

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, 29 October 2024

The **SPEAKER (Hon. L.W.K. Bignell)** 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.

Parliament House Matters

COMMUNITY EDUCATION OFFICE

The **SPEAKER (11:02)**: Before I kick off, we actually went through that a few times last week—not in here, but out on the APY lands. I want to take this moment to thank the education office of parliament for the great outreach they are doing with civics. They have been, over the past three years, to every part of South Australia. To be up on the APY lands and visit some of those schools last week was just an incredible experience.

Natalie and Shannon, who were the education officers, took up a mock parliament. So there is a backdrop and the kids sit in a chair and this is behind them and it looks just like they are in parliament. Unlike me, they wear ties and a wig and the gown, and we take a mace. I just want to thank Natalie and Shannon and everyone who works so hard in the education office. I know the education minister is very keen on the parliament being out in the schools and teaching civics.

Bills

OFFICE FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT BILL

Second Reading

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 26 September 2024.)

The **Hon. S.E. CLOSE (Port Adelaide—Deputy Premier, Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science, Minister for Climate, Environment and Water, Minister for Workforce and Population Strategy) (11:03)**: I am really pleased to have the opportunity to speak on this bill. This particular policy area is one that I have taken a great deal of interest in, both when I was education minister and also in our time in opposition. I spent quite a lot of time in opposition looking at the evidence for what interventions we could make as a state to improve the chances of all children being successful in their education.

As we know, education is foundational to success in our kind of society. It is utterly necessary. It is important that children are able to not only finish school but finish school well, learn skills that are useful for their day-to-day life and navigating it and also, of course significantly, skills to be able to be employed in reliable and well-remunerated work. Individually, those children deserve it and, collectively, we all benefit.

We are not as exceptionally good an education country as we sometimes like to tell ourselves. We tell ourselves, because we have many examples of excellence, that that is universally the case and that the way that we construct our education system is as good as it gets. It is simply not borne out by any analysis of comparative success across the OECD and similar nations.

What we have is an education system that results in about 25 per cent of children not getting their high school certificate—some other nations get much nearer 90 per cent—and we have a system where disadvantage weighs very heavily on children. If they come from a background of a family that has low household income, and that has low education attainment for the parents, that all

too readily translates into lower success for the children of that family. This is not what you would expect if you thought of us as being a nation of the fair go, of meritocracy and of egalitarianism. What you have is a result that you would think is far more consistent with one that was a class-based country. I think we need to be honest about that to ourselves because our children deserve better.

In opposition, the Minister for Education, myself and the Premier collectively spent considerable time contemplating the changes that one could make in South Australia to make this a stronger education system, and a number of those have been put into place by the minister during our time in office. I think the one that probably attracts the least ready political attention but the one that will have the biggest outcome over the medium to long term is this idea of adding a year of school in the form of offering three-year-old preschool.

There is such strong and overwhelming evidence of the difference that that makes. How do I know this? Well, a study was commissioned by the education ministers ministerial council while I was education minister but delivered once we had gone into opposition. It was called Lifting Our Game, and it did a serious analysis of what one should do with early childhood. It recognised that Australia is one of the nations that performs worst in comparison to other nations. We are a country that has underinvested in early childhood and we have, unfortunately, reaped the result of that in the outcomes.

I am talking about early childhood because, of course, we are setting up the Office for Early Childhood Development, which will allow us to deliver three-year-old preschool and will also allow us to offer other services and supports for children in those first years—and I would like to pay tribute to previous Premier Jay Weatherill, who as both education minister and as Premier recognised the importance of the early years.

Those results do not confine themselves. The changes do not confine themselves to the impact on those children while they are small children, but you can see the result that emerges from them as they get towards the end of high school. We know this because of the PISA, which is a test that is applied to 15 year olds across the OECD and partner countries every few years. It is a test that is constructed as problem-solving in various realms: mathematics, science and literacy.

It asks children at the age of 15 to solve problems using those skills, and an enormous amount of data is generated from PISA, an enormous amount: the structure of an education system; the extent to which it is equal or unequal; the kind of resourcing that is devoted; and, of course, crucially for this discussion, what happens in early childhood. It is collected from all of the countries that participate, and then the results are generated.

Most people in this chamber will already be aware that Australia has gone backwards in PISA since it was first started, and it has gone backwards against other nations, but it has also gone backwards against itself, so both absolutely and relatively Australia's results have declined in PISA. That is deeply troubling. I find it far more troubling than NAPLAN, because NAPLAN as a standardised test the variations tend to be very minor and we get very agitated and excited about those variations state by state, but what we see is that, if your parents are less educated and your parents' income is lower, you are likely on average to do worse in NAPLAN, so that tells us something about our education system. It probably does not tell us much about the quality of teaching, which I suspect is pretty evenly spread, but does tell us about the importance of resources and who is sitting next to you in the classroom.

PISA tells us that, as children are getting close to completing their high school education, how ready are they to solve problems presented to them. One of the many lessons PISA tells us is that, if you invest in early childhood before school, you will get better results at the age of 15. Every nation that does better than Australia in PISA has two years of preschool, not one year. Every nation that does better than us believes in a dose of at least 15 hours a week, and that is commonly regarded as a minimum dose.

Some people will recall that getting to the 15 hours was a struggle, when previous governments had to hammer out an arrangement whereby the state pays for some of the preschool hours—12 hours for South Australia (it varies across the country)—and an extra three hours is universal access. I recall bitterly when we had to deal with the Hockey budget under Tony Abbott and Christopher Pyne as education minister, making us wait for that extra three hours a week for

children at the age of four—it was a political battle that we eventually managed to prise out. It was done on a year-by-year basis, instead of a guarantee, but we are talking about three-year-old preschool.

An analysis that was done that was presented to the education ministers council in 2018, once we had gone into opposition, said that you could see a score point difference at the age of 15 based on investment in early childhood. For every extra dollar you spent on pre-primary education you would get nearly a two-point score difference. If you reduced the child-teacher ratio in pre-primary by one child you would get 2.69, so getting on for a three-point difference. If you increased by 1 per cent the proportion of students who attend pre-primary education—so in your country if you can increase just a little bit—you get a six-point difference, but if you increase the duration by one year, meaning that you go from just four year olds to also three year olds, you get a nearly nine-point score difference in PISA. That is the extent to which that extra year makes a difference.

Unfortunately, that result came out in 2018 to more or less deafening silence across the nation. Victoria did start to take an interest in offering three-year-old preschool. They of course have a very different structure where their delivery is done in a way that is funded essentially by parents and by a subsidy that comes from the commonwealth, because it is treated in a funding sense as if it were child care as opposed to the South Australian model of preschool, which is that there is a government offering as well as a private offering, and the government offering of course does not charge parents to the extent of child care (there is a very small materials-services charge).

I do recall vividly coming off paying for child care and going into preschool with my children: the relief in the amount of money you were stumping up was very marked. But that makes it an expensive proposition in South Australia, yet we have chosen to go ahead with this model. Having discovered that it makes such a big difference and having seen that Australia is so far behind, nearly 70 per cent—around 68-point-something per cent—of three-year-old children are in a preschool education in the OECD, so nearly 70 per cent of three year olds.

In Australia at that time it was only 15 per cent; only 15 per cent of three year olds had access to a preschool education. That was largely because we would see children who were Aboriginal had a right to go, and we would see that there were some elite schools offering what was described as a 'preschool program for three year olds' but not for the great bulk of Australians.

To see that gap, where we think of ourselves as being a pretty good education nation and yet to leave our young children so far behind, seemed to us to be unacceptable. That is why we proceeded to develop a policy that we would bring in three-year-old preschool. We did that policy, to say, 'We will do this, and it will commence in 2026.' Obviously, it takes a ramp-up. I think the Victorians have suggested 10 years of ramp-up for themselves, and that is not least because you need an awful lot more educators and care workers to be able to populate those schools and to make them work.

We recognised that we needed to do that, but we decided that we would have a royal commission to look into the way in which that would be structured in order to really flesh out the complexities of our system, which is a mixed system of preschool being offered by childcare centres and preschools being offered by public, government centres. That royal commission not only investigated the merits of and the mechanisms for three-year-old preschool but also looked significantly at the way that we ought to have additional interventions associated with children who are disadvantaged.

It is very, very important for children who have any form of disadvantage, and that includes developmental disadvantage, which is not always attached to the wealth and social background of the parents, of course. It is also something that exists for some individual children and if not spotted and acted on can really hold that child back. While it is very important, significantly, that disadvantaged children have access to this, in fact it helps all children. It is not something that ought to be reserved only for children in disadvantage; it is something that ought to be recognised as a value for all children.

We asked the royal commission to look into not only the mechanics of the three-year-old preschool offering but also the way in which we would be able to offer more supports for children

who had extra needs. I think the result they came up with, offering additional services and additional access for children in disadvantage, was important.

As I say, one of the issues that I think is really worth looking into in some detail is the way in which we can pick up developmental challenges for students, not only because the earlier you get into these the better but because, in fact, for some children you can leave it too late. The wiring of the brain by the time people notice that there is a challenge can mean that there is very little change that can be realised or that the child is so far behind that they find it extraordinarily difficult to catch up, so it is very important that we give that option to children.

I am just looking through this magnificent report that was produced by the people who were commissioned by the education ministers ministerial council. They went up hill and down dale in the seriousness of looking into these issues. It is very disappointing that no-one in Victoria and South Australia really took it too seriously. In South Australia we had to wait to come into our election, of course, to be successful in bringing this in. They look at the developmental advantage on the duration as well as the quality of preschool.

If you have a high-quality preschool and you get one to two years of that, if you had two to three years, even a low-quality service about matches the impact of a high-quality service for only the one to two years. So bearing in mind the amount of service that we offer makes an enormous difference even in a relatively low-quality setting, which of course we have absolutely no intention of offering; we have an intention of offering a very high quality.

That kind of data is what drove us to think about not only the importance of lifting quality standards, which has been a project for some time, started by Julia Gillard when she was federal minister to turn child care from being really about the productivity of the parents into being both the productivity of the parents and the quality of experience for the children, but also, significantly, this dose of early childhood preschool that makes such a massive difference to their life experiences and their life opportunities.

I think the work that has been done by the minister has shown a degree of care and attention to the outcomes that are well worth understanding. This is not an easy policy area. This is an area that has many people already invested in the current system and who already understand the current system and very few people who are actually about to use three-year-old preschool.

Twenty thousand kids are born each year, so in any given year you will have 20,000 kids who will be available for that service, but when you think about the vast majority of families who have kids in all the other years but one particular one, and you have all of the people whose kids have left school and they are more interested in what is happening in postsecondary education or they are now thinking about their own lives and not really about the education system anymore, you do not get a lot of political advantage.

This is not an area that is hunted for in order to get votes. That is why I find it very admirable that both the Premier and the minister have put so much energy and so much money into making this work, because it genuinely is for the right reasons rather than to be responsive to a quick election fix of getting additional voting of additional support for their interests.

Forgive me for being inarticulate in those recent sentences, but I was just at the same time scrolling through this excellent report and finding where Australia sits in the OECD average in the way in which we have invested to date. For investment in early childhood as a proportion of GDP, the OECD average—bear in mind we are one of the richer nations in the OECD, not one of the poorer ones—is 0.81 per cent of GDP. Australia is at 0.49 per cent, so a bit over half. Investment in pre-primary is 0.61 of GDP and for Australia only 0.2 per cent. In participation, as I have described, there is nearly 70 per cent participation across the OECD of three year olds compared with only 15 per cent of our children.

We are also only average in the four-year-old enrolment—in fact, on the year that was being assessed we were very slightly below average, so not world leaders in that. We need to make sure that while we are doing three year olds we continue to emphasise the importance of four year olds. I will also note that we are way below the dosage that is quite common across the OECD. In fact, in

Europe four year olds are treated almost as if they are going to school, they are attending so frequently. That said, they are doing it in a way that is utterly play-based and age-appropriate.

