to be published.

LEGISLATIVE REVIEW COMMITTEE

Mr FULBROOK (Playford) (14:02): I bring up the 21st and 22nd reports of the committee, both entitled Subordinate Legislation.

Reports received.

Parliamentary Procedure

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: Before I call on questions without notice I acknowledge the presence in the gallery today of students from Unley High, guests of the member for Unley. Welcome to parliament today.

Question Time

COST OF LIVING

The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS (Black—Leader of the Opposition) (14:03): My question is to the Premier. Does the Premier have a plan to deal with the highest inflation in the nation? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS: Labor ministers have prioritised spending more than \$325,000 on overseas trips since the election. At the same time South Australians are struggling to put food on

the table and pay their bills. South Australia's inflation rate is the highest in the nation, meaning that even essential everyday items are increasingly unaffordable. Over the last year the cost of milk has increased by 18 per cent, fruit and vegetables by 9.3 per cent, electricity by 14.4 per cent, and the average mortgage has increased by nearly \$1,000 a month.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN (Lee—Treasurer) (14:03): Yes, the Leader of the Opposition is right to raise the issue of inflation. It is having a very significant impact not only on household budgets but also on thousands and thousands of businesses across not only South Australia but the entire country. When we are talking about a through-the-year inflation rate in the order of 8.6 per cent that is something unheard of in recent memory, certainly well beyond the inflation target that has been long established by the Reserve Bank.

Not only are households and businesses having to pay much higher costs, including a range of goods and services (some of those just given to the house by the Leader of the Opposition), but in an effort to combat the inflation, which is rampant across the national economy, we have now had nine successive cash rate rises by the Reserve Bank, which corresponds unfortunately immediately in mortgage rates for millions of Australians. And so in that respect, households and businesses are being confronted with perhaps the most severe double financial whammy that we could have contemplated over the last 20 or 30 years.

As the price of goods and services has escalated now also the price of mortgage debt and other loans is escalating as well. What did we do? Well, we recognised that, as the national economy was flourishing and performing at almost unprecedented levels, we made a commitment to the people of South Australia that we would increase financial support for those people in our community who we thought needed it the most, that is, by and large, those people who are in receipt of state government concessions, and in particular the Cost of Living Concession.

So, while those opposite raise the issue that ministers have been travelling overseas at the cost of tens of thousands of dollars per trip, I am pleased to report that, in contrast, we have committed more than \$40 million in this financial year in additional financial assistance; and in that concession alone now spending approximately \$80 million on providing payments of \$449 for approximately 150,000 South Australians, as the Minister for Human Services updated the house yesterday, and other payments of \$224 for other recipients who are not owner/occupiers.

Then, of course, cost of energy is something that is of extraordinary national concern, and quite rightly so. We have had the Premier of South Australia joined with other Premiers and First Ministers and the Prime Minister to agree to a \$3 billion assistance package for Australian households, including here in South Australia, the reach of which will not only benefit that same group of South Australians that I just spoke about but also will reach far more broadly than that.

Those payments are currently the subject of implementation discussions between treasurers for rollout this calendar year. That is what both the state and the federal government are doing to help households combat the scourge of high rates of inflation.

MINISTERIAL TRAVEL

The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS (Black—Leader of the Opposition) (14:08): My question is to the Deputy Premier. Will the Deputy Premier release details of her expenditure for her recent overseas trip and, if so, when? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS: The Deputy Premier has spent over \$72,000 in overseas travel since the election but has not provided details of who she met with and what her accommodation, meals and alcohol costs were to taxpayers.

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) (14:08): Of course, the information that is required by proactive disclosure has already been put up for the two trips I undertook. In fact, *The Advertiser* has just—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. S.E. CLOSE: —asked for the itinerary for the trip to Egypt, and I have provided it and all the costs associated that I have on me.

AMBULANCE RAMPING

Mrs HURN (Schubert) (14:09): My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. Can the minister outline what lessons he is hoping to learn from the Queensland government when he travels there on Thursday? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

Mrs HURN: One reason provided to the opposition for the minister's early departure from parliament this week to travel to Queensland was that he wanted to learn how Queensland is tackling ramping. It should be noted that the Queensland Labor government has delivered some of the worst ramping in the nation.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister has the call.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier is called to order. Minister.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Elizabeth! Order! The Premier is called to order. Member for Cheltenham!

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for West Torrens is warned. Minister.

The Hon. C.J. PICTON (Kaurna—Minister for Health and Wellbeing) (14:09): I am glad that we are finally onto the big issues here in terms of what flights we are taking to Queensland tomorrow.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Morialta! Member for Unley! The member for Morialta is warned. The minister has the call.

The Hon. C.J. PICTON: The opposition is well aware—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Newland!

The Hon. C.J. PICTON: The opposition is well aware that there is a Health Ministers' Meeting in Queensland over the next couple of days. We appropriately have asked for leave to go to that meeting. The pair has been granted by the opposition, which is funny that they come and complain about it now.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Elizabeth! The Treasurer is called to order. Member for Badcoe!

Mrs Hurn interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The member for Schubert is warned. Minister.

The Hon. C.J. PICTON: Upon looking at the flights, we saw that the flights would mean, to get to the official function, we would have to miss question time in any regard tomorrow, so hence we have asked for the pair. I thought, while we are doing that, we should take the opportunity to look at other systems. I have been doing this consistently around the country. We have done this in Sydney already—

Mrs Hurn interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The member for Schubert is warned for a second time.

The Hon. C.J. PICTON: —which is a Liberal-Nationals government. I have been to Sydney, investigated, looked at hospitals and met with clinicians there. For a couple of hours before the ministerial meeting happens, we will be doing that in Brisbane and meeting clinicians. I think we are going to the new Gold Coast hospital and meeting with Queensland Health department there.

I am very happy to outline why we are going a couple of hours earlier, which the opposition have given their full support to by providing a pair for that to happen. I make no apologies at all for talking to clinicians around the country about fixing these very complex issues. As has been rightly pointed out by the shadow minister, the whole country is confronting these issues, and it is important—

Members interjecting:

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

The Hon. C.J. PICTON: Thank you, sir. It is important that we meet with clinicians around the country to learn about initiatives that are working or not working to make sure that we can put the best possible policies in place here in South Australia. That's exactly what we are doing. This week we have been very busy announcing policy after policy, development after development, in terms of investing in our healthcare system here. We are not doing the approach that was tried and failed by those opposite, which was privatising, redundancies of frontline nurses, bringing in the corporate liquidators.

Members interjecting:

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

The Hon. C.J. PICTON: That led to a rapid increase of 485 per cent in South Australia, and now we are reversing that by investing in our health services. We were at Lyell McEwin Hospital yesterday announcing a doubling of our commitment, that is starting next month, in doubling the number of beds. We are increasing even the number of beds in the already larger emergency department there. We have more dialysis chairs that we have announced there as well.

At Modbury Hospital, the Premier and I and various members were there on the weekend in terms of progress on the new mental health facilities that are progressing, more than doubling the number of mental health beds, which we know is a critical issue in terms of delays in our healthcare system.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. C.J. PICTON: We also announced a new site for the Woodville ambulance station—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The Premier is called to order.

The Hon. C.J. PICTON: —to make sure people can get faster response times in the western suburbs. Today I was with Minister Butler, who announced new urgent care centre investments across Adelaide. What did we hear from those opposite—support for that? No, they have come out opposing those measures, calling it window-dressing, those urgent care centres which are so important.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Badcoe! Order! I see the member for Florey.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

Mr BROWN (Florey) (14:13): My question is to the Minister for Local Government. Can the minister provide an update on matters related to elected council members lodging campaign donation returns?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK (Stuart—Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Roads, Minister for Veterans Affairs) (14:14): I thank the member for Florey for this question. Members of this house will be aware that it was announced today that I will be introducing a bill proposing reinstatement of council members who lost office due to their failure to lodge campaign donation declarations by the legislated time frame. While I will not go into further details of the bill, it is important to inform members about why this bill is important. My determination to introduce this bill is motivated by two reasons. The first is—

Mr Patterson: Because my hands were off the wheel—the left one and the right one.

The SPEAKER: Order, member for Morphet!

Members interjecting:

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

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: The first is out of respect for the democratic process and the collective decision of the people who voted in council elections. The bill proposes to reinstate people who were democratically elected to be members of a council across all of South Australia. Reinstatement avoids voters having to vote yet again, and for some they have already voted in elections four times in the last 12 months when you take into account the state and federal elections, the council elections in November and a state seat by-election afterwards.

My second motivation is the desire to avoid additional costs to the ratepayers of affected councils. It is money that is better spent on productive services and infrastructure that help their community and others across all of South Australia. Supplementary elections cost tens of thousands of dollars: for small councils in the vicinity of \$10,000 to \$20,000, while for larger councils it could cost more than \$40,000.

The Local Government Association (LGA) wrote to the state government last Tuesday to seek a resolution. The LGA have been very constructive and have sought a solution and, as the president of the LGA, the Kimba mayor, Dean Johnson has said:

While the LGA accepts that individual elected officials bear personal responsibility for complying with their campaign reporting obligations, it appears the cost and consequence of not submitting paperwork on time is utterly unreasonable.

I agree with Mayor Johnson and I have appreciated the constructive and collaborative approach that the LGA have taken in this matter.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Hurtle Vale! Order!

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: It is in stark contrast to the course taken by the member for Flinders. While positioning himself as a friend of local government, he has sought to blame.

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

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: At no time has the member for Flinders offered a—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! Minister, I will hear the point of order from the member for Morialta. The member for Taylor is called to order and warned.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: The question was relating to an update. The minister has been providing one. When he pivots to casting personal reflections on other members of the house, he is in breach of standing order 127 for reflections, and he is in breach of standing order 98 for debate.

The Hon. A. Koutsantonis: Allegedly.

The SPEAKER: Order! Well, that may be. That is the submission that you have made to me. I have listened carefully. I will now listen carefully to the minister. The minister of course well knows that some compare and contrast is permissible, but of course standing orders 98 and 127 do certainly apply.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: At no time has the member for Flinders offered a solution and, worse, he has not even asked me for one. He has called for an investigation, not a solution. That is, until last night.

Members interjecting:

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

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: My office informed the member for Flinders last night at around 7.30pm about my intention to introduce the bill today, gave him advice about the critical elements of the bill, and agreed on a time this morning to brief him in detail about the bill. Lo and behold—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The Premier is called to order! Minister.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The member for Morialta and the Premier will cease their exchange. The minister has the call.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Lo and behold, the member for Flinders posted on social media later in the evening, while regaling his followers with his daily activities, and I quote—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for West Torrens is on a final warning. Member for Chaffey! The member for Chaffey, you will come to order.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

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

The SPEAKER: Member for Morialta, please take a seat. I will deal with the member for Chaffey. You will leave the chamber under 137A. Your exchange continued. I didn't have the presence of mind to see who the exchange was with, but had I they would be leaving, too, until the end of question time.

The member for Chaffey having withdrawn from the chamber:

The SPEAKER: The member for Morialta.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Standing order 98 and 127.

The SPEAKER: There is some merit in the point of order that is raised with me. There are barely seconds remaining in the answer. I will bring the minister to the question at hand.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Thank you, Mr Speaker. He said, 'I called on the minister to act immediately to get this sorted so that communities can have certainty.' I am an avid reader of the *Hansard*, and my advisers inform me of media activity regarding my portfolio. I keep an eye on my correspondence and I have assured the house that there was no media that evening. I cannot recall the member for Flinders ever calling me directly to act immediately on this matter. A focus—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! Minister, please be seated. Your time has expired. The Premier is called to order. The member for Hurtle Vale is warned. The member for Colton has the call.

MINISTERIAL TRAVEL

Mr COWDREY (Colton) (14:20): My question is to the Treasurer. Does the Treasurer intend to release details of the total expenditure for his recent trip to New York, Washington and Los Angeles and, if so, when? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

Mr COWDREY: On 13 February the Under Treasurer confirmed that the Treasurer's trip to New York, Los Angeles and Washington between 19 and 27 January cost at least \$78,000, including the cost of business class flights and accommodation, but the Treasurer has not yet released details of those expenses.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN (Lee—Treasurer) (14:20): Yes, I will. I will do it in accordance with Premier and Cabinet Circular 35, as was the practice under the previous Liberal government and as was the practice under the previous Weatherill government.

It is worth noting, of course, that those guidelines were changed. They were changed by the previous Marshall Liberal government to reduce the amount of information that is required to be proactively disclosed. It's a Premier and Cabinet circular. The practice is that they are confirmed by a decision of cabinet, which would mean that the Leader of the Opposition, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the member for Hartley and others over there made that decision to reduce the amount of information that is required to be released. So I will be meeting the obligations; I will be doing it as per the requirements, as I have already made clear publicly.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for West Torrens is on a final warning. The member for Badcoe well knows the rules; the member for Newland does too.

MINISTERIAL TRAVEL

Mr COWDREY (Colton) (14:21): My question is to the Treasurer. Did the Treasurer personally approve the choices of hotels his party stayed in on his recent trip to the United States? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

Mr COWDREY: It has been reported that the nightly cost at the Century Park Hotel where the Treasurer stayed in Los Angeles was \$US676 a night. The Marmara Park Avenue hotel, where the Treasurer stayed in New York City, is described on its own website as a New York City luxury hotel featuring a wellness centre, Turkish bath and curated art collection, and is located a convenient 13-minute walk from Madison Square Gardens, home of the New York Rangers.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN (Lee—Treasurer) (14:22): I don't recall who made the decisions around these, but these hotels were selected on the basis of being proximate to the business meetings that we had in each of these centres. Of course, the point I have repeated when asked publicly about this is that overseas travel is very expensive at the moment. The reason why is because after having virtually closed borders for 2½ years, there is a rush—not just for leisure travel but for business travel.

Governments and many private businesses had been precluded from showing up face to face to those people with whom it's important to maintain a direct relationship. Of course, there are fewer flights available to locations that people are travelling to and the price is much, much higher than what it has been historically.

But I make the point that as far as I'm aware, I am the first Treasurer to present to face-to-face meetings internationally since 2017. This was an endeavour that the previous government didn't think was important enough.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: The member for Hartley may say that Zoom is sufficient, but that is not the standard that those opposite kept when they were in government, particularly those including the member for Dunstan, the member for Chaffey and the former member of the other place, the Hon. David Ridgway. Overseas travel by Liberals is fine; overseas travel by people who aren't Liberals apparently is abhorrent. Once again, a double standard from the Liberal Party of South Australia.

MINISTERIAL TRAVEL

Mr COWDREY (Colton) (14:24): My question is again to the Treasurer. Did the Treasurer take any taxpayer-funded foreign US currency with him on his eight-day trip to New York, Washington and Los Angeles and, if so, how much did he take and how much did he return with?

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN (Lee—Treasurer) (14:24): Yes, I did. That is the normal practice, particularly for people travelling to the US, whereas it is not required here in Australia. Yes, currency is also referred to as cash, for the benefit of the member for Schubert.

Mrs Hurn interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: I notice that we are quite often having to explain these basics to the member for Schubert when she chooses to interject on matters of Treasury and finance.

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

The SPEAKER: Member for Morialta!

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: I am more than happy to complete my answer if she has completed inserting her foot in her mouth. I think I took the sum of \$US500. I returned the vast majority of that. My recollection is that most of that was used for the necessity of tipping, which is a custom and practice in the United States, but once we have finished reconciling all of that, those details will be proactively disclosed in accordance with Premier and Cabinet Circular 35, which I remind the house was changed by those opposite. The member for Schubert, of course, the principal adviser—

Mrs Hurn interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: —to the member for Dunstan when he was Premier—

Mrs Hurn interjecting:

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

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: —of course, the minister responsible for taking in changes to the Premier and Cabinet Circular, it didn't seem to be a problem back then when those changes were being made, but she seems to have had a change of mind. Isn't amazing that the standard which they held themselves to between 2018 and 2022 seems to be something that they flee from at great pace.

ULURU STATEMENT FROM THE HEART

Ms CLANCY (Elder) (14:26): My question is to the Premier. Can the Premier please update the house about the government's commitment to the Uluru Statement and is he aware of other views on this issue?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier) (14:26): I thank the member for Elder for her question. I can certainly inform the house and, indeed, remind the electorate more broadly that on this side of the chamber we are utterly supportive of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, including the provision of a Voice to the South Australian Parliament. That is a view that is an established principle and policy on this side of the house which is underpinned by a shared belief within the South Australian Labor Party that this is the right thing to do.

