

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**Tuesday, 19 March 2024**

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

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

The SPEAKER read prayers.

*Bills***CHILD SEX OFFENDERS REGISTRATION (CHILD-RELATED WORK) AMENDMENT BILL***Committee Stage*

In committee.

(Continued from 7 March 2024.)

Clause 1.

Mr TEAGUE: We are disjointed only to the extent that the committee kicked off on the last Thursday of sitting, so in commencing the committee process I appreciate the minister's response to my first question at that time, going more particularly to the concern that I had flagged during the course of the second reading debate about the matters that were perhaps best articulated by Business SA by its letter to the Attorney dated 18 August 2023.

My question in that context was to ask the minister if the minister is satisfied there is a sufficient program, with or without the direct involvement of Business SA, to ensure that those who might be affected in every respect will be made aware of their obligations. If so, how is the minister satisfied and how is that process of awareness-raising going to occur?

The minister had begun to answer that question, or might have provided a full response. Apart from noting that it is a matter that had been raised in another place and it was a matter of relevance, the minister emphasised that the bill by itself is not imposing new obligations on businesses. Further, the minister observed, and at this point I am quoting from that response:

The way that this is set up through this legislation or through this bill is that the onus of compliance absolutely falls on the offender, and the risk of noncompliance and the particular penalties that that will attract also fall on the offender.

The minister then further adverted to having been advised that it was:

...SAPOL's intention to communicate the onus of that compliance and that risk of noncompliance very clearly to those who are registered child sex offenders.

At that point the committee reported progress. I understand then—and that is helpful—that SAPOL is alive to the new circumstances and that the onus is entirely on the offender to comply, to do what is required under the new legislation, including identifying circumstances to an employer.

My next question, in those circumstances, is then: what supports, if any, has the government contemplated in terms of provision to employers—again, with or without direct involvement of Business SA—to ensure that there is a minimum of practical disruption to business as a consequence of what might, through no fault of the business, be a potential practical disruption, if not the business being caught up in offending? I understand very clearly that there is no risk of that from business' point of view, so, from a practical point of view, is there any range of support and, perhaps further to that, is there a program of ongoing communication? I keep mentioning Business SA—it need not be limited to Business SA—but to employers, workplaces and that peak body in particular.

The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD: I think the member has outlined or summarised the answer that I previously gave in relation to there not being particular new obligations on employers, but rather the obligations are borne by the offender. I think we agree on that point.

In terms of communication or assistance to business and the question about disruption, I think the important thing to note is the nature of the transitional provisions with the six-month period. I think that will be important in terms of there not being a sudden disruption but rather that period of transition.

Also, obviously we have consulted Business SA. There will be general communication from the Attorney-General in terms of media and broad communication, but again I go back to the point that, as the member also said and as I spoke about last time, the Commissioner for Police and SAPOL will be communicating closely of course with offenders who bear that obligation, but there will be the general communication from the Attorney-General around the provisions of the new bill.

Mr TEAGUE: I hope to have some form of coherence in terms of this group of questions. If we have cleared up that on the one hand the bill is not imposing fresh obligations on business, SAPOL is alive to making some extra efforts to bring to attention those who have obligations, and then questions of transition and support for business in practical ways, is the minister able to enlighten the committee at all in terms of the government's view or advice in the practical circumstance in which an employer might require to navigate the rights of an employee affected by the bill in, for example, the following circumstances.

This is a matter among those practical challenges that I am sure Business SA is alive to—and I recognise that Andrew Kay is head of Business SA, but in particular Kendall Crowe from a policy point of view—and would perhaps seek some comfort from a day-to-day managing of rosters point of view in the following example: you have an employee who, whether or not having twigged themselves to the legislation, or SAPOL has assisted and brought it to their attention, is then in a circumstance of compliance that may or may not involve an application to the commissioner to grant discretion and so on.

Let's assume that there is an employee in circumstances now who is no longer permitted, for all the good reasons that we support the passage of the bill, to work at particular times, particular rosters, maybe particular locations of an employer, but willing, able and with capacity to fulfill duties in other ways, perhaps at different times, different locations and so on. In circumstances where, if you like, a demanding employee is then presenting and saying, 'I might be subject to these probations, okay, but I also have the willingness and capacity to perform the duties that are the subject of my employment.' I started by asking whether the minister could enlighten the committee.

In what circumstances is an employer now going to be navigating new territory in terms of negotiating with that employee, and to what extent is the employer armed with the capacity to say, 'Oh well, bad luck, this trumps whatever else you're doing,' and with the best will in the world you might have to say, 'All bets are off, it's too hard and you're out.' If I can boil it down to one straightforward question: to what extent have the industrial relations consequences of this been worked through in the interests of both parties, but I couch it in terms of the interests of the employer in the present circumstances?

The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD: Thank you for the question; it is a question I have been contemplating myself, actually. As the member would appreciate, the Attorney-General is also the Minister for Industrial Relations, so, certainly, I can say that he has contemplated particular circumstances that may arise with both acts operating alongside each other. So I can certainly answer that part of the question: of course, he has thought about that.

What I can say is that there are already particular circumstances that arise in a workplace for all sorts of reasons, including reasons where an employee has been found guilty of a particular offence. There is already a great body of precedents around how industrial relations legislation sits alongside particular aspects of all sorts of offences.

In many ways, I guess the approach for an employer, in relation to this particular type of offence, would be the same as it is in relation to other types of offences where Work Health and Safety Act considerations are taken into account where particular responsibilities and rights, both for

the employee and, very importantly, other employees in a workplace are taken into account in terms of the provisions of either the state or federal Fair Work Act.

In many ways, the contemplation of how these two pieces of legislation sit alongside each other will continue with similar considerations to what employers undertake now in terms of health and safety, in terms of, as the member himself raised, all sorts of rostering considerations and people's responsibilities and rights under that. But I can say that, with the dual roles that the Attorney-General holds, that has certainly been contemplated in this case.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: I have some questions, minister, on how this will affect the current and future employment of people who have been convicted of child sex offences. For example, former Labor staffer Benjamin John Waters was spared jail over child abuse material. The former South Australian Labor staffer spent eight months in home detention for viewing and sending child abuse material in what the District Court judge described as a serious and social evil. Benjamin John Waters was handed a one year and three-month sentence and a non-parole period of eight months.

Obviously, this was back in 2022. I suspect that Mr Waters would be out looking for work. Would he be able to work as a political adviser, as he did in the office of Labor MP Nat Cook, who was at that time the shadow minister for disability and other sectors that had contact with children? Would he or anybody convicted of those offences be prohibited from working for a minister or a shadow minister or a member of parliament who had those types of responsibilities?

The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD: I am not sure if the member was in the chamber, but just to reiterate, as I did both in the contribution I made in leading discussion in this house around this bill and in other parts of this debate, this bill applies to registered child sex offenders.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: And they are registered child sex offenders, I believe. Mr Waters is a registered child sex offender after that conviction, yes? Would that be the case?

The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD: I have already answered the question about who this bill applies to.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: No, you have not answered the question. The question was whether the restrictions would prohibit somebody who was in this category working in government or for a government minister or a member of parliament in an area that had contact with children. That is my specific question that you have missed.

The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD: I am wanting to be clear here. This bill applies in the way that I have previously described. It, of course, also operates in conjunction with existing legislation that deals with child sex offenders.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Yes, but can you answer the question as to whether somebody who this bill affects—in other words, does this bill cover employees of members of parliament or ministers whose portfolio responsibilities or parliamentary responsibilities deal with children or have contact with children?

The CHAIR: Member for Unley, the minister has responded to your question on two occasions. You may not like the answer, which is fine, you are entitled not to like the answer. If you believe this bill does not go far enough or is inadequate in some way, you correct that by an amendment. The minister has answered the question. Next question, please.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: We know in the workplace, particularly in retail, there are many children who start as early as 15. My son started his first part-time job not long after his 15th birthday. On his first day there was a three-hour induction. Part of that three-hour induction entailed an induction from the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association in front of these 15 and 16 year olds about the benefits of joining the union.

Of course, former Labor minister Bernie Finnigan, who started his political career in the shoppies union, got 15 months' jail suspended for the use of child pornography back in 2015. My question is: would this also apply to people who would have a casual association through visiting a workplace that has children under the age of 18 and having them in an environment where they had control or had the attention of those children in a briefing about the services that they offer?

The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD: As I spoke about earlier, in relation to this bill child-related work means work involving contact with a child in connection with any environment where there are children present.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Is that yes, there would be? I am asking for clarity, minister.

The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD: If it is work involving contact with children in an environment where the particular business or operation employs children, that is the relevant provision to look to in terms of your question.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: The way I understand that question is that that would be the case, that somebody who was a registered child sex offender could no longer work for a union, for example, that had people under the age of 18 as members or tried to recruit people under the age of 18 as members. That is how I understand your answer to the question, and it is also the way I understand your answer to the question about Ben Waters, a former employee of Nat Cook, who is now obviously also a registered child sex offender because of his child sex offences through exploitation material that he had viewed and disseminated through networks.

The question now is: what happens if it is discovered that an existing employee is a registered child sex offender who has only now been recognised as being prohibited from working in the areas that this amendment expands it to? What happens in their situation, and also in an employer situation? Is there a conflict with the federal Fair Work Act, and what advice is there for employers who need to deal with that situation because they simply were not aware?

In my own electorate, we had a situation—although it was not an employer-employee situation—where the president of the Unley Road traders association had been charged with child sex exploitation material in November last year. He did not tell anybody and he attended an event that was sponsored by the Unley traders association in February this year. Not long after that, his charges were made public and everybody was, obviously, absolutely horrified that that person was continually involved in family-friendly events that were being sponsored by the traders on Unley Road.

I am just trying to get an understanding of what support there is for people. It is very confronting. I witnessed how those who were involved in putting on that event felt about hearing that news, and I imagine an employer being made aware of that news. How would employers also be made aware that this is now an obligation of theirs, that they must not have somebody working for them, if they have had someone working for them for a number of years in that position?

The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD: First of all, I would suggest that the member look at part 5, section 64, the interpretation clauses of the substantive act, the Child Sex Offenders Registration Act, because that certainly goes into detail about what already exists in legislation in terms of who is covered through the operation of this act. So I would suggest that you look at that particular part.

I understand that you have brought up a range of particular circumstances in your question, and I would give you the same answer that I gave to the member for Heysen earlier, and that is that in every circumstance, once these new amendments are in operation, those new amendments will operate as they should. They also operate alongside the existing provisions of the Child Sex Offenders Registration Act, and they also operate alongside the provisions of both the state and federal Fair Work Act, which apply to different groups of employees depending on by whom they are employed.

So, in any of those circumstances that you have raised, the particular employer, looking at those three sets of provisions—as they would now with the operation of the Child Sex Offenders Registration Act, and particular industrial relations legislation, whether that be the state or federal Fair Work Act, and, of course, the Work Health and Safety Act—will need to consider those circumstances and act according to those pieces of legislation that already exist.

I imagine that employers will do what they do now, which is to seek particular advice, to make police reports where they are required to do that, as they are already required to do, and that they will continue to fulfil their obligations under both those acts, and now with these additional provisions in relation to the class of employees that are covered by these amendments.

The Hon. D.G. PISONI: Supplementary, sir, if I may.

The CHAIR: No. I have been very generous with the questions, member for Unley. I think I have allowed more than the usual questions.

Clause passed.

Clause 2.

Mr TEAGUE: Just considering then the question of commencement, as is normal, there is no indication, other than coming into operation on a day to be fixed by proclamation. In the circumstances of this change that is going to affect the status quo, vis-a-vis business employees and employers, firstly, has the government given any particular consideration to the time for commencement? Is it going to be in any way unusually moved forward to accommodate any perceived necessity to prepare industry or any other affected party? Is it otherwise a matter that the government is expecting to be commencing—otherwise than in the usual course—and that we might all anticipate then dealing with the consequences, including the transitional processes and so on following its commencement?

The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD: As we would with any particular legislation, the Attorney-General will take account of, primarily, the safety of children that will be enhanced through this piece of legislation. He will also take account of the needs of the police commissioner and SAPOL in terms of the commitment and requirement now to communicate with registered offenders. The Attorney will also, of course, take into account the needs of business. As he always would, those particular interests will be balanced. There will be obviously discussion with the police commissioner, given the requirement that he has to communicate to registered offenders. Those three groups or those three matters will be balanced, and the act proclaimed accordingly.

Mr TEAGUE: It sounds as though there might be some consideration beyond business as usual perhaps that one might anticipate prior to the act coming into operation. I hear the minister in that regard: that might amount to some time passing or not. To perhaps then couch that in terms that are rather more specific, and these are no more than practical examples, I might put it in terms of three different categories.

One is where a particular employee is engaged in training one or more other key employees and the business might be affected in that compound way by the fact of that employee being involved in training, whether or not the training involves training children—just in a training capacity. If it is in the interests of, if you like, the third party—apprentice or trainee of some sort on the job—not to have their training disrupted, you can see a whole range of different parties affected by the advantages of continuity of the training.

Again, perhaps for the purposes of this bill, it is important to couch that in terms of let's exclude circumstances in which the training is of minors. As one might argue, it is going directly to that kind of contact. If it is not already covered by the old form categorisation of 'nature of work', this is one of those circumstances that is very close to the old form 'nature of work'. In any event, let's just say it is training that is provided to one or more other employees, and it is in the interests of those trainees and the employer at least that there be continuity. It might be that that is a post-commencement commissioner discretion point, but to the extent that there is a particular range of training programs about which consultation prior to commencement would be desirable, that is one thought.

Secondly, which is sort of related to it, is where the skills of the employee are deployed in a particular time-critical way, and if there were to be some precipitous circumstance then requiring that employee to leave the employment or change the way in which they are doing it—the location and so on.

Thirdly, and perhaps for good measure—and I hear the context in terms of the industrial relations parallels and the existence of the primary act—is the minister able to say categorically or give examples, if there are, of circumstances in which the commencement of the act will lead to circumstances which themselves might be grounds for termination in that there is just no way, absent the exercise of the commissioner's discretion, for the employment to be maintained in any way? Therefore, notwithstanding the provision of training, notwithstanding relevant discrete skills that might

be applicable to a particular trade or a particular location, is there any circumstance in which the operation of the act will provide grounds for termination?

Perhaps to flesh that out somewhat, having given that kind of spectrum of responses from employer obligations all the way through to employer supports in the broad, and we are dealing with clause 2, I am to understand that the government will have given consideration to circumstances in which the commencement of the act will give rise to circumstances where the employer is for the first time aware of the particulars of the circumstances of the employee if there are no grounds for termination associated with navigating that space. What particular recourse might an employer have in dealing with that both prior to commencement and otherwise?

The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD: I think there are five questions in that one question, so I will do my best. To go back to the first question, I think you alluded to a question mark over whether the consideration of commencement was outside any business-as-usual processes, and the answer that I gave to your earlier question about the safety of children, the needs of the police commissioner and SAPOL and the needs of the employer, all being balanced in terms of commencement, are what we would say are business-as-usual processes to go through when whatever the subject matter of the bill is that a particular minister and the government will go through.

I will take the question about training and about skills needing to be employed in a critical way and group them together by saying that the base of those questions, despite there being different examples, is a question again about disruption to the employer and I would say—

Mr Teague: And the trainees—

The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD: Yes, that's right. What I would say again is that, as I spoke about in my introductory remarks, there are transitional provisions that do not necessarily mean they may but they do not necessarily mean immediate termination—there are certainly circumstances where they may by the nature of this bill—but the purpose of the transitional provisions is to contemplate a range of matters: again, first and foremost, the safety of children and also potential disruption.

In terms of the grounds of termination, there are all sorts of reasons that an employer has the right to terminate employment. Those reasons will continue to exist, and those rights of the employer to engage in disciplinary proceedings, including termination of employment, will continue.

Mr TEAGUE: I appreciate there are a number of scenarios put there in terms of what might affect the timing of the act coming into operation. That is of assistance, both in the particular context of commencement and perhaps generally.

What is important perhaps to keep on reiterating in this space is that, with the possible exception of the scenario I put in terms of the provision of training by an employee of other employees in the course of their broader work where the trainees are minors—let's say they are undertaking an apprenticeship and they are 16 or 17 years old—that might be couched within the former regime, if you like, the former approach, which defined 'child-related work' in terms of the nature of the work and the range of categories there that are all set out. They are readily understandable. They are categories of work that can be identified in advance and it is clear on an objective reading and in a temporal sense as well that we are focused on the nature of the work, not on those categories of persons who might come from time to time into the workplace for different reasons.

That training environment example might be a bridge from one to the other, but for the bulk of circumstances we are now going to be zeroing in on employees who have otherwise for some time had to steer clear of that large number of categories of child-related employment and now they instead, in a temporal sense, find themselves possibly from time to time in employment that is caught by the new definition.

I think we have all agreed that it is a new form of complexity that involves a new form of live assessment from time to time and it might be one in which the person's employment is perfectly acceptable for a period of time. It becomes prohibited by the act by dint of the employment of children from time to time and then may cease to be prohibited by the act in further subsequent circumstances, hence I think the understandable focus on the commencement of these provisions.

As I understand the answers given to questions so far in relation to commencement, there will be the usual course of pre-commencement work, but nothing that is particularly unusual has been identified. Is it fair then in those circumstances to say that the government's intent is to navigate that live assessment process, if you like, primarily by the operation of the safeguards that are the subject of the balance of the bill, therefore post-commencement?

The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD: I think I understand where the question is amongst the detail there. I think the short answer is that it is both. I just spoke about the considerations—the safety of children, the police commissioner and SAPOL's needs, and employer needs—in terms of determining the date for commencement. Also, of course, with the transitional provisions during that period, there is another opportunity to consider those particular groups and that particular imperative around the safety of children in that period and rightly so.

Of course, as is the case with any legislative amendment, there is ongoing examination of the efficacy of particular provisions with regard to those three groups and the imperative around the safety of children and the need for SAPOL and also employers to undertake their operations. I believe that answers the member's question.

Mr TEAGUE: Before leaving the clause, I will conclude that point by highlighting the relevance, the importance, of the Law Society's observation at paragraph 12 of its letter to the Attorney dated 7 August 2023, where it makes the observation, by reference to the Criminal Law Committee, that:

...the Committee noted the Bill effectively contemplates an extension to the already existing prohibition from engaging in 'child related work.' Practically, the definition will now expand.

That is the ground we have covered. It continues:

It will now not cover simply work in which children are involved. It will now extend to a workplace in which children are also employed.

We have talked about the temporal nature of that. The letter continues:

While the very important objectives of the Bill are noted, the Committee highlighted the need for an important balance to be struck to ensure any amendments do not give rise to an increased potential for arbitrary outcomes.

The two concerns of the Law Society that are made clear on the face of that are first the fact that the provisions apply to those who are charged with offences—that is not the subject of this question—and second is the concern that the provisions can apply arbitrarily. In that context, the Law Society is emphasising in its submission the importance therefore of the possibility for the exercise of discretion by the commissioner.

I appreciate the minister's answers in terms of work done in preparation for the bill. We are here talking about when it is going to commence. I have thought of a couple of scenarios in which continuity might be in the interests of more than just the affected employee; training circumstances for one, training of adults. As I understand it, the circumstances of the commencement are about as vanilla flavoured as they can be. They are normal. We expect commencement fairly soon.

The range of different scenarios that one might contemplate in terms of workplace—everything from consequential termination through to changes of rosters, changes to training arrangements, changes to the securing of unique skills—they are for all intents and purposes going to need to find their way, and to the extent that an exemption is appropriate for particular circumstances, then the commissioner is going to have important work to do.

The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD: As the member has pointed out, the Criminal Law Committee at paragraph 12 does highlight the need for, importantly, that balance to be struck to ensure any amendments do not give rise to an increased potential for arbitrary outcomes, as he has just spoken about. However, at paragraph 13, the committee also:

...highlighted (and supported) the ability for the arbitrary operation of these provisions to be ameliorated by a person being able to apply to the Commissioner for an exemption.

They go on to say that is appropriate and should remain.

Clause passed.

Clause 3.

Mr TEAGUE: On clause 3, I highlight the corollary to—I do not have it in front of me—I think section 11 of the Bail Act and subsection (2ab). This is one of those matters of coherence that has been thought about in the course of the preparation of the bill, and I understand it, but I just want to highlight the temporal point that is introduced now.

Perhaps as a threshold question, because I can be a bit slow on the uptake sometimes: is it indeed an introduction of a temporal assessment? Is there any other existing category of, in the old regime, child-related work that would require a temporal assessment—the point about children being employed from time to time, that situation changing in a whole variety of circumstances—or is it actually a complete proposition to say that we are moving entirely from an environment in which the nature of the work was the full test and we are now going to be in an environment where there is this sort of centrally temporal test that is going to depend on whether children are in fact employed from time to time in whatever workplace?

The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD: Again, the short answer to the question is that there would be temporal assessment, as there is now under part 5, section 64 of the Child Sex Offenders Registration Act. If you look at the definitions there, if you take part 5, section 64(1)(i) of the Child Sex Offenders Registration Act, which talks about overnight camps, for instance, right now there could be a circumstance where an employee is involved in particular camps with that organisation with adults, for instance—taking adults to a camp—but then it changes and that particular employee potentially has responsibility for running those overnight camps with children. Of course, there would be that timely assessment to ensure that the provisions of the bill are upheld.

Similarly, for instance, in relation to part 5, section 64(1)(j), should there be a period of time when an association or a movement does not have particular children associated with that movement, association or club, but then at a later time they do, of course there would be that timely assessment in relation to these new provisions that we introduce through this bill to make sure that those provisions are upheld.

Mr TEAGUE: Alright. That might be debated. I doubt that (i) and (j)—

The Hon. K.A. Hildyard: They might not be the best examples.

Mr TEAGUE: They might be; (i) might be the best example, but I doubt that either of them take us very far. I would have invited the minister to say that the short answer was yes; it is not particularly controversial. I can understand circumstances, possibly, where 64(1)(i) might involve a temporal assessment. In terms of clubs, associations and movements where there is a significant child membership or involvement, we go to the nature of it—if it is a junior sporting club.