This is not about getting little kids sitting in rows and practising for school; this is about little kids playing with teachers who are well educated in how to draw out the skill development that is required and to test how the young children are going and whether they need any additional assistance, but in the kind of environment that is welcoming, play-based and supportive.

I do think when we look back in the future that we will look at this reform as being one of the most crucial that has been undertaken by this government. This is a reformist government; this is a government that has come in with a pretty big agenda that it is steadily working through. But this reform, I think, is the one that will most pay off in the quality of experience for individual young people and collectively in the benefits that we reap from the quality of our education system.

The Hon. B.I. BOYER (Wright—Minister for Education, Training and Skills) (11:24): I want to begin by thanking all those members for their contributions, including on this side of the chamber. I thank the members for Hurtle Vale, Gibson, Reynell, Dunstan, King, Torrens, Ramsay and, just then, the member for Port Adelaide with an excellent contribution, I thought, that took us back to why we started considering a move to have a second year of preschool in the first place and to the report that landed in 2018 that spoke really strongly and powerfully about what the benefit of a second year of preschool is.

Something that the Deputy Premier reminded me of, and something I think we do not speak about enough, is the link between two years of preschool and the improvement that it can bring to bear on our PISA results for 15 year olds, which is something that we do speak about quite a lot. I think we should, and I include myself in this, do a better job of drawing a link between the early years and the work that is done there and the benefit that can be achieved later in a young person's education and later in a young person's life. Perhaps even as much as 12 years later we might see some of the benefits of some of those standardised tests that we do.

I want to thank all those members, including the member for Morialta, of course, for their contributions on this bill. Several members reflected on the importance of early childhood development and the reforms that bill will underpin, including the introduction of universal access to three-year-old preschool, additional co-design support for Aboriginal children, the expansion of child health and developmental checks—I know that has great bipartisan support in this place—and greater support for a strong and valued early childhood workforce, which is something that has been spoken about for years upon years but I think is only just beginning to be realised. We heard, just earlier this year, the announcement from the federal government that there will be a significant and genuine pay rise for that sector, which is coming and which is certainly well overdue, I think we can all agree.

Importantly, this bill provides the foundation for a connected, collaborative early childhood system that champions change and gives South Australian children a flying start to their life. The bill, in legislating the role of the Office for Early Childhood Development, as recommended by the Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care and the royal commissioner herself, the Hon. Julia Gillard, will provide the office with the functions and powers it needs to further the government's ambitious reform agenda.

The member for Morialta, in his contribution, asked a couple of questions about the office and the approach taken in the bill, and I will respond briefly to those questions. In response to the member's question about why the parliament should legislate for the office, I note that the royal commission recommended an office with a legislated mandate to bring together, through a system stewardship approach, what has been a fragmented early childhood development sector.

I might just speak briefly about that fragmented approach. I think one of the things that has made conversations around early childhood reform difficult and cumbersome is the very opaque nature of the early years, not just in terms of the intersection between federal government and state government about who is responsible for what, which a lot of people find confusing, including how the childcare subsidy works. Perhaps I am just on my lonesome here, but I suspect that I am not. It may not be until you have a child of your own who goes through the childcare phase of their life—and you are grappling with understanding how it works with the childcare centre around making

bookings and claiming the childcare subsidy and what you are entitled to or not entitled to—that you actually get a clearer picture, I might say, of how it actually works.

Then, as the Deputy Premier said before, you lay on top of that the fact that, in terms of preschool or kindergarten, it works differently in different states. The Deputy Premier referred to Victoria, which is the state in which I did kindergarten. Victoria has a much bigger role from local councils, as opposed to the South Australian system, which I think is an excellent system—I think it is a better system than the Victorian system. Nonetheless, there are differences in how it works across all state and territory borders. That, combined with the fact that the federal government plays a role and the state government plays a role and then, in some jurisdictions, local council plays a role, makes this whole debate difficult. It has been a slow, drawn out and protracted move towards where we are now, because it has been harder for everyone collectively to get their heads around how it actually works.

I will return to responding to some of the member for Morialta's other points as well. The royal commission found that the legislation would give the office the leave, as it needs, to connect with all levels of government, for profit and not-for-profit providers, which goes to the heart of the recommendation made by the Hon. Julia Gillard. I think it goes to the heart of how our rollout here in South Australia will be different to how it has been rolled out in jurisdictions like Victoria; also community groups and experts, with the intent of moving toward the overall goal, which was recommendation number 1, around reducing the level of developmental vulnerability for South Australian children from the current rate of 23.8 per cent, which is above the national average, to 15 per cent by 2043.

I spoke about things that are a bit cumbersome and complicated. I would have grappled with that myself around how I do a better job and how we do a better job in the public domain around explaining more clearly what we mean by developmental vulnerability, what it actually means in terms of an individual child and, of course, what the flow-on effects can be if that developmental vulnerability is not addressed in terms of what it looks like for that young person on the day they sit down for their first day of reception. If they are in the 23.8 per cent category, and the child next to them or a child of the same age from across the border in Victoria with a lower average developmental vulnerability figure is not in that category, it means they start school behind.

If we were to be completely frank in this place, which I think we should, some catch up and some do not. As children get older—and the Deputy Premier alluded to this—given that 90 per cent of brain development is complete by the age of five, that task of catching up and overcoming issues around developmental vulnerability and the things that underpin it, whether it is social, emotional, cognitive, physical or language, are complex and get exponentially more difficult to address as that young person gets older. It does not get easier, it gets harder, so if you do not invest in the early years in trying to get it right, what you actually do is you spend a lot of money on what you might describe almost as the tertiary end of the process, around sometimes putting bandages on things.

Sometimes we get it right and we can overcome those things, sometimes we do not and then, of course, you can draw what is an incredibly clear and direct link between those things not being successful in the early years and the trajectory of that young person's life in terms of their chances of being gainfully employed, happy, mentally healthy, all those kinds of things; interactions with the juvenile justice and adult correctional systems. There are really clear and quite depressing links between when we get it right in the early years and when we do not get it right in the early years and what it means for that human being when they get older.

That is why recommendation number 1 is getting that level of developmental vulnerability down from 23.8 to 15 per cent by 2043, and I endeavour to do a better job of communicating publicly around what that actually means in plain English so that those families who have children, or will have children, can understand why it is so important that we make a real push into that space.

Again, the Deputy Premier referred to things outside the fundamental delivery of the 15 hours of three-year-old preschool in terms of the other wraparound supports that we will be putting in for three year olds and four year olds, those things outside the actual provision of 15 hours of play-based learning per week for three year olds and four year olds. That will go towards getting that level of developmental vulnerability down. There are other things; it is not just having bums on seats, so to

speak, but there are other supports that were recommended by the royal commission that are needed to make sure we address all those things that fall into the category or categories of developmental vulnerability.

The royal commission found that providing for the office in legislation will formalise its value and purpose as a system steward of the early childhood development system and provide a long-term commitment to its role. The government has publicly accepted that recommendation.

I note there are various ways in which an office or agency may be established or provided for under legislation in our state. The member for Morialta outlined a number of those in his contribution. It is not particularly unusual for an act of parliament to provide for an office, body or officer with statutory functions towards important public aims. I will give a few examples here: the Office for Ageing Well, the Industry Advocate, the Cross Border Commissioner and the Suicide Prevention Council, just to name a few.

The member for Morialta asked whether the office would be subject to the strictures of the Legislative Council's Statutory Authorities Review Committee. The short answer to that is no. The office, as recommended by the royal commission, will act as a system steward but within a departmental context.

The Statutory Authorities Review Committee is established under part 5A of the Parliamentary Committees Act 1991, with the function to inquire into, consider and report on any statutory authority to it under the act. Pursuant to section 3 of the Parliamentary Committees Act, 'statutory authority' means:

a body corporate that is established by an Act and—

- (a) is comprised of or includes, or has a governing body comprised of or including, persons or a person appointed by the Governor, a Minister or an agency or instrumentality of the Crown; or
- (b) is subject to control or direction by a Minister; or
- (c) is financed wholly or partly out of public funds...

Under the bill the office will not be a body corporate and therefore will not be a statutory authority subject to the functions of the Statutory Authorities Review Committee.

Since the introduction of the bill I have also had the privilege of meeting with the First Nations Voice to Parliament—I understand this is one of the first bills to go through that process—to hear its views about the bill and its suggestions for areas where the bill could be improved. That has been formally considered now, and I thank the members of the Voice for their advice and their insight and their willingness to share their community's perspective, stories and experiences. I will be moving some amendments in the committee stage on the suggestion of the First Nations Voice.

Until then, I would like to just thank all those members again for their contributions, and I look forward to taking this bill through the committee stage. I must say it has given me a sense of genuine hope in terms of the nature of the debate around this bill in here, which has been a very constructive one, I think, from both sides of parliament. That is excellent, given that we are dealing with an issue around which there is a lot of bipartisan support relating to what we do around providing better support and education and care for our youngest South Australians.

Bill read a second time.

Committee Stage

In committee.

Clauses 1 and 2 passed.

Clause 3.

The Hon. B.I. BOYER: I move:

Amendment No 1 [EduTrainSkills-1]—

Page 2, line 9 to page 3, line 2 [clause 3, definition of *Aboriginal child*—Delete the definition and substitute '*Aboriginal child* or *Aboriginal person* means a child or person (as the case requires) who—'

- (a) is of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent; and
 - (b) regards themselves as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (or, in the case of a young child, is regarded as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander by a member of their family or community); and
 - (c) is accepted as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander by a relevant Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community,
- (and a reference to Aboriginal, or an Aboriginal family or organisation, is to be construed accordingly);

This amendment is regarding deleting the definition of 'Aboriginal child' and substituting it with 'Aboriginal child or Aboriginal person' instead. This is from feedback that we received from the Voice around the language, and most of the amendments that we are proposing to move in this committee stage are around language.

Various functions in the bill have application to Aboriginal adults through reference to 'Aboriginal families, communities and organisations', and a proposed amendment to clause 8 includes a reference to 'an Aboriginal person'. Feedback from the State First Nations Voice to Parliament emphasised the importance of recognising family and community in the legislation. As I indicated at the close of the second reading, this amendment is the first of a number of government amendments I will be moving based on the advice and suggestions from the State First Nations Voice to Parliament.

The Voice provided detailed feedback on the bill and a range of suggestions to support the best outcomes. I want to reiterate my thanks to them for engaging in the proposed amendments in a constructive manner, and I think they are sensible.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I will have a couple of questions on the amendment in a moment. Firstly, I indicate my gratitude to the minister for engaging in his second reading reply with some of the questions I posed in my second reading speech. I indicate that will probably save us some time during this committee stage. I will not repropose those arguments that he addressed in his second reading reply.

I will talk to colleagues in the coming weeks, between the houses, and give some consideration to the argument that the minister has put, which I am sure will inform the position the opposition ultimately takes on the third reading of the bill in the Legislative Council. We can manage that then. It is a question of judgement in relation to the value of having a legislated office as opposed to one put in place under the usual arrangements in the Public Sector Act. So I thank the minister for that and, as I said, that will probably save us 10 or 15 minutes today.

In relation to this amendment and the other amendments that are to follow, as the minister has said, I think this is the first bill that I am aware of that has come through the parliament that has had amendments as a result of consideration by the First Nations Voice to Parliament. On that basis and for the benefit of the house, I wonder if the minister could explain the process of how that engagement worked in a practical sense.