Of course, as leader of the party, I am very proud of the fact that, as a big believer in the Voice, I will be doing everything I can to ensure that this becomes legislation that passes the parliament and, as a consequence, is established in the state of South Australia. I do think leadership matters here, and I think that it is important that leaders, particularly of parties of government, have a clear policy conviction that underpins their position.

Yesterday, the member for Black, in the media, stated in respect of the Voice that 'the principle here is worthy'. Then he went on to say in a separate media outlet InDaily, 'We're in principle supportive of the concept.' Indeed, the Hon. Michelle Lensink in the other place also stated, and I quote, 'In principle, the Liberal Party supports an Aboriginal representative body.'

So, therein lies a degree of consistency, except now we start to run into problems because the Leader of the Opposition in the other place was also on her feet yesterday espousing a view about the Liberal Party's view of the Voice. She said, and I quote, 'This is an attack on parliamentary democracy and principle.' She goes on to say, 'Quite apart from my objection in principle.' The Hon. Ms Girolamo said in the other place that it's not about outcomes; it's about adding another layer of government, another layer of bureaucracy. That doesn't accord with someone who supports the Voice in principle.

Then, of course, the Hon. Ms Curran from the other place said, 'I disagree with this legislation in principle.' Then, of course, Mr Hood in the other place—that's the one who is already there, not the one who is coming that the Leader of the Opposition is opposed to—said on the Voice, and I quote, 'We will ultimately severely undermine the democratic principles that have served us so well.' So here we are, on this important opportunity to bring the state together to advance the cause of Indigenous affairs, where both parties of government—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: —went to the 2022 election with a shared bipartisan position on the establishment of the Voice to Parliament. Having gone through all this and six months of consultation, the Leader of the Opposition says, 'My problem here is about process but we support it in principle,' but his representative, in the other place, says she is fundamentally opposed to the principle.

This is a clear demonstration of the fact that, when it comes to the Voice to Parliament and this important democratic reform, the Liberal Party doesn't know what it believes in. And I am willing to stand on my feet and say that on this side of the house we have a unified position. We didn't show up to the introduction of this Voice to Parliament legislation a couple of weeks ago, and stand with Aboriginal members of our community, and celebrate and clap with them, and then change our position a couple of weeks later. We have a unified and a shared belief that this is the right thing to do, which is why we will continue to see its pursuit through the parliament in a way that we believe the majority of South Australians support.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier's time has expired. I remember, of course too late, that standing order 120 does restrict reference to debate in the other house. There was no point of order raised with me, and it has been the practice of many Speakers to allow or to permit the leader and the Premier a degree of latitude.

HOMEBUILDER PROGRAM

Mr COWDREY (Colton) (14:31): My question is again for the Treasurer. Has the Treasurer written to the federal Treasurer to request an extension to the HomeBuilder scheme and, if not, why not? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

Mr COWDREY: It has now been two weeks since the Treasurer informed the house that he had not written to the federal Treasurer to request an extension to HomeBuilder. Twelve hundred

South Australians, including first-home buyers, could lose their HomeBuilder grants of up to \$25,000 through no fault of their own.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN (Lee—Treasurer) (14:31): Perhaps I can provide some further context around the HomeBuilder scheme to the parliament, because some people opposite have sought to portray this as a matter of having a level of discretion and an unwillingness to exercise that discretion, either by me or by the federal Treasurer.

Mr Cowdrey: The guidelines have been changed.

The SPEAKER: The member for Colton is called to order. The Treasurer has the call.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: The reality is that despite the circumstances that some people may find themselves in where they may not be eligible for the grant—and I completely understand and agree that for those people that is absolutely regrettable—this is not a scheme which is currently open, currently in operation and subject to change. In fact, the last time—

Mr Tarzia: Make that change then.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: The member for Hartley says that we can—

The SPEAKER: The Treasurer will not respond to interjections.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: —and that I should make that change. I said that I would provide some further context to the house and so allow me to, Mr Speaker. This was the subject of a national partnership, I am advised, which was signed between the commonwealth and the states and territories. It set out how the HomeBuilder grant was to be provided to Australians across the country equally in all respects except one, that is, there was a higher value threshold for some of the Eastern States' jurisdictions, reflecting the different characteristics of their housing market.

The scheme has been closed since 14 April 2021. For nearly two years the scheme has been closed, and the only substantive change which was made was when there was a decision by the previous Coalition government—my recollection is in very late 2020—to extend the scheme for a further three months or so at a lower value threshold—

Mr Cowdrey interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Colton!

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: —to \$15,000. Of course, since that time, for nearly two years, the scheme has remained closed. There are many thousands of Australians—

Mr Cowdrey: No-one is asking you to open it.

The SPEAKER: The member for Colton is called to order. The Treasurer has the call.

Mr Cowdrey: No-one is asking you to open it.

The SPEAKER: Member for Colton, you are warned.

Mr Brown interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Florey is on two warnings.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: There are many, many thousands of Australians who have sought to access the HomeBuilder grant from the day it was announced right up until very recent times. They have missed out on accessing the HomeBuilder grant for a range of reasons, which are related to not being able to satisfy the criteria that are set out in and subject to the national partnership agreement that was signed between the commonwealth government and the state government under the previous Coalition government and the previous Liberal government well before the scheme closed, being more than two years ago. For the suggestion to come forward now that there should be changes made to the benefit of a small number of people post the closure of the scheme, in my view—

The Hon. J.A.W. Gardner: 1,200 people.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: It's not 1,200 people. It's not 1,200 people, okay? I realise that there are people who are impacted—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Hartley is on three warnings.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: —but there is no substance to the assertion that the member for Morialta makes that 1,200 people are missing out on the grant, and I know how fervently he seeks to uphold the standing orders when it comes to accurate information being provided to the house.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: I am happy to continue my remarks if the member for Colton has a supplementary or a subsequent question on the matter.

HomeBuilder Program

Mr COWDREY (Colton) (14:35): Will the Treasurer stand up for Marianne, her husband, Jim, and 15 other—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Point of order, sir.

The SPEAKER: Member for Colton, there is a point of order, which I will hear from the member for West Torrens.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Standing order 97 does not allow argument in a question.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! That may be, member for West Torrens. It may be that the question, when finally formed, involves opinion and/or argument, but I will need to hear more.

Mr COWDREY: This is literally the same language that was used by those opposite.

The SPEAKER: Member for Colton, what is your question?

Mr COWDREY: Will the Treasurer stand up for Marianne, her husband, Jim, and 15 other future residents of Norwood Green and write to the federal Treasurer to request an extension to HomeBuilder? With your leave and that of the house, I will explain, sir.

Leave granted.

Mr COWDREY: Marianne Forrest is currently renting in the city with her husband, Jim. Marianne signed a contract in 2020 to purchase an apartment at Norwood Green with the help of the \$25,000 HomeBuilder grant, but their apartment is unlikely to be completed by the deadline of 30 April this year due to construction workforce shortages and material shortages, so they, along with 15 others, are worried about what they might be forced to lose in terms of their savings or to take out of their retirement savings to pay the difference.

The SPEAKER: Before the Treasurer answers, it seems to me that there is the sliver of an argument in the question, but it could easily be cured. To suggest that the Treasurer is not standing up really invites a consideration of the purported facts that were introduced then by leave. When taken together, the inference, of course, or argument is that the Treasurer is not doing something. Expressed more plainly, I am sure the question can serve the same purpose, or a separate question can serve the same purpose.

Mr COWDREY: Will the Treasurer provide assistance to Marianne and her husband, Jim, and 15 others at Norwood Green?

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN (Lee—Treasurer) (14:38): Those people who the member for Colton makes reference to have my sympathy. I feel very sorry for them that they have been placed in this situation by the tenets of the scheme that were set and agreed to between the former Coalition government—

Mr Cowdrey: And changed once and can be changed again.

The SPEAKER: Order, member for Colton!

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: —and the previous state Liberal government. As I was saying before in my answer, there are many thousands of Australians who have missed out on the HomeBuilder grant who feel similarly aggrieved because they have not been able to satisfy the terms of the arrangements that were struck between those two governments, the terms of the national partnership agreement, the details of which are published on the website. They not only have my sympathy but every single South Australian who is struggling to get into the housing market has the sympathy of the Malinauskas Labor government.

That is why we spent the entire last week rolling out a series of announcements designed to get thousands and thousands of South Australians who are currently locked out of the housing market into housing. Whether it's home ownership—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: —whether it's into emergency accommodation, whether it's into public housing, whether it's into affordable housing—

Mr Cowdrey: Just federal budget savings, is that all it is?

The SPEAKER: The member for Colton is warned for a final time.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: —we are doing what we can with the opportunities that we have to control those areas of government policy that can provide some relief and some access to those people who are locked out of housing here in South Australia. But I regret the circumstances that have befallen the people that the member for Colton raises and others who have missed out on the HomeBuilder scheme since its inception in early 2020. The scheme is not open, the scheme is not able to be changed. All we can do now is to try to provide every possible avenue into housing—

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

The SPEAKER: Member for Morialta!

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: —for those people who are unable to enjoy housing. I haven't visited the Norwood Green development. I understand it is still under construction, from what the member for Colton says. The barrier for the Norwood Green project is not that it is still under construction and won't be completed by the end of April. To be eligible, in this particular instance, for the HomeBuilder grant required construction to commence within 18 months of 31 March 2021, i.e. by 31 December last year—so, as long as construction commenced. What seems to be the barrier in this case is not being able to provide certificates of title and evidence of settlement by the end of April, 30 April, this year. These are not matters that are open and to be changed—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Hurtle Vale is on two warnings.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: —by the state government and by the commonwealth. It would require a significant reopening and changing of the HomeBuilder scheme. I reiterate the point that I have made in the media and publicly: the reason why governments haven't made an exception for the people at Norwood Green is because it would be inequitable for those other South Australians and Australians who have missed out on the HomeBuilder scheme because they haven't been able to adhere to the other criteria of the scheme, whether it's because what they were proposing to do wasn't within the value range, whether it was because construction hadn't started in time—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: —whether it was because construction hadn't started in time, whether it was because they weren't Australian citizens, for example. There are many thousands of Australians—

Mr Cowdrey: So it's their fault.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: No, it's not their fault. It's the fault of the scheme—

The SPEAKER: The Treasurer will not respond to interjections.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: —that was struck by Josh Frydenberg and agreed to by Rob Lucas.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: There are many areas—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Florey!

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: —of previous government policy that those opposite are now calling on us to fix from the last four years, both nationally and here in South Australia. But those people have my sympathy, and I also regret to inform it is beyond my control to fix this.

The SPEAKER: The Treasurer's time has expired.

Mr COWDREY: My question is again—

The SPEAKER: Order! You do not have the call for the moment. In fact, there are a couple of warnings that must be noted, including the member for Hurtle Vale now on two, the member for Florey on two once again. Shadow treasurer, you have the call.

HOMEBUILDER PROGRAM

Mr COWDREY (Colton) (14:42): My question is again to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer provide assistance to Evan and Monique from Campbelltown? With your leave and that of the house, sir, I will explain.

Leave granted.

Mr COWDREY: Evan Katis and Monique Cirocco are first-home buyers who signed a contract to buy a property with the help of the HomeBuilder grant. Now they are concerned that they will have to make up the \$25,000 difference because their home will not be built in time, placing them at substantial risk of financial hardship.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN (Lee—Treasurer) (14:43): I am not sure of the precise circumstances that the member for Colton raises with me and raises in this place. At the very least, in the first instance, I can certainly make officers available from RevenueSA to understand fully what their circumstances are and whether in their particular circumstances anything can be done for them. But I reiterate the point: in terms of reopening the HomeBuilder scheme, making it available for a cohort of people who are worried that they may miss out on it for not being able to adhere to certain criteria, the reason that is not being entertained is because it would be fundamentally inequitable to those other thousands of South Australians and Australians who have missed out for a range of reasons, particularly not being able to satisfy other criteria of the scheme.

The SPEAKER: I see the member for Light. Members might wish to know, I believe, that it is the member for Light's birthday today.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The member for Light has the call.

LABOUR FORCE DATA

The Hon. A. PICCOLO (Light) (14:44): Thank you very much. My question is to the Treasurer. Can the Treasurer provide the house with an update on the state of the South Australian labour force and how this is impacting business confidence?

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN (Lee—Treasurer) (14:44): I also extend my birthday wishes to the member for Light. Judging by the corflutes I saw at the last state election, he is 36 today.

I am grateful for the member's question. It goes to the extremely strong performance of the South Australian labour market. The most recent labour force figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics last Thursday show that there is yet another new record that has been achieved by the South Australian labour force, with 927,900 people employed here in South Australia—an extraordinary record. That is up 4,200 from the previous month which at the time was, in itself, a record for the total number of people employed here in South Australia.

Pleasingly, of those 927,900 people 610,900 are full-time workers—a record in full-time employment here in South Australia. That itself is an increase of 2,400 full-time jobs from the previous month and 12,600 more full-time jobs since the recent March state election. In total, that is almost 20,000 new jobs since the March state election.

Our unemployment rate now sits at 4 per cent, which is the second lowest on record after the 3.9 per cent recorded last month. This unemployment rate is equal to Victoria and the Northern Territory, and lower than Tasmania. While the unemployment rate did rise slightly from 3.9 per cent to 4 per cent, this was driven by a participation increase in the labour force of 5,500 people to a seasonally adjusted participation rate of 63.7 per cent. These are undeniably strong results for the South Australian economy.

The strength and resilience of the South Australian economy in the face of what appears to be growing economic headwinds confronting the nation is being reflected in business confidence statistics. The latest NAB Monthly Business Survey reported a significant boost in business confidence in South Australia. South Australia's increase in business confidence was the highest of all states in the month. Our business confidence index rose 19 points in January in seasonally adjusted terms, leaving South Australia with the second highest business confidence levels behind Tasmania. Nationally business confidence rose by six points, with all states reporting an increase, except Queensland.

January also saw business conditions rise by 20 index points in South Australia compared with only five nationally. These results were consistent with NAB's more in-depth Quarterly Business Survey for the December quarter. In that particular survey, South Australia had the highest business confidence of all mainland states. South Australia and Tasmania were the only states to see increases, and this leaves South Australia as the only mainland state in positive business confidence territory. Additionally, South Australia was the only state to see an improvement in business conditions.

It is clear that businesses are currently feeling confident in the state of our economy. People are continuing to consume and businesses are continuing to employ. However, as I have been at pains to say each time I have reported economic conditions to the parliament, we have to be aware that economic forecasters are projecting a slowdown in the nation's economy this year, and South Australia will not be exempt from this. What is pleasing is that we confront any such economic challenge from the strongest possible position.

HOMEBUILDER PROGRAM

Mr COWDREY (Colton) (14:48): My question is again to the Treasurer. Can the Treasurer offer any assistance or reassurance to Rosanna? With your leave, sir, and that of the house I will explain.

Leave granted.

Mr COWDREY: Rosanna saved, while renting, for a deposit for an apartment after being persuaded by marketing to use the HomeBuilder grant to support her purchase. In November 2021 she received an email from RevenueSA warning her to submit the title to her property by 30 April 2023, even though construction on her apartment will not be completed in that time. Without an extension to the HomeBuilder deadline, Rosanna is worried that she will have to take \$25,000 out of her retirement savings.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN (Lee—Treasurer) (14:49): Again, I sympathise with Rosanna and others in circumstances like hers. As for what can be done for Rosanna and her particular circumstances, again, I make the same offer to her and to the member for Colton to make

Revenue SA officers available to see the particulars of her circumstances and whether anything can be done within the existing precepts of the scheme.

Outside of the HomeBuilder grant, yes, of course, we would be very happy to look at ways that we can help Rosanna, and indeed other South Australians who are seeking to get into housing, whether it is in terms of the housing solution itself or increasingly what we are very pleased to be providing to South Australians is improved housing finance options.

Further to the Leader of the Opposition's question at the beginning of question time with respect to inflation, there are many people who are experiencing much higher mortgage rates at the moment and correspondingly much higher repayments on their mortgages.

People are seeking where they can to refinance, or for those people who are in situations similar to those that the member for Colton has just articulated—for example, people who are renting and who have saved and saved in an effort to try to get a deposit together so that they can get a loan to get into housing in one form or another—we have made it clear that there is a viable in many respects, and in many cases a much more affordable way for people to get into housing finance, and that is through HomeStart.