But the essential point is that we go from categories of work that are readily identifiable by their nature to the presence or not of children in workplaces of any kind. Therefore, it is now everybody in circumstances where before it was about, essentially, child-facing work, work in which the employee by the nature of their work carried some of the indicia of close connection, to use the language of vicarious liability. The analogy might have been made in the past to that close connection test for vicarious liability.

We had the debate over the last 100 years or so around whether or not it can ever be possible for an employer to be responsible for the criminal conduct of their employee. That has been aired in a range of jurisdictions over the last 20 years in particular in circumstances of sexual abuse by that employee, and the high watermark of those cases has been in circumstances of 64(1)(a) to (p) categories—school, boarding house—where the nature of the duties of the employee are so closely connected to children that the vicarious link may be established.

But here we move into different territory altogether, territory in which there is this temporal connection. Perhaps the question might be couched in terms of: has the government given any contemplation to the kind of macroconsequences of legislation of this kind and, if so, is it prepared for a change of approach that might occur, the application of a hypercaution, if you like, by both employees and employers, in which you will see a very clear separation between anybody who is even remotely likely to have any contact with anyone under the age of 18 in a workplace? To what

extent is that a potential unintended consequence of the legislation and in the interests of productivity generally, or does it fall into the category of we will just have to see what we find as we go along?

The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD: I think the question was about have we contemplated those, I think the words you used were 'macroconsequences' or 'broader consequences', and the very short answer is yes.

Clause passed.

Clause 4.

Mr TEAGUE: We are here then focused on the work of the commissioner. The commissioner already has a range of powers and this is now having the effect of broadening that to the new paragraph (ka) category. In terms of the broadening of the scope, I might have gone around the block a few times on this whole change of work to be done under this legislation, but moving away from categories of work and the exercise of discretion to what one might contemplate as being characterised by endless different discrete sorts of circumstances where someone, until the public debate has occurred and until the legislation is enacted, might have perhaps never dreamed that they were employing anyone who was vaguely conducting child-related work and will need to equip themselves with that new fluency.

But in terms of what is going to come to the commissioner, is it now likely to be a whole different range of almost endlessly unique factual circumstances that might be newly associated with children being employed from time to time? The first question might be to workload and resources: has there been any indication to or from the commissioner about the nature and scope of the work that is likely to have to be done by the commissioner in response to the new landscape?

The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD: In a broad sense, there will be some resourcing impact and we are alive to that and it is something we are considering, and it is something that we will continue to monitor in consultation with the commissioner. The reason that I say that we are alive to it and will continue to monitor it is that, as the act commences and the period of time unrolls when people have to declare or make their particular notification about their status as a registered child sex offender, that will of course give rise to a further contemplation of what particular resourcing impact this bill will have.

I think it is incredibly important that we do continue to be alive to it and continue to monitor it as these provisions come into effect, because we certainly would not want to estimate that there is a particular resourcing impact and then there is a greater need or a lesser need, but it is something that we are alive to, will continue to monitor and will continue to of course communicate with the commissioner and with SAPOL about that potential resourcing impact and the depth or the breadth of that particular impact.

Mr TEAGUE: The next question perhaps goes to the merits and I go to subclause (3), the new subsection (5a) and particularly subsection (5a)(b). Cutting through all the rest of the criteria, we have someone who is caught by (ka) and their offence is not connected to child-related work in the old regime, then the commissioner has a merits task to do and that is expressed in (b):

- (b) the Commissioner is satisfied that the offender does not pose a risk to the safety and well-being of children employed in the business or undertaking that constitutes the child-related work.

For some reason, what keeps coming to my mind is an engineer employed on a mine site, working with machinery that is critical for the mine site. I do not know why, but it just keeps coming into my mind during the course of this debate in terms of an example. The person is a long-term employee. They are on a fly-in fly-out arrangement and there are perhaps apprentices on site from time to time. So (ka) is triggered and the person is otherwise useful. Perhaps they are engaged in all the example circumstances that I have indicated.

In any event, you now have an employer in need of that employee with particular skills and there is an application in the offing. What, if any, insight can the government give about the matters that the commissioner might need to draw upon in order to satisfy themselves of that test in (b)? How could the commissioner possibly know in those circumstances whether or not the offender posed a risk? Is the government conscious of there being an assessment that is going to be so particularised as to identify beyond the individual the particular tasks? Is the government anticipating seeing,

therefore, a kind of 'There's your supplementary rule book on the exercise of the discretion; on you go'? For good measure, how is that anticipated to work in a practical sense?

The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD: Thank you for the question. I would draw the member's attention to the substantive act, the Child Sex Offenders Registration Act 2006, and particularly to section 66B which sets out the general power of the commissioner to make declaration, and particularly to subsection (7) which I think sets out really the answer to the question that the member has posed. It provides:

- (7) In deciding whether to make the declaration and the terms of any such declaration, the Commissioner must take into account—
- (a) any risk assessment undertaken in relation to the offender; and
 - (b) any other offending by the registrable offender; and
 - (c) any victim impact statement; and
 - (d) the sentencing remarks relating to each relevant offence,
- and may take into account any other matter the Commissioner considers appropriate.

Then there is a note that sets out a particular example in relation to that last point.

Mr TEAGUE: So in that sense, no change, and that is section 66B, general power. Again, I am looking to interrogate this in circumstances where the commissioner, until now, has been called on to exercise the discretion in circumstances of the old regime in which it is the nature of the work that we are considering. And to take the minister's example at (i), the overnight camp, if one were to consider the exercise of the discretion in those circumstances, then there are some fairly clear lines of sight that might answer an application for the exercise of discretion in that category of work type context.

So if the answer is that it is a subsection (7) assessment, same as it is, and the note applies, then so be it. I am just flagging that subsection (7) is now going to have to be twisted and personalised and applied in a much wider range of circumstances than it was before. If that is what it amounts to, that is what it amounts to.

The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD: Again, I think the short answer is probably yes. I hear your question or point, and yes, that is right.

Clause passed.

Schedule.

Mr TEAGUE: I will hazard this. In dealing with transitional provisions, as I understand it, those who have already been charged and would otherwise be affected are not covered by (ka) retrospectively, but the application of clause 2 of the schedule is to require that the notification obligation applies anyway, perhaps, if I put it that way. The affected employee, in terms of the transitional arrangements, who has been previously charged and bailed—

The Hon. K.A. Hildyard interjecting:

Mr TEAGUE: Two.

The Hon. K.A. Hildyard interjecting:

Mr TEAGUE: No, they have been charged and they are on bail. Correct me if I am wrong, but by virtue of (a):

A registrable offender who—

- (a) on the commencement of this Act, becomes a person engaged in child-related work—

The Hon. K.A. Hildyard interjecting:

Mr TEAGUE: Yes. We can wrap it up for all purposes in terms of clause 3 as well. Where they are not caught by (ka) for reasons that the bail agreement is entered into prior to commencement—that is the example that I am focused on—then they have a notification obligation, nevertheless, to the employer by virtue of these specific provisions. Is that the appropriate

characterisation and, therefore, they will need to look to these prospective provisions in order to find their obligation to report to the employer?

The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD: I am really trying to answer the question. If you are on bail, the terms of your bail agreement will not be retrospectively changed; however, that requirement to provide that notice will exist.

Mr Teague: And by virtue of these transitional provisions.

The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD: Yes.

Mr TEAGUE: I know this question might have arisen in the course of the debate on the substantive bill. We are here talking about transitional provisions, we have emphasised that the obligation is on the affected employee to navigate the territory and the indication has been given that SAPOL will be extra active in terms of that. And where someone is the subject of bail conditions, there might be an ideal environment in which they are being monitored and they can be advised, 'Right, hang on, have you thought about this?'

In terms of those means by which this cohort of affected individuals are going to be advised, assisted, engaged, does the minister have anything to add to previous answers in terms of those resources that might be applied to making sure that they are appropriately informed and therefore matters are not compounding unnecessarily?

The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD: You are right. I think the answer is similar to the answer I gave earlier in relation to the police resourcing question. Of course, we will be monitoring and be alive to any additional resourcing that is required, but for those who are on bail, there are already interactions with particular authorities, and I am sure those interactions will be exercised in terms of discussions around the notification, but we will be monitoring any additional resourcing as the provisions take effect.

Schedule and title passed.

Bill reported without amendment.

Third Reading

The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD (Reynell—Minister for Child Protection, Minister for Women and the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing) (12:21): I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Bill read a third time and passed.

STATUTES AMENDMENT (NATIONAL ENERGY LAWS) (WHOLESALE MARKET MONITORING) BILL

Second Reading

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 15 November 2023.)

Mr ODENWALDER: Sir, I draw your attention to the state of the house.

A quorum having been formed:

Mr PATTERSON (Morphett) (12:24): I take the opportunity to speak today about the Statutes Amendment (National Energy Laws) (Wholesale Market Monitoring) Bill and indicate that I am the lead speaker for the opposition on this bill. This bill, like others we have spoken about beforehand, is another batch of reforms coming from the Energy Ministers' Meeting, and it seeks to amend both the National Electricity (South Australia) Act 1996 and the National Gas (South Australia) Act 2008.

The main intent of the bill is to provide the Australian Energy Regulator with new gas and electricity contracts market monitoring powers. The aim stated is that the AER has the information and visibility it will then need to understand both the wholesale electricity market and the wholesale

gas market. In terms of how it has arrived here in the South Australian parliament, this initiative has been in the pipeline for some time, going back to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's June 2018 Retail Electricity Pricing Inquiry.

In their final report, they recommended that the AER's wholesale market monitoring should be expanded and appropriately funded to include monitoring, analysing and reporting on the contract market. Of course, after that report in 2018 the Energy Security Board in their July 2021 Data Strategy also recommended expanding the Australian Energy Regulator's powers and monitoring capabilities for wholesale markets, as proposed by the ACCC and agreed to by ministers, to ensure more effective markets and consumer protections.

That work has been, as I said, in the pipeline for a while. It now arrives here in our parliament based upon the fact that South Australia is the lead legislator for the national energy laws, and so the changes to the wholesale market monitoring are being introduced here. Of course, as on previous occasions the convention for such changes to the national energy laws is that these legislative amendments are supported by the opposition, and so I indicate that the opposition will be supporting this bill.

As I said in my earlier remarks, this place has considered reforms to both the gas and electricity markets, with past amendments such as the east coast gas system amendments, consumer data right protection, gas pipelines, market transparency and also ministerial powers. There have been amendment bills dealing with those matters.

As part of the consultation with stakeholders, it was pointed out to me by one of the stakeholders that this reform that we are seeing here continues the trend of gas and electricity market reform delivering market transparency and increased powers to market bodies, in this case the Australian Energy Regulator but in other cases that I mentioned, the Australian Energy Market Operator or the AEMC.

This is being done in an attempt to address supply issues over the last two years. They will tell these market bodies more about what is going on. You would think, yes, that that is important, and you certainly would not get an argument from many in regard to that. But it also is putting more and more compliance burden on industry—the stakeholders in this, whether it is the gas producers, the gas pipelines, the generators or retailers, as well.

As I said, there has been effort in here, but there does not seem to be a corresponding effort to actually address the fundamental issue, as I talked about before—the supply issues. There has been no effort to increase supply by getting more gas out of the ground and into the gas markets, nor is there more baseload electricity generation in place before retiring coal-fired power generation. We know that these supply constraints have inevitably led to higher prices.

We know that South Australian working families are struggling with higher power prices, and they are looking for relief. They are at breaking point and they are pleading for relief. So, rather than the energy ministers looking to address things that are going to really shift the dial and getting prices down, what we are getting are these sorts of measures here. This is what they have been effectively served up with, and it becomes just a drawn-out process.

What I am hearing from people in my community down in Morphett, and from people in many other electorates as well, broadly across South Australia, is that a lot of customers can certainly tell the market bodies what is happening just by looking at their power bills. On the weekend I was at a business where their power bills have gone up massively. Previously, two years ago, the bills were around \$2,000 per quarter, and now their most recent bills are up to \$5,100 a quarter. They can tell just by looking at their bill what is going on, and they could quite happily pass on to the AER that there are big issues going on in terms of their power bills that need to be addressed appropriately and urgently.

The AER does a number of reports. At the end of last year it put out its annual retail markets report and in that it gave a breakdown of the composition of residential electricity and gas bills. If you look at what the report said in terms of gas bills, it rightly highlights that wholesale costs contribute approximately 33 per cent to customers' gas bills, network charges make up 43 per cent of the bills, and the remainder is the retail. Additionally, if you look at the breakdown of an average electricity bill,

around 35 per cent of the cost of those bills are network charges, about 43 per cent of the costs are to do with wholesale power, and the remainder relates to both retail and environmental programs.

That is the breakdown and it gives you a bit of an idea, I suppose, about this bill, if it is looking at wholesale transparency or market monitoring. In terms of the electricity market, it is looking at about 43 per cent of the underlying costs in household power bills. In terms of gas, it contributes about 33 per cent, so it is dealing with about 33 per cent. Again, effort needs to be put in to make sure that the overall bills are coming down.

I will talk a bit about electricity and how that works in the wholesale portion. It is bought and sold through the national energy markets. There is the wholesale spot market for selling electricity and there is also the transmission grid to transport the energy to customers—to the major metropolitan networks and the urban centres—and, within that, there is the distribution network as well. In the case of SA, it is SA Power Networks.

In terms of the wholesale side of things, on the spot market, the price can fluctuate wildly. A cap is in place, though, to make sure energy prices do not become off the scales. Even so, prices can go up to \$16,660 per megawatt hour when you have periods of really high demand and low generation. Similarly, when there is a saturation of generation, as happens during the day when it is very sunny, there is a floor price of negative \$1,000 per megawatt hour. You would think, 'Why would there be negative prices?' With the increase in renewables, there are really wide variations in price, as I said, going from negative prices during periods of really high solar output combined with wind through to very high prices when there is no wind and solar generating into the system and, concurrently, very high demand as well.

One of those situations happened only a couple of weeks ago here in South Australia. Spot prices were up at the capped amount of \$16,600, and it coincided with a hot day. Towards the end of the day, when there was no solar and the wind was absent as well, this caused big price spikes. That feeds through, unfortunately, into people's bills and businesses' bills. The system is having to deal with a lot of intermittency.

The original system was built, as I have commented before, at a time when you had a centralised power system based upon coal-fired power stations that would run predominantly all day, and then they were supplemented by gas to deal with the peaks and troughs predominantly when people are waking up and businesses are starting and, similarly, as people are coming home. That has been upended with intermittent renewables, and so we have the spot market going up and down, sometimes a number of times in the one day. Because of this, because it can go up and down so much, it really is incumbent and sensible for any retailer that is trying to purchase electricity to then onsell to their customers to try to protect against these wild fluctuations.

It is very hard to plan a business around a weather forecast a few days in advance. Ultimately, the weather now has more and more of a role in terms of dictating what the overall spot price will be, because not only does it impact on the demand, which was the traditional driver of demand—on cold days people put their heaters on, and on hot days they put the air conditioner on—but now also the supply side is being more and more influenced by the weather.

As I said, it would be very difficult for retailers to plan what your electricity purchase would be over the next three days or the next week based upon weather forecasts. They can have a bit of a guide, but it really makes it next to impossible to try to predict in advance six months or 12 months what the weather could be.

Hence, what retailers look to do is contract over longer periods of time or hedge with generators in advance to lock in a firm price for electricity to be supplied into the future. It works well for both parties. These hedging contracts can be traded publicly as standardised products on the ASX, but more likely as bespoke agreements directly between the two parties. These are known as over-the-counter contracts. Because they are between two parties, they will be customised to their needs, taking into account what their customer base is, what their demand profile is, which they understand, and then making sure that they will be able to supply to the demand regardless of the conditions. It puts the onus on the generators to then provide it. By doing this it does provide more certainty and it also manages the exposure to volatility.

As I said previously, the over-the-counter contracts work for both the purchasers, the retailers, and also the sellers of the product: the generators. From a retailer's perspective, the retailers can manage their wholesale market price volatility for their customers. They can lock in a firm price for electricity to be supplied into the future. That allows for them to then in turn give stable pricing for their customers, because customers do not want to have to think on any particular day about whether the rate of electricity they are going to be purchasing will be going up or down. It is much easier for them to know that it will be not exposed to this sort of volatility.

In terms of the generators as well, the advantage of these over-the-counter contracts means that it reduces their exposure and risk as well, and allows them to lock in future revenue. As I said, these contracts go out for six months, 12 months and even more. It gives them revenue streams, it allows them to provide forward budgets and, additionally, can underpin their investment into new generation. If they know they have this revenue coming down the line, that will justify new investment. Certainly, there is a need for new investment in generation—it is very important—especially if that generation is base load power as well. We know that that will help to stabilise prices as well and reduce the peaks and troughs that are going on at the moment.

In terms of these contracts, a lot of the ASX products are publicly listed, so they are available for the AER to look at. The AER does not presently have the power to look at the over-the-counter contracts bespoke agreements between two parties. They cannot look at them. They do not have the power to request these contracts for monitoring purposes, and so a large part of the bill that has come before us deals with that by giving the AER the powers to gather information about electricity contracts and also financial risk management products using the expanded information-gathering powers considered in this bill.

I talked earlier about gas. The average wholesale composition of a bill is around 33 per cent. In terms of how that plays out, most of the gas that is bought and sold in the Australian domestic market is done so under gas supply agreements (GSAs) between producers and also the users of gas, predominantly contracting the amounts of gas over a time period as well. A smaller proportion of the total gas supply is traded in markets run by the Australian Energy Market Operator in a number of forms: short-term trading markets, declared wholesale gas markets and also the Gas Supply Hub exchange.

Again, this bill before us also makes changes to expand the AER's powers to monitor and report on the wholesale gas market. Principally, it is similar to the changes that will occur with the market monitoring for the electricity markets as well. Not only is gas important in its own right, for industrial uses and for homes as well via the retailers for home consumption, but of course it is also very important in the electricity generation mix. It is a flexible fuel and can be used in peakers to come online fairly quickly and it helps firm renewables as well.

When I talked before about intermittency and prices going up and down, gas plays a very significant role in allowing renewables to be firmed as well. In fact, in the latest version of AEMO's Integrated System Plan that has been put out for consultation they forecast that, as renewables roll out, the amount of gas generation will increase from their original forecast back in 2022, which was 10 gigawatts, to 16 gigawatts.

You can see that it is recognised by AEMO how important gas is to the market and so, as I have said in previous speeches around some of the powers given to these market bodies, there needs to be a lot of effort put into trying to address the supply issue because, if we are going to have that much gas going into the electricity market, we need to have gas that is cheap and is not pushed up in price because the supply has been artificially reduced by governments.

Certainly, the Victorian government is a big culprit in terms of that. We know that the southern basins are declining, so there needs to be replacements for those. South Australia has a pipeline of SEA Gas coming from that region, so it is inextricably linked to those basin declines. We do need more supply coming into the market as we go forward, as the Australian Energy Market Operator's ISP lays out in detail. We have the northern basin and certainly significant ones in Australia and ones in Queensland and New South Wales that should be brought to market and that principally help the whole of Australia in terms of dealing with the supply of gas and therefore the actual prices that flow through as a result.

The other aspect of the point made is that, as there is more intermittency and unpredictability in the electricity generation mix, the ability to contract gas in similar amounts on an ongoing basis is getting changed. Certainly, consumption has become more volatile and that has brought changes into the contracting that is going on—these gas supply agreements between parties—so we need to make sure they are allowed to continue and be flexible as changes in the market unfold.

If I move on to some other changes in the bill, it also causes the AER to prepare a report on the results of its wholesale market monitoring function at least once every two years. We already have reports into wholesale power and gas prices by the AER. It also releases a wholesale markets quarterly report. If you cast your minds back to when this amendment bill was introduced into parliament last year, at the time the AER had just released their quarter 3 of 2023 wholesale markets quarterly report. At the time, it certainly did make for sobering reading not only for households here in South Australia but also for small businesses.

When I look at what was laid out, these are the average wholesale quarterly prices averaged over the whole quarter. In terms of the quarter 3 of 2023 numbers, it showed that SA had the highest quarterly average wholesale power price in the nation. It was \$114. When you compare that with some of the other states, New South Wales was next at \$89 per megawatt hour; averaged over the quarter, Queensland came in at \$74; Victoria had \$59; and Tasmania had \$31 per megawatt hour. You can see that South Australia was head and shoulders above the other states.

That was and is having a material effect on the power bills that South Australians ultimately have to pay. As I mentioned before, the AER said that on average wholesale prices make up about 43 per cent of customers' electricity bills. Of course, we had the minister coming out and saying the problems are a result of the war in Ukraine. As time has gone by, what we have found is that really became a catalyst, but the underlying issue was a lack of gas supply, and that tipped it over the edge.

If you look at what the wholesale prices were in quarter 3 of 2021, which was of course pre the Ukraine war, and look at South Australia versus the others, South Australia's wholesale rate averaged over quarter 3 in 2021 was \$63 per megawatt hour. Comparing with the other states, New South Wales had \$88 per megawatt hour, Queensland had \$90 per megawatt hour, Victoria had \$64 per megawatt hour and Tasmania had \$27 per megawatt hour. Comparing those prices back in quarter 3 of 2021 with the prices in quarter 3 of 2023, you can see that all other states had gone back down by that stage.

So the issue around any bubble because of Ukraine had passed those states by, but in South Australia we still had very high wholesale electricity prices, well over and above what they were two years previously in quarter 3 of 2021. While all other states in the National Electricity Market had seen their wholesale prices fall since the start of 2023, South Australia was the only state that had seen its wholesale prices increase. At the start of quarter 4 in 2022, South Australia's wholesale price was \$80 per megawatt hour, so it had gone up from \$80 to \$114.