The Hon. B.I. BOYER: I am very happy to do that. Although formal consultation on the bill occurred before the State First Nations Voice was fully stood up, if I can use that language, the Voice secretariat was briefed on the bill by the chief executive of the office, Kim Little, in July of this year and indicated support for the work of the office and the inclusion of functions in the bill in relation to Aboriginal children.

Following the bill's introduction, the Voice provided a detailed response to the bill and sought further information about the work of the office and, in particular, how Aboriginal communities would be engaged and Aboriginal perspectives incorporated into the design of the government's early childhood reforms. On 24 September this year, I, along with the chief executive of the Office for Early Childhood Development and the relevant staff of that office, met with the members of the Voice to hear their views on the bill and to share with them information about how the government's early childhood reforms would work to support the development of Aboriginal children.

Following that meeting, the office provided the Voice further information about operational aspects of the office and policy design, including the role of an Aboriginal co-design governance group to oversee and provide high-level monitoring in regard to the early years policy reforms, such as Aboriginal three-year-old preschool initiatives and the Aboriginal early childhood workforce

strategy. The office has expressed to the secretariat its interest in engaging with the Voice about the design and delivery of the reforms and whether this may be sought or welcomed by members. As a result of the feedback submitted by the Voice, this is the first amendment to the bill that I propose.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I am sorry I did not take perfect notes as I was going but, to clarify, there was a briefing provided by Kim Little in July to, I assume, the secretariat of the Voice, then there was the meeting the minister and the chief executive had on 24 September or thereabouts, and then there was the subsequent provision of follow-up information. I think I have that right. Can the minister describe whether the meeting on 24 September was with the entire group of elected members of the Voice or a subgroup, a representative group? Can the minister explain who the minister met with and how that procedure worked?

The Hon. B.I. BOYER: I would describe it as a large proportion of the Voice membership. Basically, those who could make themselves available were the ones who did.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: In relation to the engagement with the Voice on this bill, is it expected that all bills that the minister is dealing with—I know that there is one that he is dealing with on the list in relation to oversight and advocacy bodies, for example, and there may be other bills that are going through the process within the minister's department at the moment—will go through this process where there is a briefing to the Voice, an opportunity for a larger group to discuss it, or is it a selected bill either of the minister's suggestion or on request of the representatives of the Voice?

The Hon. B.I. BOYER: Obviously, this was quite early in the existence of the Voice, so how it will work moving forward might be slightly different in the sense that there was a formal consultation on the bill before the State First Nations Voice was fully stood up. Moving forward from here, obviously, they are fully operational and stood up, so I think the anticipation is that we will seek to consult with them on bills. I think for the bill that you mentioned, though, that consultation may have occurred before they were stood up.

We will have them on the list to consult and we will offer briefings, and then I would anticipate that they will let us know whether or not they will take up the offer of that briefing. If not, then we proceed; if they do, then it would be a process similar to this one in terms of how I intend to operate with it. I would ideally like to be part of that briefing so I can do my best to answer their questions and they get a chance to ask me questions directly.

Amendment carried; clause as amended passed.

Clauses 4 and 5 passed.

Clause 6.

The Hon. B.I. BOYER: I move:

Amendment No 2 [EduTrainSkills-1]—

Page 4, line 14 [clause 6(2)(d)]—Delete 'promote' and substitute 'drive'

Amendment No 3 [EduTrainSkills-1]—

Page 4, line 17 [clause 6(2)(e)]—Delete 'promote' and substitute 'drive'

Amendment No 4 [EduTrainSkills-1]—

Page 4, line 30 [clause 6(2)(j)]—Delete 'promote' and substitute 'drive'

Amendment No 5 [EduTrainSkills-1]—

Page 4, line 32 [clause 6(2)(k)]—Delete 'promote' and substitute 'drive'

Amendment No 6 [EduTrainSkills-1]—

Page 4, line 34 [clause 6(2)(l)]—Delete 'promote' and substitute 'drive'

These amendments amend various subclauses of clause 6 to delete the word 'promote' and substitute it with the word 'drive', which was a suggestion made by the State First Nations Voice to Parliament:

A stronger term than 'promote' should be used to convey a more active and assertive approach to the office's functions.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I should indicate in this context that the opposition was made aware of these amendments this morning. Presumably, they must have been looked at by cabinet yesterday, is my guess, and I appreciate that. I am not seeking to have a concern. I appreciate the effort the minister's office has gone to at short notice to give me some information about this but do indicate that I will obviously have a chance to discuss these amendments with my colleagues in between the houses, so if there are any concerns we will raise them at that stage in the Legislative Council on the merits. I do not propose to go to the merits now.

In relation to the discussion about how the Voice has been interacted with in this way, my recollection is that the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People had made representations to the first draft of the bill that informed the second draft of the bill. As she is also an elected member of the Voice, was she one of the advocates who spoke with the minister on this occasion as well?

The Hon. B.I. BOYER: Commissioner Lawrie was not at the meeting on 24 September.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: When did the Voice provide the government with their formal feedback on their proposed amendments, and did the government accept all their suggestions?

The Hon. B.I. BOYER: We are trying to find the date—and I am confident we will, if we have a little bit more time—but I am reminded that we did not accept all the suggestions from the Voice. The ones we are presenting here as amendments are the ones that we did.

I think it was 20 September, I am told, that was the date of the formal feedback being provided by the Voice, but I can also tell you that not all the feedback that was given has been accepted and not all that is being proposed to be included are in these amendments today.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I have just one or two more final questions. If that feedback was provided on 20 September, my recollection is that was prior to the meeting the minister had with the representatives of the Voice. I am wondering whether they had any further formal submissions after the meeting with the minister.

My second question—I will include it here, it may save us some time later—is this: is there any publicly available document identifying the Voice's other suggestions to government on their full set of recommendations, acknowledging that the minister has identified that not all were accepted by the government?

The Hon. B.I. BOYER: I am advised there was no further formal feedback provided by the Voice. I was not part of that communication between the Voice and the Office for Early Childhood Development, but I think what you would characterise as their earlier feedback was more questions about what would be the implications of how things would work rather than them putting to us other suggestions around changes we would actually make to the bill, if that makes sense. That is the best way I can characterise it.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: If I can just clarify: the characterisation that the minister has just offered, where there was a more informal approach from the Voice to the department, with questions of clarifications and changes, am I right in saying that feedback to the department has led to this set of amendments? Is it right, then, to characterise that there was other informal feedback given that did not lead to further amendments? Is that correct, or is there a letter or a memo or a submission of some sort that has come from the Voice to the department?

The Hon. B.I. BOYER: I am told there was just the one formal submission made by the Voice and what followed after that was some back and forth between their members and the secretariat around what the implications of that would be but no subsequent formal submission, as I am told, by the Voice with other suggestions or other requested changes.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Thank you very much for that clarification. My last question on this one is: is that formal submission publicly available either from the Voice or through the Department for Education or other processes?

The Hon. B.I. BOYER: I am told that as a matter of course we have not published submissions from groups as part of these processes, but I think it would probably be a question for the Voice if they wanted to release that.

Amendments carried; clause as amended passed.

Clause 7.

The Hon. B.I. BOYER: I move:

Amendment No 7 [EduTrainSkills-1]—

Page 5, line 9 [clause 7(1)(a)]—Delete 'promote' and substitute 'drive'

Amendment No 8 [EduTrainSkills-1]—

Page 5, line 15 [clause 7(1)(d)]—Delete 'promote' and substitute 'drive'

Amendment No 9 [EduTrainSkills-1]—

Page 5, line 19 [clause 7(2)(a)]—Delete 'should' and substitute 'will'

Amendment No 10 [EduTrainSkills-1]—

Page 5, line 20 [clause 7(2)(a)]—Delete 'promoted (including by promoting' and substitute 'driven (including by driving'

Amendment No 11 [EduTrainSkills-1]—

Page 5, line 22 [clause 7(2)(b)]—Delete 'should be supported (including' and substitute 'will be supported (including, but not limited to,'

Amendment No 12 [EduTrainSkills-1]—

Page 5, line 27 [clause 7(2)(c)]—After 'children' insert '(including any developmental trauma)'

These amendments are very similar to the amendments made to clause 6 around deleting 'promote' and substituting it with 'drive' for the reasons I set out in terms of the amendments we just moved to clause 6: delete 'should' and substitute 'will'; delete 'promoted (including by promoting' and substitute 'driven (including by driving'; delete 'should be supported (including' and substitute 'will be supported (including, but not limited to,'; and amendment No. 12, after the word 'children' in clause 7, page 5, line 27 insert '(including any developmental trauma)'.
The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: As I said before, we will have a closer look at these between the houses.

Amendments carried; clause as amended passed.

Amendments carried; clause as amended passed.

Clause 8.

The Hon. B.I. BOYER: I move:

Amendment No 13 [EduTrainSkills-1]—

Page 5, after line 37—Insert:

(2a) Without otherwise limiting subsection (2), at least 1 member of each committee must be an Aboriginal person.

That is feedback, of course, from the Voice around making sure that there is Aboriginal representation on any committees that might be formed under this bill by the chief executive or the minister and ensuring that there is Aboriginal representation on that committee.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I have a question of clarification in relation to the nature of committees that this will impact. My question is: are there committees already in existence in the office as it is currently constituted that will carry over into the new legislated office and will therefore immediately attract this expectation? Are there other committees that the minister envisages being covered by this clause and, indeed, the amendment as well?

The Hon. B.I. BOYER: I am informed that the exception is MECAF, with which the member for Morialta is familiar, the minister's committee that I have established—the early childhood advisory

forum—which would fall under the purview of this amendment. There is the need to make sure it has Aboriginal representation. That is the only existing committee that would be affected.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I suspect I know the answer to this question. Within Public Service departments there are, from time to time, committees of a somewhat informal nature that tend to be formed, meeting regularly. The same public servants of a particular functional capacity might be meeting on a weekly or monthly basis with the minister, or indeed the chief executive, to undergo consideration of certain operational duties. Can the minister clarify that it would not be the expectation of the bill that this clause would capture such operational informal committees, if you like, but just those formally constituted for a specific purpose in the way described in the bill?

The Hon. B.I. BOYER: Yes, I can confirm that.

Amendment carried; clause as amended passed.

Clause 9 passed.

Clause 10.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: As discussed in the second reading, clause 10 sets out the powers of the chief executive to ask other state authorities to provide information. Regarding the operation of the office as it is at the moment, without this legislative power, can the minister advise if there are examples that he is aware of of the need for this power? Are there examples where the Chief Executive of the Office for Early Childhood Development has requested information from other government instrumentalities and they have not provided that information as requested without requiring this power?

The Hon. B.I. BOYER: I am told, no, there has not been a situation thus far where one of those bodies that has had information requested of it by the Office for Early Childhood Development has needed to use those powers.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Is the minister aware of any examples of government agencies or departments under his authority who have requested information in the way that this clause describes of another government department and not being provided with it?

The Hon. B.I. BOYER: The best answer I can give the member for Morialta is: not to our knowledge. We are trying to seek a more detailed answer by checking with the Chief Executive of the Office for Early Childhood Development about whether that might have been the case but at this stage the answer is no. I might just add that, in communications between the Office for Early Childhood Development and the Education Standards Board, I believe the Education Standards Board gave some feedback as part of the consultation of the bill with some suggestions around the strengthening of some clauses to make sure that they had the legislative cover to provide the information that might have been needed.

I understand that was accepted and has been included in the bill to make sure they are comfortable, but with that exception, we are not aware of any cases where information was requested by the OECD to another department, and they said that they were not willing to give that, but I am happy to come back to you as soon as we have an answer on that if that is okay.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: That you for providing that answer. If the driving motivation behind this clause is actually to ensure the ESB has cover in providing information that they are not prohibited from otherwise providing under their act, then that would make sense. If you could just clarify that, included in the same answer between the houses, I would be most grateful.