For those people who are unable to get a deposit together of the order of 20 per cent, or even 15 per cent or 10 per cent, which is required by the banks (and once you get under 20 per cent, of course, with the intendant Lenders Mortgage Insurance), an alternative is for them to check with HomeStart to see whether one of their loans is available, because HomeStart offers loans to South Australians from as low as 2 per cent deposit with no Lenders Mortgage Insurance.

That may not fit the bill for the people that the member for Colton raises, but in terms of the full tranche of additional housing options to get thousands of South Australians into housing and to have more affordable housing finance are some of the ways that we are trying to help South Australians.

HOMEBUILDER PROGRAM

Mr COWDREY (Colton) (14:52): My question is, again, to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer help Alicia from Parkside to access HomeBuilder? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

Mr COWDREY: Alicia signed a contract for her first home that she was able to afford with the help of HomeBuilder. Her house will be completed by the end of May. After signing the contract for her home Alicia enrolled her son in the local school, but now she is concerned that she will not be able to purchase her first home without the \$25,000 grant.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN (Lee—Treasurer) (14:52): Once again, for Alicia, I am happy to make Revenue SA officers available to speak—

Mr Cowdrey: Do something about it. Change it.

The SPEAKER: The member for Colton is on a final warning.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: —with her—

Mr Cowdrey: Are you a grinch?

The SPEAKER: Treasurer, please be seated. The member for Colton will depart under 137A for the remainder of question time.

The honourable member for Colton having withdrawn from the chamber:

The SPEAKER: The Treasurer has the call.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: It seemed from the description of Alicia's circumstances that she may be in a slightly different circumstance from some of those who are experiencing difficulties accessing the HomeBuilder grant by virtue of investing or purchasing in the Norwood Green development as described by the member for Colton.

If somebody is building a house, particularly on property they already own then they already have a certificate of title. The requirement is around when construction commences not necessarily when construction completes.

That may not be the circumstance that Alicia is in. I don't obviously have the full particulars from the member for Colton's question, but for her and for the others who have been mentioned in the member for Colton's line of questioning, of course, we are happy to speak with them to make resources available to try to assist them in their circumstances.

However, if it is to access the HomeBuilder grant, that is a scheme that has been closed since April 2021 by the previous Coalition government and is not currently open for changes.

MAJORS ROAD INTERCHANGE

Ms THOMPSON (Davenport) (14:54): My question is for the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport. Can the minister provide an update on the Majors Road interchange project?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS (West Torrens—Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Minister for Energy and Mining) (14:54): I always look forward to these days when I get these questions without notice about—

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

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! I will hear the member for Morialta under 134.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: The question seeks to elicit a response that, in my view, would contradict the standing order relating to pre-empting debate on something that is on the *Notice Paper*. Prior to question time, the member for Florey put a Majors Road work redevelopment report on the *Notice Paper* for the house to consider tomorrow.

The SPEAKER: It's a sophisticated point of order, but if I were to rule that way, member for Morialta, it would be very difficult for matters of public business that relate to some matter that might be brought on to be discussed in question time. Equally, I haven't heard the answer.

The Hon. D.J. Speirs interjecting:

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes, we wouldn't want to deny the Leader of the Opposition. It's a special relationship we have about Majors Road. I note the member for Davenport's strong support for this project, as it has now surpassed the support of the member for Black, who was once a very strong supporter of this.

The Hon. P.B. Malinauskas: Not that long ago, either.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Just a wee time ago they were big supporters. I can advise the house that site investigations and early works to construct the very popular Majors Road interchange project will commence on 1 March, very close to the ides of March.

The Hon. D.J. Speirs: St David's Day.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: It is St David's Day. Of course, I am of the ancient faith—not the new Protestant faith of the Catholic Church.

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I can inform the house that local South Australian Aboriginal business RAWsa have been engaged to conduct the site investigation works to help better understand the underground services and inform the project's detailed design. RAWsa will also construct the project's site facility adjacent to Riding for the Disabled Association SA site.

The Majors Road on/off ramp will provide commuters in the southern suburbs with greater access to the Southern Expressway, something that has been championed by a number of people in this house over a long period of time but has somehow now, surprisingly, one less supporter. It will provide communities with improved access to Glenthorne National Park via new bike

connections, making it easier and safer to get to the park by bike, also to access the Sam Willoughby International BMX Facility and of course, importantly, the Southern Soccer Facility will be enhanced.

As I have stated previously, these works are scheduled to commence on 1 March and are expected to be completed by late April 2023, weather permitting. Procurement for the interchange design and construction contract is expected to be completed in mid-2023, with major work expected to start in late 2023 and the project completed by the end of 2025.

I remind the house that the previous plan proposed by the Liberal government would impact a minimum of 13,000 square metres of Glenthorne National Park, including 8,000 square metres of established vegetation and significant trees. Their plan would have cut a swathe of destruction across the national park.

I am proud to say that our proposed concept design has been developed to ensure minimal impact on Glenthorne National Park, with no portion of the national park to be further isolated from any other area of the park. The current design also ensures no impact to significant vegetation, Glenthorne Farm or the O'Halloran Hill Recreation Park.

Given our design so thoroughly rectifies the shortfalls in the former government's disastrous plan, I encourage the member for Black to return this project to the top of his priority list and join me in looking forward for his community rather than looking back in anger. Nothing good comes of anger.

An honourable member: He thinks you're Liam Gallagher!

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Well, I would have been Noel. I encourage the member for Black to return to this very popular project in his electorate, or he might face the wrath of his community.

TEACHER PERMANENCY

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER (Morialta—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:59): My question is to the Minister for Education, Training and Skills. Will the government deliver on its election commitment in relation to teacher permanency and, if so, when? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: During the last election the Labor Party released an election commitment that it would 'increase the percentage of permanent teachers by at least 10 per cent'. During budget estimates the minister confirmed, and I quote, 'The percentage of permanency across the preschool, primary and secondary systems is 80 per cent.' Labor's promise, therefore, requires that figures be lifted to at least 90 per cent, and progress has not been reported thus far.

The Hon. B.I. BOYER (Wright—Minister for Education, Training and Skills) (15:00): I thank the member for Morialta for this very important question, and I can say from the outset that, yes, we will deliver on our election commitment in the area of teacher permanency. I would like to tell the house about why it is so important now, more than ever, that we do that.

Many members of this place would have seen in the last few weeks there has been national coverage around teacher shortages. The numbers, in terms of shortages in some of the eastern states, particularly New South Wales and Victoria, are very high. What I have heard in terms of New South Wales is as many as 3,000 unfilled vacancies and 900 in Victoria. Fortunately, in South Australia, we don't face those kind of numbers, but it is a problem that is certainly coming our way.

I am conscious, as the Minister for Education in this state, that we need to be doing absolutely everything we can to make the teaching profession as attractive to people as it can be, keeping in mind that currently the system is quite inefficient in terms of how many graduates it is putting through. I think we have something in the vicinity of only 60 per cent of people studying their initial teacher education complete it, and then I think as many as 50 per cent of those who do complete it leave the profession in the first five years.

So what we were aiming at here with this election commitment was increasing permanency by at least 10 per cent, and the reason we chose the figure of at least 10 per cent is because there is disagreement across the system in South Australia around what existing levels of permanency

are. I believe the union thinks that it is at, from memory, 70 per cent and the department thinks it might be 80 per cent, so instead of choosing a figure we have decided to say 'by at least 10 per cent'.

Now, why is that so important? Well, because we know that we have a lot of teachers who still remain on contracts. They are disproportionately younger teachers, and we know with the issues out there at the moment, particularly in terms of cost of living and housing affordability, that it is very important for these often young teachers to be able to have permanency, not just so they can see a long-term pathway in the profession and stay there, but also so they can actually secure a loan to purchase a house.

I want to make sure that we don't lose those young gun contract teachers in particular who don't have permanency who might instead, in this pretty incredible jobs and labour market that we have in South Australia at the moment where there are so many job opportunities, choose another path and leave the teaching profession. So, because of that, we have made the commitment to increase permanency by at least 10 per cent. We will absolutely deliver on our election commitment.

There are other things that we are doing, too, that I can report back to the house and the member for Morialta, and that includes making the regional allowance for those teachers who choose to go to a regional area to teach, which is currently as much as \$5,000 per year, ongoing instead of capping out at the end of five years, which then of course results in that teacher deciding, well, I might return to a metropolitan area.

So these are just two of the things we are doing to make sure that we don't have the kind of workforce pressures and shortages in the teaching profession in South Australia that eastern states like New South Wales and Victoria are currently suffering from.

Grievance Debate

WADE, THE HON. S.G.

The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS (Black—Leader of the Opposition) (15:03): I would like to take this opportunity today to pay tribute to the career of someone who has served both the Liberal Party, and also the South Australian people and these houses of parliament so well over the last couple of decades, and that is the Hon. Stephen Wade.

Stephen Wade obviously stepped down from the Legislative Council a few weeks ago just prior to us returning from the summer recess, and I think that everyone who knew Stephen knows not only the diligence and compassion that was a trait, a hallmark, of every aspect of his work, but also the great calling that he clearly had for public service in the state of South Australia.

After graduating in law and economics from the University of Adelaide, Stephen spent quite a period of time working as a parliamentary adviser at both state and federal levels, including for former Liberal health minister Dr Michael Armitage. It is likely that during his time working for Dr Armitage, Stephen really developed his passion for health care, both primary healthcare and ageing. Something that Stephen was particularly interested in, which came to the fore later when he was appointed a minister in the Marshall Liberal government, was the concept of wellbeing, of preventative health.

Stephen worked in corporate governance and on a range of boards, including from 2003-06 as chair of Julia Farr Services, the largest disability provider in South Australia at the time. He was a fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. Following the 2006 state election and the departure of Angus Redford from the Legislative Council, Stephen filled that casual vacancy in May of that year, spending nearly 17 years as a member of the Legislative Council.

In April 2010 he became shadow Attorney-General, a role he held until June 2014. From then, he took on the role of shadow health minister, shadow minister for suicide prevention, mental health and substance abuse, and ageing. Then, in 2017—and I understand this title was at his request—he became shadow minister for health and wellbeing. Following the election of the Liberal government in March 2018, Stephen took on that portfolio in government, covering health, wellbeing, mental health, ageing well, substance abuse and suicide prevention.

As someone who had the privilege of serving for four years with Stephen alongside him in cabinet, as well as other colleagues who are here today, I got to observe his thoughtfulness, his

focus on policy development and his desire to ensure that our healthcare system in South Australia—both the primary healthcare system and also the preventative health system—was as well-placed as possible and as well-funded as possible to respond to the challenges of our times. The challenges of our times were many, they were varied and, of course, one in particular was incredibly unexpected.

Stephen had the unexpected role of Minister for Health and Wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic. He took a very significant role, both in the policy development and the emergency response, alongside Premier Steven Marshall, the Chief Public Health Officer, Nicola Spurrier, and, of course, Commissioner Grant Stevens: the four figures who had such a key role in ensuring that South Australians were kept as safe as possible during that time. I believe we will all always have to be thankful for the role that Stephen played during that era.

We should not forget the very significant increase in health spending during that time—a record investment of \$7.85 billion in our health system in the 2021-22 financial year, including upgrades of The Queen Elizabeth Hospital, the Modbury Hospital, and Flinders and Lyell McEwin hospitals.

Stephen was an exceptional health minister. He was a mentor and a compassionate leader. I am sure that he will continue to serve the South Australian public, the Liberal Party and his community in the Adelaide Hills well into the future. At every step of the way, standing by his side supporting and encouraging him was his wife, Tracey. We wish both of them a very enjoyable retirement and we look forward to catching up with Stephen Wade very, very soon. Thank you, Stephen, for your contribution to South Australia.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS PROGRAM

The Hon. D.R. CREGAN (Kavel) (15:08): Recently, my office was contacted by Ms Yolande Law, of Woodside, an unpaid carer for her good friend, Mr Graham Crocker. Graham lives with a chronic mobility-impairing health condition. Yolande cares for Graham in her home. She approached my office because she needed supportive railing installed both inside and outside her house, alongside a wheelchair, in order to minimise the risk of Graham falling.

Graham is not eligible for support under the NDIS, and at the moment is not old enough for the My Aged Care scheme. I have been informed that Graham and others who are unable to receive NDIS or My Aged Care may be eligible for the 12-week Community Connections program funded by the Department of Human Services. The program, amongst other things, makes provisions for home-based health support through care partners in the Adelaide metropolitan, Eyre and Far North, Flinders and Upper North, Riverland, Mallee, Coorong, Limestone Coast, and Yorke and Northern local health network regions.

The Adelaide Hills region does not have a care partner. This means that due to the sole fact that Yolande resides in the Adelaide Hills, she is unable to access this short-term support to ensure a safe environment is provided for Graham. I note that residents of metropolitan South Australia who are receiving services under the Community Connections program are eligible for separate funding to install home-based equipment under the Community Connections stream of the DHS equipment program.

While Community Connections itself is a short-term program, grants under the DHS equipment program may provide a more permanent support. Yolande is not able to access the longer-term support offered under the equipment program due to the fact that she resides in the Adelaide Hills. Yolande or anyone else in a similar situation is treated differently to someone in metropolitan Adelaide.

Members of my community have expressed significant concern that people like Graham who are ineligible for the NDIS or My Aged Care are falling through the gaps. Those with chronic health conditions not covered by the NDIS are required to wait until they are 65 years old in order to qualify for My Aged Care support. This can mean decades of living without sufficient support or funding.

It was strongly expressed to me by my community that this general lack of support is further exacerbated by funding and program structures which serve to disadvantage rural South Australians.

It is simply not right that one should miss out on crucial funding and support solely because they do not have a metropolitan postcode. This is an important issue and one which must be addressed to safeguard the quality of life for some of our community's most vulnerable people.

MALINAUSKAS LABOR GOVERNMENT

Mr COWDREY (Colton) (15:11): I rise today because there are some very serious questions emerging about this Malinauskas Labor government and where their priorities lie. It does not seem that fixing ramping even gets a mention from the Premier anymore, and the cost-of-living crisis engulfing South Australia seems to have taken a back seat to rubbing shoulders with sports stars, influencers and celebrities. Let's lay some facts on the table about what the Premier and the Treasurer have presided over to date.

Unemployment: currently 4 per cent, equal second worst in the nation. Even more troubling, South Australia has held the unenviable title of having the worst or second worst unemployment rate in the nation for every month but one since this Labor government was elected.

The cash rate: in March 2022 the cash rate sat at 0.1 per cent. Now, after multiple rounds of cash rate increases, the official rate sits at 3.35 per cent. What does that mean for the average South Australian mortgage? Families need to find nearly \$1,000 extra a month just to service their existing loan and keep a roof over their head.

Inflation: well, we are leading the nation in something. Unfortunately, this is not something that makes the average South Australian smile, though. December 2021 to December 2022, 8.6 per cent, the highest annual rate of inflation in the nation. I do not need to tell any South Australian that we are paying more for nearly everything.

But let's look more closely at some of the ABS data, again December to December numbers. You wake up in the morning, you turn the lights on, electricity up 14½ per cent. You go and put some petrol in the car, fuel up 15.6 per cent. You grab a loaf of bread for toast in the morning, up 12.8 per cent; and milk for your coffee, up 18 per cent. You send the kids to school with a couple of pieces of fruit, fruit and veg up 9.3 per cent. You need to replace your microwave, household appliances up 11.4 per cent.

All of this is happening in concert with a housing affordability crisis. The HomeBuilder scheme, implemented during the peak of the COVID pandemic to stimulate the housing industry, was a successful scheme that attracted over 14,000 applicants in South Australia.

The opposition learned recently that a potentially large number of applicants in the order of 1,200 are likely to miss out on the grant, making their home ownership opportunities precarious because their homes are not going to be finished in time through no fault of their own due to supply and labour shortages. Does this Treasurer pick up the phone? 'Hello Jim—member for Lee, Mr Mullighan.' 'Who's that?' No. All the opposition are saying is that the guidelines for this scheme have been changed before. We are asking the Treasurer to pick up the phone, talk to Jim Chalmers and make a request on behalf of these 1,200 people in South Australia that the deadline for completion be extended. This is a simple thing.

National partnership arrangements get changed very frequently. It is within the Treasurer's power to pick up the phone, talk to the federal Treasurer and do something about this. No. Instead of that, we get a treasurer who refuses to even make a call or to stand up for South Australians. We get a treasurer who calls into radio to defend his extravagant trip to New York, most likely costing in excess of \$78,000. As his CE said, 'The bills are still coming in.' His accommodation was The Marmara Park Avenue hotel in New York, with its wellness centre, curated art collection and Turkish bath, while South Australians are worried about turning on the tap because of the potential increases in water costs under this Treasurer.