The other point out of that is that it clearly shows that while we have the Premier trying to constantly deflect responsibility for massive power bills in South Australia by saying it is an east coast energy crisis, you can see that in terms of the wholesale prices, all the states had been able to revert back to comparable to what they had two years prior, except for South Australia. The Premier really needs to acknowledge and admit that these power prices show that it is a South Australian crisis. It cannot be passed off as an east coast crisis.

I talked about the quarter 3 wholesale numbers in 2021, when they were much lower than those of quarter 3 in 2023. That played a big role in the reduction in power bills that occurred under the former Liberal government. I have said previously that, according to the ESCOSA report, we saw power bills reduce by \$421 over the term of the former Liberal government after inheriting surging electricity prices from the Weatherill Labor government. The current energy minister was the energy minister in that government as well. Prices were going up. Now we have prices going up again, with the same minister in charge.

Going back to those prices in quarter 3, pointing out that the prices were high, we had the minister on radio saying, 'They were high because there were issues with the interconnector for two days and that would have increased prices by about \$20.' He said, 'If that hadn't been the case then

we would have been below a lot of the other states.' Again, referring back to the costs that I outlined just before, South Australia had average quarterly prices of \$114 for that quarter 3 and the next highest was New South Wales at \$89. Even if you took off the \$20, that had South Australia at \$94 so it still would have been the highest in the nation. It is not good enough to try to blame and shift the blame onto other things. The minister and the government need to take responsibility for this, they really do.

As I said before, when I went back to look at those quarterly prices again, going back to quarter 1 of 2023 the price in South Australia was an average of \$99 per megawatt hour. As I said previously, in quarter 4 of 2022 the price was \$80 per megawatt hour, so again we are seeing an increase from quarter 4 of 2022 to quarter 1 of 2023—and in fact, SA was the only jurisdiction to experience an increase in their wholesale prices between quarter 4 of 2022 and quarter 1 of 2023.

There are underlying issues there. Both that increase there and also, as I said, the quarter 3 wholesale prices being the highest in the nation, are a huge concern, especially the quarter 3 one because that came out in the period of July to October and came on the back of a massive jump in the default market offer that occurred back on 1 July 2023.

South Australian households that were on market offers were forced to absorb some of the highest increases to electricity prices in the nation on 1 July 2023. Households copped big blowouts of up to \$512 extra per year for the average household on a default market offer, while there was a whopping \$1,310 jump for small businesses that were on these default market offers. These were massive, massive increases for households and equated to anywhere up to 23.9 per cent for residential customers and 28.9 per cent for small businesses.

That heaped additional pressure onto those families and small business owners and, of course, these increases also came on top of increases that had happened in the previous default market offer (DMO), DMO-4, which came in on 1 July 2022. Households in that DMO had prices go up by \$198—nearly \$200—in the previous year's default market offer. The result was, back on 1 July 2023, South Australian households had the highest increase to their power bills in dollar terms. Likewise, businesses certainly had the highest increase in their power bills, both in dollar terms and also in percentages. This left them paying some of the highest prices in the nation.

At the same time, last year AEMO warned that South Australia is one of the jurisdictions that has the highest chance of blackouts as well. We were warned that blackouts had a much higher chance of happening here in SA than in other states. I notice the time and I seek leave to continue my remarks.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 13:00 to 14:00.

Parliamentary Procedure

ANSWERS TABLED

The SPEAKER: I direct that the written answers to questions be distributed and printed in *Hansard*.

PAPERS

The following papers were laid on the table:

By the Speaker—

Auditor-General—

Consolidated Financial Report Review—Report 4 of 2024

[Ordered to be published]

Education Management System Project—Report 5 of 2024

[Ordered to be published]

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

VAILO Adelaide 500 Event 2023—Report summary on the

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

Regulations made under the following Acts—
National Parks and Wildlife—Wildlife—Protected Animals

By the Minister for Energy and Mining (Hon. A. Koutsantonis)—

Regulations made under the following Acts—
National Energy Retail Law (South Australia)—Local Provisions

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

Regulations made under the following Acts—
Public Finance and Audit—Public Authority

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

Regulations made under the following Acts—
Disability Inclusion—Exemptions

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

Government Response to the Environment, Resources and Development Committee's
Urban Forest Interim Report

Parliamentary Committees

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

Mr BROWN (Florey) (14:03): I bring up the 71st report of the committee, entitled SA Aquatic and Leisure Centre Renewal Works.

Report received and ordered to be published.

Parliamentary Procedure

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: Before I call questions without notice, I acknowledge the presence in the chamber today of year 9 students from Adelaide High School, guests of the member for Adelaide. Welcome to parliament.

Question Time

AMBULANCE RAMPING

The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS (Black—Leader of the Opposition) (14:04): My question is to the Premier. Will the Premier fix the ramping crisis? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS: The Malinauskas government was elected two years ago promising to fix the ramping crisis. Since then, the Premier has presided over the worst 21 months of ambulance ramping in South Australia's history and more ramping in less than two years than the former Liberal government's entire four-year term.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier) (14:04): We know that one of the big concerns that South Australians have at the top of their minds when it comes to our health service is the impact that ramping has. When we think about ramping at its worst, of course it's when ambulances don't roll up on time. But the good news is ambulances are now rolling up on time.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: What we have been able to do as a government is reverse, in a very substantial way, the policies that the former government had. Under the former Liberal government, we were the only state in the country to cut—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: —the Ambulance Service three out of four years. It's quite remarkable that across four years of the life of the former government, three—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: —just sticking to the facts—three out of four years they cut the Ambulance Service, so when we got a growing population and an ageing population, when we had a global pandemic, they thought—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: —the wise thing was to cut the Ambulance Service. When they started cutting the Ambulance Service—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: —guess what started happening? Guess what started happening?

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Morialta! Member for Florey!

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: Ambulances stopped rolling up on time. What we have done is we have completely reversed that.

Mrs Hurn interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Schubert!

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: We have dramatically boosted the Ambulance Service and now ambulances are rolling up on time.

Mr Whetstone interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Chaffey!

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: Now, on top of that—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: —we continue to roll out a program of employing more doctors, which we now have a lot more of—

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

The SPEAKER: The member for Morialta is warned.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: —more nurses—

The Hon. V.A. Tarzia interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The member for Hartley is warned.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: In fact, this year we have 832 new graduate nurses and midwives coming on board. Then, throughout the second half of this year, as a result of the decisions that we have made that those opposite would not, we have 150 new beds being added to the capacity of our hospital system. Then next year, another 130 new beds on top of that. What that adds up to is effectively a whole new Queen Elizabeth Hospital coming on line—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: —over the course of the next—

The Hon. V.A. Tarzia interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order, member for Hartley!

Mr Cowdrey interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Colton!

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: All things that would not have happened had this government not been in charge. More ambulances, more nurses, more doctors, more beds and all of that—

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

The SPEAKER: Member for Morialta!

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: —along with a better hospital system that would not otherwise have been the case if those opposite were in charge. What is telling—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order, members to my left!

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: What is telling, of course, is that all these policies: to build a bigger health system, to have more staff working in a hospital, the opposition haven't complained about once. They don't seek to criticise a single policy of the government's in the area of health. In fact, how could they?

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: How could they criticise our policy when they don't have one of their own? That's right, those opposite—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: —have no policy, no legitimate criticism, only commentary. Well, commentate all you like because those that commentate without policy are not entitled to be on the government benches.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: We are getting on with the task of actually delivering for the people of South Australia.

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

The SPEAKER: Member for Morialta, order!

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

The SPEAKER: There is a point of order from the Leader of Government Business.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: When you started speaking, sir, there was a wall of noise.

The SPEAKER: Indeed there was.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: A wall of noise. The opposition can't be interested in asking questions—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: —they interject continuously.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Florey, order! The member for Morialta, the member for Schubert, the member for Hartley, the member for Chaffey and the member for Florey are warned.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

AMBULANCE RESPONSE TIMES

The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS (Black—Leader of the Opposition) (14:08): My question is to the Premier. Has the Premier seen a copy of the full review and notes completed by the South Australian Ambulance Service into the death of Eddie?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier) (14:09): The government was very pleased to receive the report and the review that was conducted by SAAS. Naturally, it was a report given to the health minister, but being a matter of interest to the state, I have familiarised myself with that report. There were a number of recommendations that came out of the report that SAAS has, largely, accepted.

It was an important exercise. I think the review by SAAS demonstrates a couple of fundamental and key points. The first thing is that ambulance response times mattered in this instance. It also demonstrates that ramping informs ambulance response times—not exclusively, but it has an impact, which is why as a government we have a policy to address both. It's not just about fixing ramping and it's not just about fixing ambulance response times: both matter. I think, tragically, Eddie's circumstance demonstrates that.

The second thing is that, out of the review, we know that there were things that could be improved within SAAS in regard to the dispatch of ambulances under certain circumstances, and there were specific recommendations in that regard. I think there were also questions around the outbound calling effort from SAAS to the carer, which came up during the course of the review. We know that SAAS was making proactive outbound calls to Eddie's carer throughout the course of that day and into the evening, but there were issues in regard to how that was conducted and how that could be improved in the future, which were identified in the report and which SAAS is pursuing.

Amongst other issues that were contemplated throughout the course of the SAAS inquiry, triaging is an important element because of course, tragically, what we know in respect of Eddie's case is that once it was triaged from what was originally, from memory, a category 5—where it was resulting in a delayed response time—to a category 1, when it was triaged appropriately, the ambulance got there within a couple of minutes. I think, from memory, it was four minutes. I'm looking to the health minister: four minutes?

The Hon. C.J. Picton: Yes.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: The ambulance got there within four minutes. Tragically, Eddie, I understand, was dead on arrival, which is heartbreaking because had that triage been different earlier, it might have been a very different outcome than what was otherwise the case.

The recommendations have been accepted by SAAS. We see that as being a worthwhile exercise under terrible circumstances. I think it's fair to say that the SAAS review is also a demonstration of why one of the first things this government has done is to reverse those cuts to the Ambulance Service and actually given it—more than just reversing the cuts, what we have also done is given it a dramatic funding boost. It's hard to know whether or not the outcome would have been different in the absence of those cuts, but as a government we do believe those cuts hurt the Ambulance Service. The evidence speaks for itself, which is why we have reversed those cuts with some of the biggest funding boosts the South Australian Ambulance Service has ever seen.

To be more specific about it, in regard to the Ambulance Service itself—because that's what the review was principally into—we now have an additional 171 ambos on the books within two years of coming to office. We have increased the number of people who are working in SAAS as ambos by 171 over and above attrition, with another 87 coming online this year. By the end of 2024, we will have 258 additional ambos on board than what was the case when we were elected.

AMBULANCE RESPONSE TIMES

The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS (Black—Leader of the Opposition) (14:13): Supplementary to the Premier: is the review the Premier referred to in his answer the full and unredacted review that he has read, or the publicly available list of recommendations?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier) (14:13): I have seen both and I have read both.

The Hon. V.A. Tarzia: How about you table them?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader.

AMBULANCE RESPONSE TIMES

The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS (Black—Leader of the Opposition) (14:13): My question is to the Premier. Will the Premier direct the South Australian Ambulance Service to release the full review into Eddie's death to his family? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS: The Chief Executive Officer of SAAS confirmed, during a Budget and Finance Committee hearing on Friday 15 March, that Eddie's family were only given a copy of the seven findings and recommendations. These are publicly available.

The Hon. C.J. PICTON (Kurna—Minister for Health and Wellbeing) (14:14): I start by saying this was an absolutely shocking case that, I think, shocked all South Australians, and has been taken extremely seriously by the government, by SA Health more broadly and also by the SA Ambulance Service.

Promptly upon this issue becoming aware to us, we made sure that this was being reviewed. We conducted a review jointly by SA Ambulance Service and senior staff within it but also in conjunction with the Chief Medical Officer of South Australia, Dr Mike Cusack, who looked into this matter and provided information to the government, which is in findings and recommendations which were released in the past week or so. Those findings and recommendations outline, as the Premier has said, issues in terms of both ramping but also a number of matters that the Ambulance Service could have addressed in terms of helping to achieve a faster response in this instance.

Very specifically, this is not a report into the cause of death, which will ultimately be a matter for the Coroner to investigate, and we understand the Coroner will be looking into this matter. Secondly, it is not a report into what happened at the care accommodation this person was in, because obviously that is out of the scope of us in terms of SA Health and SA Ambulance Service.

SA Ambulance, the reviewers and Dr Cusack have been in contact regularly with the family, have met with the family, have provided information to the family, have provided briefings to the family. As per what Mr Elliott said in his evidence to the Budget and Finance Committee last week, they stand willing to further meet with the family and have further discussions and provide any additional information that the family would seek.

From the beginning of this inquiry, it was made clear to the public when it was first announced that the findings and recommendations of it would be made public, and that is what has been done, and those have been released in full. SA Ambulance Service and SA Health are now working on implementing those recommendations as soon as possible.

AMBULANCE RESPONSE TIMES

The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS (Black—Leader of the Opposition) (14:16): Supplementary to the Minister for Health: why won't the minister release the full report and its corresponding notes to the family?

The Hon. C.J. PICTON (Kaurua—Minister for Health and Wellbeing) (14:16): Firstly, I would say that both the Premier and I have offered to meet with the family on a number of occasions, and that offer remains open. We are very happy to do so. Secondly, as I said, both the reviewers through SAAS and Dr Cusack, the Chief Medical Officer, and Mr Rob Elliott, the chief executive of SAAS, have met with the family, have gone through the findings and recommendations, have talked in detail about the case. As Mr Elliott has said—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Unley and the member for Schubert will come to order.

The Hon. C.J. PICTON: As Mr Elliott said to the Budget and Finance Committee last week, he stands willing to provide further information to the next of kin.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Colton, order!

The Hon. D.G. Pisoni: What are you hiding?

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

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Schubert is on a second warning. The member for Unley is warned for a final time. The member for Chaffey is joining the member for Schubert on a second warning.

The Hon. C.J. PICTON: As I said and as Mr Elliott said last week in the Budget and Finance Committee, they stand willing to provide any other further information that the next of kin would wish to seek.

AMBULANCE RESPONSE TIMES

The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS (Black—Leader of the Opposition) (14:18): My question is again to the Premier. When will all the recommendations of the SAAS review into Eddie's death be implemented?

The Hon. C.J. PICTON (Kaurua—Minister for Health and Wellbeing) (14:18): This is also a question that was canvassed in the Budget and Finance Committee last week. These have only been provided to government in the past week, and there has now been work done on an implementation plan against these recommendations, in which we would expect there to be time lines. Obviously, we want them to be completed and implemented as soon as possible, but both SA Ambulance Service and SA Health more broadly are working through the implementation of that.

As was mentioned earlier, there are a number of recommendations. One firstly goes in terms of the hospital system and the release of ambulances when SA Ambulance is under pressure from our emergency departments. Secondly, it goes in terms of criteria callbacks for patients who are waiting and addresses changes around those and the criteria in which they can occur. I expect that they will be relatively quick to be able to change the criteria to make sure that that can be updated.

It also talks about other issues, such as putting in place teleconferencing so that there can be eyes on the scene in a number of cases between the Emergency Operations Centre staff and the people in the community. There will have to obviously be IT procurement and work through setting

that up, which probably would take longer to do so, but we are very committed to making sure that all those recommendations can be implemented as quickly as possible, and the team is currently working in terms of implementation plans and time frames around those.

GENERAL PRACTITIONER PAYROLL TAX

The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS (Black—Leader of the Opposition) (14:20): My question is to the Premier. How does the Premier respond to comments from the South Australian Chair of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, Dr Sian Goodson? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS: In a press release yesterday entitled, 'Stop The Patient Tax Grab', Dr Goodson was quoted as saying:

More and more patients will miss a GP consult and turn up to already under-pressure hospital emergency departments with conditions that could and should have been managed by their usual GP.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier) (14:20): I think there are an important couple of elements that I would say in regard to this subject. The first is this: the state government, particularly through the Treasurer and also the health minister, has been very keen to work collaboratively with representatives of GPs throughout the state, and that collaboration and effort has resulted in a reform that is the envy of GPs in other jurisdictions around the country, particularly around the amnesty arrangement that has been in place and is very, very different to what we see happening in other states, such as Victoria, where no such arrangement is available.

That was a package that was negotiated directly after engaging with GPs and their representatives, and we thank them for their advocacy in that regard to instruct that effort. They have subsequently now in some instances made clear they are wanting for more than that, and that's perfectly legitimate for them to advocate for. In that context, we will continue to engage in every way we can.

In respect to GP services more broadly, there is absolutely no doubt that we have a shortage of GPs in Australia at the moment. There are a range of reasons for that, but general medicine is very, very important in healthcare provision. Of course, the provision of GP services is within the remit of the commonwealth largely, because it is the commonwealth that is responsible for primary healthcare in our division of responsibilities between state and federal governments. It's interesting—on this side of the house we are committed to any measure that will make a positive difference to bulk billing rates and what we have seen is a really big change in policy.

Let's be clear about something: there has been no change to any rules, any legislation, any regulations in regard to GPs in South Australia—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. S.C. Mullighan: That's right, no change.

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: There has been no change.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Hartley and the Treasurer will come to order. The Premier has the call.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: There has been absolutely no change by the state government, but there has been a change at the federal level. This is important, because at the federal level what we saw during the life of the federal Conservative government was a freezing of the rebates paid to GPs. It turns out, if the federal Liberal Party takes a flamethrower to the revenue base of GPs in this country, guess what happens? We start to see a decline in general practice.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: Now, what won't be surprising to anyone bearing witness to today's question time is that the same party—

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

The SPEAKER: Member for Morialta!

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: —that cut the Ambulance Service in South Australia turns out to be the same party that at a federal level was cutting GP services across the nation.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: And now they complain about it. And the opposite is true—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The Treasurer is called to order.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: We are the party reinstating funding to the public hospital system—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Morialta!

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: —and we are the party seeking to provide support to GPs—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Hartley!

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: —across the country in regard to general practice.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

AUKMIN MINISTERIAL MEETING

Mrs PEARCE (King) (14:24): My question is to the Premier. Can the Premier update the house on the upcoming AUKMIN ministerial meeting?

Members interjecting:

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier) (14:24): We will get that chance in a couple of weeks, but right now we are—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Hartley is warned for a final time. The Premier has the call.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Chaffey!

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: On Friday—

The Hon. V.A. Tarzia interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The member for Hartley can depart under 137A for the remainder of question time.

The honourable member for Hartley having withdrawn from the chamber:

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: On one level I welcome every time the opposition opposes Gather Round. It just reminds—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: It is a unique form of politics.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: Some people say this opposition lacks courage and I simply point them to the fact that they oppose Gather Round. That takes a unique form of political courage; long may it continue.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Morialta is on a final warning. Members to my left and right, the Premier has the call. Order, member for West Torrens!

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: It turns out that it is not only the government that likes football, it is also none other than David Cameron, former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, who I look forward to attending a footy game at Adelaide Oval with on Friday night. That will be right after David Cameron and the British Defence Secretary, Grant Shapps, will have met with the Deputy Prime Minister of Australia, Richard Marles, along with the foreign minister of Australia, Penny Wong, right here in South Australia.

They will be having what is known as the AUKMIN meeting just down the road in Government House, in what represents another significant milestone for our state, particularly given the nature of the AUKUS relationship which has the power to reshape South Australia's economic complexity. This matters to working people; it matters to businesses in South Australia.

We have been working in close collaboration for some months now with the federal government and with the British foreign service represented by their embassy here in Canberra, formulating the AUKMIN meeting which would traditionally happen in a location like Canberra or Sydney but instead they have chosen to have it in Adelaide. Increasingly, the rest of the nation and, indeed, parts of the world are looking to South Australia as a place for significant investment—not just in our security relationship but our industrial relationship.

BAE Systems is about to double the number of employees it has in South Australia as a result of a fully funded plan to build frigates here, which is a big departure from previous policies. We very much look forward to active discussions at the AUKMIN meeting about the collaboration around the AUKUS relationship that will see nuclear submarines built in South Australia.

One of the key topics of discussion that I will be having with Mr Cameron and Mr Shapps in my engagement will be around what this state government is doing to invest in the skills and the training that are required to build these most extraordinary machines. We will be talking about the state government's technical colleges. We have been delivering the technical colleges—go down to Findon and check it out. We will be talking about the reforms—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: —this state government has made to amalgamate universities and attain, which the Deputy Premier has led, 1,200 additional university places specifically in regard to the AUKUS training effort. We will be talking about the investments we are making in three-year-old-preschool because this is such a long-term project. We are investing in the skills that will underpin the AUKUS arrangement and the AUKMIN relationship for many years to come.

GENERAL PRACTITIONER PAYROLL TAX

Mrs HURN (Schubert) (14:29): My question is to the Premier. Will the Premier meet with the royal college of GPs to discuss the Queensland government's payroll tax ruling? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

Mrs HURN: The Queensland government announced a new Revenue Office ruling clarifying that patients' fees paid directly to a GP for their services will not be subject to payroll tax.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN (Lee—Treasurer) (14:29): I thank the member for Schubert for her question. I remain in regular contact with the royal college. My office advises me that we are due to meet in the coming days to continue these discussions because, as the Premier has already advised the house, I have found the interactions I have had with Sian Goodson and the royal college extremely productive for the benefit of not just her constituency of her members, general practitioners in South Australia, but also the government.

It is as a result of those interactions and her representations that we have made a series of decisions as a government to put in place a regime that is far more generous to GPs than what is happening in some other states and territories. The reason why is that we recognise, as I think most people in this chamber would, the critically important role that GPs play in our community. As the Premier pointed out in some detail, the decade of abject misery that they were subjected to by the Liberal Party of Australia in their time in federal government—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Bear in mind, while they interject and seek to talk over the proceedings of question time, it is all of those people opposite who are calling out who stood in T-shirts and handed out for Tony Abbott, Peter Dutton and Malcolm Turnbull, for all those people who refused to increase the remuneration for GPs for a decade—not a real increase in remuneration for GPs under a Coalition federal government for a decade.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Chaffey, order! Member for Colton!