Clause passed.

Clause 11.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Notwithstanding the comments I made earlier appreciating the minister engaging with comments in my second reading speech, and that will save us some time here, I will just put a couple of quick questions through. Has the minister received any feedback from organisations that were not supportive of the measures in this clause?

The Hon. B.I. BOYER: I am informed the answer is no, the only exception being the answer I gave to the member for Morialta's previous question around the ESB providing what could better be characterised as advice around how a clause could be strengthened to make sure they have the legislative protection to be a part of the information sharing that is required. Just to add, I have confirmation from the chief executive that there were no other groups that expressed displeasure or unhappiness, if I could put it that way.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Either now, or if the minister prefers in writing between the houses, I would be appreciative of a list of any agencies, non-government organisations or institutions that were given the opportunity or were encouraged or requested to provide feedback on either the bill or—my particular interest is in the current clause—clause 11.

The Hon. B.I. BOYER: Happy to provide that between the houses, thank you.

Clause passed.

Remaining clauses (12 to 18) and long title passed.

Bill reported with amendment.

Third Reading

The Hon. B.I. BOYER (Wright—Minister for Education, Training and Skills) (12:11): I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Bill read a third time and passed.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE (SAFETY AND SUPPORT) BILL

Second Reading

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 16 October 2024.)

Mr TEAGUE (Heysen) (12:11): I rise to speak to the bill and indicate that I will be the lead speaker for the opposition. At the outset, I will indicate that the opposition will not oppose the passage of the bill through the house. I will just flag the opposition's interest, for several reasons that I will talk to in the course of my remarks on the second reading, in further analysis that may be afforded, including by committee inquiry, and that is a matter that is presently under consideration.

This is a matter of some significance and substance and I want to acknowledge the work of the government in bringing the bill to the house and concluding what has really been a very long waiting game. The minister has been, for some time now, promising that significant reform would be presented in the way of legislation. Indeed, it has been a highlight of the agency targets over estimates since the election, and such was the amount of time in which the key relevant review had remained with the minister, from about February 2023, that there has been particular concern in the parliament and by members of not just the opposition but of the crossbench that has heightened over the course of this year in particular. So it is good to have the legislative result, finally, following what has been a long time waiting.

I make the observation as well that the bill is styled as the Children and Young People (Safety and Support) Bill 2024 and, for those who are following the debate and looking to analyse what is new and what has changed, it is a matter of balance that government has decided to style the bill as a 2024 bill, as a new document. For those who are familiar with the 2017 act—the act that was the subject of a legislated review and which provides the existing legislative framework under which child protection is dealt with in this state—it is very much still the structure of what we see that is the subject of the 2024 bill that is now before us.

So if one picks up the 2017 act, or looks at it alongside the 2024 bill, the two are comparable. Changes from one to the other are discernible. I make no particular criticism about a choice of name and structure. There are significant changes that are the subject of the 2024 bill but they are discrete and reflective of, in many ways, a discrete amendment to the 2017 act.

In terms of a further word of broad context, the 2017 act, of course, results from the work that then Deputy Premier John Rau led (and not alone) in terms of taking government responsibility very much in the context of response to extraordinary disastrous circumstances and which included, but not only, the tragic death of Chloe Valentine among several terrible tragedies that shocked the state over the course of years leading up to it. Those events were in turn informed by the Nyland royal commission series of recommendations that resulted from that significant work, and that in turn led to the 2017 bill; that is, the work post 2016 under John Rau led to the 2017 bill.

In terms of guiding principles and structures that informed that legislative process, one point that ought to be highlighted and understood by the community of South Australia is that the paramount principle that was stated to underpin what I will call the 'Rau approach' that led to the 2017 act, was that safety was regarded as the paramount principle that guides all other things that follow in the act. It very much informs then the way in which actions are taken in accordance with the 2017 act, and that extends to the practice and structure of the department in all sorts of ways, this paramount principle of safety.

In the reform process that we have seen that has led to the bill, styled as the 2024 bill, that we have before the parliament, that paramount principle of safety has been retained and it is I think an important matter to dwell on. I will look to come back to it in the committee. I think while there are one or two other headline issues of perhaps controversy, complexity or difficulty, that point, that paramount principle of safety, I think will remain a controversial issue. The question whether that is remaining and abiding as a paramount principle in child protection—and I will stand to be corrected—I think is somewhat unique. If we look to the broader test, we will see that when one applies UN conventions, looks to other jurisdictions and so on, we will see that the best interests of the child is the primary principle.

So the inclusion of the best interests of the child in the 2024 bill is a welcome expression. The question whether to do away with this ongoing stated paramount principle of safety is more than just choosing one virtue over another, and there is certainly more to it than just looking at whether that ought to be removed or brought down the list in terms of priority. But it is important to note at the outset that the government has chosen to stay with what I will call that Rau formulation of paramountcy, of safety, and now to express as a principle alongside but subsidiary to the principle of what is in the best interests of the child.

Again, this may be fleshed out further in the course of the committee as to the reasons why, but it speaks to, for example, the way in which the government, by what it does through the power of the legislation, is driven to things like the priority for reunification, the priority for the support for enabling capacity of parents, and a focus on a range of things that might sit alongside safety or, in certain cases, trump safety, where the best interests of the child are the matters in focus.

It is important to bear in mind at the outset that this bill takes the 2017 paramount principle of safety and restates that that remains as a paramount principle. I suggest that is an area for considerable further debate. I suggest it is a matter that might remain controversial as we all chart a course towards improvement in this very challenging area. So that is the first thing that I want to highlight in a framework way.

The bill introduces a number of discrete references or attempts to recognise some important matters that are particular to child protection. First, in clause 19, it recognises that the challenge of child protection is a whole-of-government challenge, and it provides at least a nod to the need for the Minister for Child Protection to bring together the leaders of different departments.

I think in doing so it highlights just how limited the capacity is for a minister in charge of one portfolio area to direct the conduct of those in other portfolio areas, much less the spending and accountability for funds that may be required from doing so, but it goes there in clause 19 and onward and we see a process by which we can expect to see chief executives coming together, and at least meeting and considering matters that have been brought to attention by the minister. I think to the extent that that happens, we are likely to see at least an elucidation of the sorts of things that are important across departments.

I also mention, as the minister did in the second reading contribution, that, yes, the bill does define in clause 4 and provides in part 7 for a new threshold for mandatory reporting. We have a new

test of significant harm, and a definition of 'harm' and 'significant harm' for a variety of purposes that are now applied to be applied, according to the 2024 regime. That is in response to what has been undoubtedly a very large volume of reports that have occurred. It continues to escalate, to the point where the process of receiving reports and then actioning them takes on the sort of character of data and statistical management perhaps more than it does being able to deal with each individual call and to provide the best possible response.

A shift to give a signal that significant harm is the trigger for mandatory reporting is at least an endeavour towards setting a particular threshold for those reports. The practical consequence of that would remain to be seen. If this passes through the parliament, we will see a threshold applied. We will then need to see, importantly, that there is actually a change in the practical landscape. One might say for those who are in a position of mandatory reporting, first of all I had better have a fair amount of certainty as to where the boundary lines are, and some confidence that if I am now not going to start reporting the sorts of things that I have been routinely reporting for years, then I had better have the confidence that I am not going to be on the wrong side of that threshold, and so on.

Those might be matters of practice. I think they come down then to the important work of making sure that people are aware that these are your new obligations; understanding how information is received and treated; and then knowing that everybody who is participating, whether as a mandatory reporter or a receiver of information, is then able to proceed with confidence. Of course the desired outcome is that there is an improvement in the capacity for the department and all others involved to be aware and to be able to respond such that there is an improvement in the capacity to assist vulnerable children.

In terms of those discrete changes, I also draw particular attention to part 8 and the regime therefore and expanding of the articulation of family group conferences, the way in which they are to be convened and the opportunities that are to be afforded. I note that, so far as the part 8 regime for family group conferences is concerned, they remain a matter of discretion for the chief executive. That is not the case pursuant to the new part 4 with respect to Aboriginal children, and I will address that in a moment. But otherwise family group conferences remain a discretionary matter for the chief executive on the one hand and the Youth Court also will have the power to convene a family group conference, but again not necessarily therefore a mandatory early event that might therefore be able to assist all children.

In light of all the evidence we have about family group conferences, I indicate a wholehearted endorsement of the tremendous work they are able to do, alongside other early intervention actions. In addressing family group conferences in particular, I again come back to this point about the retention of the paramount principle being safety. In circumstances where the paramount principle was the best interests of the child, I have no doubt that would augur towards an even greater emphasis on family group conferences. We know the tremendous work they can do.

They also demonstrate and exemplify the kind of all around involvement with a vulnerable child that follows from a 'best interests of the child' principle; that is, all of those people, carers, friends or family who have a responsible interest in looking after the child can have an important role. Family group conferences and the successes they have had demonstrate that, where that broader community has a means of getting involved and getting involved early, then better things can follow than the alternative.

The part of the bill that is new is part 4. Part 4 provides for additional provisions commencing at clause 39 and really occupies the bulk of the additional substance of the bill when compared with 2017 and is to be found the subject of part 4. It provides for additional provisions relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and includes a range of practical measures, including—and I have just addressed family group conferencing—rendering mandatory every best effort to convene a family group conference. It includes a range of practical matters to apply measures that are responsive to Aboriginal culture and community, kinship and those matters that may lead to particular benefit to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

This is an area of legislating that really is new. I do not say that to be any more critical than that at the outset. It is true that Aboriginal children are substantially over-represented by reference to the overall population among the cohort of children in out-of-home care. It is true that Aboriginal

and Torres Strait Islander children are in need of the most careful scrutiny of what can be done to respond to their needs and to ensure their wellbeing in terms of the response of the Department for Child Protection, and so it is unsurprising that there is this new part of the regime, the subject of part 4.

What is particularly novel and, one might say, courageous is division 4 of part 4, which provides for, really, a form of subset of the department to be formed insofar as it provides the means for two steps to occur. First, in clause 49, it provides for the minister to be empowered to recognise certain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander entities for the purposes of the functions the subject of this part in particular.

I will just focus on clause 49 for a moment. It is really very broad. It provides that the minister may, either on an application by a third party—they are termed an 'eligible entity'—or indeed on the minister's own motion and after undertaking consultation, recognise a third party, recognise an 'eligible entity', as a recognised Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander entity for the purposes of the act. Having done so, the process then proceeds, the subject of division 5 of part 4, to provide for the chief executive of the department to delegate a certain specified function or, indeed, a range of functions of an identified class to a recognised Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander entity or to a specified member of a recognised Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander entity.

That is a fairly broad kind of delegation power. Then, in clause 51, the bill provides that the costs of the recognised Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander entity performing delegated functions are to be borne by the Crown. So there are three steps: the minister in clause 49—'recognises' is the word used in the clause—designates an entity for these purposes, the chief executive can then delegate a function or functions to that entity, and the Crown bears the cost of that entity undertaking the delegated functions.

That is really quite a substantial novelty. It is quite a substantial change in the way that the responsibilities of the minister and the chief executive—indeed, of the government—are discharged in terms of the practical actions of the department. I know it has been queried by stakeholders in terms of its broadness, its general application. There may be an opportunity for some clarity in committee about what entities may look to be immediately eligible or likely.

But I suppose the broad question that stakeholders raise, and which might be apparent on the face of it, is: on the one hand, at what point is it a delegation in order to ensure that services and functions that are within the responsibility of government are performed all the more effectively and, on the other hand, to what extent without more is there a risk that this might be an abdication of such responsibilities by government? I say that against the background that it is undoubtedly a new approach, so it is a significant step that I think will remain an issue of some focus once entities are designated and functions then, in turn, are delegated.