We on this side of the house can see why South Australians are becoming increasingly frustrated with this Malinauskas government because they are out of touch, they are arrogant and, quite frankly, after not even 12 months it is clear that they have the wrong priorities.

KELLY, MRS M.H.

The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL (Mawson) (15:16): I rise today to pay tribute to a wonderful local woman, Marjorie Kelly, who unfortunately died on Sunday night. She was just 32 days short of her 100th birthday. I know that her son Doug, his wife, Julie, and their daughters Georgia and Megan were very much looking forward to that big 100th birthday celebration next month, as were many of us in the town of McLaren Vale.

Marjorie was a fantastic woman. She was part of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force in World War II, after she moved to Canberra to work in Treasury. She was a big fan of John Curtin and Ben Chifley, and a lifelong Labor supporter—a wonderful woman who was very much respected, obviously, by her family and by everyone in our local area. My one big regret is that on Remembrance Day last year, when I saw Doug wheel Marjorie into the memorial (I was over in the official part) I thought I must say g'day because I knew her 100th birthday was coming up in a few months' time, but someone spoke to me at the end—it was a pretty hot day—and Doug and Marjorie had gone by the time I went over to say g'day.

To Doug, Julie, Megan and Georgia, please accept my condolences. I spoke to Doug yesterday. He said that, because so many family live interstate, they are going to hold off on having the funeral until Marjorie's birthday: she was very pragmatic and she would not have wanted everyone having to change their flights and incur added costs, so they will wait until March to have a celebration of Marjorie's life. We wish the Kelly family all the very best over the days and weeks leading up to that time.

Just before Christmas, we lost another great person, Francis d'Arenberg Osborn, better known as d'Arry Osborn. He died just a few days short of his 96th birthday. This would have been his 80th vintage. D'Arry was third generation on the vineyards at McLaren Vale and someone who worked with other families right from those early days in the establishment of McLaren Vale and in the growth of McLaren Vale. He moved the business that he took over in 1959 from a bulk wine maker to a maker of great dry reds, which were sold largely in flagons and then later in bottles.

In 1969, he won the Jimmy Watson trophy, and 1959 was when he came up with the red stripe. Anyone who knows the d'Arenberg label will know the famous red stripe. He travelled the world. He was relentless in getting on planes, going around the world and selling into I think about 80 countries in the end. I remember in 2006 I was in Moscow, and I went to a restaurant that did not have an English version of their menu, but on their wine list they had d'Arenberg wine. It just showed the reach that d'Arry had and the lengths that he went to.

To his son, Chester, and Chester's three daughters and to d'Arry's daughter, Jacki, again we offer our condolences for someone who did so much not just for his own business, which is a global brand, but for McLaren Vale as well. Right back to the years of Don Dunstan, d'Arry was fighting to preserve the agricultural lands around McLaren Vale, and of course we finally achieved that in 2013.

I worked with d'Arry, not that he ever voted Labor in his life. He was always proud to say, 'Young fella, you are doing a really good job, but I just can't vote Labor.' I said, 'I don't need your vote, d'Arry. I just love the fact that you have so much wisdom, and I appreciate what it is you have learned and that you have passed that on to others like me.' Whenever we had a meeting about the character preservation of McLaren Vale, d'Arry was always sitting front and centre, usually with Alec Johnson on one side and a few of the other established families, like the Kays, on the other side. Preserving the agricultural landscape of McLaren Vale was always really important to d'Arry Osborn.

Vale, d'Arry, and we will miss you.

WADE, THE HON. S.G.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER (Morialta—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (15:21): I would like to take the opportunity to reflect on a couple of issues. The Leader of the Opposition has just reflected on the career of the Hon. Stephen Wade, who served this parliament with distinction and our state with tenacity, hard work, courage and compassion throughout his entire parliamentary career. While Stephen may well have other professional things that he does in the years ahead, his service to this parliament has come to an end.

Stephen is a modest man. He perhaps would be in two minds about the fact that members of the leadership team of the Liberal Party are taking this opportunity today to reflect in their grieves on his hard work and his tremendous career. Stephen would not seek that sort of reflection as a modest person, but he certainly merits it. His service to the people of South Australia during the period of COVID will be remembered not just kindly by the history books but with extraordinary gratitude by the hundreds of thousands, more than a million, South Australians.

As has often been reflected upon, where would anybody in this state have preferred to be than South Australia, if forced to be anywhere, between January 2020 and the end of 2022? I submit: absolutely nowhere else. This was the best place in the world to be, and Stephen Wade's work as health minister was second to none, chairing the health ministers in the ministerial council and working closely with Nicola Spurrier, Grant Stevens and Premier Marshall to ensure that we had the best response of any jurisdiction in the world bar none.

That work was just the most significant and last element of his work as health minister. There was his work to develop suicide prevention programs and wellbeing and preventative health measures and to invest in things that were needed in South Australia after the disaster of Transforming Health: more than a billion dollars in hospital infrastructure upgrades; expansions to our emergency departments across metropolitan Adelaide; improvements, in the hundreds of millions of dollars, across Country Health in South Australia; and an increase in the base health budget to \$7 billion.

That investment was significant for the wellbeing and the health of South Australians. Stephen Wade fought to ensure that the things that mattered were done during his time as Minister for Health. One of the most iconic achievements that Stephen Wade undertook as minister was of course to revitalise the Repat, a hospital that was closed by the Premier, Peter Malinauskas, when he was Minister for Health and was re-enlivened as a health precinct, serving the people of South Australia under Stephen Wade, to Stephen's credit.

On a personal level, I have been friends with Stephen for more than 20 years. We served on the Liberal Party's executive together. He became a life member of the Young Liberals during my period in the Young Liberals, although his time was earlier.

But certainly on the state executive he was constantly supported by the party's state council who saw in Stephen a faithful servant of the party, a dedicated servant of the people of South Australia and someone who, along with his outstanding and wonderful wife, Tracey, will be able to be proud of the service he provided as health minister and as a member of the Legislative Council.

In the moments left, I would like to reflect on another matter. All parents across South Australia understand the critical importance of playgrounds to their family's wellbeing, to their children's welfare and indeed sometimes you need that circuit breaker at home to get the kids in a better mood, to keep them active in a positive way that does not involve disagreeing, so it is with great pride that in my local community in the Morialta area we reflect on three significant upgrades that have made access to these family amenities and facilities so much better.

At Thorndon Park, the Campbelltown City Council, along with the state government in one of the COVID stimulus grants matched fifty-fifty, has developed a superplayground at Thorndon Park, which is absolutely tremendous. This week—it has been open for several weeks and that has been great—the crowning achievement, the megaslide, is finally open for everyone to enjoy. I know my kids cannot wait. I am sure many others in the community cannot as well.

More than that, I also commend the City of Burnside for the work they have undertaken at Penfold Park. The new playground is nearly realised in its full development and it is looking fantastic. The kids have loved that one too. I want to commend Councillor Henry Davis; when he was on the Burnside council it was a project he really pushed. But I also commend all the staff at Burnside council and the project contractors who did a great job.

Finally, at Morialta Conservation Park, the Mukanthi playground area has had a \$1 million investment in the new car park. Car parks may not be sexy but they are so important, and at Morialta that car park has ensured that dust has been reduced, that people can access the playground when

needed, and that investment by David Speirs when he was environment minister is now bearing great dividends for our community.

Parliamentary Procedure

VISITORS

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Brown): The Chair acknowledges the attendance today of Mr Andrew Lamb from the Local Government Association.

Grievance Debate

LIGHTSVIEW

The Hon. A. MICHAELS (Enfield—Minister for Small and Family Business, Minister for Consumer and Business Affairs, Minister for Arts) (15:26): Just before I commence, I also want to acknowledge the Hon. Stephen Wade in the other place and thank him for his years of service, not the least of which was being health minister during a COVID pandemic. I know his work ethic during that period of time will stand him in good stead going forward and I want to thank him for his public service.

When I was first elected as the member for Enfield in 2019, one of the issues that kept coming up again and again was the issue of public transport in Lightsview, in particular the frequency of the local bus service for some 6,000 residents in that area. Lightsview is a relatively recent development. The concept was to have a modern cosmopolitan suburb close to the city with easy public transport access which in turn was to reduce the need for car ownership in the area, which was a great idea if we had adequate public transport in the area; and that is the issue that kept being raised with me and has been for the last three years.

Bus is the only option for people of Lightsview and there are only a few routes. The O-Bahn is the preferred route into the city but getting to the Klemzig interchange is the hardest part. The thing that shocked me when I first went in was the infrequency of the service. I had university students saying that if they missed the morning 206, they were not getting into town for university. They were forced to either walk to Hampstead Road, and if you know the area it is quite a walk. Maybe uni kids could do it but for seniors and people with disability that is asking too much.

In the last three years of my being the member for Enfield, and before that, we had a 206 bus route that only operated between 7am and 9.30am, with nothing during the day, and then 3.30pm until 7pm—again, nothing at night. We had no services on the weekends and we had no services on public holidays, which I found extraordinary.

Of course, we were not in government at that time in 2019, so I wrote to the transport minister, Stephan Knoll. I let him know that the public transport system through Lightsview did not meet the needs of that growing population. I suggested a few ways for services to be improved, and one of those options was revising the timetable to have the 206 bus route run throughout the day and on weekends and nights. I made suggestions about reliability of services, because I did get some feedback that even the buses that were running were not running on time or were being completely missed. There was a suggestion of an express service to the Klemzig Interchange as well.

I did not get very far at that point in time, so in 2020 I conducted a survey of the residents of Lightsview to see what it was they really wanted, and the overwhelming response was about the frequency of the bus services: that having them operate during the day and on weekends was critical.

I wrote again to then Minister Knoll, who initially did actually commit to the Go Zone in Lightsview but only as part of broader public transport reforms, which meant something like 1,000 bus stops being cut throughout metropolitan Adelaide. Of course that was scrapped, which meant that the Lightsview Go Zone was also scrapped as part of that.

I did not give up, and in December 2021 I started a petition called 'Demand Better Bus Services', which was signed by more than 700 people in my local area. I took up the cause again with the transport minister at that time, Minister Wingard, who proved to be not even as helpful as Minister Knoll. Unfortunately, the Marshall Liberal government refused to take action on Lightsview.

Given that I had campaigned on this issue for the past three years up until the last state election as a member of the opposition, I put it up as an election commitment, and I am very pleased that the then shadow transport minister, the member for West Torrens, was very supportive of this initiative. We made it an election commitment and we have been working on it ever since we got into government.

I am very pleased that on the weekend I was able to have two street-corner meetings and announce to my local residents that the Lightsview Go Zone was due to commence in July 2023. In a few months we will have public transport through Lightsview during the day, on weekends and at nights—which people are very happy about. I want to thank the Minister for Transport for getting that done.

Bills

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (CASUAL VACANCIES) AMENDMENT BILL

Standing Orders Suspension

The Hon. G.G. BROCK (Stuart—Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Roads, Minister for Veterans Affairs) (15:32): I move:

That standing and sessional orders be so far suspended as to enable the introduction of a bill without notice and passage through all stages without delay.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Brown): An absolute majority of members not being present, ring the bells.

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

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER (Morialta—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (15:34): The opposition supports the motion.

Motion carried.

Introduction and First Reading

The Hon. G.G. BROCK (Stuart—Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Roads, Minister for Veterans Affairs) (15:34): Obtained leave and introduced a bill for an act to amend the Local Government Act 1999. Read a first time.

Second Reading

The Hon. G.G. BROCK (Stuart—Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Roads, Minister for Veterans Affairs) (15:35): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Local Government (Casual Vacancies) Amendment Bill 2023 will amend the Local Government Act 1999, to amend section 54 of the Local Government Act, to retrospectively restore to office those council members whose position had become vacant due to their failure to submit their campaign donations returns on time.

Before I further explain the effect of this bill, I would like to state my disappointment that it is necessary at all. As I noted in my ministerial statement on 9 February, it is the responsibility of all members to make sure that they lodge their returns within the time frame.

I note that there have been numerous public references to new requirements, and I am advised that there were two changes to these requirements for the 2022 periodic elections that were made through the Statutes Amendment (Local Government Review) Act 2021.

The first was to require all candidates to lodge an additional return shortly after nominations had closed and before voting had begun so that voters could see which candidates had received donations and, if they had, from whom. This was strongly supported at the time as this information can be critical to voters' decisions about who they wish to vote for.

The second change was to require all candidates to lodge their returns with the Electoral Commissioner rather than with a chief executive officer of the relevant council. I am also advised that

this change was requested by the local government sector through the reform work that led up to the 2021 amendment act, and was also supported by the Local Government Association. The change reflected a view across local government that all aspects of council elections should be managed by the Electoral Commissioner as an independent body, such as is the case for state elections. I am also advised that other aspects of campaign donations returns remain unchanged through the amendment act.

In particular, the trigger within the Local Government Act that has caused the vacancies that have necessitated this bill has been in place for the life of the act—more than 20 years. However, before the 2022 periodic elections, I understand that this clause had never been triggered before—that there had been 100 per cent compliance across 68 councils for six periodic and many supplementary elections.

I am not going to speculate on the reasons for the failure of the 45 members whose positions were made vacant to lodge their returns in time. Many have made applications to the South Australian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (SACAT) for restoration to office, which SACAT may do if it is satisfied that the failure was due to circumstances beyond a member's control. The reasons put forward by members may therefore be considered in this context. However, my strong view is that it is not acceptable that their communities and ratepayers may have to bear the trouble and the cost of replacing a large number of council member positions.

To prevent this, the bill proposes to amend section 54 of the Local Government Act to retrospectively effectively 'disapply' the provisions that automatically make a member's position vacant when they have not lodged a return within one month of the statutory deadline for doing so (which is 30 days after the conclusion of the election) by deeming the vacancies to have not occurred. To prevent any confusion that may result from a retrospective disapplication of the vacancy of council member positions, the bill also makes other amendments to the Local Government Act to ensure that acts and decisions by these members and their councils are not invalid due to the change.

The bill also clarifies that the 45 members in question should receive their allowances and other entitlements as they were entitled to over this period. In recognition of the importance of lodging campaign donations returns, the bill also requires members to lodge their returns within 10 days of the commencement of these amendments, if they have not done so already, or their positions will become vacant.

I note there is a tendency to describe this requirement to lodge returns as 'administrative', implying that it is simply a piece of red tape that council members must deal with. In fact, making information about campaign donations known and accessible is critical for transparency, accountability and ensuring trust in our elected member bodies. It is just as important for members to transparently declare that they did not receive any gifts, if they did not. Simply not completing a return on this basis does not provide certainty to council members' constituents that this has been the case.

Therefore, the bill makes clear that returns must still be lodged. It also does not affect the provisions within the Local Government (Elections) Act 1999 that provide that candidates in the election who did not return their campaign donations return may be liable for a \$10,000 penalty. Of course, it will be open to the Electoral Commissioner to decide whether to pursue this course of action.

In closing, I emphasise once again that I am introducing this bill to manage an unacceptable situation. I agree with the Local Government Association, whose president, Mayor Dean Johnson, wrote to me on 14 February to request a legislative solution to this particular problem, that it should be addressed now, in the best interests of councils and their communities. I agree with the LGA president, Mayor Dean Johnson, when he says:

While the LGA accepts that individual elected officials bear personal responsibility for complying with their campaign reporting obligations, it appears the cost and consequence of not submitting paperwork on time is utterly unreasonable.

I will also be looking at all measures to ensure that this situation is never repeated, as part of a review of local government elections that will be underway as soon as the current election processes are complete. This has never happened in the history of the Local Government (Elections) Act 1999 until

the previous changes were made to this process. Well, for the benefit of our communities, I am happy to offer a solution. I commend the bill to members and seek leave to have the explanation of clauses inserted in *Hansard* without my reading it.

Explanation of Clauses

Part 1—Preliminary

1—Short title

The short title is the *Local Government (Casual Vacancies) Amendment Act 2023*.

Part 2—Amendment of *Local Government Act 1999*

2—Amendment of section 54—Casual vacancies

Section 54 of the *Local Government Act 1999* is amended so that the office of a defaulting member will be taken not to be, and never to have been, vacant as a result of the failure by the defaulting member to submit a prescribed return before the expiration of 1 month from the end of the relevant period for the member.