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: The member for Chaffey yells out, 'What are you doing?' The bulk-billing incentive was tripled in November—tripled.

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

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

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Schubert, your colleague the member for Morialta will be heard under 134. I anticipate 'debate'.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Standing order 98: debate. The question went to whether the Premier would meet in relation to the Queensland government ruling.

The SPEAKER: I will listen carefully. There were a number of interjections, particularly from my left. The Treasurer has the call.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: I know it is hard for those opposite. When they are screaming out interjections, it makes it hard for them to hear the information that is being given to the house. I have already discussed the regime of meeting with the royal college that the government is engaging in in the coming days.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: If that advice that we have provided to the house is not welcome by those opposite, then what I would encourage those opposite to do is stop spreading the deliberate lies and misinformation that their positioning on this issue has encapsulated.

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

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! There is a point of order from the member for Morialta, which will be heard under 134. The member for Schubert is called to order. I anticipate 98.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Yes, 98. The minister is required to respond to the substance of the question and not go on to debate related matters.

The SPEAKER: There is some merit in the point of order that has been raised, but it may be that the Treasurer has concluded his answer. No, very well; there is more to come.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Unlike the attempts of those opposite, principally the member for Colton and the member for Schubert, we are committed to dealing with this issue on the basis of facts, accurate information.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: We have those opposite, particularly those two members I just referred to, deliberately putting out misleading press releases.

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

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! There is a point of order under 134 from the member for Morialta. I anticipate he presses 98.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Yes, sir. In response to your last ruling, the Treasurer is ignoring it.

The SPEAKER: It was not so much a ruling as an encouragement to the Treasurer.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Morialta! The same content might well be introduced with less rhetorical varnish.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: So three times now I have confirmed the meeting arrangements between the government and the royal college.

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

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: You would like further information? We just can't keep up with you, John.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: We can't keep up. Maybe get a question. Just get a question. You are the deputy leader—step up. Step up to the plate.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Come on, contribute. That's why you're there. I conclude my remarks, sir.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer has concluded his answer.

GENERAL PRACTITIONER PAYROLL TAX

Mrs HURN (Schubert) (14:34): My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. Has the minister requested modelling from SA Health on potential impacts that GP payroll tax changes may have on pressure in our emergency departments and on ramping and, if not, why not?

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN (Lee—Treasurer) (14:35): This is exactly the same line of questioning on this that we had last week in parliament when—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: And I provide exactly the same definitive advice to the house as I did back then. Those opposite are running around with all sorts of contentions and conjecture around what the ongoing implementation of longstanding, unchanged, unaltered tax arrangements here in South Australia are.

Mr Cowdrey interjecting:

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Oh, the shadow treasurer now might have something to say. Oh my goodness!

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Colton! The member for Chaffey!

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Imagine outsourcing the treasury portfolio to the shadow minister for health. Just have a go.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The member for Morialta!

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Just get up and have a go. It's extraordinary. Why bother demanding to be on the front bench when you don't even want a question.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: And if you demand to be on the front bench, actually get on it. It's not rocket science.

Members interjecting:

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

Members interjecting:

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: That's right. That's exactly right.

An honourable member interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Anyway, we don't go about these exercises—

Mr Cowdrey interjecting:

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

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: —of modelling additional tax revenue because it has never been about that. And we don't go about modelling those other impacts because we don't believe them to be true.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Chaffey! Member for Morialta!

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: We are focused on working with the royal college—

Mrs Hurn: You haven't even asked.

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

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Colton is warned for a second time. The Treasurer has the call.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: We are approaching this in a calm, sensible way—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: —with the royal college and with the AMA. We can come in here and have a debate and we can ask questions which are not based in fact or interested in factual answers and you can try to get more information to run your misleading press releases all you want. On this side, we have been dealing with this reasonably with the royal college—

Members interjecting:

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

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: —and with the AMA for 12 months. In comparison to New South Wales, which has reconfirmed the longstanding obligation for payroll tax on contractor wages back to 1 July 2018, we, on the other hand, have said that we won't be doing that, there won't be any penalties and there won't be any interest—completely separate from New South Wales and Victoria. In addition to that, as a result of our discussions with the royal college, we have also said that there would be an entire further year, this current financial year, of no payroll tax obligations for those practices that have not been meeting their longstanding legal obligations with regard to the Payroll Tax Act.

We have put those arrangements in place because we have been meeting with the royal college and the AMA over the last 12 months to make sure that we are managing this issue and doing it in a way which is based on fact rather than the fiction of how those opposite have been behaving out in the media. So, if anyone is worried about this issue, you might want to consider the role that the member for Schubert and the member for Colton have been playing in deliberately spreading—

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

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: —lies and misinformation in the community.

The SPEAKER: There is a point of order which is—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Schubert will cease her exchange with the Treasurer. There is a point of order under 134 which I will hear from the member for Morialta.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Standing order 98: the question was about briefings or information that the Minister for Health has or hasn't requested. The Treasurer abusing other members is well outside standing order 98.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! If that were the case the individual members would of course be able to approach the Chair under a different standing order. Nevertheless, there is some merit in the matter that has been raised with me. I will listen carefully. The Treasurer, of course, has an enthusiasm for rhetorical devices. If those devices were deployed more sparingly, it may be that there are fewer points of order, but I'm not sure necessarily that that would appeal to the Treasurer. In any case, he has concluded his answer. Very well, we are going to turn to the crossbench. I understand the member for MacKillop is seeking the call.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! There is something called the crossbench. You might recognise some of the members—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! Order! And they will be recognised in the same way as any other member of the house, member for Flinders, and the member for MacKillop well and truly has the call.

RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS

Mr McBRIDE (MacKillop) (14:40): My question is to the Minister for Energy. How is the government going to assist the MacKillop electorate to participate in renewable energy generation projects? Mr Speaker, with your leave and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

Mr McBRIDE: I have been advised that a number of shovel-ready solar and renewable projects have been delayed or shelved due to an ageing power network in MacKillop. Investors have advised me they are burdened with the high cost of grid upgrades, jeopardising the financial viability of these ventures. It should be noted there has been state and federal government support for grid infrastructure upgrades in the north and the Riverland but none have been offered in MacKillop.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS (West Torrens—Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Minister for Energy and Mining) (14:40): It's always good to hear from the member for MacKillop. He is such an influential backbencher, he is even scaring some of the Liberal candidates out of his own electorate. I noticed Nicolle Flint is sort of running back home rather than run for MacKillop, which she was out and about talking about. Maybe perhaps she went doorknocking and found out how popular the local crossbench member actually was. But, sir, he is right—

Mr Whetstone: You are misleading the parliament. When was she talking about running for MacKillop?

The SPEAKER: Order!

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister has the call.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I think the member for Chaffey is still a bit sore after the weekend, seeing Anne Ruston dumped to number two. It's pretty clear that the Liberal Party has been taken over by some extreme right-wing elements. It seems that—

Members interjecting:

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Sorry? Are you worried about Tony Pasin too?

Members interjecting:

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: No, you are okay with Tony Pasin?

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: You like your new overlords? You are okay with your new overlords? Yes, alright. The member for MacKillop is absolutely right that there is a large number of renewable projects that proponents want to get up in regional South Australia, and the reason they want to get up renewable projects is that, first, they are more likely to get dispatched to the grid because they are cheaper than fossil fuels, and there is a hunger and thirst to decarbonise across the country, but obviously there is a cost.

Because our assets are independently regulated, any connection of new generation to the grid—because we prioritise, obviously, cost and reliability over generation in our grid—what that means is any new generator wishing to connect to the grid has to bear those costs themselves. The alternative is, of course, that we would use the community to cross-subsidise private proponents that are building infrastructure generators for profit. The logical extension of that would be that you would be having AGL or Origin subsidised for building new generation. The connections to the grid and any improvements to the grid for those connections should be borne by the proponents.

These are longstanding rules that are in the grid and they are there for a very good reason: they are there because we want to make sure that we prioritise reliability and cost on consumers.

South Australians today have had some good news with the default market offer. We have had a decrease of 2½ per cent and a much larger decrease for small business, which is good news for those consumers, despite the rumour mongering by members opposite there would be 20 per cent increases. Of course, there weren't such things—what we have seen is a decrease, and those reductions are welcome.

What we don't want to do is to inadvertently increase power prices by having proponents have their costs borne by consumers as a whole to improve the grid. I know the member for MacKillop is a fierce advocate for development in his community and his electorate and he wants to see more renewable energy in the system, but I do caution members that these developers, whether they are wind farms or whether they are a gas-fired generator, or even if you had members opposite win and we get a nuclear generator in the country, all those costs are borne by us the consumer. So it's important that we make sure that those costs are borne by the generator and that the generator has to wear that and that is a risk that they take.

RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS

Mr McBRIDE (MacKillop) (14:44): Supplementary question to the Minister for Energy: will the government consider acquiring the South Australian Power Networks to ensure consistent investment rollout of renewable energy projects across the whole state?

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Florey is warned for a final time.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS (West Torrens—Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Minister for Energy and Mining) (14:45): As I see the students from my old alma mater, Adelaide High, leave I remember sitting in the audience at Adelaide High School and there was a famous Liberal politician who came to speak at Adelaide High School. I think it was Dale Baker. He came along to speak at Adelaide High and we sat and listened intently to his remarks about the work of Thomas Playford. Thomas Playford had built up the state's infrastructure. As the Premier famously talks about, the Morgan to Whyalla pipeline, a great piece of nation-building infrastructure. When New South Wales coal was being forced upon South Australian electricity generators, he held a royal commission to ask why we can't use our own coal from Leigh Creek. Then he nationalised, that's right nationalised, those infrastructure assets and created the Electricity Trust of South Australia, for the benefit of all South Australians.

The inheritors of his legacy then sold it all—sold it all. Not only did they sell it all in claiming to pay down debt, they then went on to increase debt—they went on to increase debt.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Geniuses! So are we planning to undo their privatisation? No, we are not. I will give you a very good reason why we won't. Despite the success of Labor governments in this state, every time we build up public infrastructure, like the last time we were in office we bought two generators to provide reserve power that is a sovereign capability for the state, the moment we lost that election, what did they do?

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: They sold it.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Chaffey, member for Florey, order!

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: They sold it. They can't help themselves. They are addicted to it.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Chaffey, you leave me no choice, and the member for Florey, both to depart under 137A for the remainder of question time.

The honourable members for Chaffey and Florey having withdrawn from the chamber:

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: So every time we attempt to build up public infrastructure, build up public assets, essential utilities, they are at risk—they are at risk—and they are at risk because when Sir Thomas Playford was Premier and the great Sir Don Dunstan and the like graced these chambers, there was a bipartisan accord. That bipartisan accord was: we are a small state, a small population and a large land mass and we need to have these public infrastructures in public hands to make sure that South Australia can grow. But unfortunately, the inheritors of that legacy forgot that and immediately then sold them and then complained about the people who bought these assets and then closed them.

So, I say to the member for MacKillop that I would dearly love to have these assets in public hands. In fact, I was in here in 1999 when John Olsen proposed the sale of ETSA after having promised to never, ever sell it. I voted against the sale of ETSA. I voted against the breaking up of the assets. I voted against the sale of Torrens Island. I voted against the sale of the Playford Power Station. I voted against the sale of the poles and wires. I voted against the sale of the transmission. Yet members opposite were all in favour of selling those assets. So if we buy them back, you can bet London to a brick they will sell them again.

CITADEL SECURE

Mr COWDREY (Colton) (14:48): My question is to the Minister for Trade and Investment. Has the minister ever met with any representative of Citadel Secure and, if so, with whom, when and for what purpose?

The Hon. N.D. CHAMPION (Taylor—Minister for Trade and Investment, Minister for Housing and Urban Development, Minister for Planning) (14:49): I meet with businesses all the time and I was very happy to meet with Citadel Secure on 5 September at 10.45 for a 30-minute meeting. I met with Mr David Searles, the Director and Defence Engagement Specialist, and Mr James O'Hanlon, Director and Defence Security and Training Specialist. We discussed their proposal for communications infrastructure for disaster zones and for places without secure and critical communications infrastructure. I think they are a great South Australian company. I think both those individuals served their country in places like Rwanda, Timor and Afghanistan. Personally, I am always happy to meet veteran-run businesses because I think that is a real strength of our defence state.

I think this was an important meeting. I was happy to take it. To save the member asking, the outcome of that meeting was that we referred them to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, who were better able to help them with their particular plans.

CITADEL SECURE

Mr COWDREY (Colton) (14:50): My question is to the Treasurer. Has the Treasurer sought advice on whether clients of Citadel Secure have received funding from the state government? With your leave, sir, and the leave of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

Mr COWDREY: On 22 February, the opposition asked the Premier whether any minister or their staff had met with, or if any government funding had been provided to, a number of companies listed on the Citadel website as 'clients we have worked with'. The Treasurer indicated that he would take the question away and see what information he could provide.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN (Lee—Treasurer) (14:50): Yes, I have sought that advice, and as soon as I have it I will update the house.

WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN POLITICS

Ms CLANCY (Elder) (14:50): My question is to the Deputy Premier. Can the Deputy Premier please update the house on the representation of women in South Australia?

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) (14:51): I am delighted to answer this question. Last year, I had the pleasure of being invited to be on a committee overseeing a program hosted at the University of Adelaide called Pathways to Politics for Women. It's a course designed for women who think they would like to be an elected member of either council, state parliament or federal parliament. It is an excellent course that will continue to run, and it responds to a desire from a number of women to work out whether there is indeed a pathway for them to be represented in parliament.

If you look on this side of the chamber, there is a relatively easy answer, which is: there is a pathway. There is a pathway that has resulted in more than half the members on our side of the chamber being women. The seven who won the seven seats that were necessary to win for the government to be on this side of the chamber joined seven existing members of parliament in safer seats, so no longer do you see that when there is a loss, most of the women disappear; what you now see is that women are spread—as are men—through the marginal seats and the safer seats.

That is an important and instructive lesson for women interested in being in politics, but it didn't happen by accident. It happened because we changed the rules a number of years ago—led by, from memory, the wonderful foreign affairs minister, Penny Wong—to have a quota that needed to be reached over a period of time, and we also had a determination from the leadership, particularly, of course, from Peter Malinauskas, but I and the senior members of the opposition at the time were also involved in going out and finding women who were interested and prepared to run for parliament and who would, of course, be able to represent their communities in the way in which those seven have. It worked, and it is wonderful.

Not every woman in the community is going to want to be in the Labor Party, unfortunately; we are not a single-party state. If you look at some of the smaller parties, the Greens, for example, do very well with women. It is variable with some of the others, but there is often a good presence of women. But if you happen to be Liberal-leaning, what a terrible time to think about wanting to be in politics. Not only do we have, I think, when elected, around 12 per cent of the membership on the other side being women—that has gone up a tiny bit because one man has left the party in order to go over—but we have also had the appalling message sent by the mess that was the selection for the Senate over the weekend for people who were already sitting, but a little vanity exercise for a right-wing anti-vaxxer to be able to demonstrate—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Morialta under 134.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Standing order 98, sir: it has been found by yourself and other Speakers that the minister is in no way responsible for internal party matters.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! That may be. It's certainly an important ruling. However, the question is very broad and is directed at representation with respect to the state. Of course, senators represent the entire state, so I will listen carefully.

The Hon. S.E. CLOSE: The message that was sent to the women who went through the Pathways to Politics for Women course, who might be considering doing that, who are interested in being on the Liberal side of politics, was it doesn't matter if you have been—I think I will quote Senator Birmingham—'a highly effective cabinet minister'. It doesn't matter if you have been part of 'an outstanding part of our leadership team'. If you're a woman and if you are progressive, if you are not an anti-vaxxer, then you will be humiliated by being dropped to number two. That is the message that was heard by every woman in this state about the attitude.

Of course, I exempt the two women on the other side. They are shaking their heads, sadly. I think it is wonderful that they are there. I feel for them what it must be like. Who celebrated having Alex Antic? United Australia Party Senator Babet thought it was a good thing. He thought it was wonderful. He is the one who thinks that the COVID-19 vaccine is more dangerous than COVID-19.

The SPEAKER: The Deputy Premier's time has expired.

DEFENCE INDUSTRIES

Mr PATTERSON (Morphett) (14:55): My question is to the Minister for Trade and Investment. Have any other Adelaide-based defence companies been referred by the minister or his staff to the federal Minister for Trade and Tourism, Senator the Hon. Don Farrell, or his department and, if so, how many? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

Mr PATTERSON: I have spoken to South Australian defence companies that have a relationship with the Department for Trade and Investment, and they advise me that they have not received a referral to the federal Minister for Trade and Tourism from the minister's office.

The Hon. N.D. CHAMPION (Taylor—Minister for Trade and Investment, Minister for Housing and Urban Development, Minister for Planning) (14:56): It seems to me an impossible question for me to answer when you don't name the company. I would have to take that on notice and go and check. I have met with 50 companies in the defence, space, innovation area. I have met with many, many other companies in housing and planning, including some that have been referred to me from those opposite, and often have I, as a result, had engagement with federal bureaucracies and federal ministers. That's my job. That's what state ministers do. I am happy to take it on notice. But my job is to support South Australian companies, and that is what I do.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

DEFENCE INDUSTRIES

Mr PATTERSON (Morphett) (14:57): Supplementary: did the minister request or instruct his staff to request a favour from the federal Minister for Trade and Tourism, Senator the Hon. Don Farrell, to meet with Citadel Secure or any other defence companies?

The Hon. N.D. CHAMPION (Taylor—Minister for Trade and Investment, Minister for Housing and Urban Development, Minister for Planning) (14:57): The member takes a phrase in an email out of context deliberately.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. N.D. CHAMPION: My department and my office act professionally and courteously at all times. What this is an attempt to do is to take one phrase out of an email, and then what you do is try and smear people.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. N.D. CHAMPION: That is what you are trying to do here: smear a veteran-run business. After 20 years of serving their country—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. N.D. CHAMPION: —in places like Rwanda, Timor and Afghanistan, you want to smear this company run by two good Australians. That's what you want to do, on the basis of a single phrase in an email. My staff are courteous and respectful in their engagements with the department. That's all this represents. What we've got here is an opposition that is slowly descending down the Trumpist extremist wormhole, which is not just about knocking off moderate women; the other part of it is getting stuck into veterans.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! There's a point of order from the member for Morialta at 134.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I think the minister is in breach of standing order 98.

The SPEAKER: That may be. However, it may be that he has also concluded his answer.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Adelaide has been waiting patiently.

ELECTRICITY PRICES

Ms HOOD (Adelaide) (14:59): My question is to the Minister for Energy and Mining. Is the minister aware of any expected changes to electricity prices for South Australians and how this may affect cost-of-living pressures?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS (West Torrens—Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Minister for Energy and Mining) (14:59): I thank the member for her question and, indeed, the entire chamber, because I do get a lot of questions from members about power prices, and it is fair to say that the cost of living is on the forefront of everyone's mind and I know that the Premier—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I didn't know that saying the cost of living was on the forefront of everyone's mind would be so offensive to people. How would that be offensive? People used to take you seriously.

Mr Teague interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Thank you very much, sir.

Mr Teague: Tell the truth.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Point of order, sir: I would ask him to withdraw and apologise for that.

The SPEAKER: Very well. The member for Heysen, the member for West Torrens has taken offence to the outright suggestion that he is not telling the truth to the chamber. That, of course, could be a matter dealt with alternatively under the standing orders but it hasn't been. The next best course, of course, is to withdraw and apologise. I invite you take that course.

Mr TEAGUE: I withdraw and apologise.

The SPEAKER: Very well. The minister has the call.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Here endeth the lesson. The regulator sets the annual default market offer every year, and the default market offer has indicated that—

Mr Teague interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The member for Heysen is warned!

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: My goodness!

Mr Teague: They're just not paying that much attention to you anymore.

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: You seem to be paying a lot of attention.

Mr Teague: Do they?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: You. You're just a little bit obsessed. It's a bit scary, a bit creepy.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr Teague: I reckon yesterday you jumped the shark.

The SPEAKER: Order! The exchange between the member for Heysen and the member for West Torrens will cease. The minister has the call.

Mr Teague: I reckon he has jumped the shark.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Well, I love debating the former Acting Attorney-General who held the roles and functions of the job but never actually did the job, and I'm happy to debate him any time. I would encourage him to actually have the courage to ask me a question, pretty please.

Mr Teague: Your time will come.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes, and I look forward to it. Back to the default market offer: the default market offer is something that the Australian Energy Regulator does every year, and it released a draft this morning. That shows that they intend to cut prices for small businesses by 8.2 per cent. That's nearly a \$500 saving for small businesses.

Mr Patterson: After they went up \$1,300, so we're still \$800 worse off.

The SPEAKER: Order, member for Morphett!

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Of course, again my friend the member for Morphett forgets to mention the subsidy that the Treasurer put in place, which was over \$600. Now, I know maths is not the strong point for Collingwood players.

Mr Patterson interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: What we are seeing is that retail prices are coming down. Wholesale prices have plummeted in South Australia: what you are seeing is the forward price coming down a lot.

Mr Patterson: One quarter. We still had the highest ones over the whole of 2023.

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Again, incorrect. I again say to my friend, the member for Morphett, the Australian Energy Regulator publishes reports on market offers throughout the year and they show that our market offers are cheaper than New South Wales, cheaper than the ACT and cheaper than Tasmania. It's a quip jibe to come out and say 'highest prices in Australia,' or 'highest prices in the world'. It's not true; it's just been made up. I've got to say, the thing about making things up is you get caught out. I also heard the member yesterday telling radio that he thought prices were going to go up today. Well, they didn't go up today.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Morphett on a point of order.

Mr PATTERSON: I ask the minister to withdraw that. That was never said.