I have already mentioned that among those additional provisions the subject of part 4—the practical functions that constitute part of part 4—we see special provisions for family group conferences. There is also articulated in the new part 4 continuing adherence to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle; it is the subject of clause 44. There are then particular arrangements for case planning, for placement and for reviews of contact arrangements. As I indicated, all of that is new.

The feedback—not only the feedback following the first circulation of a draft of the bill some weeks ago but, indeed, for a sustained and some considerable period of time from carers and those who are engaged in all sorts of ways and outside of government in particular—has highlighted a need for a complaints mechanism that is both effective and on an even playing field that is accessible to those outside of government. So we have seen calls for an independent complaints mechanism, and there will be many in the community who will be disappointed to see that the bill does not include provision for any overall independent complaints mechanism.

Referring to part 3, division 3, clause 27, the bill provides for a quality of care report. The bill sets out guidelines under which the chief executive is obliged to establish and publish. Those quality of care report guidelines are the subject of a whole range of mandatory components, including, among other things:

...the process by which a quality of care report is to be assessed...

...the actions which must be taken in response to a quality of care report; and

...the ways in which procedural fairness is to be afforded in relation to a quality of care report...

I make particular reference to that and also appreciate that the government has clearly given some consideration to what an independent complaints mechanism might look like. I think we have seen iterations, over recent weeks, of the bill. There was a draft that had a form of independent complaints mechanism in it. I do not think it met with much positive response and, as a result, the government has regarded it as a greater virtue to say, 'We will take that out altogether instead.' I would be interested to perhaps explore this in the course of the committee.

But, as I understand and as is clear to those engaged in the sector already, the government might, in turn, make some extra effort and focus on what might be done to join up the existing capacity of the Ombudsman to be responsive to complaints by carers and for there to be perhaps a more effective joined-up arrangement between Child Protection and the Ombudsman in terms of awareness and understanding of how the two can work to respond to complaints by carers.

The feedback I have, anecdotally—and I think it has found its way onto the public record in various ways—is that presently the Ombudsman might have legislated power to receive and deal with complaints but is not necessarily doing a lot of it, and carers, similarly, might not regard the Ombudsman as the first port of call. If that can be a means by which an independent complaints mechanism can be advanced, then I will be glad to work with the government to see how that can happen. I highlight for the moment that this remains an area of real concern for those carers outside government who have complaints and feel both thwarted and as though they are not on a level playing field when it comes to getting to grips with things that are not working.

The second thing that the government has indicated the department will pursue as a matter internally is a better, more broad-ranging form of regional oversight of individual staff members, with the intent that there might be improvement there. It remains a sore point, it is not addressed in the bill. That might just be where that is at, for better or worse, and I think there might be more to be said about that, but I for one welcome the opportunity to see what might be done further with the Ombudsman, and it might be that an independent complaints mechanism is still work to be done.

The bill has been the subject of feedback from a variety of very thoughtful and well-known stakeholders, individuals as well as organisations active in this space, and I recognise those who have provided feedback to the government. It has been an interesting contrast in that there has been a long waiting period before seeing the legislation, and it has been a relatively short period of weeks since seeing the legislation and now its being brought to parliament.

As a result of that, I just indicate that I am still due to meet, in the course of the next hour or so, with stakeholders who have been active in this space and keen to provide their feedback, but we press on. They include the Guardian for Children and Young People, Shona Reid, and I recognise her work and, in particular, the Children and Young People feedback document that she provided in August of this year. I recognise and appreciate the work of April Lawrie, the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People, who has provided the results of her inquiry of work in anticipation of the bill and has also addressed the bill in recent weeks.

I recognise the advocacy of Uniting Communities and I draw particular reference, in the course of this debate, to its submission dated 15 September of this year in raising, I think, what it describes as the positive, on the one hand, and what is missing on the other. That is a thoughtful, succinct and valuable contribution to the debate, and Uniting Communities has been particularly engaged in this for a long period of time.

The Guardian for Children and Young People has also provided a submission dated September this year, and I recognise that submission, which highlights, in particular, the point about the best interests of the child, and there is scope to come back to it. In recognising those contributions I, finally for the time being, note the submission from the South Australian Council of Social Service (SACOSS), which provided a submission also dated September 2024.

All of those that I have mentioned are familiar to me. I have had the opportunity at various times over not just these last few weeks but over the last couple of years in particular to engage with them. I know how dedicated each of them are, in some cases to discrete parts of the community of

vulnerable children in the state, and the work that they do is particularly valuable. I expect there will be an opportunity to draw from their contributions questions and submissions in the course of the committee, so I just flag that.

We are in a relatively live-action progress situation. It is not as though the responses to the draft bill have sat on the table for a long period of time and the whole situation has been settled. Some of these contributions, meetings, feedback to the draft and so on were only, really, in very recent days, so there may be more still coming. As I say, I expect to meet with some of those people, including just over the lunch adjournment in a moment.

I note and thank the government and thank the minister for the briefing that was afforded to me on the 24th of this month, last Thursday. As I indicated to the government in the lead-up to the debate, there are clearly important areas of work that are carried on in this bill that were very much the subject of the 2017 bill. There are matters that have been retained that will continue on and there are both discrete changes that I hope I have addressed at least in some sort of overview as well as this entirely novel part 4 of the bill, which will apply those additional provisions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

What I propose to do is, perhaps having flagged those particular matters in the course of my second reading contribution, to take the opportunity of the committee to walk through and provide, perhaps, the government the opportunity to address more particularly those matters that I have flagged, especially part 4.

It is an important framework piece of legislation. It ought not be regarded as entirely some sort of revolution in child protection, and I do not think that the government present it as such.

The SPEAKER: Member for Heysen, do you want to seek leave to continue your remarks?

Mr TEAGUE: No. I think I will wrap up in just a few seconds. It is important that South Australians get to grips with the details of what is now a step from the 2017 act to the new regime, the subject of the 2024 bill. I look forward, therefore, to the opportunity to contribute in the course of the committee stage.

Ms O'HANLON (Dunstan) (12:59): I, too, rise to speak on the Children and Young People (Safety and Support) Bill 2024, which—

The SPEAKER: Member for Dunstan, did you want to seek leave to continue your remarks?

Ms O'HANLON: Yes.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 13:00 to 14:00.

AUTOMATED EXTERNAL DEFIBRILLATORS (PUBLIC ACCESS) (MISCELLANEOUS) AMENDMENT BILL

Assent

Her Excellency the Governor assented to the bill.

CHILD SEX OFFENDERS REGISTRATION (PUBLIC REGISTER) AMENDMENT BILL

Assent

Her Excellency the Governor assented to the bill.

STATUTES AMENDMENT (TRANSPORT PORTFOLIO) BILL

Assent

Her Excellency the Governor assented to the bill.

*Petitions***WESTERN HOSPITAL**

Mr COWDREY (Colton): Presented a petition signed by 2,639 residents of South Australia requesting the house to urge the government to ensure the future of the Western Hospital at Henley Beach, and in particular, ensures that the land on which the hospital sits remains zoned for health care services into the future.

*Parliamentary Procedure***PAPERS**

The following papers were laid on the table:

By the Speaker—

Auditor-General—Report 11 of 2024—State finances:

Insights for the 2024-25 State Budget [Ordered to be published]

Independent Commission Against Corruption—Integrity State 2023-24:

Corruption prevention recommendations—Report—October 2024
[Ordered to be published]

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

Annual Reports 2023-24—

Coast Protection Board

Co-Management Board—Mamungari Conservation Park

Environment and Water, Department for

South Eastern Water Conservation and Drainage Board

By the Minister for Local Government (Hon. J.K. Szakacs)—

Local Council By-Laws—

Renmark Paringa Council—

No. 1—Permits and Penalties

No. 2—Local Government Land

No. 3—Roads

No. 4—Moveable Signs

No. 7—Waste Management

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

Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016—Early commencement of the Inter-War Housing Heritage Code Amendment by the

City of Norwood Payneham and St Peters Report

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I would like to welcome people in the gallery today, in particular the owner of Adelaide United, Mr Cor Adriaanse, and the CEO, Nathan Kosmina, who are guests of the Minister for Trade and Investment. It is great to have you here. Thank you and all the very best.

*Parliamentary Committees***PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE**

Mr BROWN (Florey) (14:04): I bring up the 106th report of the committee, entitled Kangaroo Island Health Service Infrastructure Upgrade and New Workforce Accommodation.

Report received and ordered to be published.

Mr BROWN: I bring up the 107th report of the committee, entitled South Australia Police Barracks Relocation Project Gepps Cross—Band.

Report received and ordered to be published.

Question Time

KNIFE CRIME

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA (Hartley—Leader of the Opposition) (14:05): My question is to the Premier. Will the government take any action to address knife crime in South Australia and, if so, when? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: In recent months, we have seen a spate of alleged knife crimes by minors, including at Arndale, Marion and last week at the Elizabeth shopping centre.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier) (14:05): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. The Leader of the Opposition will be very grateful to know—as I am sure he may already, but there is every chance he may not—that the government has already committed to a range of reforms in respect of knife crime, ones that seem to be remarkably similar to those that have been proposed by the member for Bragg and the Leader of the Opposition.

Regarding the announcement from the opposition today in respect of their proposed knife crime reforms, we welcome the bipartisanship that you have now brought to the table. There is that old saying, 'Imitation is the greatest form of flattery.' We won't necessarily apply that here in those circumstances—others can draw their own conclusions—but we have gone out for a comprehensive exercise. The opposition have proposed a comparatively narrow approach.

We believe that if we are going to address knife crime, let's do it properly. That's why we have put on the table not just the sorts of restrictions around age like those opposite have put, but also to dramatically increase the remit of the act or the remit of the law to be able to capture other behaviours and also provide a degree of enforceability to this. Like I said, we welcome the opposition catching up; I guess that is one way to define it.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: Given the interjections, I was trying to be cordial, but if we are more frank about it, this is another good example of the opposition joining the party. You're a little bit late, but you're welcome. We will make sure that a comprehensive bill is introduced to the parliament at the appropriate time.

KNIFE CRIME

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA (Hartley—Leader of the Opposition) (14:07): My question is again to the Premier. When will the government release the outcome of its consultation, or take any action at all, in relation to the discussion paper titled 'Tackling knife crime in South Australia'? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: The discussion paper was released around three months ago, but we have seen no action from the government despite a spate of recent knife crimes.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier) (14:08): What's interesting is that the Leader of the Opposition, in his explanation just then, has actually identified exactly what I was referring to earlier about the comprehensive effort that the state government is undertaking. Let's provide the Leader of the Opposition even more detail, which I am more than happy to furnish the house. We released our comprehensive discussion paper from 21 July to 25 August. That has resulted in over 100—

Members interjecting:

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: As I was saying, that resulted in over 100 survey responses.

The Hon. V.A. Tarzia interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Leader, you will listen to the Premier in silence, as will your colleagues.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: That has delivered over 100 survey responses. We will undertake the exercise to familiarise ourselves where the opposition have made a thoughtful contribution to that extensive survey process, although the Leader of the Opposition might want to rule that out off the bat; time will tell. We have had over 100 responses and there is a range of issues that the government is working through in conjunction with AGD and South Australia Police that goes beyond just the increasing of the age for the prohibition of the sale of knives. It also goes to metal detector search powers, the definition of 'school', the requirements around storage for the sale of knives, questions around the display of prohibition notices and even potentially a licensing or registration scheme for particular categories of knives.

What we are undertaking is a serious and comprehensive exercise to tackle some of the challenges, and we have done that in concert with South Australia Police. I am not too sure if the shadow minister for police, whoever that is—and I am not being facetious here, I don't know—is that you?