The terms *defaulting member*, *defaulting period*, *prescribed return* and *relevant period for a member* are defined.

In connection with the above, it is provided in the measure that—

- the member's performance or discharge of official functions or duties during the defaulting period is not invalid or unlawful by reason only of the failure referred to above; and
- no allowance, expense or other entitlement paid or payable to a defaulting member in respect of their office during the defaulting period is to be recovered or withheld by reason only of that failure.

A defaulting member must submit their prescribed return (unless the member submitted it during the defaulting period) within 10 business days after the day on which the measure commences. If they fail to do so, their office becomes vacant.

It is provided that the operation of Part 14 of the *Local Government (Elections) Act 1999* is not affected by the measure and no act or proceeding of a council is invalid by reason only of the operation of subsection (1a) (as proposed to be inserted by the measure).

Other amendments are technical or consequential.

Mr TELFER (Flinders) (15:41): I rise as the lead speaker for the opposition on the Local Government (Casual Vacancies) Amendment Bill and indicate the support of the opposition for this bill. It has been a pretty eventful week and a half for local government here in South Australia. There has been a lot of concern, a lot of stress, a lot of uncertainty that has been caused through this scenario.

Last sitting week, we heard the local government minister stand up and give notice that a significant number of council members had failed to lodge their campaign returns to the Electoral Commission of South Australia, and their positions as members on their council are likely to become vacant. We heard about, the night before, the minister meeting with the Electoral Commissioner for the first time since the local government elections, when he informed the minister of this issue with local government. Seemingly, that was some 3 to 3½ weeks after these people had actually lost their positions.

There was a statement made in this place that the window of one month for these people to put their requests into SACAT for their appeal to be heard was closing. That window says a month, but 3½ weeks after, it was the first time that we had heard about this. It was the first time that the people who are caught up in this chaos had heard about it, 3½ weeks afterwards. Some of these people only had a couple of business days, firstly, to get their head around the issue and, secondly, to get their appeal into SACAT.

As I said, a lot of stress, a lot of uncertainty was caused. I myself fielded an incredible number of phone calls, text messages and emails from elected members who had lost their positions—elected members who were uncertain whether they were caught up in this. Although the statement was made on the Thursday here in this place, a lot of those people, including CEOs, did not actually find out until the next day. Some of the members caught up in it did not actually find out until Saturday. Some of them had to have their appeals in to SACAT by the Monday. You can see that these scenarios, just from what I have set out so far, from my perspective, are unacceptable.

It is interesting the minister at the time used words like 'disappointing' and 'deeply disappointing', I think, and 'outrageous' to describe this situation, and highlighted his perspective that the blame was to sit at the feet of those individual council members. Indeed, I agree that some of the blame is obviously with these individual members because a significant number of them had managed to get their declarations in on time, but the number of 46 at the time, or 45 which it seems to have developed since, is too big a number for that blame to be sheeted purely at the feet of those individuals.

The stories that I heard from all across the state were from a variety of people, even some of those who were successful in getting their paperwork in on time. Some of these people got their paperwork in. They tried the online portal for a number of days unsuccessfully and ended up having to ring ECSA, and if you got the right person there they said, 'Well, email it in.' Some people were texting it in and some people were hand-delivering it. Some people put it in the mail before the cut-off date and were then informed by the Electoral Commission that, because they had not received it in time, that return was late and they had lost their positions.

There are so many unanswered questions through this process, and as I have mentioned in this place, in the media, publicly and to people who have been coming to me with concerns, we need to have answers to these questions.

What involvement did the minister have when we were getting to this point? What conversations had the minister had with the Electoral Commissioner? The question I asked in this place was answered with, 'Well, by legislation I wasn't allowed to talk to the Electoral Commissioner.' I have been looking through the Local Government Act and the Local Government (Elections) Act and I do not see anywhere that the minister was precluded from getting an update from ECSA on any concerns around the local government elections.

In the title of the role of local government minister, you can see that his core function is local government. The core aspect of local government is local government elections. In the two-month period that followed the local government elections, was there even just a conversation with the Electoral Commissioner to say, 'What's going on? What's the latest? Can I have an update?' This is after the elections have actually been completed. It confounds me that this conversation wasn't had between the minister and the Electoral Commissioner.

The question still outstanding for me is: how many complaints had the Electoral Commission had about the online portal, about the issues that people had with lodging their paperwork? I am hearing stories about people having issues with lodging their paperwork, not just after the election but their nominations before, people who struggled to actually get their nomination forms in and, even then, had to email it rather than use the portal.

Even since this issue with the online portal has come to a head and some of the supplementary elections that are being run at the moment, there are still issues with the online portal. I am just amazed that there has not been that recognition from those who have responsibility for local government and local government elections, that they have not recognised that there are issues here that need to be sorted. How many phone calls did the Electoral Commission get from candidates who were so frustrated with trying to upload their documents?

The communication itself which has come to elected members has been sporadic and uncertain. The minister highlighted that there were some 12 pieces of communication—that is the number that he quoted here—that the Electoral Commissioner told him were sent to elected members, but of course that included pre-election material, flyers that they got with the big pile of paperwork, and the reference was made here that even registered mail was sent to candidates. True, registered mail was sent to candidates.

Can I run you through the timelines for some of this communication? I hope that through this process you can see why there is such frustration in local government at the moment. The dates are a little bit uncertain because even the information that was coming to candidates around when their applications were due is inconsistent.

Within the legislation there is a line that says that if you have an election which is uncontested—so you are elected unopposed—your election result is declared on the weekday before

the second Saturday. I have been reading through the Local Government Act and the Local Government (Elections) Act quite a lot over the last week and a half. The weekday before the second Saturday—from my calculations that would be around about 12 December. People had a 30-day period from that day to get their forms in, and once it was past that they had a month. So they had to have their forms in between 12 November and 12 December. A month from that is 12 January.

The letter that the Electoral Commission sent to people—the registered mail that is being relied on as a real source of truth so that everyone knows exactly what their requirements are—is dated 12 January, the very day that a number of these members actually lost their positions. You can see why there is frustration. Now, that is the day the letter is dated. I do not know about you, but I am sure that as reliable as Australia Post is, it is not going to get in people's hands on 12 December. A number of the people who have been contacting me have said, 'It didn't actually hit my letterbox until the 18th or the 19th.' These people were getting notified that they had to get their letters in by a certain date and that date had already passed. That is why there is so much stress and so much uncertainty.

The dates that have been given to people have been inconsistent as well. On one hand, you have people who have been elected unopposed. The date of their declaration starting is, as I have said, that weekday before the second Saturday. The declaration for those who had a contested election was a date after that. However, the advice that had come from the Electoral Commission was the same advice for those who were elected unopposed as it was for those who were elected through a contested election. The advice that was sent in that registered letter that was dated 12 January actually said, 'You've got until 19 January to get your form in.'

I am starting to unpack just a little bit of the anguish that I have been hearing from elected members after the minister made his statement in this place on the last Thursday in the last sitting week—the anguish, the stress, the uncertainty that people have. There are people who have been putting their forms in and the Electoral Commissioner has been saying, 'Yes, this form is lodged appropriately' but then they are caught up in this chaos.

Where is the minister in all of this? This is the bit that I still cannot get my head around. How can it be nearly two months after these people had overdue forms that the minister is finding out? Where is that communication from the Electoral Commissioner?

There is an obligation on the Electoral Commission. As soon as a form is overdue (that date being around 12 December) there is a legislative obligation—it is in the legislation—on the returning officer for local government elections to inform these people 'as soon as practicable' that their forms are overdue and they only have a month to get them in.

Now, if you are following along, I would have thought that 'as soon as practicable' would be the day that they became overdue, the day after perhaps, perhaps that week. Give it a little bit of leeway. They would have seen this coming. It was a month. It was a month after these people had an overdue form that the letter was dated to let them know their forms were overdue. That month was the period of time that they had before they had lost their positions.

Following on from that, they had lost their positions and they had a month to put their request in to SACAT for a hearing, for an appeal. But we only publicly found out about this whole chaotic event 3½ weeks after that period. There are so many unanswered questions. There is so much information that has been made available to me as a shadow minister by concerned, stressed elected members that we do not have answers for.

This whole process brings me no joy at all. I have so many friends and colleagues in local government who have gone through so much uncertainty and so much stress because of this scenario, and we need there to be accountability. We need to know in the cold, hard light of day what issues were there with the process, what issues were there with communication, where did the accountability sit, how are we going to rectify these issues, and are those who are responsible going to be held accountable?

This legislated obligation to let people know failed the very people who were caught up in this. As I said, it brings me no joy. It brings me no joy to ask these hard questions of the local government minister and of the Attorney-General, who are responsible for the process. The local

government minister is responsible for local government. The Attorney-General is responsible to the Electoral Commission. When are we going to get these answers? This is why I think the only way for us to truly be certain about this whole process and learn from the mistakes that were made is for us to have an independent investigation.

I do welcome this small but important piece of legislation, and I have been calling both publicly in this place and in the media—sorry, not on the phone—I have been making calls publicly for this to be sorted, because the vast majority of people who are caught up in this, unfortunately, are regional people: people with pretty poor internet, people with pretty delayed Australia Post, people who are genuine in their need and their want to be serving their community. Many people have had to fork out thousands of dollars for legal advice to put their appeals into SACAT.

A lot of these regional councillors—and I used to be one of them—do not get paid a lot in their allowance. The councils at tier 5 level, which a lot of our smaller regional councils are, their elected members are paid \$6,000 or \$7,000 to cover a bit of their costs for a year. It is not much. I know that it always used to cost me personally and my business a lot more than the dollars that I used to get back, and we have seen a situation where these people are putting thousands of dollars into legal advice as far as the SACAT process goes.

As I said, I welcome this legislation. It is something that I have been hoping would come because, in the end, we have 45 community representatives in councils who have been hanging in the wind for the last week and a half, and the uncertainty that that has created in their communities, from my perspective, is unacceptable.

The answers to the questions that I am looking for about the process still remain unanswered. I hope that once this legislation goes through with the support of the government and the opposition, once these community representatives are appointed back into their positions, once the dust has settled, we can have a fulsome look at how we got to the point of 45 councillors losing their positions and the heartache that that caused.

The process has failed. I do not think the legislation has been the failing point. It has been well pointed out by media and many in this place that the period of time put in place in the legislation for reporting is not insignificant. I think it is the communication to the members who have been caught up in this that needs a good look. I really encourage the minister that, once we have stopped talking about it in this place, we have an independent investigation so that we know where these mistakes are being made, where these processes have failed, and how we have reached the point where we are having to consider retrospective legislation.

This is not good lawmaking at all. This is retrospective. In any other scenario, I think as an opposition, we would be questioning the validity of making rules to try to fix a problem that has already happened. But for the impact that it has had on these 36 communities and these 45 councillors, on behalf of the opposition, I put forth my support. I look forward to this going through both houses. I trust that, in the next sitting week, when it is considered in the other place, the 45 members who have been put out of their representative bodies on their councils can be reinstated and their communities can have more certainty.

Ms SAVVAS (Newland) (16:00): Today, I wish to also speak to the Local Government (Casual Vacancies) Amendment Bill. This bill is incredibly important, as is its expedience, and will deal with the situation that has arisen where vacancies have been created for 45 council member positions due to those members' failure to lodge their campaign donation returns within the statutory deadline.

The bill proposes to amend section 54 of the act, to retrospectively disapply those provisions that automatically make the members' positions vacant. That is in the case when they have not lodged a return within one month of the statutory deadline for doing so by deeming those vacancies to not have occurred. We adhere to a change in process, and that is the process outlined by part 14 of the Local Government (Elections) Act, which lays out requirements for the management of campaign donations. This includes requirements for all candidates to furnish returns to the returning officer, being ECSA.

There are two times during the candidacy or post the candidacy when those candidates must furnish those returns for a periodic election: firstly, within 21 days of close of nominations, to capture information so far as is possible before voting starts—a very important step in terms of transparency for voters before they go to the ballot box or the ballot envelope, as the case may be. I do think it is incredibly important to note here that a number of councillors who do not meet the requirements of the process did, in fact, provide this first return.

The act also requires a second return often referred to as 'campaign donation 2', which must be furnished within 30 days after the conclusion of the election. For the purposes of complete and transparent disclosure, candidates must furnish the return even if they have not received any gifts. Personally, I did not receive any gifts in my own council campaign but was required to provide returns at different times of my tenure to provide transparency to the constituency. I do strongly believe that that is transparency that our constituencies are owed.

This bill is not here in any way to modify the requirement to provide disclosure: it is here to benefit communities and to ensure the sanctity of the democratic process. It is to benefit those people who would have been unfairly sent to the ballot box again at the cost of the taxpayer and/or ratepayer. It is not here to challenge, as suggested by the member for Flinders, whether individuals received their form on time or whether there were issues with the portal, and such. This is a bill to support community outcomes. Our minister is actively introducing a bill to fix the mess left to us by the former government, so I do actually agree with the fact that it perhaps is retrospective in order to fix the changes to the Local Government Act that allowed for this mess to be created in the first place.

This will provide a solution that would have otherwise had an unacceptable impact on community members through additional costs that may occur through supplementary elections or delays in important council business. In my own community, the City of Tea Tree Gully, where I was formerly a councillor, some residents have already been sent to the ballot box four times in the past 18 months, and I think it is important to respect the decisions that have been made in that time. For me, that is the importance of this bill. It is important to protect our community members, and to ensure that that democratic will is respected without the huge cost associated with supplementary elections.

For me, it is also important to get back to business. I do believe in strong councils, and I believe in getting real outcomes for our communities. The process of a supplementary election of course interferes with that, as does the incredibly timely and costly process of applying to SACAT for a result. As a result of that process, should it have been going ahead, our local outcomes are interfered with. I also do not wish those costs on duly elected councillors, and I think it is important to also consider those councillors who have been through this process and at times faced some quite difficult media scrutiny as well as community scrutiny due to this process that has occurred.

It is also very important to note that this bill does not remove the obligation for all candidates to manage their campaign donations and to furnish their returns so that communities can see what they have received. We do know that forthright and adequate donation disclosure is a fundamental component of democracy and that constituents deserve transparency and accountability when it comes to donation returns. We have to ensure that element is protected and will be respected without the need for exorbitant cost to the community. I am very happy to be commending the bill today.

Mr ELLIS (Narungga) (16:05): I rise to congratulate this parliament for pursuing this course of action and congratulate the minister for bringing this bill to the house and the expediency with which he hopes to pass it. I have to say, without knowing all the details of all the indiscretions, I have talked to a couple of the councillors within my electorate, and it does feel to me as though evicting them from their roles on council is like cracking a walnut with a sledgehammer.

It seems like quite a hefty penalty, at least for the indiscretions I am aware of, for what seem like relatively minor indiscretions. I congratulate the minister—and the parliament, it seems—for pursuing this course of action and providing a clean slate for those councillors who, at least in my part of the world, are only there to serve their community. They are putting their hands up not by any means to enrich themselves or advance any job prospects: they are purely there on behalf of their community because they want to see improvements made.

To provide punitive measures like this that might otherwise discourage people from putting their hands up in the future I think would be a step backwards. Enabling those people to take the

place that they earned by virtue of the support of their communities and to continue to advocate on behalf of their communities is a step in the right direction, so congratulations to the parliament.

It has already been touched on quite eloquently by the member for Flinders, but I do want to touch upon the stress that this has placed upon some of those candidates. I had the opportunity to talk to Richard Carruthers, who was successfully elected to the Yorke Peninsula Council and has been a stalwart of that council and certainly a number of communities in the council for quite some time, who was unfortunately caught up in this mess. I have to say that the stress that he has gone through as a result of being caught up in this has had quite an impact on him and his family.

As I said, I talked to him last night and asked his permission before bringing it up. He was extremely relieved to hear that this is the course of action that is being pursued. He has always done his best to put the community first and has achieved some significant things for those people he represents. The idea that he might be tarnished with this brush despite a relatively minor indiscretion was weighing quite heavily on his mind.

In addition to that, I do not think he would mind me saying that Richard had already gone out and secured the services of a lawyer at personal expense to himself, which is obviously money he will not get back but such was his determination to clear his name, continue to serve his community and continue to do what he has done for quite some time. I, for one, am relieved that Richard will be able to take his place on the council going forward and that Kristin Murdock will be able to take her place on the council going forward. I look forward to seeing what the YP Council can achieve in its upcoming term.