The SPEAKER: Alright.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr Patterson: You're making things up like usual—just making it up.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Morphett has taken offence. The standard is a subjective one. I invite the minister to withdraw and apologise.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I withdraw and apologise because the member says he has never said that power prices are going up. Okay, we will check with the house. We all heard it. The shadow energy minister has never said that power prices are going up. I will check. In fact, he is so adamant he has taken offence to it. So, the entire strategy of the opposition now is power prices are not going up. Excellent. Thank you very much to the shadow minister. What a great tactical genius he is—absolutely. So, now, here we are it's clear—

Mr Patterson: No—just making it up.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Oh, now I'm making it up! Everyone just saw you do it.

The SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired and so has question time.

Grievance Debate

MALINAUSKAS LABOR GOVERNMENT

The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS (Black—Leader of the Opposition) (15:04): This week marks two years since the election of the Malinauskas Labor government—and listen to the arrogance, as usual. They celebrate that their snouts are back in the trough, but importantly we need to ask ourselves: are South Australians celebrating the fact that the Labor Party has been in government for the last two years? Are South Australians celebrating the outcomes of this Labor government? Are South Australians feeling better off across a whole range of areas than they did two years ago when this government was first elected? The unequivocal answer to all of that is 'absolutely not', because in the last two years we have seen South Australia go backwards across so many different measurements.

The measurement that is worth reflecting on today is the Premier's own measurement. The Premier said in a public forum just a couple of weeks ago—quite clearly an admission of his government's own inadequacy, and an admission, perhaps, of his own inadequacy—that nine times out of 10 when a politician speaks, makes a commitment, makes a pledge, makes a promise, it is BS. I am not going to use that word in full; the Premier did, but I have respect for this chamber and this house and I will not be using that word. The Premier said that nine times out of 10 what his party does, what they say, what they pledge, what they commit to is BS. We can see that time and time again in terms of the delivery, or lack thereof, of the Labor government since they came to office.

Of course, the biggest example of a statement that has turned out to be BS is the central election commitment that that party was elected on two years ago, and that election commitment was: 'We will fix the ramping crisis. Vote Labor like your life depends on it.' Remember Ash the ambo making those claims to the community, urging South Australians to do so—vote Labor like your life depends on it? Well, Eddie's life depended on it. He waited 10 hours for an ambulance, and by the time it turned up to his care facility in Hectorville Eddie had tragically passed away. We know there are lots of other examples out there in the community. Some families have spoken up; some are too grief-stricken to do so.

People are dying waiting on ambulances, they are dying on the ramp, they are dying in the full-to-capacity emergency departments. This is a tragedy facing South Australia. Under Labor, this example of BS, this election commitment, has delivered the 21 worst months of ramping in South Australia's history. February statistics just handed down a couple of weeks ago showed the worst February for ramping in South Australia's history.

You can work down through the list of commitments that have been utterly compromised or walked away from altogether. The cost-of-living commitment, the Premier saying that cost of living is to go down under his government, a commitment that he would put downward pressure on cost of living. Well, the pressure has been put, and that has been put forward to South Australian families and small businesses, as their costs have surged: interest rates are up and their energy bills are through the roof.

We have a great fear for the SA Water regulatory determination coming up on 1 July this year, that that could see water bills surge. Now we have heard of a new tax which is emerging, the GP patient tax, which could end bulk billing as we know it. It could drive more patients to ramping, to EDs and away from their local GP. That is a new tax from a government that committed there would be no tax rises, there would be no new taxes.

Looking not too far away, just to the east of here, we see the Adelaide Parklands—well, really, to the north, south, east and west surrounding our city. But particularly in the context of the Dunstan by-election, many residents there care for their Parklands. Labor said that they would protect our unique Parklands, and what do we see? Five separate attacks on our Parklands, as listed

by the Adelaide Park Lands Association: lost Parklands, Parklands locked away from South Australians to enjoy.

We see a commitment broken to offer three-year-old preschool to all children in South Australia from 2026. We are now told that kids, to get access to that, will have to be born in 2029 and hope that it is available in the early 2030s for them—another broken promise. South Australians deserve better than a Premier where nine times out of 10 what he and his government say, what they commit to, what they pledge, is BS.

RICHARDS, MS G.

Mr BELL (Mount Gambier) (15:10): I rise today to talk about a wonderful businessperson in our community, Gail Richards. She is a tireless advocate for palliative care and hospice services. When I brought a motion into this place last year, I worked with Gail on her background story around hospice and palliative care services. What Mount Gambier and our community really need is a dedicated hospice facility.

We proactively engaged with Steven Marshall and the Liberal government when they were in government and also with Chris Picton and the Malinauskas government. We understand that there is no bottomless pit of money; however, we need to get a road map going forward to make sure that we put the steps in place for our community. There are a lot of ageing members of our community. You just have to look at Hallmont and Woodlands, which are two retirement facilities in Mount Gambier. The need for a dedicated hospice facility is certainly there.

Gail's lived experience really transformed through a campaign for greater palliative care services. Gail's grandmother's illness and the experience that family went through is what spurred Gail on to really getting involved in raising funds for hospice and palliative care services. She introduced a fundraising initiative called Key 2 Kindness, because her business is called Key 2 Sale. Through donations since 2021, Key 2 Kindness has raised over \$120,000, all of which has been reinvested back into our community. Included in those fundraising efforts is a biennial charity ball, the latest of which took place just a couple of weeks ago.

Over the past two years, Gail and I have engaged in numerous discussions regarding the necessity of a standalone hospice facility. We have convened meetings with our local health network and the health minister to explore options for a feasibility study; however, up until a couple of weeks ago, we had not been able to secure government funding for this feasibility study. This led to Gail's focus for the 2024 charity ball. In addition to raising funds for the local volunteer-led in-home hospice service, the evening also saw a campaign to raise \$20,000 that was needed for the feasibility study.

Another key figure in the night's success was guest speaker Diane Wright OAM. Diane was instrumental in the establishment of the hospice facilities called Anam Cara in both Colac and Geelong. She spoke to the crowd about the importance of what a hospice facility can do for the community, patients and their families as they go through their end-of-life journey.

Importantly, she was also able to illustrate that the size of a community does not define the viability of having a hospice facility. With a population of only 10,000 people, the town of Colac and the surrounding area have supported the facility since its opening in 2011. Now in its 12th year, Anam Cara House provides respite, palliative care and end-of-life care for the people of south-west Victoria. It provides an in-homelike setting, offering a choice in care for people of all ages who are living with long-term or life-limiting illnesses.

Diane's message was well received and the night achieved the goal of raising \$20,000 for the feasibility study, as well as a further \$25,000 for the in-home hospice service. The Mount Gambier community has shown that it is ready to support the hospice facility and I look forward to further discussions and working with the health minister and the current government on how a state government can assist in making this happen.

I congratulate Gail Richards and her team at Key 2 Sale on their efforts in hosting such a successful charity ball and thank them for their continued advocacy for bringing greater palliative care services to our region.

MALINAUSKAS LABOR GOVERNMENT

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER (Morialta—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (15:15): I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak today, on the second anniversary of the election of the Malinauskas Labor government, about the government's failure to deliver to the people of South Australia and for the people of South Australia on their central election promise or even on any of their key election promises.

It was just a couple of weeks ago that we heard advice from the Premier of South Australia that when a politician offers promises then nine times out of 10 it is BS. That was the way the Premier of South Australia described the way that politicians talk, and he is certainly correct inasmuch as he talks about the Malinauskas Labor government.

Central to the promise for their election was their commitment to fix ramping and yet more than 20 months in a row it is the worst on record. Their failure to deliver on this is an extraordinary abrogation of the duties to the people of South Australia, because before the election they raised this issue as being that of the most primary issue of life and death for South Australians—'vote Labor like your life depends on it' was the call before the election.

After the election, all of those Stobie pole posters that said they would fix the ramping crisis may as well never have been put up. They do not want to talk about that. They never use the same data that they promised to fix before the election when describing it now. It is an extraordinary black mark on the Malinauskas Labor government and the people of South Australia do not forget that. Everybody remembers those posters, and they will be held to account for it.

This government failed on a whole range of other promises too. The Premier promised that the government would be determined to provide relief for the cost of living wherever they can, yet South Australian families typically are \$20,000 a year worse off. The Labor government's promise that they were addressing the housing crisis, the Labor government's promise that the first and most important role of government is the safety of its citizens—broken promise, broken promise.

Indeed, in the last 12 months, in the last year, crime statistics have been going up significantly, as we see traders in the Rundle Mall confronted with issues: people bringing knives into shops and people brandishing chairs at staff. We have heard from retailers, we have heard from retail staff and members of the community who are deeply concerned about crime in the city, deeply concerned about crime in their communities, from the eastern suburbs to the West Coast. Right around the state of South Australia people are concerned about crime, and the government's promise, Peter Malinauskas's promise, that the first and most important role of government is the safety of its citizens has been shown up for the BS that the Premier might describe it as.

The Premier said there would be no new taxes, no tax increases and that the state budget would be kept in surplus—another broken promise from this government. As we have just heard in question time again today, GPs can expect no further support from this government, as what they have described as a GP patient tax is about to be imposed on GPs and, more concerningly, imposed on sick and vulnerable South Australians, who will be confronted with the increasing costs, potentially the end of bulk billing in South Australia and a likely turn away from South Australians choosing the GP and instead going to the ambulance ramp. This is both a disastrous health decision not to address the GP ruling and, indeed, a disastrous decision for sick and vulnerable South Australians.

The Premier said before the election that premiers have a responsibility to stand up for the state's interests, and this Premier has declined to take his federal Labor mates to task when it comes to the federal Labor Party's rejection of their commitment for nine Hunter class frigates. That has been reduced to six and our Premier is now absolutely fine with that. That is a disastrous concern for our confidence in our shipbuilding sector.

Number 7 on the list today, 'Labor will protect Adelaide's unique Parklands' was the claim before the election. After the election, only, it turns out, when it is convenient for them to do so, and when it is not, they are happy to let the Parklands go. Labor said the existing Aquatic Centre can continue to be used while the new one is being built and for families and for swimmers and particularly for students seeking to learn to swim, that is a significant broken promise that is of concern to them.

Finally, there is Labor's commitment to offer three-year-old preschool to all South Australians from 2026. Labor's plan for education on the posters on polling booths was: number 1, universal three-year-old preschool. The best-case scenario for universal three-year-old preschool under Labor's plan will apply for children born in 2029—not this electoral cycle, not next electoral cycle, the cycle after that, and that is if they ever find the budget or the workforce to deliver on this promise. They have failed the people of South Australia. South Australians deserve better but the good news is we are past the halfway mark and help will be on its way in 2026.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

ECONOMIC EQUALITY FOR WOMEN

Ms CLANCY (Elder) (15:20): On 8 March we celebrated International Women's Day, and today, on the two-year anniversary of being elected alongside six other new Labor women, it seems like a good opportunity to reflect on that important day. The UN Women theme for International Women's Day this year was Count Her In: Invest in Women, Accelerate Progress. This theme highlights the need for greater economic inclusion for women and girls everywhere, the need to reshape systems and remove barriers so women and girls will have equal opportunities to earn, learn and lead.

This is especially important in our post-COVID economy going forward. Women experienced the most acute impacts of the pandemic and while lockdowns and closures ended a few years ago, COVID will continue to compound women's historic economic disadvantage. It is well established that disadvantage is rooted in the cultural responsibilities expected of women in our society. This may be changing, albeit slowly, but it is women who bear children, predominantly who raise children, women who structure their work and social lives around the wellbeing of children and women who experience the negative economic consequences of the choice that families make to have children.

Women do the lion's share of unpaid work, including housework and caring responsibilities. Extra unpaid work means women have less time available for employment and education. This extra burden on women has long-term consequences for women's careers and economic security. While women are doing up to an extra hour a day (I wish), in unpaid caring roles, women are racking up an extra two hours of paid work, padding their pay packets and superannuation and generally improving their economic futures.

Unfortunately for women, we are more likely to work part-time or in casual jobs that do not have paid leave entitlements. Single parents, the vast majority of whom are women, are regularly forced out of the workforce, most likely due to caring responsibilities. Single mothers in particular have not rebounded to pre-pandemic level employment yet.

While important progress has been made, women continue to face significant obstacles to achieving equal participation in the economy. It is women in Australia who are working part-time in order to care for family, whether children or elderly parents; in fact Australia has the fourth highest rate of part-time work among women of all OECD countries. Women's part-time working patterns continue past childbearing age and into later life. Having children is not limited to a finite window of care; rather, women adjust their entire working lives to accommodate their family care responsibilities.

Reduced time for work over a lifetime can result in financial insecurity, poverty and homelessness in later life. We are seeing the consequences of these systemic factors right now in the increase in women over 50 experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness. In addition, many of these women did not benefit from compulsory superannuation. Many were paid at a lower rate than their male colleagues. Many faced systemic discrimination and were forced to give up their jobs when they became pregnant or were married.

These policies seem archaic now and as women we appreciate those before us who fought hard to make change. However, I regularly meet with women in my electorate over the age of 55 who are struggling to find secure housing, do not own their own homes and do not have enough superannuation to retire on.

The Minister for Urban Development and Minister for Planning recently gave councils greater powers to approve self-contained accommodation. We know, from listening to older women, that what they want is a place to belong, that there is not enough accommodation suitable for single older women and that women want to live independently but within a community where they can feel safe and secure.

Our government's decision to activate an underutilised housing option will give families the option to co-locate in multigenerational arrangements, a benefit to both older women who desire to age in place, and young families looking for affordability and community. Given the current housing crisis, which we are working very hard to address, as well as the need for a greater range of housing options, this is a practical step we have taken that will immediately allow for additional accommodation to enter the market.

Through South Australia's Women's Equality Blueprint, our government has outlined the key initiatives we are progressing to improve the status of women and girls. The huge range of initiatives span across four priority focus areas: women's safety and security, leadership and participation, economic wellbeing and health. The blueprint highlights our vision of South Australia as a fair and inclusive state in which girls and women can equally and actively participate in the economy and all aspects of life.

Our government has implemented a number of initiatives aimed at supporting women to gain additional skills, address the gender pay gap and increase women's participation in non-traditional roles. This includes investing in grants to encourage women into trades and address skill shortages in priority areas such as defence, commercial cookery, concreting and technology.

Our Labor government will continue to work towards economic equality for women and girls within the government, private sector, non-government organisations and within all our communities.

FROME ELECTORATE

Ms PRATT (Frome) (15:25): On this day, 19 March, as the house reflects on two years into this term and two years on from the last election, with reflections on the government and its promise to fix ramping and the disappointment we have noted that continues to be, I want to grab this opportunity to reflect on the fantastic opportunities and recognition that is due to the electorate of Frome.

For 12 years the electorate of Frome was represented by the current member for Stuart and it was my great delight to join this chamber, work alongside colleagues on this side and the other side of the house, and to represent a community that is vast in its primary industry and rich in talent and human resources and I take an opportunity today to celebrate the towns and communities that continue to support me.

I really want to recognise and reflect on their hard work, their efforts and the achievements of those who have been nominated or achieved awards and also those who just work quietly, and who get on with the job of representing their communities.

Today, I want to start with my first recognition and pay tribute to a friend of mine, Merrilyn Williams, who has run the Clare florist store for many, many years and who, at the end of last year, declared that she needed to give time back to herself. We know that florists look after us in the best and worst of times. On behalf of the entire Clare Valley and Mid North, I know that everyone would agree that Merrilyn deserves to go off on her adventures now.

There are so many amazing men and women who live throughout the electorate of Frome, whose endeavours in business, primary industry and volunteering are just extraordinary. I want to work through a list, if you like, of people who are living and working in the community, people such as Pip and Leon Faulkner, who represent the Envirocopper business and the innovation that they are bringing to a smaller footprint when it comes to this important commodity.

Nicola Palmer and Warrick Duthy are well known to this chamber and to this state. Nicola was most recently, on International Women's Day, nominated Woman of the Year. The work that they are doing celebrating biodiversity through Paddock to Plate dining experiences at the Watervale Store is quite synonymous.

Steph Schmidt from World's End and the Goyder region is dedicated on a daily basis to supporting her husband and family on the farm, but in her right she is a hero of mental health. Mel Kitschke, that legend up at Bundaleer, Maple and Pine forest, is just a fantastic advocate for that extraordinary plantation and the biodiversity in that region.

To Ali Cooper in her own right for the work that she does in tourism and accommodation, managing the park in Jamestown, and her father-in-law, Leith, who was awarded Citizen of the Year for his service to the Jamestown Show over 70 years.

To Paulie Calaby, a friend of bees and biodiversity, a great teacher of gardening and one of many red shirts who run the Clare Showgrounds, most recently working really hard over the weekend to support 3,800 people coming to the Clare rodeo, which was amazing.

I thank Damien Graham, who is a quiet coordinator of the Mid North Community Passenger Network, and all of the volunteers who continue to move people from my community around the district and to the city for their important and often life-saving health appointments.

I celebrate the work that has been undertaken in the Freeling community through the business sector, rebuilding and delivering a supermarket to a growing community that, sadly, through decisions made by the government, has permanently lost its police station—but that doesn't hold it back, and I am looking forward to the day when this community has a flourishing GP clinic and chemist.

Louise and Neil Haines are legends locally for running the Watervale General Store. We farewelled them a little while ago now, but these are the heroes over the last two years who have really contributed to the local economy and established their businesses and their brands in a way that went beyond the boundaries of the electorate. Greg Boston up in Jamestown, who has been significant with the Mid North Suicide Prevention Network, is another person who deserves my attention and my thanks. On the second anniversary of my representation, I thank my community.

ADELAIDE ELECTORATE

Ms HOOD (Adelaide) (15:30): Today does mark two years since the election of the Malinauskas Labor government, and today I want to speak on not just my election commitments that I am delivering, but those community wins, those little things that can make a big difference to the community.

In terms of my election commitments, over the last two years we have already delivered a 25 km/h school zone for Gilles Street Primary School and Pulteney. It still beggars belief that you can have two busy CBD schools and have cars travelling at 50 km/h, so I am so glad that we have been able to create a much safer street in front of those two schools. I have delivered the very popular Prospect Pocket Park in my community, completely changing the view of Scotty's Corner, one of the busiest intersections that you will find. We are greening that space. We are adding new trees and making that an important community space. We are also better promoting our beloved free City Connector. It is so lovely now that when you see the free City Connector, it does not just blend in the same as any other bus, it is covered in beautiful and vibrant artwork by the very talented local artist Robert Eckert.

In terms of my other election commitments, we have our brand-new Adelaide Aquatic Centre, with earthworks underway. We are looking forward to getting into major works from July. We are also delivering an upgrade to R L Pash Reserve in Nailsworth and, in Collinswood, a new roundabout at the Howard and Rosetta Street intersection, with works just starting last week to make that intersection much safer for locals. We are also expanding Botanic High and I cannot wait to see us welcome new students in the next term.

As I was saying, there are also things you do as a local MP that are the small community wins that make a huge difference to our local community. In the next four minutes, I want to see if I can run through the more than 20 community wins that we have been able to deliver, working together with locals in my community. I start with the new pedestrian crossing at Fitzroy Terrace. I want to thank locals like Ron, Jane and their dog Ned for supporting this safer crossing.

On College Avenue in Prospect for the last two or three years we have been running a campaign against the installation of a second mobile phone tower that would have been just 70 metres from an existing phone tower. It would have looked like we had goalposts in our local neighbourhood. We took on a David and Goliath battle against Optus, and we won. I want to thank James, David, Karen and Enzo. We were the 'five musketeers'. We took on a giant and we won that battle.

We have also introduced a 'keep clear' zone at the Main North Road and Penn Place intersection. I want to thank local Jessica for raising that issue. It makes getting out of her local street much safer and easier for her and many other residents. We removed a 'mail zone at all times' sign on Hutt Street that was taking away parking for local residents. I want to thank Hutt Street Chicken and Seafood for raising that issue. We were able to replace the mail zone—even though there was no post office—with a half-hour parking sign to improve parking for that beloved main street.

In February last year, we had a huge community win to green our neighbourhood, where I announced that we had secured three pocket parks for that local area—not just one, but three, on Churchill Road and Drayton and Chief Streets. I want to thank locals James, Steve and Iolanthe, and councillors Kristina Barnett and Trinh Nguyen for their work on delivering those community wins.

There was also a new netball ring installed under the Ovingham overpass. Often netball gets looked aside for basketball rings, but locals Sophie, Sibella and I took on that challenge, and we saw a netball ring installed. We installed a Keep Clear zone for Nottage Terrace to provide easier access into Corbin Road. We secured a Prospect school precinct traffic study to look at traffic improvements around Gladstone Road, Olive Street, and Braund Road. That is now underway. We secured a Do Not Queue Over Intersection signage and expanded Keep Clear zone for Fitzroy Terrace.

We won another Keep Clear zone for locals exiting D'Erlanger Avenue, Collinswood onto Nottage Terrace, so thanks so much to Anna for her staunch advocacy on this. We have additional traffic measures for Fitzroy Terrace to provide better instructions for locals on which lane goes where. We secured a commitment from Adelaide City Council to reinstate bus stop 4 on Melbourne Street after our community campaign. We found a new home for the police greys off the Parklands at Gepps Cross, listening to the community. We have had an improved pedestrian crossing closed on Main North Road to make it more accessible for those in mobility scooters and wheelchairs. Thanks to local, Peter, for his advocacy.

In the very small time I have left, we have secured installation of a new park bench on Pulteney Street. We have introduced a code amendment to look at prohibiting adult entertainment in the East End. Thanks to Lindsay, Andrew, Gayle and many East End locals for working with me on this. More recently, in February we prevented buses idling on Hutt Street. Thanks to DIT for changing over the time point location. We have also got a trial going of the free City Connector for an extra bus stop at bus stop V1 on Hutt Street. Thank you so much to the community for working with me on these community wins.