The Hon. J.A.W. Gardner: I see what you did there; you made a little funny—

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: It's not a funny, I'm actually being serious. Is it you? I don't know. I am actually being serious. I know it's not you anymore because you were upgraded to the Treasury portfolio at the expense of the member for Colton, who has been ceremonially dumped.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: No; we are getting on with the task of a comprehensive exercise to make South Australians safe in concert with South Australia Police which, I suspect, those opposite haven't done.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA POLICE

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA (Hartley—Leader of the Opposition) (14:10): My question is to the Premier. What action is the Premier taking to address the concerns raised by the police commissioner about demands on our police force? With your leave, sir, and that of the house I will explain.

Leave granted.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: The Commissioner of Police was quoted in *The Advertiser* recently as saying:

I have been clear to government...that SAPOL is struggling to keep up with increasing calls for service including increasing...complex domestic violence and mental health incidents, compounded by a retention and recruitment challenge. Our people are doing it tough.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier) (14:11): There are a few things to say to the Leader of the Opposition's question, which is entirely relevant. The first is this. The comparative strength of the South Australian economy, compared with the rest of the country—yet again the Commonwealth Bank has ranked us as one of the top two in the country; we've gone from first to second, although they acknowledge we are neck and neck with Western Australia and that it was a close deliberation—is quite an extraordinary performance that has no precedent in the history of South Australia, certainly not when those opposite were in charge.

As a result of the strong performance of the labour market even for South Australia Police, which was once a go-to job—they would put out an ad for recruitment and there would be a queue out the door of people applying—that is no longer the case, because of the strength of the economy. South Australia Police are enduring the same challenges as every other employer in the state: they are crying out for people because they have more work, more demand, than they have access to a ready supply of labour.

As a result of that, through actions taken by the Treasurer, the Minister for Police, the Minister for Police's predecessor, we have dramatically invested in recruitment efforts. Notwithstanding that, we still have more people that we need to recruit to South Australia Police, which is reflected in the police commissioner's remarks, and that I have naturally spoken to him about.

We are working with South Australia Police beyond the investment in recruitment. We have also funded the substantial increase in the number of protective security officers, which also serves the function of allowing police to focus on other core duties.

But do you know what, Mr Speaker? Notwithstanding those challenges, which are well-documented—as is our response—quite amazingly, what we have seen in South Australia is a reduction in crime in a whole suite of areas, which is such a credit to South Australia Police. Despite the fact that the police aren't able to recruit to their fully funded level, and the fact that means, in turn, that there are actually fewer police, what we are seeing in South Australia, in a range of crime stats, is crime coming down, which speaks to the extraordinary professionalism that we see from men and women in uniform.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Members to my left! Member for Chaffey!

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: I can only take it, from those interjections, that those opposite aren't as keen as those on this side of the house to commend the extraordinary work of SA Police. Here I am commending police, and those opposite interject. I would have thought that would be a position of bipartisanship.

Let's go through the numbers. These are rolling statistics of the immediate 12 months prior, so this takes us to 31 August. Offences against property and person: down; offences against—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Colton, you can leave the chamber until the end of question time.

The honourable member for Colton having withdrawn from the chamber:

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: Offences against person: down; sexual assault and related offences: down; robbery and related offences: down, by 21 per cent in this instance; other offences against the person: down; theft and related offences: down; theft of motor vehicles: down; fraud, deception and related offences: down.

What we are seeing is that despite the challenges in terms of staffing, South Australia Police are undertaking an extraordinary effort to deliver a safer community. We commend them: those men and women in uniform, we commend them. I also commend the efforts of SAPOL leadership from the police commissioner but also in other sections senior within SAPOL that are responsible for recruitment and retention to maintain the effort. The government stands with them. We have committed more resources and we will continue to liaise with South Australia Police over future budgets.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA POLICE

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA (Hartley—Leader of the Opposition) (14:15): My question is again to the Premier. Will the Premier release the findings and recommendations of the Premier's Taskforce into South Australia Police recruitment and retention issues and, if so, when?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier) (14:15): We have received that report. That report is subject to cabinet-in-confidence and, of course, those arrangements are appropriate.

PATIENT ASSISTANCE TRANSPORT SCHEME

Mr McBRIDE (MacKillop) (14:15): My question is to the Minister for Health. What is the minister doing to ensure that country patients who claim the Patient Assistance Transport Scheme (PATS) receive their claim payments within a two to four week timeframe? With your leave, Mr Speaker, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

Mr McBRIDE: My office receives numerous complaints from regional patients who are waiting up to eight weeks or longer to be reimbursed for their travel or accommodation. These

timeframes are too long and are putting a financial strain on those already feeling the effects of the cost of living.

The Hon. C.J. PICTON (Kaurua—Minister for Health and Wellbeing) (14:16): I thank the member for MacKillop for his very good question. As members, particularly those representing regional areas, will know, the Patient Assistance Transport Scheme is a very important scheme for helping people get to medical appointments or other health needs that they have across South Australia. It's a system that we have bolstered since coming to government, with the biggest change in well over a decade—almost two decades—by doubling the fuel subsidy rate which was applied to help more people particularly with that cost-of-living expense in terms of where they need to travel to gain help through the public health system.

That has certainly led to more demand on the PATS system and, as the member has noted, there have been a number of people who have raised concerns in terms of the turnaround time for the PATS team to make sure that their payments can be made. This is something I appreciate members raising with me. Recently, I met with the Rural Support Service, who are the area of the South Australian government responsible for delivering this.

The Rural Support Service are effectively the remnants of what was Country Health SA and they provide services on behalf of all the six local health networks in country South Australia. I met with the team and made very clear to them that we need to see improvement in terms of their turnaround times for making those payments available for people in the Patient Assistance Transport Scheme, and they have certainly committed to doing so. They are putting in place a number of immediate improvement initiatives, which include:

- recruiting additional temporary staff to assist with phone calls to free up the time for the assessments to be made;
- two FTEs from other teams being provided to PATS for three months to assist with current applications;
- a quick claims assessment process having been introduced, where a team leader is able to review bulk claims on the system and provide payment to simple straightforward applications that can be quickly assessed.

There are also long-term initiatives that the team are working on, including recruiting a business analyst to review the PATS portal and identify efficiencies and improvements to reduce the processing timeframe and administrative burden for patients completing applications online, and procuring an external agency to review PATS processes and the PATS portal to identify areas of potential fraud and suggest opportunities for efficiencies in the assessment of claims.

Furthermore, an overarching PATS governance committee has also been established, with the first meeting held in recent months, to provide overall governance to the scheme, including monitoring matters such as the current delayed processing times that the member raises and seeking improvements to the scheme for those who use it, and particularly looking at one area of improvement being online digital application processes so that more patients can choose to use online applications which can improve processing and help to prevent any instances of errors occurring. I think that deals with a matter that the member for Narungga raised previously with some of those burdensome paper forms being an issue as well.

In summary, this is an important scheme for South Australians. It is the responsibility of the Rural Support Service to deliver it. They are ultimately responsible to the Barossa Hills Fleurieu Local Health Network board as part of that health network but, ultimately, to all the other health networks across the state. I made it very clear to them that we need to see improvements in those turnaround times, and the measures that I have outlined certainly are welcome and I will be monitoring it very closely and am happy to talk to any members, in terms of their feedback, in making sure that people can get their claims in a more timely way.

RIVER MURRAY ENVIRONMENTAL WATER

Ms HUTCHESSON (Waite) (14:20): My question is to the Deputy Premier. Can the Deputy Premier inform the house about the increase in environmental water coming down the River Murray?

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, Minister for Workforce and Population Strategy) (14:20): I am delighted to bring the chamber up to date with the progress in environmental water being made available to South Australia. In the 2023-24 year we had 1,650 gigalitres of environmental water that came across the border that has done a significant job at cleaning up the river, not only for the environment but, of course, crucially, to maintain it as a healthy, working river. It is only a working river if it is a healthy river. It is only a healthy river if the environment is taken care of.

It is so important that we see water being able to flow through the river to take the salt out but also that the environment, that is so dependent on the quality of the river, is able to be sustained. We have seen an increase in golden perch, in black bream down in the Coorong, and also silver perch along the river channel being much more healthy. We have seen very rare bird species having benefited from this as well and also, of course, vegetation, which benefited so much from the flood experience and is now able to continue to be sustained as we start to head into a drier period.

It is very important that the environmental benefits that came about as a result of the flood aren't lost by then stepping back. Of course, had we not had a Murray-Darling Basin Plan and water transferred over to the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder, we would not be seeing this kind of benefit. I did hear someone say something about irrigators, and it would be remiss of me not to point out what good news it is that for the third year in a row irrigators in South Australia have received 100 per cent of their allocation, as we absolutely desire to see constantly.

But we are also aware that irrigators are dependent on the river being healthy. Irrigators are not able to use water from a brackish, hypersaline drain, they need a healthy working river and that is what we—at least on this side of the chamber—are all dedicated to seeing happen. Much as it is good news to see that we have had the 1,650 gigalitres come through, and we have seen positive effects from that, we know that that isn't enough to really make sure that this is a sustainable Murray-Darling Basin.

We know that that last 450 gigalitres of environmental water—that was the only reason that South Australia signed up to the plan—does need to come over to the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder. We know that as we head into the next drying period, as we see climate change increasingly take effect—and just look at what is happening in the Limestone Coast, if you don't think that a drying environment is bad for primary producers—as those forces start to really bear down on the Murray-Darling Basin we need to make sure that we have a pathway to getting the water into the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder's hands to be used judiciously.

Unfortunately, of course, that is not a position that is shared by the South Australian Liberals who represent this state in Canberra. Unfortunately, they decided to vote against a bill that proposed to see the last 450 gigalitres coming over to South Australia. If they had had their way, then the deadline would have come and gone and we would have had about two gigalitres assigned. They decided that they would not support a piece of legislation that enabled people who chose, who wanted to sell water to the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder, to say that they would be able to sell water to the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder. We decided that they would not be allowed to benefit from that.

There is often a discussion about that being a negative economic consequence, and I invite people to read Commissioner Richard Beasley's contribution to that bill where he comprehensively debunks the nonsense there that is perpetrated by the people on the other side.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA POLICE

Mr BATTY (Bragg) (14:24): My question is to the Minister for Police. Does the minister have a target date for when SA Police officer numbers will return to establishment level and, if so, what is it?

The Hon. D.R. CREGAN (Kavel—Minister for Police, Emergency Services and Correctional Services, Special Minister of State) (14:24): I thank the shadow minister for this important question. We would like to see South Australia Police achieve establishment as soon as

possible, and the substantial investment that has been made to support police to achieve that outcome is, of course, over \$12 million.

As the Premier has earlier indicated, we are seeing very strong employment conditions in South Australia. By way of personal observation, I think this might be the first time in my lifetime that there has been full employment in South Australia. That means that, despite the more than 2,000 people who are applying to join South Australia Police every year—it's more than 200 a month—despite the 262 graduations in the last financial year and the 239 separations, which means that we are making progress, of course, to restoring numbers towards establishment, we nevertheless are competing with a whole range of other agencies and employers for very, very good staff.

It is not the case that we are not receiving applications; it is the case that this is a role, of course, that requires careful selection. Although joining South Australia Police will be something that people continue to seek to do, those particular criteria will mean that we are looking for the very best people to join South Australia Police.

In order to ensure that South Australia Police are best supported, as has already also been indicated there has been investment of over \$80 million to ensure that we can recruit 189 police security officers. These are performing essential tasks to support police. We know through COVID we have seen the work that these PSOs are able to do to support police, and we want to ensure that that additional support continues.

I must say, I have had the benefit of taking briefings on what the scope of work that PSOs are performing might entail and, as the shadow minister may be aware, it includes supporting police officers in custody services, conveying persons or prisoners and assisting at events and incidents. Of course, PSOs are also providing support for Operation Nomad duties, which are particularly significant to Hills and country communities as we look towards the bushfire season. They are also assisting with exhibit and property management, stolen vehicles, crime scenes and other tasks.