I want also to flag that I note the minister has put on the record that he intends to do a bit of a review of the Local Government Act going forward. I have received feedback from the community, particularly those people who put their hands up for council, on a couple of matters that I will foreshadow as being matters that I will bring up in the course of that review, the first of those being the fact that we do not have public nominations.

There do not appear to be any publicly disclosed nominations, so people in the community are not aware of how many people have put their hands up to serve on council. Again, I can only speak with any authority for my part of the world, but I think in my part of the world that had the effect of not empowering people to know whether help was needed. As I said, they do that to serve their community first and foremost. If they are not aware that their community needs serving, then they will be less likely to put their hand up.

For example, if there were a shortage of councillors, you might have people within the community feeling inclined to then support the council and put their hands up to make sure they had a full quota of members. I think that would be a beneficial thing, so I will be pursuing that and inquiring as to whether that ought to be changed as part of that review.

The other thing that was brought to my attention, which I believe I have talked about in this place before, was the fact that the Copper Coast Council did not have the requisite number of nominations. I cannot remember the number now. I think they had eight nominations for nine positions or 10 nominations for 11, or whatever it may have been and, despite that fact, despite the fact no election was held, they still received a bill from the Electoral Commission for the conducting of that election.

That, to me, does not seem to make sense. I know we have to spread the costs out in theory, but if no election was held it seems quite incongruous that you would get a bill for the conducting of an election. I will be investigating whether that ought to be changed, and if no election is held whether they ought to receive a bill, and I guess more broadly whether the Electoral Commission should be recovering costs at all.

One of the virtues of our system is that the Electoral Commission is independent and conducts its elections independently of any level of government. They already receive an allowance from the state government every year in the budget, so whether that money ought to be used and ought to be enough to conduct the elections that they are charged with conducting will be a matter that I will be pursuing as part of this review.

In conclusion, congratulations to the minister and the government and the entire parliament for the pursuit of this outcome. I think it is a worthy outcome for those people who have put their hand up, committed relatively minor indiscretions and who only want to serve their community. I look forward to seeing it pass through this house speedily.

Mr HUGHES (Giles) (16:10): I will not take long. I think it has all been said. This is a straightforward commonsense piece of legislation. As has been stated, it is retrospective in nature, which is usually not a good thing but in this case it is a way of addressing an immediate problem and it does so in a way that preserves the fundamental principle that underlines why people need to make this declaration. You do want openness and transparency and accountability when it comes to election processes.

I think it is incredibly important that, if people do receive gifts or donations, people need to know about that. In fact, I am a huge advocate of having fundamental changes to the Electoral Act, hopefully at a state level and a federal level, when it comes to donations. I think there is a lot of improvement that is needed. The Premier has flagged that we are going to see if we can bring about some change here in South Australia when it comes to state elections, which will be a very good thing if we can do that.

Like other people, I have spoken to some of the people caught up in this. I am not going to go into any of the detail. The minister has flagged that there will be a review, and I think that is an important step. That is something that does need to happen. It is good to see these people reinstated into their positions; after all, they were elected by their communities. For some councils it will save a significant amount of money that could be spent better on other things than re-contesting elections.

So it is good to see this legislation, it is good to see the bipartisan support and it was good to see the LGA advocate for a legislative solution to this problem. I hope a whole bunch of people out there can breathe a bit more easily now that this is going to get through both houses of parliament in a speedy fashion.

Ms THOMPSON (Davenport) (16:13): I rise to offer my support for the Local Government (Casual Vacancies) Amendment Bill. Today our government is moving a bill to step in to resolve a situation that never should have happened. As a former mayor and former member of the Local Government Association board, I have to say that quite frankly this is pretty embarrassing for the local government sector.

Whilst the vast majority of members did the right thing, it is extremely disappointing that 45 recently elected council members failed to lodge their campaign donation returns on time, which has put them at risk of losing their positions on council. It means that ratepayers could potentially need to foot the bill for multiple by-elections across the state, with the potential to cost hundreds of thousands of dollars.

We all know what this money could do for our local communities. I would love to see my council fix up the local skate park that young skater, Sid, has been lobbying for for far too long. I would love to see them finish the network of footpaths across my electorate. Tens of thousands of dollars would definitely be put to good use by our local sporting clubs. I know that the Happy Valley Vikings Netball Club could use an extra netball court, and the Seacombe Softball Club would love a new diamond.

Our government needs to step in to quickly resolve this matter with a solution that avoids significant disruption to the democratic process in the business of councils. This bill will protect ratepayers from the prospect of costly by-elections, and allow councils to get on with the business they were elected to do. The bill means council members will be granted 10 additional days to lodge their campaign donation returns and avoid the prospect of losing their elected position permanently.

Transparency in the electoral system is of utmost importance, and all requirements must still be adhered to. It is a basic requirement of the local government act that all candidates must complete returns that outline gifts they may have received during their campaigns. This was a requirement when I was on council, it was a requirement when the shadow minister for local government was on council, and it has been a requirement for more than 20 years.

It ensures that councils' constituents are aware of gifts their members have received and who has provided those to them. It is fundamental to the proper transparency and accountability of council members' decision-making. The process is not onerous, so it really is disappointing that so many elected members have not met this basic requirement.

Notwithstanding the efforts of the Electoral Commissioner to remind the councillors of their responsibilities, it is clear that the change to the Local Government Act in 2021 that required campaign donation returns to be provided to the Electoral Commissioner rather than the CEO of their respective council has resulted in this unfortunate situation. Prior to that process change this scenario had not occurred in previous elections, so it is fair to attribute some responsibility to this and not place all the blame on the individual councillors.

This bill provides a simple solution that would otherwise have an unacceptable impact on councils' communities. We are looking to resolve this issue in the best interests of councils and, most importantly, their communities, their ratepayers. The government is taking the necessary action to return members who were democratically elected to their communities in November 2022 to office, and it is very pleasing to hear our local government minister inform us that he will be considering longer term change as part of a review of all aspects of local government elections to prevent this situation occurring again.

It is an absolute privilege to serve as a member of a local council and, while I feel for some of those who have felt stress from the situation, the roles do come with significant responsibility. This bill does not in any way excuse the 45 members who failed to lodge their returns. It simply removes the burden that communities who elected these members would otherwise be carrying and ultimately paying to fix. Ratepayers should not have to bear the cost of these administration failures and, out of respect for the democratic process, this is the right thing to do.

I am looking forward to seeing our local councils move past this and return their focus to the great work they do for their communities every day. I commend this bill to the house.

The Hon. A. PICCOLO (Light) (16:17): I rise in support of this bill, and do so for three reasons. First, the bill seeks to ensure that those people who were elected at the local government elections in November last year are successful in their positions by having the retrospective provision in this bill.

That is important; wherever possible we need to maintain the integrity of our democratic processes, and the people in those communities have spoken through the ballot box. While no-one is affected in my main council area, there are people affected in one of the councils that is part of my electorate, although the elected member is not part of my electorate as such.

It is important that we maintain confidence in our council decision-making processes, and that is the second reason I support this bill. The bill makes it very clear that any decisions made by councils while these elected members may have been in default are not invalidated. This bill validates those decisions, and that is very important to remove any uncertainty. That is the second reason.

Thirdly, and also very importantly, what this bill does is reinforce the requirement to be transparent. The bill reinforces and makes it very clear that those 45 elected members who find themselves in this position still need to provide that information in a timely fashion. My understanding is that the bill gives them 10 days after this act is operational.

If I was one of those elected members I would make sure that my paperwork was up to scratch and straightforward and that it was not left to the last minute. I think that this bill is the best you can do in what is a relatively bad situation, and I commend both the minister and the government for taking this action.

A whole range of other things could be done, which could be very messy and have a great deal of uncertainty, and more importantly could be very costly to some communities, particularly some of those regional communities that have very small rate bases where elections and supplementary elections are quite expensive for them.

I think that this bill is the right way to go. Firstly, as I said, it reinstalls those members who were already duly elected. Perhaps some communities or some councils did not want those people

elected, but that is a different story. However, they were duly elected and there is nothing to suggest otherwise.

Secondly, it validates any existing decisions made by council, and thirdly the transparency required by the act itself is retained. For those three reasons, I support this bill and ask the house to do so.

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (16:20): I rise in support of the Local Government (Casual Vacancies) Amendment Bill 2023. Occasionally in this place we see sensibilities that are sensible for the state, and I commend the work of the shadow minister, the member for Flinders, in pursuing this issue to make sure that, in this place, we can right the wrongs, and some of these wrongs do not seem to be particularly an individual's fault to a degree.

If anyone has tried to access business portals, and that kind of thing, thinking that they have lodged a document—tax, for instance, an ABN—and then realise maybe a week or two later, 'Oh, hang on, that didn't work,' or someone gets hold of you, it is something that is easy to do.

I think that some of the complexities of the reporting certainly need to be ironed out into the future. We do not want to dissuade people from entering any form of public office. We know that the Electoral Commission had a busy year but its role is to run elections. That is its one role in South Australia. Yes, it ran a state election, a federal election and a local government election—one job.

Some of the time lines involved seem ridiculous—the time lines involved in who let who know on what had happened. Yes, we do want transparency, but it appears that there were some issues in reporting back to people in senior positions—for example, the minister—about what happened here.

Certainly the good people of this state who put their hands up for local government for not much reward, let me say, have the reward of looking after their communities, and sometimes very small communities, very small councils, that have low rate bases and that work very hard to get grants above their rate base to make sure that they can service those communities. I commend them all, whether they are from the smaller communities or the larger communities.

Just one, for example, is the Mid Murray Council, which has a very small rate base and which has overseen millions of dollars worth of work building levees during the flood crisis, and they just got on with it. They just got on with the job relying on the word from the state government that where the holes in the finances need to be filled they will be, and if they are not I will be following them up, but I am sure they will be.

In relation to this bill, it seems to me that there have been some very, very honest mistakes made. It seems quite a reporting process, where candidates for local government have to acknowledge whether they have received gifts or not when they are elected. Obviously, it does seem to be a flawed process. As the member for Narungga said, perhaps down the track there are some other things that need to be reviewed in relation to the Local Government Act.

In regard to this bill, I think it is timely. I think it saves hundreds of thousands of dollars for local governments, which is vital in these times of higher interest rates. It would take a lot of stress away from people who have lodged their claims with SACAT. Hopefully, everything will be resolved with the passing of this legislation, giving more time for these valued candidates.

I hope everyone gets through this well—the people who thought they had achieved positions—because it has had other effects on council. Some of the broader committees of council all of a sudden realised that the chairs of some of their other local government groupings could not be chair anymore because technically they were not elected, so we had to have people backfill those positions in a hurry, which was done. It just causes stresses all along the board.

I wish this legislation speedy passage. I wish everyone, and certainly the 45 or so people who have been directly affected, all the best. I hope that the right result will come because of this legislation passing through the parliament.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK (Stuart—Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Roads, Minister for Veterans Affairs) (16:26): I appreciate all the contributions from everybody. I

acknowledge the members for Flinders, Newland, Narungga, Giles, Davenport, Light and Hammond. I think this is a commonsense resolution going forward. Again, I have listened to all the comments and suggestions from everybody today. I will give you a guarantee I will take those on board. I certainly commend the bill to the house.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

The Hon. G.G. BROCK (Stuart—Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Roads, Minister for Veterans Affairs) (16:27): Thank you to everybody for their contributions. I look forward to the speedy passage of this bill through both houses so that we can get this sorted out and into the community, and local government can get on with what they do best: serving people. I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Bill read a third time and passed.

NATIONAL GAS (SOUTH AUSTRALIA) (EAST COAST GAS SYSTEM) AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 21 February 2023.)

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I draw your attention to the status of the house.

A quorum having been formed:

Mr PATTERSON (Morphett) (16:30): I am very thankful to be able to continue my remarks on the National Gas (South Australia) (East Coast Gas System) Amendment Bill, so if we pick up maybe a bit of summary first and then move on to where we were.

Just remember, this bill is around reforms coming from the Energy Ministers' Meeting held last August, and giving AEMO powers that it has not had before in the gas market, and that is a market that is primarily based on bilateral contracts between producers, retailers, infrastructure service providers, and larger users. These bilateral contracts have been extremely reliable, and proven to be that way in making sure that contracted positions have been met.

Many of the market participants do mitigate their major supply risk through contracts, and this bill here, as was said last time, intervenes into the gas market in quite a major way as well. Because of that, and the fact that it has been quite rushed; the consultation for this one has been very abridged—about four weeks compared to years quite often for other bills that we see on national energy laws, as an example.

There is the possibility there could be unintended consequences and certainly uncertainty coming into the market, which was not there before, which we do not want to see affecting investment into gas production and infrastructure in this country because that will have effects on not only Australia's energy security but, importantly for us here in this house, South Australia's energy security as well.

The challenges that the national gas market is facing is a lot around supply/demand balance, and that balance being in deficit in terms of supply; not enough supply for the demand we need here domestically. How can we unlock what is an abundant amount of natural gas in the east coast basins, and get that to work here, which will have the impact of providing plentiful gas that then brings the gas prices down of course. That not only flows into gas users at home but also industry uses gas for heating purposes, and also from the electricity market as well. It is really critical for our electricity market as well. That keeps prices down.

I will not labour the point on that. I just wanted to give a bit of a recap. In terms of this bill here, as I said, it had some key elements around function and rule making, around transparency, around signalling and directions powers, and that is a key area of concern for stakeholders, and also about cost recovery, and the compensation. Of course, when you make these directions, the impact

is that potentially contracts are being broken, there are opportunities lost, and costs that are involved as well, and so there will be compensation.

You cannot avoid the fact that how that eventually flows through is on to people's gas bills. At some level, it arrives there. It is not something that happens in isolation and that we are protected from as gas users. Whether you are industry or whether you are a householder, there are costs there. I think where I had been up to in my contribution was around the fact that this bill would allow AEMO to have additional cost-recovery flexibility in relation to their directions powers. They already do have the ability to recover costs, but there were some amendments in this bill to give them recovery flexibility in relation to any directions powers.

Of course, there is the legislation that we see with all of these energy laws that come through, and they are backed also by rules that are put in place. In this case, those rules are enabled by the minister here in South Australia to enact rules here. For those rules, usually the power for the Minister for Energy and Mining here in South Australia is the first tranche and then the rest are run through the AMC. But in this case with this bill it allows the Minister for Energy and Mining to make further rules for a maximum period of six months from commencement of the bill, subject to further consultation processes conducted by the Energy Ministers' Meeting.

The idea, it is been stated, is to enable the Minister for Energy and Mining here to make further changes to the rules if there are any issues arising in the first six months of the legislation coming into effect, and that the head of the power to give those rules will lapse after six months. But that also speaks to the fact that the consultation part of this process has been so small. There is the potential for unexpected, unintended consequences, and the fact that the minister can make broad changes six months after speaks to that as well. That may also be a cause for concern from stakeholders because of that, and hopefully in committee the minister will be able to give a bit of comfort to stakeholders from that point of view.

Part of the process involves reaching out to various stakeholders and, as I have said previously, a common criticism of the bill is that the consultation was incredibly short. Stakeholders had two weeks to analyse and form an opinion on the proposed reforms. It is worth saying that they acknowledge the rationale, at a bigger picture, of these new rules and functions and powers given to AEMO because of the possibilities of gas shortages in the winter of 2023. However, they are very concerned that there could be unintended consequences that arise from the application of these powers.

Another concern raised by stakeholders was the extent of the powers that AEMO will be given into the gas market, which at present is primarily a private market based on contracts. They are concerned that, yes, the issue at hand is the winter of 2023, but by giving this expansive power to AEMO over a longer term horizon, that is a way of giving them massive powers over and above the short term, so concerns were raised around that.

Some of the concerns of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission were with the policy measures. They stated:

The ACCC recognises the need for considered policy measures to address issues in the east coast gas market. However, we have material concerns with the breadth and unqualified nature of the proposed extension to AEMO's functions and powers.

So in saying that, they had concerns about not only the breadth of those proposed powers but also the lack of guidance on how those powers would be exercised, and the absence of methodology for and certainty of the costs of likely intervention and how the costs would be borne.

One of the things the ACCC suggested was limiting the new functions and powers to address immediate, shorter-term risks arising from unforeseen disruptions in gas supply, such as a gas processing plant having an outage. It is the ACCC's view that any more than that—so any more fundamental structural supply issues—should be developed through a more considered and robust rule and regulation process over a longer period which, again, speaks to what usually happens with national energy laws where there is a significant period of consultation that goes about this.