Private Members' Statements

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

The Hon. D.J. SPEIRS (Black—Leader of the Opposition) (15:36): Political parties rely on volunteers. They rely on community stalwarts from all sides of politics. The members who come to these places as elected officials are backed up by many tens, if not hundreds, of supporters within their political parties and within the community, and often a bit of both. I want to pay tribute today to one of my greatest local supporters, and that is Mr Kym Rampling, who passed away a couple of weeks ago. Kym, a Hallett Cove resident, husband of Christine, father to Andrew, Elyse and Esther, was a community stalwart. He was completely passionate about Liberal Party politics, about politics more broadly, and wanted to support good people to represent his community.

He did not desire political office himself. He just wanted to be part of local political movements. He founded the Hallett Cove branch of the Liberal Party back in the late 1980s, which consequently saw Wayne Matthew elected with a significant swing in that part of the seat. He supported MPs, candidates, particularly myself when I put my hand up for preselection in 2012. He

stood by me at every single step of the way, encouraging me, providing me with advice, drawing on stories from the past and talking about ways we could represent the Hallett Cove area better.

He was always there to scrutineer votes, to encourage candidates to hand out how-to-vote cards. Kym's passing a couple of weeks ago is going to leave a great hole in the Hallett Cove community, in the local Liberal Party and in my life as well. Vale, Kym Murray Rampling.

Mr ODENWALDER (Elizabeth) (15:38): I rise to pay tribute and just add a few words about a wonderful school in my electorate, Playford College. Eight years ago, Dr Abdul-razaq Musa, who was the chair of the board and is still the chair of the board, came to visit me in parliament and told me that he and his board had purchased the land that had been vacated by the Elizabeth Special School, which had rightly been moved northward and into much better premises. From that day, I have seen the school grow from a small independent school with a very small and very young cohort through to a thriving, but still quite small physically, R-12 school.

I was really pleased to go there two weeks ago. On 8 March I was there with the member for Light and the member for Spence. The leader was there, as well as Senator Grogan and many other councillors and other many community leaders, for the opening of the Imam Ali Building, which is almost the last stage of their large redevelopment on the small footprint that they occupy. I was very pleased to be there to see Matt Burnell officially open the new building, which was built very much with federal money but also to join Dr Abdul-razaq Musa in opening the sports zone, which is a large basketball and multisport area, which occupies the space where some horrible old transportable buildings had once stood. I want to congratulate the people of Playford College, the board, the principal Chris Riemann and everyone involved in the massive expansion of this school. I wish them all the best in the future.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER (Morialta—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (15:39): The other day, we marked 20 years of U3A Campbelltown. Formerly known as the University of the Third Age, U3A Campbelltown has done an extraordinary body of work in our local area in supporting the over 50s who are retired or semi-retired to stay active mentally, physically and socially. It has done terrific work, first in its original location at the Campbelltown leisure centre and, over the last decade or so, at the Marchant Community Centre in Athelstone.

I speak as a family member, with my father and his partner being regular participants. I know what it means in their life and also the lives of hundreds of others. There are 300 current members, and more than 1,500 members of our local community have undertaken courses, social events, tried something new and stayed active physically, mentally and socially over the last 20 years since the U3A Campbelltown was established.

It was a real pleasure to attend the celebrations with the federal member for Sturt, James Stevens, the member for Hartley, Vincent Tarzia, and the Mayor of Campbelltown, Jill Whittaker, along with hundreds of others, to recommend the work, particularly of President Glenda Sherwin-Lane, past presidents, including Vale Pedersen and so many more who have done work for these communities, and continue to volunteer. It is an organisation that runs on volunteers, whether they are teaching computing and IT, Mahjong, Rummikub and chess, or tai chi, yoga and darts—so many activities undertaken by so many people thanks to the work of these volunteers. So, happy 20th birthday to U3A Campbelltown and may there be many, many more decades to come of this excellent organisation.

The Hon. A. PICCOLO (Light) (15:41): On Saturday afternoon from 2pm to the following Sunday morning at 9am, the Gawler Relay for Life committee held their annual event. This important fundraiser raises funds for cancer research through the Cancer Council. The weekend event has raised \$64,110 up to now, but donations can still be given for up to another four weeks. Since the first event was held in 2009, the Relay for Life has raised \$1.084 million in addition to the \$64,000 raised this year. I know they had a target of \$60,000.

The weekend event had 19 teams and 268 relay participants coming from all walks of life, including local schools. I would like to acknowledge that Xavier College had a team. Congratulations to the students involved. Teachers Mr Rob Polito and William Yates supported the students. Will himself raised over \$4,000 as part of the relay and other activities.

I would also like to acknowledge and congratulate the volunteer committee, headed by Gail Saunders, for organising and running such a successful event in very difficult conditions: oppressive heat at the start and rain during the evening. I would also like to thank the various sponsors and businesses across the town who make the event possible. This event would not be possible without literally the hundreds of different volunteers who make such a commitment. They provide people with hope.

Bills

STATUTES AMENDMENT (NATIONAL ENERGY LAWS) (WHOLESALE MARKET MONITORING) BILL

Second Reading

Adjourned debate on second reading (resumed on motion).

Mr PATTERSON (Morphett) (15:43): To pick up where I left off just before we broke, I was talking about the effect of the quarterly average wholesale prices back in quarter 3, and how they flowed on from the announcement around the default market offer that came into place on 1 July 2023. I just remind people, as I said during that contribution, that the default market offer that came in on 1 July 2023 saw massive increases to household power bills on average on the default market offer with a jump of \$512. Businesses also had massive increases to their bills under the default market offer of \$1,310. These are big jumps equating to nearly 24 per cent for households and nearly 29 per cent for small businesses.

This came on the back of the increases to the default market offer previous to that, which came into effect on 1 July 2022, which saw households have increases of \$198—nearly \$200—in that one as well. Over the two years, those combined caused a big jump to bills for households: \$710, in fact. For businesses the increases were even more, with big jumps in their electricity bills as well. That has a big impact on them.

As I said previously, we heard from both households and struggling small and medium businesses who had big increases to their electricity bills. They said these had increased by more than \$5,000 per quarter for some of those medium businesses. They explained there is only so much they can cut back on to reduce their costs. On many occasions, the nature of their business means that they rely on power and they cannot cut back on their power. They are struggling.

At the same time, the families at home are having to deal with a broad range of increases to their cost of living. A big part of that is electricity, so it is impacting them as well. It is also having an effect in terms of them going out and spending money at some of these small businesses. Small businesses are getting hit not only from their own pressures, but unfortunately they are then seeing it from their customers as well, so it is really challenging for them.

Since that time, the quarter 4 wholesale prices have come out, and thankfully they did show a drop for that quarter. The wholesale prices did come down. When you look at the history of the average quarterly wholesale prices over the last four years, you do see that quarter 4 tends to be one of the lower ones when you compare it across the board—quarter 4 with spring and summer, and quarter 1 potentially as well, again because of summer.

So it was expected that they would come down. It would have been startling and a poor outcome if they had not. Of course, what we saw was the minister and also the Premier jump on board those and say, 'That's proof positive that wholesale prices are coming down,' and therefore we had the energy minister demanding and telling the energy regulator that the default market offer needs to have a significant drop, a big drop, because of these.

But when you look at the overall situation for the overall year—in 2023, you look at those average annual prices in the NEM—what you find is that because we had really high prices in quarter 3, because we had rising prices between quarter 4 of 2022 and quarter 1 of 2023 combined, the average annual price in the NEM in 2023 for South Australia was \$103 per megawatt hour.

Compared with other jurisdictions, Queensland was \$102 per megawatt hour for 2023, New South Wales was \$105 per megawatt hour, Victoria was \$64 per megawatt hour and Tasmania was \$56 per megawatt hour. What you see there is that South Australia really is up in the upper echelons

of the average annual prices in the NEM—just a bit more than Queensland and just a bit under New South Wales, but effectively those three are equal. So we see sustained high prices at a wholesale level for South Australia, and that then makes its way through into customers' bills.

After massive increases over the past two years of \$710 for households, we see the Australian Energy Regulator announcing their draft default market offer today. It shows that electricity prices have come down but certainly not in comparable amounts to how much they went up over the previous two years. For households, prices were reduced between \$14 to just a bit over \$50, which is about between 0.5 per cent and 2.5 per cent.

What we are seeing are elevations, big jumps, over two years. This reduction really does not make a significant dent in those big prices that the energy minister was demanding because the underlying wholesale prices are elevated when you look at the average across the whole year. When you take away the \$14 reduction, for example, what you see over the three default market offers that have been brought down under the Malinauskas Labor government is that electricity prices have still increased significantly.

Household power bills would still be up by \$696. Small businesses saw an 8 per cent reduction in the draft default market offer here, but that was after a massive increase the previous year of 29 per cent. Combined across that, you can see that it was up 29 per cent and down 8 per cent. They are still overall big increases. In fact, over the three default market offers, we have seen elevated levels up around \$1,288 for businesses.

This draft default market offer shows that electricity still remains in high-price territory in South Australia under the Malinauskas Labor government, and it is the families and small businesses that will have to continue to pay the price. They have to face up to another year of very high electricity prices going forward. Similarly, businesses are again having to face up to these high electricity prices. Some of them are really struggling.

We have seen stories of businesses shutting their doors because of significant cost pressures in South Australia. When they set about starting their businesses, they would have set up a business model that would have been based on a certain level of rent, a certain level of employee expenses, a certain level of electricity prices. They probably did not take into account the fact that there were going to be massive increases in the prices. The effect is they are unable to make a go of it because they cannot naturally increase costs for their products because their customers are also struggling.

Consequently, they are not able to have increases at the business level to then flow through to take account of these big increases in electricity costs that have occurred. Just on the weekend, we were with a business owner, Natalie from Pulp & Thread, talking with her about this. It is a cafe and also sells fashion, trying to provide various offerings for customers. Their power bills have gone up from \$2,000 a quarter to over \$5,000 a quarter. As I said before, their business relies on power. They cannot just turn the power off.

What Natalie was trying to do was make savings where she could, turning off some of the fridges, some of the freezers and the display fridges. Usually they have food that is pre-made put out in the display fridge. It gives ideas for customers so when they come in they can see immediately what is on the menu and what it looks like. So potentially that causes them to buy those products.

Additionally, you have tradies or people on the way through who are in a hurry and do not have time to wait for five or 10 minutes to have sandwiches made for them, so having pre-made food on display makes it quick and easy and very convenient. Potentially, by not having that product there it is not certain whether that is affecting customers' habits, if they are no longer attending.

What she has certainly noticed is that her customers do not seem to be spending as much, as they are dealing with their own cost pressures at home. So what we are seeing is real effects on people. She is talking about whether that affects employing staff and growing the business. Instead of having more products there to be able to sell, it is causing a reduction. That potentially means not employing staff for as long or not employing as many staff, and that is certainly not what we want to see. We want to see businesses thriving. We want to see them employing more people. That is why it is so important to make sure that this government has a plan to bring prices down.

We know that at the election the Malinauskas Labor government had no plan in place to ensure that electricity supply was affordable and reliable. Instead, what we have now is the minister basically trying to use the newspapers to bully the AER into dropping prices significantly. We see that on this occasion that has not come to fruition at all. It is really showing up why the government needs to come up with a plan to deal with sky-high electricity prices that people are having to deal with.

I have had another example of a couple in Camden Park who are pensioners. Their power bills have surged to nearly double over the last two years. Again, they are pensioners on fixed incomes, so they are really struggling to cope with this and it impacts on what they do in terms of how they use electricity. It is front of mind at all times for them because of this. They are not alone: there are many other working families that are struggling to make ends meet.

I spoke earlier about the information in the annual retail report that came out late last year. It went through and compared all the residential electricity median market and standard offer prices across Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia, Victoria and Tasmania. It confirmed that South Australia has the highest residential electricity median market and standard offer prices per kilowatt hour in the National Electricity Market. So high prices are continuing on, and that flows through into household electricity bills.

The report went on also to say what the effects of these high power bills are on customers. It makes the point that more household customers are accumulating energy bill debt and that the proportion of customers with energy debt (less than 12 months) has increased. It identifies the fact that the big price rises that happened last year are causing more and more people to get behind in their payments. As debts grow, there are more customers entering hardship payments as well.

Sadly, one of the things that the report reveals is that the proportion of South Australian customers on hardship payments is going up. It shows between 2018-19 it was over 2 per cent. It came down over those years between 2019-20, 2020-21. It came down to a number just over 1.5 per cent of the proportion of customers on hardship payments. Now it is going up again. In fact, South Australia had the highest proportion of electricity customers on hardship payments in the nation, I think at 1.99 per cent. So just under 2 per cent of electricity customers in South Australia are on hardship payments.

A bit further into the report it goes into some more information relating to the proportion of hardship-payment customers who are receiving energy concessions as well, and it shows that only 40 per cent of those on hardship programs are receiving a concession. That means that 60 per cent of people on hardship payments are not receiving any support from the Malinauskas Labor government. Working families are bearing the brunt because we know many of them were not eligible for the concessions in the state budget that was handed down last year. They are struggling and they are bearing the brunt of it.

Overall, we know that the typical South Australian family is \$20,000 worse off under the Malinauskas Labor government during this cost-of-living crisis. Those people in the electorate of Dunstan, who saw their power bills going down when the former Liberal government was in power, who saw the average bill reduced by \$420, see that they are now going up again.

As I said before, we know that there was no plan in place by the Malinauskas Labor government at the election, or since, to ensure that the electricity supply is affordable and reliable. The government are spending \$600 million on their hydrogen power station, which they admit is not aimed at delivering cheaper power bills for households. I have asked the minister in parliament this year: will this power station reduce household electricity bills? His response was:

First and foremost, we have always said this is about trying to get an improvement for industrial users. It's commercial and industrial customers we are targeting.

For households, when they are struggling with these high prices, they are quite entitled to ask: what is the plan for households? That is certainly a fair question that they should be asking and that we certainly are asking.

That brings us back to the bill we have at hand. We have power bills surging for households and small businesses and so they are asking: is this bill going to help address our concerns? At the

same time, they have been promised by the Prime Minister that he will reduce their power bills by \$275. That was made before the default market offers came in place on 1 July 2022. As I said, we saw that prices over the three default market offers since are up \$696. So South Australians are not seeing a reduction; they are in fact seeing a massive increase.

Again, looking at this reform, is there hope, potentially, that this amendment bill that we are discussing today will bring down power prices? If you look into what the stakeholders had to say, you would be doubtful. Looking at the stakeholders' feedback, they did acknowledge the need for the regulator to understand the wholesale contract market, but they did raise concerns about issues, including the scope of the new powers, the use of information gathered for wholesale market monitoring purposes, for other functions that the AER undertakes, and also the need for additional measures to accompany the broadening of the AER's powers.

If we talk specifically about what some of the stakeholders said and some of the concerns they raised in regard to the expansion of the AER's wholesale market monitoring and reporting function, ENGIE and Alinta say that the AER's new powers will have limited impact on its abilities to predict and respond to issues owing to the complex and unpredictable nature of the energy system.

We also had some commentary from the Australian Financial Markets Association and Australian Energy Council. The Australian Financial Markets Association is an industry association that promotes efficiency in Australia's financial markets. Some of their comments were that the AER's powers would extend beyond the areas where it holds regulatory functions, such as into financial markets. It goes on to say that it fails to fully appreciate the scale of the proposed reporting obligation and will have significant cost implications for both participants and the AER and is unlikely to deliver the anticipated insights.

They went on to expand on these points. In terms of the technological requirements, they made the point that their members' experience is that the AER has limited technology resources to assist in their information gathering and relies heavily on the provision of written responses and data in manually populated spreadsheets. With the significant amount of information that would be aimed to be collected, it is going to be very difficult to try to collate that mass of information by relying upon manually populated spreadsheets, according to the AFMA.

They also said the frequency at which the data is required to be reported is a significant driver of costs for both the AER and participants. When it comes to talking about information versus insight, they suggest that a targeted approach appears to give greater insight rather than collecting large volumes of data which then have to be processed. They go on to make the point that certain types of contracts should be excluded, including those concerning the transmission or distribution of electricity, the cost of fuel or underwriting the supply of gas or electricity.

After that, the Australian Financial Markets Association and the Australian Energy Council recommended that the reporting obligations, as a result, should be proportional to participants' impact on the market and this could mean either exempting small participants or reducing their reporting obligations proportional to their impact on the market. These small participants could have to go to a lot of effort to provide all this reporting, when ultimately they are not providing a big impact on the overall situation in the market. So the suggestion that was made there seems to have some merit.

In terms of other feedback around this bill, there was some stakeholder feedback regarding the compliance cost and also the risk of duplicate information requests, with some of the stakeholders raising concerns that the expansion of the wholesale market monitoring and reporting function would result in significant new compliant costs for affected market participants.

At the same time, several stakeholders also highlighted the potential duplication of information collection between the AER's proposed wholesale market monitoring function. Again, the Australian Financial Markets Association, in conjunction with the Australian Energy Council, said that a number of regulatory bodies currently collect data about energy markets and the associations are keen to avoid duplication and where possible the AER should rely on data collected by other bodies.

They made the point that the area where this is particularly relevant is in terms of ASIC. The collection of information on over-the-counter gas contracts and weather derivatives is done by ASIC. Additionally, the ACCC's east coast gas market inquiry has run from 2017 and is going to run until

2030. At the same time, the ACCC's electricity market monitoring inquiry has been running since 2018 and is scheduled to run until 2025. These have involved the provision to the ACCC of data on gas prices and offers under GSAs, and detailed electricity contract information.

Another area that was pointed out was in regard to AEMO's collection of information in respect of the Retailer Reliability Obligation, which requires market participants to report on hedging levels when a forecast reliability gap results in the AER making a reliability instrument. Those are some of the comments by AFMA. Some other comments in the same vein around potential duplication were made by the ACCC, who said:

It is important to recognise that the compliance burden on industry is increasing, including with the impending mandatory gas code.

They acknowledged the potential overlap with the ACCC's gas inquiry. The ACCC suggested that the AER:

...could potentially be required to systematically report on and review all bilateral trading agreements in the east coast gas market, including those that have no bearing on the wholesale gas market, which could impose an unnecessary burden on industry and a duplication of effort across the AER and the ACCC.

There was also some feedback from stakeholders raising concerns around the potential, because of the complexity of the contract market, of raising the risk that the Australian Energy Regulator may misinterpret contractual information provided to it by market participants. Some of the specific concerns included AGL saying:

Contract information may not be available in a format that is consistent across the industry or readily understood.

Alinta said:

Without understanding the reasons for the design and features of specific contracts, or the drivers for organisations pursuing particular commercial arrangements, the AER may reach incorrect conclusions.

Origin made the point:

Over-the-counter contracts are particularly unique and lengthy, increasing the difficulty of accurately interpreting them from a regulatory perspective.

Shell made the point:

There is a lot of information in electricity market contracts which may not be relevant to the AER and its aims, and the terms may be more indicative of the individual needs of the buyer and seller than representative of underlying market trends.

They are points made in relation to the potential for misinterpretation by the regulator when looking at the contracts.

Some other concerns also related to privacy and protection of confidential information. Some of the stakeholders raised concerns that the AER will gain access to large volumes of commercially sensitive information because of the expansion of its wholesale market monitoring function to both the gas and electricity markets. A specific concern from Origin's perspective is:

Along with holding more sensitive information, the removal of restrictions that currently exist in section 18D on the AER's use and disclosure of that information will increase the potential for confidential information to be disclosed.

While the stakeholders acknowledge that the amendments proposed in the bill would allow market participants to request the redaction of names and other identifying details of counterparties to contracts, there are still some concerns from the industry overall.

As I said at the outset of my remarks, South Australia is the lead legislator and the convention is for these changes to come into effect nationally, and they do that by passing through the South Australian parliament. As such, the opposition will provide our support for these amendments to the national energy laws and, as I informed the whip earlier, we will not seek to go into committee at the conclusion of the second reading debate.

I make the point that these changes, as I outlined for some of the other national energy bills that have come into this parliament recently, continue the trend of electricity and gas market reform,

delivering market transparency and increased powers to market bodies, in this case the AER but also AEMO and the AEMC, in an attempt to address supply issues over the last few years. This legislation is not targeting the real need for South Australian families and businesses right now, which is to bring down energy bills, and that is certainly what the government should be focusing on right now.

Mr FULBROOK (Playford) (16:15): I am very happy to rise and speak in support of the Statutes Amendment (National Energy Laws) (Wholesale Market Monitoring) Bill 2023. Today, we received the welcome news that electricity prices for households and small businesses will start to fall. This follows a draft ruling by the Australian Energy Regulator that default market cuts of 2.5 per cent, or \$57, for average households and 8.2 per cent, or \$481, for small businesses should be in place by July.

While we would like to see more as consumers, it is a far cry from the doom and gloom of the 25 per cent increases I understand were predicted by those opposite. While everything counts, it is still a small step and reinforces that there is still much more to do. This is where the bill before us has the potential to make further difference. While I have spoken about the default offer, this piece of legislation will hopefully empower consumers to drive a better deal for themselves on their energy bills.

You have to be hiding under a rock if you have not noticed privatisation has been a massive step backwards for consumers. What was supposed to have created a competitive market has instead developed a situation where consumers have suffered at the mercy of rising prices. Giving extra powers to the Australian Energy Regulator, as proposed in this bill, will allow it to investigate if retailers are making excessive profits at the detriment of consumers due to secret hedging strategies. Arguably, this sort of reform may not be necessary if the retailers were passing on savings. But who does not like letting a little bit of sunshine in?

I say this in the knowledge that I have become aware of a recently published report by the Australian Energy Regulator showing that wholesale electricity prices have fallen sharply. In the last quarter of 2024, the regulator's report showed that in South Australia average wholesale prices were \$53 per megawatt hour. This was less than half the \$114 per megawatt hour average in the previous quarter and down from \$80 per megawatt hour in the same quarter of 2022. For the full year, prices fell by 44 per cent. As the minister stated—and this is reflected by the modest fall in the default offers—there can be no more excuses from retailers. They must pass savings like these to the consumers rather than what seems like the pocketing of extra profits.