So we are thinking very, very carefully about not only recruitment and restoring South Australia Police as quickly as possible to the full establishment figure, but what other steps we might be able to take to support and complement the role that officers serving in the force are presently performing. Nobody in government—not myself, not the commissioner, not the Premier, not any other minister—is being distracted from the hard truth that we would like to have more police officers. We would like to have them but, as I say, people are applying to join South Australia Police and we welcome those applications.

May I say just by way of additional emphasis that we are in market or have been in market in the UK, the Republic of Ireland and New Zealand. It has been the history of South Australia Police that we have successfully attracted and retained officers who have been previously serving in those jurisdictions. We welcome their historical commitment and contribution to South Australia Police. Because of that experience, it seems clear that we will have success in recruiting additional officers to support South Australia Police in consequence of those recruitment campaigns which, of course, are ongoing.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA POLICE

Mr BATTY (Bragg) (14:28): My question is to the Minister for Police. Will South Australian police officer numbers return to establishment levels by 30 June 2025?

The Hon. D.R. CREGAN (Kavel—Minister for Police, Emergency Services and Correctional Services, Minister for Special Minister of State) (14:28): I think it's necessary to refer to my previous answer. We would like to ensure that South Australia Police returns to establishment as soon as possible and we are providing as many resources as we possibly can to achieve that outcome.

As I say, one of the principal difficulties at the moment is that South Australia Police are competing for very, very talented and capable people with many other agencies: not just first responder or emergency services agencies in South Australia but with every other police force around the country—if people are making applications to join other police forces. They may be making applications to join other arms of the emergency services, they may be making applications

to join the Australian Defence Force, they may be making applications to join a wide range of other employers; and good candidates have many choices. We would, of course, encourage them to join South Australia Police. We would love everybody to consider policing as a career.

The investment is being made to ensure that there is support for recruitment and, as I have earlier indicated by way of my previous answer, which bears repeating in part: 262 graduates have successfully completed the course from the Police Academy in the last financial year, and 239 separations. So it is not right to say, as has been suggested by the opposition in the media, that there are more people leaving South Australia Police than are joining. It is the opposite. The opposite is the case.

It is unfortunate that it is necessary to reflect by way of context, of course, on the regrettable efforts that were made previously and historically in this space. As I have indicated, unhappily on a previous occasion, it's my view that it must have been obvious—it must have been obvious—to previous ministers in a former government, serving in this role in the last government, that additional investment was necessary. The number, of course, had fallen, if I rightly recall, to I think as low as 111, so it was clear enough, it was plain enough, that additional investment was required. That additional investment, of course, is now being made.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA POLICE

Mr BATTY (Bragg) (14:31): My question is to the Minister for Police. Does the minister have any plans to increase the funded establishment level of SA Police officers?

The Hon. D.R. CREGAN (Kavel—Minister for Police, Emergency Services and Correctional Services, Minister for Special Minister of State) (14:31): I appreciate this important question. Certain of these matters were ventilated on FIVEaa. I think the shadow minister made a contribution to that important debate as well. The shadow minister will know that my answer was that our focus is on ensuring that South Australia Police regain establishment figures, and that is an investment that has been made—or substantial investments have been made—as I have earlier indicated, to achieve that outcome, and a substantial recruitment campaign. That's the focus.

But what should not fall out of view, of course, is the desire to ensure that we have additional police security officers (PSOs), and that investment is an important, necessary and ancillary step to establishment overall. So 189 additional officers are sought with respect to that program.

I must say too, of course, that it's not just direct investment in police recruitment that is important to support police. By way of context, it's necessary to ensure that there is a full budget program, a series of budget measures which are supporting SAPOL and, as the shadow minister may be aware, but by way of context for colleagues, \$36.7 million has been invested to ensure that we have police heading back to the frontline for frontline duties and, on our analysis, that will free up the equivalent of more than 100 police officers and staff for operational duties.

Those present, of course, will be familiar with the \$90 million investment that has been made in a digital police station to ensure that there are certain efficiencies in relation to tasks that are being performed presently by officers. There is \$9.3 million for workforce civilianisation; \$8.5 million for telephone resolution capabilities; \$25.5 million for the National Firearms Register; and, obviously, a very significant and important investment in the member for MacKillop's community, which will see the construction of a new Naracoorte police station.

We have touched on international recruitment, and I won't detain us in relation to those remarks but just emphasise overall that the level of investment in South Australia Police is very significant at the moment. It is significant in its own right. It far, far eclipses the investment profile that we saw under the previous government when the Leader of the Opposition was the minister, and others in the role.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The member for Florey will come to order. And members on my left, please listen to the minister in silence.

The Hon. D.R. CREGAN: The hard troubling fact is that it would have been plain that certain of these investments were necessary at a much earlier time, but were not, nevertheless, as I earlier indicated, made available.

QUARRY SITES

Mr McBRIDE (MacKillop) (14:34): My question is to the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport. Is the government aware of two high-quality road-making quarry sites in my electorate of MacKillop and that they are not being used? With your leave, Mr Speaker, and the leave of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

Mr McBRIDE: Papineau Rocks at Keilira and Mount Monster near Keith are two quarries that have high-quality road-making material. It is my understanding that, despite this, the government is currently sourcing lower-grade material from other sites.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS (West Torrens—Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Minister for Energy and Mining) (14:35): You might be surprised to know that I don't monitor the quarries personally and I don't check individually the quality of the road base and the materials that we use; however, challenge accepted. I will ask my agency to go away and look at this.

However, I do caution the member—and I do so in a collegial way—it would be inappropriate for me to tell my agency from where and how it sources its road base. It is done through a competitive process. Obviously people can be prequalified to provide certain products, but the idea that I would intervene and tell my agency, on the advice of the local member of parliament and the proponents who own the quarries, that their materials are superior to the ones we are accessing from their competitors and that we should then direct my agency to go to those other quarries, could raise the concern of a certain agency that just tabled a document in the house called the Independent Commission Against Corruption. I think it would be inappropriate for me to do so.

However, if the accusation is correct and we are using inferior products, I would then also add this point: it is my aspiration that the Department for Infrastructure and Transport use the minimum viable product possible to try to save as much cost as possible when we do road maintenance. We are attempting to maintain a road network that is thousands and thousands of kilometres of sealed and unsealed road network, of which we do not have the financial capability to keep up to a standard that everyone would expect. We are 7 per cent of the population, we have 10 per cent of the country's roads and we get about 5 per cent of the funding.

Again, while there might be products that are superior and more expensive, it does not mean that they are also the right products to be used. If my agency is being prudent and frugal—good. I hope that they are using their procurement appropriately. I have no evidence to hand that they have not done so to this date. I hear this a lot from people in my own electorate who say to me that they produce certain products that the government consumes: 'Why aren't these products procured from me?' It is inappropriate for me to then say to my agency, 'Jim Smith down the road makes these types of products that we use, buy it from them.' There is a process we go through.

I hear what you are saying, but I also am prepared to defend my agency, because it's important that integrity remain and that we get the cheapest possible products we can and if that means paying a higher haulage cost but a cheaper rate per tonne of product that we buy that ultimately is cheaper, well, so be it. We are all South Australians and we want to support as many South Australian businesses as possible. I will check what the member is saying, but at this point I am satisfied my agency is doing its job appropriately.

ADELAIDE AIRPORT INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT CAPACITY

Ms O'HANLON (Dunstan) (14:38): My question is to the Minister for Trade and Investment. Can the minister update the house on the recommencement of international flights into Adelaide?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS (Cheltenham—Minister for Trade and Investment, Minister for Local Government, Minister for Veterans Affairs) (14:39): I certainly can, and I thank the member for her question. It was an absolute pleasure last night to join the Minister for Tourism and also the

commonwealth Minister for Tourism and Trade, the Hon. Don Farrell, at Adelaide Airport to welcome Emirates back into Adelaide. We also joined the Premier this morning and senior executives of Emirates here in Adelaide who have travelled to Adelaide for this momentous occasion.

This is really important because it unleashes more economic activity for our state. Of course, we heard from the Minister for Tourism in this place just a couple of weeks ago around the immense opportunities that direct flights unlock for tourism, for person-to-person transit and travel, and that is an amazing outcome for our state with the recommencement very soon of China Southern Airlines flying from Adelaide to Guangzhou.

But today is a really important day for South Australian jobs and South Australian businesses that export. We welcomed last night a 777 into Adelaide Airport—a great airplane, a great machine. It accommodates over 300 passengers. I know, Mr Speaker, that you are an aviation enthusiast, so I am lecturing and speaking to the converted here. The 777 is a unique aircraft because it also is the optimal aircraft for airfreight and this airfreight capacity into the UAE is really important.

Today's reconnection of direct flights does not serve as the start of an economic incubator, but it leapfrogs and springboards off the really important work that has already been done. About 5 per cent of South Australia's exports leave by air. The UAE is particularly different. Twenty-five per cent of our freight exports by air to the UAE because of the nature of those exports—premium food, premium wine, seafood, citrus, vegetables and dairy—so reconnecting these direct flights to get South Australian products into market by saving a day of transiting through markets or airports like Melbourne or Sydney will make a massive amount of difference for South Australian exporters who are already investing directly and heavily into these markets.

The extra 196 tonnes of weekly trade or airfreight will also make a world of difference when it comes to supporting—well supported by Adelaide Airport—the direct connectivity into market all around the world. I think it was Senator the Hon. Don Farrell who made these remarks and I think there is no better person to know about a Woolworths analogy than Senator Farrell. He referred to Dubai as 'the Woolworths of the Middle East', where freight comes in and is then distributed out. It is like a Woolies DC and that is what we see unleashing economic activity today.

We have been performing exceptionally well as a state in our export data. We have hit record high exports into China. We have consistently, since coming to government, seen our exports reach and surpass \$17 billion. Why is this important? It is important for local businesses. We know that businesses connected to trade and exports perform better and are more resilient and for those 100,000 jobs that are supported by exports they are paid better, they are more secure, they are better performing and, as a government that believes heavily in the dignity of work, we will continue backing policies that back in those jobs as well.

YOUTH CRIME

Mr BATTY (Bragg) (14:43): My question is to the Minister for Police. What action, if any, is the minister taking to address youth crime in South Australia? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

Mr BATTY: Last week it was reported that three teens were charged, one aged just 14, following a knife fight in Elizabeth that left a teenager fighting for life in hospital with serious stab wounds.

The Hon. D.R. CREGAN (Kavel—Minister for Police, Emergency Services and Correctional Services, Minister for Special Minister of State) (14:43): I appreciate the question from the shadow minister. There has been a considerable focus from the opposition on crime statistics. I think, regrettably, some of that commentary has not been accurate overall in terms of the position that we face in South Australia.

I think at the outset, by way of context, it is important to say that we have closely considered the ABS crime statistics. The shadow minister will know there is a reporting period that sometimes coincides with February but on the last reported data, of course, the number of youth offenders in

South Australia is, I must report, less than was the case under the previous government. I might say that under the previous—

Members interjecting:

The Hon. D.R. CREGAN: Well, you know; if I can just make my contribution. I must say, depending on which of the offences you break out, we are not seeing the type of increase in youth crime that the shadow minister and others have been suggesting overall. We have also not been seeing the increase in crime that the shadow minister has been suggesting overall. In that same ABS data statistics set, the number of total offences in South Australia at the last reporting period from the ABS—this isn't the rolling crime statistics but rather the total state amount—was 25,709.