The basis of their concern is related to the cost of these measures which, as I said, would ultimately be borne by gas consumers, whether they are households struggling with cost of living in

all facets of their lives, whether it is interest rates going up, food going up, electricity prices going up, or if you are an industry where you have fixed costs and you are trying to make a business sustainable and have not factored price spikes into the business model as well.

The ACCC is concerned about the proposed breadth of the directions and trading power, given the distortionary effects and unintended consequences that these types of regulatory interventions can give rise to. Their view is that powers should be emergency powers only, going on to say:

Such a broad power able to be exercised in any circumstances creates significant uncertainty as to regulatory risk in the market, may impact investment incentives for entry and expansion in the market, particularly where the costs of such measures and how they will be calculated and borne is not clear. On additional cost recovery and compensation functions, there is a potential for significant costs to arise from the exercise of the new proposed functions and powers. These costs will ultimately be borne by gas buyers and consumers.

That is the feedback from the ACCC.

Other stakeholders, the Australian Pipelines and Gas Association, said they understood the need to extend powers to AEMO to act at times of crisis but that this reform does not deliver increased supply which, again, is something that I touched on earlier in my contribution: that the nature of these bills is looking to get involved in giving more powers to the regulatory bodies as opposed to the core issue which is a supply issue as well. The Australian Pipelines and Gas Association made the point that:

Great care needs to be taken in extending such powers that it does not further damage the investment environment. More investment in natural gas, and increasingly in renewable gas, is critical to addressing the fundamental issues in the East Coast gas market, high prices and a challenging market for supply of gas.

They went on to state their key points around these measures:

1. The power to direct is too broad.

They were also concerned that:

2. Care must be taken to ensure the extended powers do not undermine the reliability and quality of contract services.

The rationale around this being:

The ability for AEMO to issue directions that override these contracts between producers, retailers, infrastructure service providers and large users but instead direct gas to parties without contracted positions has implications for the reliability of contracts.

Whether it be an incentive for companies that previously they have contracted—and now they see that those could be broken so being uncontracted is not as much a risk as maybe it previously was. Another point they made is:

3. The importance of transparency and engagement and that should be recognised in the national gas law.

Again, their rationale is that: 'It is vital to the effective market function that participants: are aware of when the directions are being issued,' and, importantly, before these directions are being issued, that they 'are engaged to the greatest extent possible' as they are contemplating an issue so that they can have input, and that maybe a regulatory body that is not at the coalface might not see what a consequence of that action could be down the line, so making sure there is good consultation where possible.

Another point they made was around directions to infrastructure service providers. These directions must consider the title to the natural gas as well. The issue they raised was specific to infrastructure service providers because these infrastructure service providers do not typically own the gas that is being transported or stored in their assets.

A direction to an infrastructure service provider to deliver gas or make its facilities available without an equivalent order to the owners of the natural gas can certainly raise some issues, one being that the infrastructure service provider may be placed in the untenable position of deciding which contracts to break. Quite often, gas pipelines are not sending gas down just from one provider. They have multiple producers that it goes through. So they would have to decide which one to choose, which producer's gas gets redirected.

Customers of infrastructure service providers may not understand or follow the directions. They might ask, 'Why do I not receive the contracted gas that I have contracted?' Additionally, if following a direction requires curtailing some customers, an infrastructure service provider may inadvertently exacerbate the market issue leading to the direction. That goes back to making sure there is proper consultation before a direction to make sure there are no unintended consequences.

There was other feedback from stakeholders. Again, they made the point that an alternative to setting up a way for AEMO to intervene in the market is to increase the supply of gas in the east coast market, particularly in Victoria and New South Wales. This would alleviate the need to direct gas from Queensland to the south at times when there is a perceived shortage. That is again underpinning the fact that the real issue is around supply and demand. Another point made by stakeholders is that we should make sure we are not undermining investment because, by doing that, we are also undermining ongoing investment into increasing supply. Really, allowing that is what is going to underpin the future industry growth.

As I said, you can see the issues they have around supply. It is basic economics, that getting more gas into the east coast gas market is critical to keeping gas prices—and ultimately electricity prices—down for families and industry and business. As I said previously, according to the ACCC the domestic market requires more than 450 petajoules of new gas development in the upcoming future. More investment in natural gas and increasingly in renewable gas will be critical to addressing the fundamental shortage issues in the east coast gas market that ultimately lead to high prices and a challenging market for the supply of gas.

As has been said by stakeholders, this amendment bill is necessary to address winter. We have to be careful of this government's intervention in the gas market. We acknowledge that it is a major change, and it needs to be acknowledged that there is the potential to create unintended consequences. This uncertainty could certainly have an effect on investment into gas production and infrastructure at a time when investment is going to be crucial to Australia's and South Australia's energy security. With that, I conclude my remarks. As I have said in my contribution, I will look to flesh out some of those questions at the committee stage of this bill.

Mr FULBROOK (Playford) (16:48): I speak in support of the National Gas (South Australia) (East Coast Gas System) Amendment Bill. This bill is another in the series where the South Australian parliament has the task of fixing up the mess left by others in the energy sector. I am pleased to speak on this, just as I have spoken earlier on consumer data rights, sandboxing and efforts made to remove the cash grab by the previous Marshall government on electric vehicles.

Regretfully, our nation has suffered a lost decade in energy policy—a decade that, when the Coalition held office nationally, has left behind a trail of confusion and unnecessarily high costs. Currently, the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) does not have an explicit reliability or supply adequacy role across the interconnected east coast gas network. This situation, which this bill seeks to address, is among the many problems left to us by the Coalition's failure.

In consultation about the bill, the Australian Aluminium Council speaks of the frustration felt by industries that are high users of energy. Energy use accounts for 30 to 40 per cent of the cost base of companies manufacturing aluminium, so the impact of price and supply is keenly felt and a key determinant to international competitiveness. In a submission to the consultation process for this bill, the council said that it:

...notes that industry has been calling for gas market reforms for more than a decade. The Council and its members are seeking an efficient, effective and deep Australian domestic gas market—a market which is comprised of many buyers and sellers who are able to negotiate contracts where both sides can obtain a fair return and where, for example, shortages in supply lead to higher prices, which in turn brings on additional supply to satisfy this demand.

However, the Council is concerned that in the decade since, Australian gas prices have increased, despite numerous inquiries and policy agendas, little has changed on the ground, and indeed as outlined in the Paper and by the ACCC, the situation has become worse. The Council urges the implementation of actions to address the situation, not simply more consultation.

The Council recognises the need to balance Australia's contribution to the world's energy security and the trust trading partners and international investors have shown in Australia's resources and energy sectors, with the needs of domestic consumers. Currently the pendulum has swung too far in favour of exports, to the detriment of domestic consumers.

The Aluminium Council also added:

At a time when manufacturers are facing serious challenges, energy is one of the few advantages Australia has to offer and which Government can help to deliver. There needs to be sufficient supply of competitively priced natural gas to meet the forecast needs of energy users within Australia...The Council seeks a national climate and energy policy framework which is transparent, stable and predictable, while maintaining the economic health of the nation including vital import and export competing industries.

These are wise words from the Aluminium Council, which I hope the conservative side of politics heed rather than continuing their obsessive approach of driving down costs by hurting working people.

After that lost decade, we now have before us a bill to give greater powers to AEMO to gather information and, if necessary, intervene in the market to ensure manufacturers and households have a reliable gas supply. During the consultation phase, the Australian Gas Infrastructure Group, which owns South Australian distributor Australian Gas Networks, acknowledged that the energy supply problems of 2022 led to the policy reforms proposed in this bill. In discussing the consultation leading to this bill, it is noteworthy that they expressed concerns about some aspects of the reforms, including the possibility of increased costs. The peak body wrote that it was:

...strongly of the view that any costs associated with increased reporting and compliance because of the proposed reforms should be kept as low as possible and should be paid by the entities whose actions or policies have given rise to the shortfall.

It also added:

To the extent that recent energy supply challenges have been the product of electricity shortfalls and government policies that either discouraged or disallowed gas production, it does not hold that gas infrastructure companies and our customers should incur the cost of ensuring it does not reoccur. In our view this would be an unfair and inequitable outcome for consumers.

As has been frequently observed, the governments of New South Wales and Victoria have been impediments to gas development, and their policies have now created potential for costs to increase for consumers. Building products manufacturer Brickworks, a high user of energy, say risks of gas shortfalls are a major concern for the industry, and they support the intent of AEMO having more powers to identify and resolve problems.

However, Brickworks were also apprehensive about the costs. They have described gas contract pricing as already being at 'extreme levels' and, as they put it, it was essential that reforms were formulated with protections 'to minimise any uncontrollable costs that will ultimately be passed through to gas consumers'. Brickworks said they strongly opposed costs of intervention being socialised across all market participants; rather, Brickworks have said that the entity that causes an issue that requires AEMO's intervention should be the entity that pays the cost. The view of 'causer pays' was shared by pipeline owner and energy operator Epic Energy. I quote:

It is critical that compensation costs (for AEMO intervention) be apportioned to the entity responsible and this be linked to a reliability requirement for supply. This approach would encourage market participants to maintain an adequate level of risk coverage or hedging to ensure they do not incur costs in relation to the exercise of AEMO powers, which should encourage appropriate behaviour and the limitation of utilisation of AEMO powers.

In the discussion paper, which led to this bill, the type of costs which are likely to be incurred from these reforms were categorised, and these are:

- administrative costs to the AEMO of establishing and undertaking its ongoing market monitoring and signalling roles;
- costs to the Australian Energy Regulator and AEMO in their competitive enforcement and rules administration roles respectively;
- costs of compliance to the industry in respect of information provision and internal compliance processes;
- costs incurred by persons subject to directions issued by AEMO in complying with those directions;
- costs incurred indirectly for those affected by AEMO's directions or trading; and

- costs incurred by AEMO in trading in gas where necessary to address reliability and supply adequacy issues.

With these potential costs in mind, it will be important that private companies in the market take notice and do whatever they can to ensure gas supplies are plentiful. If they do that, the need for AEMO intervention will diminish and so will costs. Companies all claim they want to serve the best interests of their consumers. They must now practice what they preach.

In finishing up, I want to pass my thanks on to everyone who has helped in bringing this essential piece of legislation to our parliament. I can see that a lot of effort has gone into the consultation process and pick up on the frustration and necessity for this long overdue bill. I also want to place on record the assistance of Chris Russell, from Minister Koutsantonis's office, who has been first-rate in backgrounding me and no doubt other members of parliament on this bill.

Irrespective of persuasion, our political staff in South Australia play a crucial role in the passage of legislation. While we see a bill before us, *Hansard* does not reflect the hours they have spent trawling through each and every clause, the numerous meetings they have held and the accompanying novels they have written for each bill they are overseeing. So a big thankyou to Chris and everyone else involved in bringing this bill before us and, with this in mind, I commend it to the house.

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (16:57): I rise to support the National Gas (South Australia) (East Coast Gas System) Amendment Bill 2022. This bill aims to implement a framework that provides the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) with the tools and power to monitor risks to supply adequacy in advance of those risks being realised, to signal those risks to the market and seek a response.

Late last year a heads of agreement with the LNG exporters (liquefied natural gas exporters) was designed to prevent a gas supply shortfall and secure competitively priced gas for the domestic market. This included a commitment to offer additional uncontracted supply to the east coast market. In spite of this, the ACCC and AEMO still identified that a number of risks to gas supply shortfall still remain.

I note the federal Labor government intervention with price capping on gas, but I am pretty sure the gas in South Australia is still under those caps naturally anyway, and I am concerned about market intervention at that level because it creates an uneven market and it can have the reverse effect on gas supplies. Unlike the National Electricity Market, which has well-established frameworks under which AEMO maintains reliability and supply adequacy, AEMO has limited powers and tools to identify and respond to supply/demand imbalances in the east coast gas market outside of Victoria.

The suite of reforms was agreed to by the Energy Ministers' Meeting. On 12 August 2022 the Energy Ministers' Meeting agreed to take a range of actions to support a more secure, resilient and flexible east coast gas market. Senior energy officials undertook consultation between 26 September and 21 October 2022 seeking stakeholder comments on proposed regulatory amendments, which included a draft bill, draft regulations and an initial set of minister-initiated rules. On 28 October 2022 the Energy Ministers' Meeting agreed to the amendments to the National Gas Law to extend AEMO's functions and powers to manage reliability and gas supply adequacy for the east coast gas market over winter 2023 and beyond.

On 30 November 2022 the Minister for Energy and Mining, the Hon. Tom Koutsantonis, introduced the National Gas (South Australia) (East Coast Gas System) Amendment Bill 2022 into this house. In December 2022 the Energy Ministers' Meeting considered the initial rules package which sits under this new framework based on consultative feedback. The time frame of the suite of reforms has been unusually short in comparison to previous national energy law rules amendments that were considered last year.

The National Gas (South Australia) (East Coast Gas System) Amendment Bill 2022 aims to implement a framework that provides AEMO with the tools and powers to monitor risks to supply adequacy in advance of those risks being realised, to signal those risks to the market and seek a response. These actions seek to address the winter 2023 east coast gas supply adequacy concerns

raised by both the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) in its July Gas Inquiry—Interim Report and AEMO's Gas Supply and System Adequacy Risks report.

The bill also seeks to address forecast future risks to reliability and supply adequacy going forward. These risks are emerging with the forecast decline in southern gas reserves, increasing reliance on gas from Queensland, and challenges to the reliability of coal generation as the energy market transitions. I will talk a bit more about that later on.

Unlike the National Electricity Market, which has well-established frameworks under which AEMO maintains reliability and supply adequacy, AEMO has limited powers and tools to identify and respond to supply/demand imbalances in the east coast gas market outside of Victoria. The broad aim of the proposed regulatory amendments is to implement a framework that provides AEMO with the tools to identify risk to supply adequacy in advance of those risks being realised, to signal those risks to the market and seek a response, and to allow AEMO to manage situations if adequate market responses are not forthcoming to ensure AEMO has multiple options to better manage the forecast threats for winter 2023.

To ensure transparency in AEMO's use of these new powers, the regulatory package imposes reporting requirements on AEMO. Practically, this will require AEMO to report to ministers on the use of its directions and trading powers over time. The reforms outlined in this consultation paper are proposed to complement other initiatives by government and industry to address forecast shortfalls in the east coast gas market. This includes the commonwealth government's actions to renegotiate the heads of agreement and amend the Australian Domestic Gas Security Mechanism.

Key elements in this bill include function and rule making, transparency, signalling, directions, powers, cost recovery and compensation. In regard to the function and rule making this legislation seeks to put in place, AEMO's new east coast gas system reliability and supply adequacy functions are proposed to encompass:

- monitoring trends in supply and demand across the system;
- identifying, communicating and publishing information about actual or potential threats to reliability and adequacy of gas supply within the east coast gas system;
- reporting to energy ministers on these matters;
- giving directions on trading in gas and associated services to maintain or improve the reliability and adequacy of gas supply in the east coast gas system; and
- other functions conferred on AEMO by the rules for the purposes of the new east coast gas system reliability and supply adequacy functions.

The bill also provides the head of power for the regulations to specify:

- the relationship between the operation of AEMO's east coast gas system reliability and supply adequacy functions, or a provision of these functions, and a law of a participating jurisdiction, in the event of an inconsistency;
- the extent to which a relevant ability is or is not required to comply with an east coast gas system direction in circumstances where the direction is inconsistent with a law of a participating jurisdiction; and
- the extent to which an east coast gas system direction is not valid in circumstances where the direction is inconsistent with a law of a participating jurisdiction.

In regard to transparency in the legislation, this is to ensure that AEMO has the necessary information to undertake this new function, the draft regulatory framework sets out additional disclosure obligations on certain industry participants over specific forecast periods.

In addition to those explicit additional disclosure requirements, the regulatory framework enhances AEMO's ability to seek specific information relevant to the exercise of its functions from a wide range of entities, including gas producers, pipeline operators, storage providers and large users.

In regard to signalling, the regulatory framework provides AEMO with significant flexibility in how it will undertake its monitoring and signalling functions. Generally, where an emerging risk or system threat is identified (both over the short or longer periods), the signalling framework would allow AEMO to notify the market and seek market responses to address the threat.

As to directions powers, where the market does not or cannot respond to AEMO's signalling and an actual or potential threat emerges, the framework provides for comprehensive directions powers. The proposed powers would allow AEMO to instruct a range of entities to take specific actions to maintain or improve the reliability and supply adequacy of natural gas across the east coast gas system. These powers have been made broad to ensure AEMO can take actions to manage the risk of gas supply shortfalls in winter 2023.