What we are hopefully going to see is a benefit for all consumers, even those who have taken steps to insulate themselves from the worst of electricity price rises by investing in rooftop solar. It is reasonable to suggest that for those in a financial position to make the capital investment, solar has been an incredible success. The Australian Energy Market Operator's 2022-23 South Australian Electricity Report recorded that rooftop solar provided 17.7 per cent of the total annual generation for that financial year.

This was a significant part of the renewable energy mix, which dominates our power system, complementing the 46.9 per cent of generation which came from wind farms and the 8.8 per cent from grid-scale solar. It has put Australia in a position where renewables provided more than 75 per cent of the electricity generated in the 2023 calendar year, a world-leading achievement for a jurisdiction that does not have the benefit of hydroelectricity.

Arguably, the community I have the privilege to represent is at the epicentre of this movement, for they have been amongst the most enthusiastic in the nation in installing rooftop solar panels. The Clean Energy Regulator records rooftop solar installations by postcode and highlights that in Paralowie and Salisbury Downs, postcode 5108, residents have installed 8,300 solar systems as of December last year. This put the suburbs just outside the top 50 nationally in the number of systems per postcode area. In a separate investigation by the Clean Energy Council, postcode 5108 is down as the state's top suburb for solar energy production. I live in 5107, so I cannot ride personally on the coattails of this, but I am making my own personal contribution to bringing my neighbourhood's tally up.

Getting back to my neighbours in Paralowie and Salisbury Downs, it is worth celebrating that the aggregated capacity of 42 megawatts from just these two suburbs alone is like having a small-scale commercial generator. In Parafield Gardens and Greenfields, there are 4,130 solar systems, and in Mawson Lakes—a suburb of which I partly represent with the member for Florey—there are a further 4,131 solar systems registered with the Clean Energy Regulator.

The then Labor government, led by Premier Rann, paved the way for the uptake of solar power in our state. It was a visionary move that has been good for the planet and positive towards the household budgets of hundreds of thousands of South Australians. It is worth noting that the financial incentive to invest has changed markedly since the Rann government pump-primed the rooftop solar industry.

In those early days, the cost of a solar system was high and the capacity of the panels was comparatively low. Those early adopters who led the way enjoyed the benefits of the government-mandated 44¢ per kilowatt hour payment for what they fed back into the grid. It was the difference that made the investment worthwhile. Retailers added to their own feed-in solar as well, to further attract customers, taking the payment above 50¢ per kilowatt hour for many households in those early days.

Today, the cost of a solar system is far lower and the output capacity is far higher. While it served its purpose well, the early adopter 44¢ tariff scheme closed to new entrants in 2011, and in recent years the feed-in tariffs offered by retailers has reduced considerably. While as a government we are working hard to make rooftop solar an even more valued commodity, until this is achieved the best way for almost all households to use their solar power is to run as much of the household as possible during daylight hours rather than exporting as much solar energy as possible into the grid unless, of course, you are still on the 44¢ scheme. Running washing machines, air conditioners, dishwashers and so on during the middle of the day powered by the household's own solar is therefore the best way to save money and to recoup the cost of the investment.

It is encouraging that more than 350,000 solar systems and about 40,000 residential batteries are operating in South Australia according to SA Power Networks. I feel it is reasonable to say that this is the voice of consumers speaking. I make no secret that I want to see this number increase, and I take this moment to share a little personal story with the house on something I got up to over the summer period—riveting stuff.

As background, about this time last year my wife and I moved into our home in Parafield Gardens. We love it very much, and one notable feature of it was an existing solar system. With no battery and some ageing elements to the inverter, it is reasonable to say that its best days were behind it. On and off throughout 2023, I had been researching my options on what the best option would be to come as close as possible to taking the sting out of my energy bills. To cut a long story short, it was decided that I would hang onto the existing system and then go ahead with an additional 6.6 kilowatt PV system and a 9.6 kilowatt battery unit.

Before anyone accuses me of suggesting something that is out of reach of everyone, I want to make it very clear that, as I have my own home loan with one of the major banks, I was able to organise a green loan with a fixed interest rate of 3.99 per cent, repayable over 10 years. Given I understand green loans are available to most mortgage customers of the major banks, I want to share this, as it is my view this is accessible to many people. While I do not want to go into the exact specifics of what I have paid, it is reasonable to suggest the set-up payment was under \$15,000, thanks to a little bit of shopping around.

Until I get a year's worth of bills I cannot say definitely but, according to the modelling done by several of the competing companies looking for my business, with a frugal family of three, and with winter being the possible exception, by and large the sting in my bills will be a thing of the past.

I am sharing this because taking out a loan like this means the repayments are now a fixed component to my energy costs for the next 10 years. Working on an amount of \$15,000, it means that it will cost me about \$71 per fortnight. This component becomes resilient to inflation, and after the system is paid off I understand there is a hopeful 15 years of operating life where it will cost me little to run. I know it is not for everyone, but hopefully it gives some food for thought on what products

are out there and how they can be used in a way to smooth out bills and, looking ahead, take the sting out of things.

While consumers are choosing clean energy and taking back control of their energy consumption, we should not be oblivious to the 60 per cent of households that do not currently have solar. Subsequently, these consumers fully draw energy from the electricity grid to meet their total demand, and these people must be supported with good pieces of legislation like the bill before us. While solar can be a game-changer, it is not cheap and it is therefore imperative that we ensure 100 per cent of consumers have access to clean, reliable and, most of all, affordable energy. In calling for these extra powers, the Australian Energy Regulator says, and I quote:

The proposed changes will greatly enhance the AER's ability to assess performance, competition and efficiency in the wholesale energy markets and ensure consumers are not unduly impacted by energy prices due to an uncompetitive market.

It is worth noting that the AER wants contracts which relate to emissions to be expressly included in the ambit of what it can access. This request is relevant following the passage in our parliament of the Statutes Amendment (National Energy Laws) (Emissions Reduction Objectives) Bill 2023. Members may recall that this bill added emissions reductions to the objectives, which all energy market bodies must follow in their decision-making.

In a submission to the current reform proposal, but written before the emissions reduction objectives bill was enacted, the AER says, and I quote:

Emissions-related contracts can directly impact participant behaviour and performance of the wholesale electricity market, as they can influence which technology types in a portfolio a participant would choose to offer and at what cost. In addition, with the proposed integration of emissions reduction in the National Energy Objective, the AER will have a role in assessing whether there are features of the market that detrimentally impact the achievement of relevant emissions reduction targets.

The market bodies like the Australian Energy Regulator have been established to make the private markets perform efficiently and fairly. As lawmakers, we must give them the tools that they need to do their job. The powers to be granted in the bill are a new set of tools that will help the regulator accomplish their role. Given this, I am more than happy to commend this bill to the house.

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (16:27): I rise to make a contribution to the Statutes Amendment (National Energy Laws) (Wholesale Market Monitoring) Bill. It was back on 8 June 2022 that energy ministers agreed to consider additional legislative reform, and that this was having a look at options to enable new gas and electricity contract market-monitoring powers as an immediate priority for introduction into the South Australian parliament, to ensure that the Australian Energy Regulator has the full information and visibility it needs.

On 2 August 2022 a consultation paper was released on amending the Australian Energy Regulator Wholesale Market Monitoring and Reporting Framework as currently set out in the National Electricity Law. Submissions closed for this on 25 August 2022. On 24 February 2023 the Energy and Climate Change Ministerial Council agreed to expedite a package of measures expanding the Australian Energy Regulator's gas and electricity market-monitoring powers, which the Energy and Climate Change Ministerial Council regard as an essential function for a well-regulated and stable east coast electricity market. This group has a view to passing this legislation as soon as feasible.

On 13 April 2023, the draft National Energy Laws Amendment (Wholesale Market Monitoring) Bill and consultation paper were released for a three-week public consultation, with submissions closing on 4 May 2023. As with previous changes to the national energy laws, South Australia is the lead jurisdiction. As such, the convention is that, as the legislation has been approved by the Energy and Climate Change Ministerial Council prior to it being introduced in the Parliament of South Australia, it receives bipartisan support.

The Minister for Energy and Mining introduced the Statutes Amendment (National Energy Laws) (Wholesale Market Monitoring) Bill into this house on 15 November 2023. This bill seeks to amend both the National Electricity Law, set out in the schedule to the National Electricity (South Australia) Act 1996, and the National Gas Law, set out in the schedule to the National Gas (South Australia) Act 2008.

As mentioned previously, in February 2023, the Energy and Climate Change Ministerial Council resolved to fast-track a series of reforms designed to expand the Australian Energy Regulator's gas and electricity market monitoring powers. These powers were described as an essential function for a well-regulated and stable east coast electricity market. These reforms were considered by the ministerial council as imperative for the Australian Energy Regulator to be able to effectively monitor and proactively identify challenges to the energy market.

At present, the Australian Energy Regulator is limited in its ability to assess competition in the wholesale energy markets due to a range of reasons, including restrictions around obtaining and using information, a lack of visibility over electricity market contracts and the lack of a comprehensive gas market monitoring role. As such, the proposed reforms include changes to the National Electricity Law and National Gas Law, with the aim to:

1. remove provisions that currently limit the Australian Energy Regulator's ability to effectively fulfil its electricity wholesale market monitoring function;
2. empower the Australian Energy Regulator to monitor contract markets;
3. create an explicit wholesale market monitoring function for gas; and
4. create additional requirements for the Australian Energy Regulator in connection with its extended wholesale market monitoring powers.

The reforms to the Australian Energy Regulator's wholesale market monitoring and reporting function aim to provide the AER with the visibility it needs to identify and investigate issues in a timely and well-informed manner and make an ongoing assessment of whether these markets are operating competitively. They are also envisaged to enable the Australian Energy Regulator to better monitor electricity and gas markets to understand the drivers of volatility and the level of liquidity in the market to better anticipate and provide information in the event of future crises.

The proposed enhanced information-gathering powers are also intended to equip the Australian Energy Regulator to monitor the progress of the energy markets as they adapt and innovate as part of Australia's energy transition. These reforms are intended to enable the AER to provide information that can inform more targeted and effective long-term policy and regulatory reform.

This bill does affect us on the national scene, and we have to regulate it from our state first as the lead legislator in this process. It certainly affects what happens between this state, Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania because we are all interconnected. Down the track, when EnergyConnect gets finalised—it is taking a while; we have the towers on this side under our proposal to build that 800-megawatt line, connection through New South Wales from Robertstown, and this will complement the Hayward interconnector, which is 500 megawatts, and the Murraylink, which is a 200-megawatt underground line from the Riverland through to Victoria.

I believe that EnergyConnect will be vital into the future. I have talked about it here before. There is obviously a range of electricity generating still going on in this country. We notice—as coal was demonised—coal stations going and maintenance not even being carried out. The banks don't look nicely on coal-fired power, but the simple fact is that it is still part of the energy mix to keep the lights on in this state and in this country. Even though we do not have a coal-fired plant here, we certainly import some coal-fired power from the two connections we have through to Victoria, and obviously that connects into New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania.

We certainly have a broad mix of generation. Obviously we have had lots of gas over the years. I have mentioned here many times that I used to work in the gas fields 40-odd years ago. It is a great industry and I really commend Santos for their project on carbon capture and storage, which will be a game changer in the Cooper Basin.

The work that goes on in the gas industry both here and interstate—some not so much interstate with bans on various programs in Bass Strait and that kind of thing—where the country has sourced a lot of energy and power in the past, is to be commended because gas will be a part of the mix for many years to come, probably at least 30 years most pundits say. We need to keep that in mind as the transition fuel because you do need base load power to keep everything running. Yes,

we do have some great renewable resources as far as wind and solar goes, though I am a bit concerned that when these projects come to end of life they become waste products—the turbines and the panels. We do have many hundreds of megawatts of this type of generation across South Australia, and that has caused some controversy at times and still does.

It is fascinating if you have an electorate where one of these projects may or may not be going ahead, whether it is solar or wind. On the different levels of discussion that are had there are quite a few solar farms through the seat of Hammond. About 200 megawatts have gone in at Taillem Bend and there are various solar farms when you head out towards Palmer and Mannum. There have been other proposals that have not got off the ground or have not happened yet for whatever reason, but there are also some wind farming proposals around the place, and certainly Tilt. They have made some adjustments to the turbines they want to put in around Palmer, and that is going through its approval process. We will see whether or not that gets the go ahead.

Especially with wind turbines usually you get a couple of camps: the ones that don't mind looking at wind turbines and those that are staunchly against them. It is a bit like solar farms on some land. As much as it takes up land, it is a negotiated lease fee between the landholder and the company wanting to generate the electricity, but then there are other people who decide they do not want any part of it.

The simple fact is that we need to generate our electricity from somewhere. Since all the stations up in Port Augusta got bowled over, we lost about 500 megawatts in one or two fell swoops. We needed to enhance the energy we lost there, mainly with gas as far as base load power is concerned and, obviously, as we have heard from other members here today, a lot of rooftop solar, a lot of industrial solar.

I have my farmhouse at Coomandook and it is magnificent. You can only put a five-kilowatt amount of panels on the end of a single-wire return line but it is still pretty handy for keeping the power bills down. I know there has been conversation today about the early legislation where I think you were paid back about 44¢ a unit for your electricity and that has now decreased to 5¢ or 6¢.

At the end of the day, I look on that as a bonus because it is about what you can run during the day—the total opposite of what we used to do in the old days, I will say, where you wanted to run everything at night on J tariff. Now you certainly want to have everything cranked up during the day to utilise that solar power so that you are not paying—I will probably get this number wrong—the 38¢ or 42¢, or whatever it is, a unit with the price that you would have to pay for that power to come in.

I think I put my unit on in the second round, I will call it, not the first round of solar when the 44¢ per unit availability was on the line, and we legislated that here through the house. I think a unit then of a similar size to what I purchased was \$20,000 with that early round and I think what we spent next time was about \$12,000. They are remarkably cheaper now; they are probably down to \$4,000 or something like that for a similar size. Then there is battery capability to go in if people want to go down the path of adding batteries.

It has been interesting—and I have mentioned this before—that the energy minister, Minister Koutsantonis, used to be a fan of EnergyConnect until we made it ours. It is odd because this will really enhance the use of our renewables, our 60 to 70 per cent of renewable generation in this state, so that when we have that oversupply of renewable energy we can export it straight into New South Wales, which then hooks up with the eastern market of Australia through Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and obviously Tasmania.

When we have to, we can import power for a range of needs, whether it is hydro in Tasmania, coal in Queensland, New South Wales or Victoria, or whether it is gas-fired. The beauty of it is that exchange of electricity and those options that will happen will assist us into the future to keep the lights on, which is something the Labor Party did not do in their previous term of government, in September 2016 when all the lights went out in this state. We were sitting in this place, and we were one of the only places to have power because we had emergency generation that kicked in.

It was a very odd day. I was stunned that the whole state could go out, but it did. It was a massive disruption. I think it was taking people up to an hour and a half to go across the square mile of the City of Adelaide. Quite frankly, for those of us who were in Adelaide for the week, it was best

just to stay put here. That should not have happened and we must do all we can to make sure it never happens again.

As I have said, as we need to retain gas supplies into the future, we must work with companies like Santos to make sure that they can do the searching, the drilling and the work needed to extract that gas because we will need it for a long time into the future. As I indicated, I really commend their carbon capture and storage, which is coming online very soon, and that will utilise depleted gas wells, especially close to the Moomba plant.

We have heard a lot about how good hydrogen is going to be. I struggle with the amount of renewable energy that is going to have to be generated. I have heard that up to 16,000 wind turbines will have to be built in the pastoral area around Whyalla and there will be thousands of acres of solar panels to generate power that will probably have a 4:1 loss ratio. To go into hydrogen, I am assuming it will utilise hydrogen as a battery essentially, but to have such a huge power loss to make green steel and other products, I just worry that so much power will be lost—but we will see. When we had the briefing from university professors, I was concerned that they were not sure how it would work—that really did concern me. We need to make sure we do all we can to have energy security in this state.

Certainly, another plank we need to look forward to into the future is nuclear energy. I have spoken about that. Our federal team, with Peter Dutton, has announced that moving forward if nuclear came on board probably the most likely site for a small modular reactor would be at Port Augusta. That makes sense. Everything was there before, as far as the coal plant and all the transmission lines that radiate across this state, because we do have some long leads, obviously. We are a small population compared with the other states. I think it is something we really need to look at.

I witnessed a lot of this when I went to England, France and Finland about eight or 10 years ago and had a look at what is going on there. I saw the canola crops out in full flower right up to the fence of a nuclear power plant. I saw towns in Finland competing to see if they were the ones that got the contracts to build the nuclear power plants and I also saw the research that is being done on putting nuclear spent rods under the ground, which would be a lot safer than the many hundreds of tonnes, probably thousands of tonnes, right across the world that are sitting on the surface.

Here at home at the minute, we have to make sure we get things right to make sure that we can keep the lights on and that we can do it economically. There are people suffering under this Peter Malinauskas government when we have seen power prices go up for households by \$696 and for small business by \$1,288. We must do better to make sure that people can thrive and their businesses can thrive.

Ms THOMPSON (Davenport) (16:48): I, too, rise to speak to the Statutes Amendment (National Energy Laws) (Wholesale Market Monitoring) Bill 2023. Firstly, I think it is important that we establish how our power prices are set and why our bills look the way that they do, because it can be complicated.

Right now, we are operating in a market that sees retailers offer fixed prices to consumers across a 12-month period. To do this, providers are estimating the likely cost of buying energy to power people's homes and businesses in the months that follow. As a result, the forward price of the energy market is responsible for setting what we pay as consumers. As energy prices fall, households rightly expect a reduction in their power bills, but movement in the wholesale market is not passed along immediately because, as we know, those fixed price offers are already in place.

Next, we have to factor in costs associated with transmission, which accounts for approximately 40 per cent of an energy bill, along with maintenance and construction of South Australia's distribution infrastructure, including the highly distinct Stobie poles. Once upon a time, this would have fallen within the scope of the Electricity Trust, or ETSA as it is better known. Unfortunately, a typically short-sighted Liberal privatisation cast aside this reliable, efficient and valuable state asset some 25 years ago. Now we pay monopolies to manage regulated assets instead.

Members interjecting:

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members to my left, you were heard in silence.

Mr Whetstone: Yes, I know.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, well, if you know that then I suggest you give this speaker the same courtesy. If you cannot, I suggest you leave the chamber. The member for Davenport.

Ms THOMPSON: Matters of ownership aside, international price shocks driven by Russia's invasion of Ukraine have subsided locally, fuelled largely by South Australia's plentiful generation of solar and wind. The Australian Energy Market Operator has confirmed that wholesale prices in South Australia almost halved from \$64 per megawatt hour in the 2022 December quarter to \$33 per megawatt hour during the same reporting period one year on.

Pleasingly, our investment in renewable energy generation is not just driving down wholesale prices, it is also helping South Australia break free of the Eastern States, where ageing coal-fired infrastructure is growing increasingly unreliable. Now it is up to private electricity retailers to recognise their costs are falling and pass resulting savings along to South Australian households, instead of treating government investment in renewable energy as a get-rich-quick scheme.

So where does that lead us? This bill increases the capabilities and responsibilities of the Australian Energy Regulator as it works to ensure our energy markets are performing competitively. For starters, we are bolstering the regulator's arsenal by providing it access to critical information on electricity contract markets. Today, the regulator relies on information available within the public domain. However, we know that deals between generators, finance intermediaries and retailers are often done behind closed doors. As it stands, we have a regulator fighting with one arm tied behind its back, and we believe that both the market and the consumer will benefit from a regulator that has full and thorough oversight of the industry it is entrusted with monitoring.

It is important to remember, too, that the Australian Energy Regulator is responsible for setting the default market offer (DMO). The DMO was enacted in July 2019 and is considered a safety net for customers who cannot or will not shop around for a new electricity deal. Households and small businesses on standard retail plans are protected by a maximum price as determined by the Australian Energy Regulator, but, understandably, it is difficult for the regulator to determine a fair and reasonable DMO when it lacks timely and regular access to each market participant's dealings. That is exactly what we are working to improve on for the residents and small businesses of South Australia, New South Wales and south-east Queensland with the introduction of this bill.

Another of this legislation's core functions is to appropriately equip the regulator to monitor and report on happenings within the wholesale gas market. It is well documented that Russia's invasion of Ukraine put upward pressure on gas prices globally, and while we cannot control the movements of foreign governments from South Australia, we can put reasonable consumer protections in place closer to home. That is why I am pleased that we are removing the regulator's shackles, and tasking it with identifying parties that exercise market power and seeking out factors that may be detrimental to competition in gas markets.

It is fair to suggest that these changes are welcomed by the consumer watchdog, which said that the AER receiving the power to monitor the electricity hedging contracts market will improve transparency and policy development. They said:

This will protect competition and facilitate the effective functioning of the electricity market by supporting the provision of risk management options to smaller, non-vertically integrated retailers.

The Public Interest Advocacy Centre was similarly effusive in its praise, saying they:

...consider these changes to be in the long-term interest of consumers, bringing greater transparency to the market and encouraging more efficient and competitive market outcomes.

Feedback received to date has been loud and clear. This is sensible policy to be delivered by the South Australian parliament for households and small businesses spanning several jurisdictions.

Sensible energy policy, as we know, is a hallmark of the Malinauskas Labor government. With our Hydrogen Jobs Plan and a commitment to establishing a world-leading hydrogen power plant in Whyalla, it is no secret that all eyes in the energy sector are firmly on South Australia, which

is why it is so important we deliver legislation specifically in relation to energy regulation that tackles the big issues head-on.

Our ambition extends beyond the hydrogen space and beyond regulatory frameworks, too. South Australian Labor's track record is unparalleled in the renewable energy space, with more than 75 per cent of all electricity generated in South Australia last year having derived from clean sources, being wind and solar. It comes as no surprise, at the very least, to members on this side of the chamber, that such significant generation of renewable energy has resulted in South Australia recording wholesale electricity prices far lower than the black-coal states of New South Wales and Queensland. Make no mistake: this long-term vision is paying dividends for people living and working in South Australia right now, and rest assured we are not done yet.