AEMO will be empowered to exercise a range of directions powers relating to reliability and supply adequacy, including:

- to maintain and improve the reliability of the supply of natural gas within the east coast gas system; and
- to maintain and improve the adequacy of supply within the east coast gas system.

AEMO directions may relate to the operation, maintenance or use of any equipment or installation, the control of the flow of natural gas, or any other matter that may affect the reliability or adequacy of gas supply within the east coast gas system.

AEMO must, before making an order relating to an east coast gas system reliability and supply adequacy function, consider the extent to which persons of the class to which the proposed order is addressed may make representations about the terms of the proposed order and invite those persons to make representations to the extent AEMO considers possible in the circumstances.

In regard to cost recovery and compensation, AEMO may already recover costs from all or a specific subset of market participants in relation to the exercise of its powers. The bill provides additional cost-recovery flexibility in relation to AEMO's directions powers.

In regard to the rules around this legislation, as is the case with most legislation that is derived from the Energy Ministers' Meeting, the bill will provide the Minister for Energy and Mining with the power to make an initial set of rules.

The bill will also enable the Minister for Energy and Mining to make further rules for a maximum period of six months from commencement of the bill subject to a further consultation process conducted by the Energy Ministers' Meeting. This will enable the Minister for Energy and Mining to make further changes to the rules if any issue arises in the first six months of the legislation coming into effect, and the head of power will lapse after six months.

Upon reaching out to various stakeholders, a common criticism of the bill is that the consultation time was quite short. Stakeholders had only two weeks to analyse and form an opinion on the proposed reforms. Another concern raised by stakeholders was the extent of the powers that AEMO will be given in the gas market, which at present is primarily a private market based on contracts. I think we need to remember that key point—a private market based on contracts. All of these things that have been discussed at a federal level and a state level here today interfere with that private market.

The stakeholders consulted include the Australian Gas Infrastructure Group, Australian Pipelines and Gas Association, Australian Gas Association, Australian Petroleum Production & Exploration Association, Australian Energy Market Operator, Epic Energy, Origin Energy, AGL Energy, and Santos. In relation to Santos, they have had recent media coverage with their carbon capture and storage project, and I wish them all the best moving that forward.

I believe the reason that this legislation has come forward is because of some flaws in legislation around the country. There have been issues in Victoria and New South Wales especially, as has been already mentioned. Victoria is pulling back on exploration activities, drilling activities. Bass Strait was, and still is, a large source of gas for the country. A friend who I worked with in the Cooper Basin 40 years ago still occasionally goes to jobs out there with Haliburton. I note the long-

term project, the Narrabri project, that Santos have had onshore in New South Wales. It has been a long-running project to get up and going in consultation with local landholders.

There have been other issues right around the country, and offshore of Australia, with potential gas projects worth many billions of dollars. There is one off the west coast of Western Australia. It is a huge project worth many billions of dollars. People can rightly question how it works and what interferences it will have on the country and that kind of thing. But gas wells do not take up a lot of country, especially offshore wells, which are in a pod and the gas is piped ashore. Onshore, it is just a well. You visit them, say, somewhere like the Cooper Basin—a Christmas tree is what they call the wellhead sticking out of the ground—and that is connected to the satellite gas station and then the bigger plant like at Moomba or Ballera.

There have also been issues to the north of Australia. Bills like this come about because it has been made hard to get supply into the market. Some people do not like the idea of gas, but it will be a transition fuel for a long time as we transition to full, so-called, clean energy. We have plenty of clean energy in this state, whether it is solar or wind. There are hundreds of kilowatts of solar panels in my electorate, or they were in my electorate, especially at the big solar farm at Taillem Bend. The simple fact is, as we move forward over the next decade or so, at least five to seven coal plants are coming out of service. We will need gas to power not just our state but the country into the future.

The same friend of mine, David, who I mentioned worked offshore in Bass Strait, has also done a recent job up at Karratha, where he was involved in a major unconventional well. They did a 1,200 metre perforation, run by Inpex, a Japanese company, for gas contracted to Japan. We all understand there is a lot of offshore gas contracted out of Australia, whether it is out of ports like Gorgon in Western Australian, Darwin in the Northern Territory or Gladstone in Queensland. So we do need to make sure that we get adequate supply as we move into the future.

Certainly, here in South Australia when we were in government, we commissioned the interconnector through to New South Wales, which will assist this state in sending its renewable energy to the east and bringing coal-fired or even some gas-fired power back to South Australia when the sun is not shining and the wind is not blowing. It will certainly make good use of our renewable sources here.

Let's see how this legislation goes, but we must make sure that we do not have a situation such as we found in September 2016 when the lights went out in this state because people acted too fast, and the next thing everything fell over. I have never seen anything like it, and did not think I ever would. It was an interesting day. I think it was 23 September at about 4.20 in the afternoon that year.

In a difficult time—well, some people think it is a difficult time—around policy and what we need moving forward, and certainly in the transition phase, we need to make sure that we have the energy supplies so that we can transition into the future without hurting people who are on the end of the use of that power, whether it be through electricity or straight gas, and so that we do not hurt the cost of living. We need to make sure that we have adequate supplies of energy into the future. I commend the bill.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Stinson): Thank you, member for Hammond. I enjoyed your recollections about Karratha, which is where I lived when I was just 21.

Mr HUGHES (Giles) (17:16): I also rise to speak on the National Gas (South Australia) (East Coast Gas System) Amendment Bill 2022. I think it is always worthwhile when we are talking about energy matters—matters that have been highly contentious in this country and in some other countries and less so in some other places—that we never lose sight of the big picture. I am talking about the really big picture, the global picture, and what we have to do to evolve our energy systems and a whole raft of other things in a particular direction to ensure that we do not stuff up the planet that we live on.

A year or two ago, some authors of the prestigious science journal *Nature* did a body of work. It was work that in a number of ways replicated stuff that had been done by a whole range of scientists, analysts, the International Energy Agency, the various bureaus of meteorology around the

world, and all sorts of research institutes. The scale of the challenge—and it is interesting when we are talking about gas today—was that 60 per cent of the oil and gas and 90 per cent of coal reserves must not be exploited.

They are the reserves that we already have and that already figure into the economic profiles of companies, and we are being told that we cannot exploit those reserves of 60 per cent of oil and gas and 90 per cent of coal if we are to have a chance—a 50 per cent chance—of meeting the 1.5° global temperature increase. It looks as though we are going to go past that, and potentially way past that, because not only are we rapidly exploiting those particular reserves but the big companies, the big fossil fuel companies and the big national entities, are adding to those reserves with the intention of exploiting them. So despite the overwhelming balance of the scientific evidence, we are, to a degree, continuing on as a globe with business as usual.

It is interesting to reflect on the fact that the science was solid back in the 1980s. In the intervening 30 years, we have actually burnt more fossil fuels and emitted more greenhouse gases to the atmosphere compared with the previous 200 years of industrialisation. We have had the science before us, we have had lots of conferences, we have had all sorts of things going on, and yet we are still continuing on in the same direction. It does not hurt to set that big picture about what we need to do, as I said, not just in the energy market but in a whole raft of areas.

The transition is not going to be an easy one; it is going to be a challenging one. As the member for Playford said, 10 years—a decade—was wasted in Australia when it came to energy policy. Like a lot of people, I think I had lost count of the number of incoherent, cobbled-together energy policies that the Coalition developed in its period in office. I think it was over 20, none of them particularly coherent or effective. In fact, the things that did work were the things that were inherited from a former federal Labor government. Unfortunately, the Coalition did not in a sensible way add to those earlier initiatives, and it created a climate where companies looking to the future had difficulty when it came to making investment decisions in energy markets.

It has been mentioned in passing that clearly the opposition are not great fans of interfering in markets. But markets fail. I am a great supporter of essential services like water and energy being in public hands, especially when it is monopolies and oligopolies. I think interfering in the market can be a good thing at times. By all means, let the market do what it does. It does it very effectively in all sorts of areas, but sometimes when it comes to the area of energy I think we have made some past mistakes. I would be an advocate for the development of the gas export industry in Queensland and elsewhere. I think we missed the boat by not having a domestic reserve policy.

I remember it was the Carpenter government in Western Australia, back about 15 years ago or so. The Carpenter government indicated it was going to introduce a domestic gas reserve policy in Western Australia, and the companies there went ballistic. They threatened all sorts of things. They said, 'We're not going to invest in Western Australia. If you do this it will destroy investment.' You had the Howard government calling Western Australia 'Venezuela'; you had this chorus of attack from the usual vested interests. What did the government do? Well, it honoured its commitment, it introduced the policy, and gas policy in Western Australia has been sensible policy. It has been able to manage the cost of gas when it comes to domestic suppliers.

When the current federal government talked about and then introduced some changes, I think the head of Santos (in his massively exaggerated language) actually used the term 'Stalinist' in relation to it. It was just bizarre. Once again, this over-the-top attack was interesting because it was happening at the time when I met with the biggest employer in Whyalla, GFG, and we were discussing this very issue. We were discussing what was going to happen to GFG if there was not some intervention in the gas market. The exporters did not give a damn about the manufacturers. They seemed to be happy enough to see them go to the wall, as long as they continued to make their enormous profits.

They were happy to see them go to the wall and did not want the market interfered with. What GFG said, and they had been out to test the market because some of the contracts were coming to an end, was that potentially it was going to add \$90 million a year to their business because they are a big gas user. I am all for transitioning away from gas but it is going to take time because it is integral to a whole range of processes.

If you look at something like a steelworks, you have the con-castor that uses gas to cut billets and slabs and other sections to size. You have the massive reheater furnace, you have other users, and other bits of kit on site that use gas. At the moment, it is essential and it is going to take a long time to transition away from that. But it is technically possible, and it has to be commercially possible as well to do that.

It is worth reflecting what did happen when it comes to having a look at how essential gas is. Back in April 2015, I had not all that long been elected, the gas pipeline that fed Pirie and Whyalla had a major incident. We lost gas coming into our communities, and that had a major impact. There are those people who advocate incredibly rapid movement, and I get the science and understand where they are coming from, but unfortunately we are not in a position to do it.

When we lost gas that had a major impact on the industry. Fortunately, some gas could be returned and they got it back up for places like nursing homes and other places where gas was also essential. Of course, it had an impact there because for a lot of people in communities like Whyalla, or in significant parts of the community, it is reticulated gas. So when it comes to industry itself, when it comes to heavy industry, gas is still essential and will be for some time to come.

Some of the debates that are going on at the moment globally are interesting. As part of the culture wars in the United States, they are talking about a transition away from gas for households and a whole raft of other users. The Australian Capital Territory here has actually moved in that direction. But when you look at households, especially new subdivisions, if you are looking at the cheapest cost of energy, you are far better electrifying new subdivisions. You should not, in my view anyway, be putting on gas.

I live in a household that is almost completely electric. It has a solar hot water heater, it has photovoltaics, and it is dependent upon electricity from the grid as well. The only gas is from an LPG bottle because the stovetop itself is gas, but the oven is electric. The stovetop is 20 years old. When it comes to the end of its life—it is a really good stove so I do not think it is ever going to come to the end of its life, and it will probably outlive me—I would go to an induction top. There are a lot of chefs now shifting in that particular direction and there are a lot of sensible things about it.

So you can completely electrify the household sector and it will save people money. In this state, the draw is mainly from renewable electricity and eventually it will be almost exclusively renewable electricity or storage and backup that is ultimately sourced from renewable electricity. So that is a direction we should be moving in.

I will not get on to one of my hobbyhorses, which is energy efficiency. We do an appalling job, an absolutely appalling job when it comes to using energy efficiently in Australia and in this state. I think I can claim credit to introducing the first energy efficiency standards in a development plan in South Australia back in the mid nineties. It was a Liberal government at the time and the public sector dumbed it down. They dumbed that policy down, so it ended up being a lowest common denominator approach, but it was the first time in this state that a council had introduced minimum energy efficiency standards.

I would like to hang my hat on it, but I cannot claim any great success. It made bugger-all difference. I have watched the changes to the household sector, the built environment, when it comes to energy efficiency, and I have to say it is woeful. We are still only at six stars, and I would argue there is very little in the way of genuine compliance even with those six stars. We are doing these huge subdivisions with all-black roofs, which is absolutely dumb. We still do not orientate within the subdivisions. There is a whole range of basic things that we do not do well. As a result, people pay more for their energy. I am getting a little bit off the track here; it is a bit of rambling.

As I said, when gas was cut off to Whyalla that had a major impact. Those events of 2015 were sudden and unexpected, unlike the risk of looming shortages which have been identified and which led to the bill before the house today. The far-reaching impacts of a gas shortfall on homes and businesses will be devastating, whether it is sudden or slow.

Loss or shortage of supply is something we must avoid. The bill is predicated on risks of a shortage, which are forecast by the nation's energy organisations. The most recent analysis on gas availability was published by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission on 27 January,

just a few weeks back. The ACCC's report is part of an ongoing inquiry into gas, which began in 2017, under a specific tasking from the commonwealth government. The ACCC January report warns that Australia's east coast gas market faces a shortfall of 30 petajoules this year if the liquefied natural gas producers were to export all their uncontracted gas.

For context, the commonwealth's department of energy says one petajoule is the energy required to power 19,000 homes for a year. On the supply side, the ACCC estimates that this year some 1,983 petajoules will be produced, mostly from developed reserves but also with some undeveloped reserves coming online, some net input from storage and some gas coming into the east coast market from the Northern Territory. On the demand side, the ACCC estimates:

- about two-thirds of demand, or 1,296 petajoules, has already been contracted by the LNG companies for export;
- some 22 per cent of demand, or 445 petajoules, will be needed by Australian customers, that is, residential, commercial and industrial; and
- just over 6 per cent, or 126 petajoules, will be used in gas-powered generation of electricity—this is particularly important in South Australia, where gas-fired power is second only to wind generation in the annual contribution to our electricity power supply.

The ACCC lists 146 petajoules of demand from uncontracted gas that LNG producers expected to have in excess of their contractual commitments. The ACCC says that this uncontracted gas could be exported, placed in storage or used to supply the domestic market. If it were all exported, the ACCC warns there would be a 30-petajoule shortage in supply.

Most worryingly, the ACCC says the LNG exporters have become net extractors from the domestic market; that is, they purchase more from third parties to add to their exports than the quantity which they supply themselves into the domestic market from their own operations. It is worth thinking about that. This imbalance began last year, in 2022, and is expected to take place again this year with a net withdrawal of 17 petajoules from the domestic market.

A further issue of concern raised by the ACCC is that demand in the southern part of the east coast gas system—that is, South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and the ACT—will significantly exceed production in the southern section, therefore gas will be piped from Queensland to the tune of 52 petajoules. The ACCC report does not break down the supply contribution from individual states; however, industry analysts calculate that South Australian producers put more gas into the system than the state consumes.

The net shortfall can really be traced to New South Wales and Victoria. In New South Wales, there have been long delays impeding gas development, most particularly Santos's Narrabri project. In Victoria, there has been the ongoing moratorium on onshore gas development. This is conventional gas development: we are not necessarily talking about fracking in Victoria, though that could also contribute. In Victoria, the moratorium on onshore gas development, which was instigated in 2012, stymied projects until new legislation and regulations were passed and prepared, keeping the industry frozen until November 2021.

The stagnation in New South Wales and Victoria is also identified by the Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association. In a submission to the consultation on this bill, the organisation says it should be up to the market to respond to potential shortfalls. It says:

An alternative to setting up a way for AEMO to intervene in the market, is to increase supply of gas in the East Coast market, particularly in Victoria and NSW. This would alleviate the need to direct gas from Queensland to the south at times when there is a perceived shortage.

They are right, but the situation we were facing with gas prices was an immediate one if the government had not intervened. To develop new supply takes time, and in the meantime we could have lost from this country a whole bunch of manufacturers. Like I said, when I was speaking to GFG about the potential contracted gas prices they were looking at before the intervention, \$90 million was added to their operation at the steelworks.

The ACCC says its forecast of the southern states being net importers from the north continues a trend that has been developing in the past few years. The ACCC goes on to say, 'Given

that some gas from the southern states flows north to Queensland, especially during summer, the actual amount shipped will very likely be higher than 52PJ.'

Time expired.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr Odenwalder.

At 17:38 the house adjourned until Thursday 23 February 2023 at 11:00.