Finally, while we are talking renewable energy, it would be remiss of me not to mention that for the first time in the National Electricity Market, South Australia entered a period of negative operational demand. When we speak of negative operational demand, we are referencing a period of time in which electricity generated by rooftop solar systems exceeded the demands of an entire state.

We know people are doing it tough, and we know energy prices in particular have proven a burden. Right now, everything points to retailers having an opportunity to deliver families and small businesses the relief that they have been crying out for without impacting on their bottom lines. To assist in that process, we are giving the Australian Energy Regulator the teeth and the visibility it needs to see that our energy markets are working for all. I look forward to delivering this change for those living in South Australia and beyond, and I commend this bill to the house.

Mr WHETSTONE (Chaffey) (16:56): I would like to make a contribution to the Statutes Amendment (National Energy Laws) (Wholesale Market Monitoring) Bill. I think it is very important. I think most members of this place understand that we do need national energy laws that work and that are transparent, and we would like to think that South Australia will be the lead jurisdiction. The Australian Energy Regulator is limited. There are restrictions for obtaining and using information, a lack of visibility over electricity contract markets and a lack of comprehensive gas market monitoring.

I have a very good friend who is a retail provider, and he has given me a much clearer understanding of the current state of play. Of course, the proposed reforms are aiming to remove provisions limiting AER's ability to effectively monitor the electricity wholesale market, to empower the AER to monitor contract markets and to create an explicit wholesale market monitoring function, particularly for gas. The reforms give AER the visibility it needs to investigate issues promptly. At the end of the day, it is about making better ongoing assessments of competition within the marketplace and also helping understand the drivers of volatility and level of liquidity.

To anticipate and provide information in future crises, reforms should allow for effective long-term energy policy that protects South Australians. Whether it is an everyday house, a small business or a large business, it does affect the flow-down. The costs, particularly by the large businesses and the large conglomerates, are felt by all. What we cannot pass down is the cost of a household power bill. That is what is hurting everyday households. That is what is hurting everyday cost-of-living pressures that South Australians are dealing with.

Back at home, where I live in Chaffey, we do need efficient and affordable energy, because that is the critical element for attracting investment. For many years, the main component within a small business has been the cost of labour, but in today's environment we are seeing that the cost of electricity is the number one cost in a day-to-day business operation. Obviously, extensive solar opportunities are helping some individuals.

I will get to clean energy, renewable energy, in just a moment. There is some truth in how we do need to have clean, renewable energy, yes, but currently, with the transition from coal, from gas and from traditional forms of power generation, we are now paying the price for that conversion into renewables.

Obviously, regional communities are facing unique challenges; they are more heavily restricted, but remember that they cannot grow without reliability and they cannot invest with that detailed information. They cannot invest with a transparent understanding of what the cost of power

will mean to their business. We must understand that infrastructure investment needs to be addressed more proactively and supply needs to be more reliable.

I will just touch on some of the larger power users in my electorate. Obviously, being a food-producing electorate we have to pump a lot of water and we also have to pack a lot of fruit. To do that takes a lot of power. I am seeing a number of those businesses, whether they be larger or smaller, reacting to looking at ways that they can be more efficient in how to drive the cost of their power bill down.

Speaking to a number of the owners and proprietors today, we have Venus Citrus, which is a citrus packhouse at Loxton. Their power bill is about \$167,000 a year but they have installed a significant amount of solar and batteries. They are also now getting to the point where they are having to install all sorts of new technology with LED lighting, making sure that they sensor light all of their infrastructure so that the light follows the movement in their shed. That is helping to bring prices down at every opportunity.

The Central Irrigation Trust is the largest irrigation trust in South Australia and probably one of the largest in Australia. They pump about 110 gigalitres of water to I think just over 10 districts at a cost of about \$5 million. To help with their business model they are now in joint power contracts in a cooperative power negotiating capacity with other businesses, so they are all buying wholesale power to reduce their power costs as well as installing panels and batteries. They are now actively involved in all of those power-generation committees and advisory boards doing everything they can to advise and to give people an understanding of what it means to their business with these spiralling power costs.

Mitolo Family Farms is a broadacre horticulture family farm, and they grow and pack mostly potatoes and onions. It is a significant business. Their power price is \$8 million a year. They have looked at ways that they would like to reduce the cost of power, but they are growing with the market trends and putting more and more land under potatoes and onions for the growing consumer demand.

With the cost of living, people are now consuming more carbohydrates; they are eating more potatoes and more onions because it is a cheaper form of food. People are restricting themselves from eating red meat, they are restricting themselves from eating seafood, they are restricting themselves from eating food sources that are more expensive. So, as a family farm, Mitolo have many sites—not just in the Riverland. The majority of their irrigation is in the Riverland, Mallee and Lower Murray, and they are now looking at ways to implement power cost-saving ways, particularly with the takeover by the Canadian Pension fund.

Accolade Wines is quite interesting as they use about 7,000 kVA a year. We are not putting a price on that because they pay for their power whether they use it or not, and that is a distinct disadvantage to that business model. They have wholesale contracts. They are a business—they are a big winery, one of the biggest wineries in the country. That just shows you the vulnerability of a food or beverage provider. They have a season, and during that season they are flat out and have the meter spinning as fast as it will go. When things slow down through the cooler months and the winemaking slows right down, they are still paying the same power price because it is an agreed market price.

The Renmark Irrigation Trust pumps about 34 gigalitres of water. They have renewed their contract, and they did it at an opportune time—they came out of contract and went shopping. They were able to reduce their power price from nearly \$1 million down to \$650,000 just with a five-year contract. If we look at other packhouses, Costa pumps around 25 gigalitres of water, but they also run significant packhouse operations. Their cost for running that business now is a major component of the cost of putting a box of fruit into the market. That cost is, of course, passed on to the consumer and that is adding pressure to day-to-day household prices.

I was speaking to Bill Moularadellis at Kingston Estate. His power price is about \$2½ million a year. He is looking at ways of reducing the cost to his business model. His words were, 'If I reduce the demand, it has to reduce the cost in a broader sense.' But the only way he sees fit to reduce the cost of his power is to go off grid by installing solar panels and batteries, and also with a mixture of

diesel because that is a cheaper form of energy generation than going into the marketplace and dealing with large amounts of cost.

I have been speaking with a number of businesses. Another family business, Red Mud Foods, has a large farm enterprise and winery. They pay about \$100,000 per month for their farm and they pay about \$80,000 per month for their winery. That is getting to the point where it is a very fine line as to whether they make money after paying wages and getting product to market. It is all dependent on the commodity price—as it is with many—but it is now becoming very evident. They pump about 9½ gegalitres of water. It shows a very distinct trend of people wanting to buy affordable food but the issues of the producers providing that food to the marketplace are ever-challenging. It is now more evident than ever that it is becoming very expensive to grow food, just as it is very expensive to buy food.

I think some of the vulnerability with the power situation—where it is hurting many businesses—is the contracts. When are those contracts signed? Are they signed at an opportune time? Is the contract signed when they come out of a contract? We have seen in some instances their power prices have doubled from a previous contract that they had signed over a period of time to a new contract. Sometimes, they need that certainty.

They cannot go into the spot market. Many might know that the spot market is highly volatile. The spot market can go from almost zero cost of power to a price that is restrictive to the point where they have to turn their pumps off, they have to shut their sheds down and they have to lay off employees because it is just simply not viable to keep that operation running when we see high spikes in power prices. That is usually when the wind is not blowing, and potentially when the sun is not shining.

I want to touch on a number of contributions by members in this place. We talk about having 75 per cent renewables in South Australia. That is great, but by the same token, the cost of power is a very small part of your bill. If we were to break that down, a number of members on the government benches have said how wonderful it is to have solar panels on your roof and maybe batteries if you are lucky enough, but what they do not tell you is what the network charges are, they do not tell you what the metering charges are and they do not tell you what the market charges are.

That is what is hurting people's bills. That is what is hurting every South Australian family at the moment. That is what is hurting every South Australian business. The wholesalers, the generators, the poles and wires all have fixed costs. We have gone from a couple of major power generators in yesteryear to now thousands of power generators, which is ideology: generating a little bit of power off your roof, sometimes storing a bit of power in your battery.

But every South Australian is picking up the tab. Mark my words: it might feel good, it might sound good, to have 75 per cent renewables, but it is costing every South Australian a significant amount of money for the fixed charges. We cannot just be spellbound by the cost of electricity. That is a small element of your bill, remembering that it is the other charges that are costing so much money.

I will just give everyone a bit of an understanding. At the old Holden site, they used to use 35 megavolts, MVA. When the current desal plant was built, they thought it was going to use a significant amount of power, somewhere in the vicinity of 100 MVA. They now know that running that plant uses about 40 MVA. BHP at Olympic Dam are the main power consumer in South Australia. They use 100-plus MVA at any one time. OneSteel, which is now GFG, the Gupta enterprise, use 50 MVA.

It will be interesting to see how the traditional power will convert over to what I think is a little bit of a pipedream, this government's hydrogen model. It is an experiment. It is going to come at a significant cost to taxpayers, and it has to be proven. I am a little sceptical because there is nothing there that is giving me hope. It will be an untested form of power generation in South Australia, how it is going to work.

By the way, EnergyConnect, the interconnector, is all very good. It is basically putting an extension cord between all of the southern and eastern states so that we can generate power, we can push power into other states when they need it and we can draw power into South Australia

when we need it. It is a great idea, but we still continue to talk about solar and batteries. We continue to talk about a lot of the renewables. I think that is a great thing to talk about because I am a supporter, but where is the base load going to come from? We cannot continue to say that we are going to get lots of solar panels, lots of fans and lots of batteries to generate the base load that this state needs because that is a simple furphy.

The state would need to be covered with fans, it would need to be covered in solar panels, to have the base load needed for some of these big users of power, and not just the big miners, the big steelmakers and the manufacturers: do not forget about the food. You cannot eat steel, you cannot eat hydrogen, but you can eat the produce that comes out of the fields, which need reliable power to keep the water pumped, to make sure that the pack houses can keep the lights on and to make sure that we can load the trucks and get it to market so people can put food on their table at an affordable price.

I must say, for what it is worth, speaking with a number of large power users, providers and generators, the best way to put transparency into the marketplace is by decoupling your bill. To do that is not playing politics: it is just plain math. At the moment every bill, whether you are house or a business, has four major components: we have a network charge, which is large; we have an energy charge, which is small; we have a metering charge, which is almost invisible to understand how it works; and we also have market charges. If we were able to decouple those four components of our power bill—so when you get your power bill next time, just turn the page over and better understand what the component of energy is in the overall cost of your power bill. It will probably make your jaw hit the floor because the energy component on the bill is very, very small.

The network charges, the metering charges and the market charges are what need to be exposed so that we can better understand where those charges are coming from, and then we can tackle those charges individually. We can decouple and we can have a level of transparency, because at the moment it is very hard to understand what your power bill represents. For the day-to-day mums and dads who do not understand, they look at the overall bill charge and they are gobsmacked because they do not understand the layers that make up the charge of that bill.

As I understand it, the national energy law, the Australian Energy Regulator, we have to support it—yes we do—but we need more transparency in the marketplace. We need to better understand what our bill represents and what makes up that charge so we can actually tackle those individual charges and then better understand how to actually reduce our power bill on a day-to-day basis.

Ms CLANCY (Elder) (17:16): I rise today in support of the Statutes Amendment (National Energy Laws) (Wholesale Market Monitoring) Bill 2023, which seeks to add to the capabilities and responsibilities of the Australian Energy Regulator. Like many of us in this place, I am regularly contacted by members of my community concerned with the price of electricity. This is an issue that was raised with me as a candidate and something that I and many other South Australians have been concerned about for some time.

When constituents bring inquiries to me, no matter what the issue is about, I always try to—and it is often impossible not to—avoid providing the context of mistakes that previous governments have made. However, when it comes to energy prices, South Australians are well aware of the mistakes of the past in privatising the Electricity Trust of South Australia and the effect that mistake still has on energy prices today.

South Australians were also bitterly disappointed by the former Liberal government's decision to sell off the operation of state-owned generators, which would have shielded us by reserving energy for emergency use. This bitterly disappointing decision has left our state more vulnerable to international forces and subjected to increasing unreliability and higher costs of coal-fired power stations interstate.

During the winter of 2022, South Australians saw the worst of this vulnerability. The ongoing invasion and conflict in Ukraine—

Mr Whetstone interjecting:

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Chaffey, you were heard uninterrupted. It doesn't mean people agreed with what you said. Member for Elder, continue uninterrupted please.

Ms CLANCY: Thank you very much for your protection, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr Whetstone interjecting:

Ms CLANCY: Sorry, did that just happen again?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Chaffey, can you just zip it please.

Ms CLANCY: I was silent during your contribution, member for Chaffey. Maybe give it a crack.

Mr Whetstone interjecting:

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Chaffey, you are warned for the third time. Next time you will be leaving the chamber.

Ms CLANCY: During the winter of 2022—

Mr Whetstone interjecting:

Ms CLANCY: —farewell, member for Chaffey—South Australians saw the worst of this vulnerability. The ongoing invasion and conflict in Ukraine, high international fuel prices, fuel supply shortages and generator outages contributed to unprecedented high prices and price volatility in the wholesale electricity market. Events such as those experienced in recent years have demonstrated the risks that energy consumers are exposed to when there is a lack of effective competition in and visibility of wholesale electricity and electricity contract markets.

It is vital to South Australian energy consumers and consumers in other jurisdictions that those responsible for monitoring these markets have the capacity and tools to look out for their best interest. The Australian Energy Regulator plays this important role, ensuring consumers have access to reliable, clean and secure energy.

The regulator is also responsible for ensuring consumers pay no more than necessary for the energy delivered to their homes and businesses. As part of this role, the Australian Energy Regulator sets the annual default market offer for electricity, which is the price cap for consumers on standing offers and which also acts as the reference point for all other contracts for households and small businesses on market offers.

Like many of you, I am sure, I was incredibly pleased to see this morning that the regulator announced their draft default market offer of cuts—not increases, as scaremongered by some of those opposite, but cuts—of 2.5 per cent, or \$57, for average households and 8.2 per cent, or \$481, for small businesses. The regulator is also responsible for determining the maximum revenue which monopoly businesses, such as SA Power Networks, ElectraNet and Australian Gas Networks, can earn and for monitoring markets and performance to enforce compliance with energy legislation.

At present, the Australian Energy Regulator relies on publicly accessible information to monitor the wholesale electricity market, such as auction processes run by the Australian Energy Market Operator and the futures market run by the Australian Securities Exchange. This restriction was placed on Australian Energy Regulator under the national energy laws to protect commercially sensitive information. In practice, however, these restrictions only serve to hamper the regulator's capacity to gain sufficient visibility of the market to perform its role.

As we saw during the winter of 2022, energy retailers struggled to access electricity contracts to hedge their retail load against high spot prices. Without access to the entire board, the Australian Energy Regulator and the commonwealth could not see the information required throughout this time period. This bill seeks to assist the Australian Energy Regulator to fulfil its role by allowing the regulator the visibility it needs to identify and investigate issues in a timely and well-informed manner and make an ongoing assessment of whether the market is operating competitively.

Outside of the publicly accessible information the Australian Energy Regulator has access to, much of the trading conducted in the electricity market is done through private bespoke contracts between generators, finance intermediaries and retailers. Without access to this information, the

Australian Energy Regulator cannot easily estimate what retailers are actually paying to purchase the energy they then sell on to households and small businesses. This particularly impacts the regulator's capacity to set the default market offer fairly for consumers.

Since the South Australian Liberals privatised ETSA, it has been up to good governments at all levels to empower consumers to take back control of their energy use and costs. A really successful example of this is in my electorate, where the City of Mitcham's Community Renewables Program is running. This program, managed by solar energy supplier ShineHub, was introduced to help households and businesses across the council area to install solar and battery systems for no up-front costs. So far, over 760 households have signed up for solar panels and/or batteries, which has offset a total of three power plants and is helping to build a virtual power plant to support the local electricity network.

The City of Mitcham's ultimate goal is to develop a community energy plan that sources the majority of its power from this local virtual power plant. This includes all residents in the council area, not just those who go solar, and a number of other local governments in South Australia and in other states have seen this project by the City of Mitcham and are looking to implement it themselves.

While this initiative is fantastic, it is still limited to those households with the financial capacity to participate in the program. While renters will benefit from the strengthening of a local virtual power plant in the long run, they will only receive the benefits in the short term should their landlord be willing to participate. That is where reforms such as those included in this bill are so important, empowering consumers and ensuring that profit-seeking retailers are not leaving ordinary South Australians behind.

I would also like to take this opportunity to talk about a new community battery program. Through a \$1 million grant from the commonwealth Community Batteries for Household Solar initiative, two community batteries will lower annual electricity bills for around 600 eligible participants by as much as \$562 per year. These batteries are in Magill and Edwardstown. The one in Edwardstown is not in my part of Edwardstown but is just over the border in my friend's seat of Badcoe, on Towers Terrace. (Hello to Jayne and Quinn, who I am sure are undoubtedly watching my excellent contribution.)

These batteries will help us to continue to decarbonise and will store excess energy during the day when renewable energy is abundant and then make it available at night during periods of high demand or when the grid needs support. Housing SA tenants living near these community batteries will be invited to join the SA Virtual Power Plant scheme, with tenants closest to the two batteries in Magill and Edwardstown receiving the offers first.

I would also like to put on record my strong support for our government bringing forward our renewable energy target by three years. We knew that we were definitely going to be able to reach our target of 100 per cent renewables by 2030, so we thought, 'Let's actually make it a bit tougher. Let's give ourselves a bit more of a push.' Now we have a target to reach 100 per cent renewables by 2027. Our previous Labor government and this Labor government's commitment to renewable energy in our state is something we can be very, very proud of, and I am so pleased that we continue to be leaders, not only in our country but around the world, in increasing renewable energy use.

In closing, I would like to thank all those who have helped bring the bill to this place, including those who participated in the two rounds of public consultation, the Energy and Climate Change Ministerial Council, and our Minister for Energy's staff, particularly Chris. I also really want to thank our Minister for Energy. He is incredibly knowledgeable about this space. He works incredibly hard. I am proud that we have a Minister for Energy who proudly voted against the sale of ETSA back in 1999—what a legend. Thank you to the rest of his team. I proudly commend this bill to the house.

Ms HOOD (Adelaide) (17:28): I, too, rise to speak on the Statutes Amendment (National Energy Laws) (Wholesale Market Monitoring) Bill 2023, and I would like to begin by taking a little trip down memory lane, recalling what was said in this place by the most senior members of a former Liberal government in South Australia. These members, a Liberal Premier and a Liberal Treasurer, were speaking about the expected benefits of privatisation of the state's electricity assets.

Of course, at that time these assets were owned and operated by the government in the interests of the South Australian people—it was good times. The then Liberal Premier, John Olsen, said on 18 March 1998:

The outcomes for reform of the State's electricity assets, to be achieved over the next few years, are as follows:

- an efficient, competitive electricity industry in South Australia, within the context of the national electricity market and competition policy;
- sustainable lower electricity prices and choice of supply for consumers;
- an appropriate regulatory environment to encourage competitive outcomes and protection for consumers;
- long term security of supply;
- repayment of budget supported debt;
- reduced risks to taxpayers;

Yes, that was the Liberals' 1998 promise of electricity privatisation: I quote, 'sustainable, lower electricity prices'.

The view was echoed by the then Treasurer, the Hon. Rob Lucas, who only recently served in the former Marshall Liberal government again as Treasurer. Privatisation would, Mr Lucas hoped, and I quote, 'lead eventually to lower prices for industry and business'. That was said on 25 March 1999. Yet, here we are, some 2½ decades later, when privatisation has almost definitely not delivered lower prices for households, industry or business. I seek leave to continue my remarks.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

Parliamentary Committees

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE ON OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY, REHABILITATION AND COMPENSATION

The Legislative Council informed the House of Assembly that it had appointed the Hon. B.R. Hood to the committee in place of the Hon. H.M. Girolamo (resigned).

Bills

ASSISTED REPRODUCTIVE TREATMENT (POSTHUMOUS USE OF MATERIAL AND DONOR CONCEPTION REGISTER) AMENDMENT BILL

Final Stages

The Legislative Council agreed to the bill without any amendment.

At 17:31 the house adjourned until Wednesday 20 March 2024 at 10:30.

*Answers to Questions***RIVER ROAD, HAHNDORF PROCUREMENT**

137 Mr TEAGUE (Heysen) (15 November 2023). In relation to the procurement process for River Road, Hahndorf:

- (a) On what date did the process begin?
- (b) How many quotes were sought for the works?
- (c) Has the department instructed the contractors to keep the value of the works below a certain threshold to avoid procurement process requirements?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS (West Torrens—Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Minister for Energy and Mining): The Department for Infrastructure and Transport (the Department) has advised:

- (a) Wednesday, 6 September 2023.
- (b) One.
- (c) No.

MOUNT LOFTY SUMMIT ROAD

In reply to **Mr BATTY (Bragg)** (28 September 2023).

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS (West Torrens—Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Minister for Energy and Mining): The Minister for Road Safety has advised:

The speed limit on the northern section of Mount Lofty Summit Road was approved to be reduced from 80 km/h to 60 km/h in November 2022.

The member may be pleased to know that the speed limit on the remaining sections of the Mount Lofty Summit Road was reduced from 80 km/h to 60 km/h on 26 September 2023, to provide a consistent speed limit along the entire length of the road.

Road safety signage is also in place to advise drivers of upcoming bends and safe speeds to travel around them, as well as to notify of upcoming intersections.

South Australia Police has been notified of the ongoing issues along this road involving dangerous driving and will continue to take affirmative action regarding dangerous driving behaviours.