By way of comparison, if you break out the COVID low, which obviously coincided with a period of lockdown, you are looking at figures as high as 44,000. That is the total statewide offences, so that is not slicing and dicing as you had engaged in on an earlier occasion that I had suggested, shadow minister. What I was relaying to you was the total statewide ABS figures, not the rolling figures as well. I think it is right for me to refer you to the statistics that the Premier emphasised earlier with respect to the police rolling figures.

None of that takes away from this government's commitment to ensuring safety in our community. It will never be the case that any minister of this government accepts crime in our community and, where there is a policy or legislative response that will usefully address a difficulty that we are experiencing in policing or in crime in our community, action will be taken. Significant detail, for example, was introduced by way of the Premier's contribution in terms of knife crime.

This is also a government that has focus particularly on the role that adults might play in enabling or encouraging children to perform acts which are effectively an extension, an agency-type arrangement, with respect to principal offenders and their desire to commit crime in South Australia. Those are a number of significant policy initiatives that this government is pursuing and, as I say, nothing will distract us from a focus on those important issues.

Equally—and it is very, very important—this is not a government that is prepared to proceed on the basis that the facts don't matter; they do matter. In terms of crime statistics overall, it is very, very important to emphasise that robbery offences are down by 21 per cent on the previous 12-month period; in terms of theft from motor vehicles, which of course on occasion can involve young people, 17 per cent; in terms of illegal use, 8 per cent; and in terms of sexual assault, 8 per cent. So these are significant declines.

YOUTH CRIME

Mr BATTY (Bragg) (14:47): My question is again to the Minister for Police. What action, if any, is the minister taking to address any concerns raised by South Australia Police in relation to youth crime? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

Mr BATTY: On 23 October, *The Advertiser* reported that a SAPOL assistant commissioner said:

...police [are] frustrated that young alleged offenders continued to offend after being released on bail by the Youth Court.

He said police saw numerous examples of multiple offences being committed by individuals who have been released on bail on numerous occasions.

The Hon. D.R. CREGAN (Kavel—Minister for Police, Emergency Services and Correctional Services, Special Minister of State) (14:48): I appreciate this very important question. I think it invites me to reflect on certain matters which I just introduced to the house, and that was to emphasise the significant focus that this government has had in recent times on ensuring that we are addressing the adults who might be encouraging young offenders to participate in crime and who have, over a period of time, used that agency arrangement in order to mask their offending. That will not be tolerated.

As well, of course, there has been a significant focus on knife crime. That will not be tolerated. You will also be aware that the Attorney-General in the other place has carriage of an effort to ensure that we are addressing post and boast-type behaviours where young people seeking a degree of notoriety might engage in criminal activity, record that activity and try to introduce images of that activity onto social media platforms.

There is a substantial policy development pipeline when it comes to ensuring that we are addressing the causes of crime and that we are focused on the type of offending that might be emerging in our community. At the same time, we are investing significant resources so that South Australia Police can continue their law enforcement activities and can focus on those who are engaging in crime, including young people in our community.

As the Premier has earlier indicated, we do keep a very close eye on crime statistics, and it is important that this debate occurs on a fact-based analysis of the circumstances that we face in South Australia, not on the type of anecdotal fearmongering that the shadow minister occasionally engages in, and engages in completely rent free—as if the facts don't matter, as if there isn't a wider context with respect to these matters.

Let me emphasise that in terms of the support to South Australia Police it is very significant. We have emphasised to the house today the additional investment that is being made in recruitment. We have emphasised to the house today the additional investment that is being made in a whole range of other initiatives to support South Australia Police. We have indicated that there has been some additional and important thinking from this government on how it is that we might support our sworn police officers, including, of course, the desire to achieve 189 additional PSOs. So it is not the case that there isn't significant focus both in terms of a legislative and policy agenda and also to ensure that very substantial investment is being made in our pre-eminent law enforcement agency in South Australia.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA POLICE

Mr BATTY (Bragg) (14:51): My question is to the Minister for Police. How many overseas recruits have confirmed their attendance at the November and January police recruitment courses?

The Hon. D.R. CREGAN (Kavel—Minister for Police, Emergency Services and Correctional Services, Special Minister of State) (14:51): I will take that question on notice.

ROCK LOBSTER INDUSTRY

Mr McBRIDE (MacKillop) (14:51): My question is to the Premier. Could the Premier please inform the house on when he expects the lobster trade to open for our southern rock lobster zone, and probably even the northern rock lobster zone, and when prices from China will benefit our fishers and lobster fishers around the state?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier) (14:52): I thank the leader of the—sorry.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: I thank a man who has all the character that is required of any leader in this place and, indeed, the member for MacKillop for his question. The member for MacKillop has drawn the house's attention to a significant development in recent weeks where the lobster trade into China has now been permitted again, with tariffs being lifted. This is, I understand, being put in place in advance of the Chinese New Year celebrations. The advice that we have received is that that timeline will be facilitated so as to maximise the exposure and the opportunity so that lobster fishers in both the southern and northern zones get access to the Chinese market at that critical time of the year.

I had the great pleasure, as the member for MacKillop is aware, to be in his electorate and the member for Mount Gambier's electorate only a couple of weeks ago, right at the very beginning of the month. I took the opportunity to be at the Blessing of the Fleet celebration at Robe, which, of course, is home to a significant number of rock lobster fishermen and fisherwomen. I went out on a vessel with a gentleman who I know the member for MacKillop knows well, and we were discussing with him and also his deckhands the importance of the Chinese market in really getting that premium

in place. That was a visit I did down there literally only days ahead of the announcement that was made at a federal level.

Can I take this opportunity to commend the commonwealth for their mature and sophisticated approach in terms of engagement with the People's Republic of China. They have done it in a way that is uncompromising in respect of Australian values but consistent with our economic interests and that of working people in our state. Minister Penny Wong and Minister Farrell have, I think, had a very considered and deliberate approach in terms of engagement with China that has been to the benefit of South Australia quite substantially, obviously with wine and also in respect of rock lobster.

It was critical that the commonwealth navigate a path that did not compromise critical Australian values, that stood strong on a range of different positions that are of concern to us as a nation, but that also sought to engage: 'Where we agree where we can, and disagree when we must', I think was the phrase that has been coined. That has now delivered results, where essentially all the tariffs that were having a significant imposition on South Australian produce have been lifted, and we are now going to see that play out in a meaningful way.

The member for Mount Gambier was very enthusiastic about drawing this to my attention, certainly in my time as Leader of the Opposition. The state government is obviously taking measures, including licence fee relief—which I am happy to say was exclusively on the back of the advocacy of the member for Mount Gambier. That was temporary by nature, and really falls by the wayside relative to the burden that missing out on a market as big as China represented.

This is a positive development, and the advice we have is that it will be in place in advance of the Chinese New Year. I am more than happy to see if we cannot furnish ourselves with a precise date, and make sure that the member for MacKillop is engaged with that detail once we are in receipt of it.

COST-OF-LIVING SUPPORT

Ms WORTLEY (Torrens) (14:55): My question is to the Minister for Human Services. Can the minister update the house on cost-of-living supports, particularly for older people using public transport?

The Hon. N.F. COOK (Hurtle Vale—Minister for Human Services, Minister for Seniors and Ageing Well) (14:56): I thank the member for her question and also thank you, Mr Speaker, for your commitment, as well as the member for her commitment, to helping South Australians to manage cost-of-living pressures. We knew we had to help South Australians, and that is why we went to the 2022 election with a range of targeted commitments, and why we have done more in every budget since.

In our first budget we delivered on two critical promises. We doubled the Cost of Living Concession in 2022 that delivered a cash payment of almost \$80 million in total to more than 210,000 households—around one quarter of all households in South Australia. At the time this was the single biggest concession payment in the state's history.

However, then, in 2023, we eclipsed that with even more for those in need. With the help of the Minister for Transport and the member for West Torrens we also introduced free public transport all day, every day for more than 400,000 Seniors Card holders. That began in July 2022, and I am really pleased to advise the house that older South Australians have now saved more than \$16 million in public transport fares since this started.

I am advised that an average of 637,270 fares have been taken across the Adelaide metropolitan network every month for free. In the 12 months to the end of August 2024, Seniors Card holders took 8,798,846 trips—without having to pay. It increased from just under 6 million trips taken in the same period just a few years before, an increase of almost 50 per cent.

This is a huge cost-of-living relief for older people, but it is great policy, because it delivers on multiple fronts. Older people being more active in the community could help them with employment, which has a double whammy impact on cost of living. Seniors Card holders can work up to 20 hours per week, and this initiative makes it easier for them to do that.

It also means older people can socialise more, visit family and friends more, get involved in communities, community centres, sheds, or take up volunteering. It reduces loneliness, and we know that loneliness has such negative impacts on people's health. More people on public transport also helps reduce traffic congestion and is good for the environment. It is an amazing policy initiative all round.

On the weekend and multiple times over the last few weeks I have been in the electorate of Black. There are around 9,000 Seniors Card holders in the electorate who have access to great bus and train services. The 9,000 Seniors Card holders in Black have been accessing this free, 24-hour a day public transport since July 2022 from places like Marino, Marino Rocks, Hallett Cove and Hallett Cove Beach train stations. I discussed this on the weekend with the Premier and with our candidate for Black, Alex Dighton, who was really pleased to hear how this was helping the local community.

I highlighted thousands of local residents who receive ongoing energy concessions, have received energy bill relief payments in 2023 and 2024, sewer and water concessions and the Cost of Living Concession payment. Our last budget included \$115 million extra for concessions, including a bonus cost-of-living payment of more than \$240 that was paid in late June. We have doubled the payment for renters.

I was really pleased to talk to Alex Dighton about this, about the fact that more help is on the way, because from 1 January Health Care Card holders will be eligible for the 50 per cent discount rate on fares. This is a fantastic result for the whole of South Australia, but importantly a great result in the seat of Black.

UNITED FIREFIGHTERS UNION OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Mr TEAGUE (Heysen) (15:00): My question is to the Premier. Will the Premier meet with the United Firefighters Union and, if not, why not? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

Mr TEAGUE: It was reported in *The Advertiser* yesterday that the UFU has been for months requesting a meeting with the Premier only to be told that he's too busy for the rest of the year.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier) (15:00): I thank the shadow minister for his question. I had the great pleasure of meeting with the Secretary of the UFU I think the week before last. She was in attendance at a union roundtable meeting that I had. The Secretary of the UFU, Ms Max Adlam, in that forum, as only Max can, forthrightly expressed her appetite to have a meeting regarding issues that pertain to presumptive diagnoses of various cancers, on which the government has a reformist attitude.

We, as a government, have introduced legislation that I believe is before the other place—it is before the other place—to expand the number of cancers that are presumptively diagnosed. We are adding three cancers to the list. Those three cancers are for female firefighters. As a government, we are doing work with the MFS to increase the number of females who are employed as firefighters. It makes sense that cancers that weren't previously on the list were added to it.

I spoke to Ms Adlam I think in the lead-up to Easter this year and she made representations to me regarding that issue and I committed to her that I would personally ensure that we expanded the list to accommodate those cancers for female firefighters and we are now honouring that commitment. There is an appetite within the UFU to expand beyond that and add yet more cancers again. That is something that the government has indicated we are willing to engage with them on.

In relation to the meeting request that was raised by Ms Adlam at that union roundtable meeting a couple of weeks ago or thereabouts, I have since facilitated a meeting with the appropriate responsible minister, the Minister for Industrial Relations, the Hon. Kyam Maher. I understand that has now been scheduled and we will see where that meeting leads. Naturally, I have met with the UFU on a number of occasions on various matters. We would seek to facilitate that as is appropriate in the event that the issue wasn't able to be resolved through the meeting with the appropriate minister.

If something necessitates out of that, then we will judge it accordingly against other meeting commitments. My diary is pretty full between now and the end of the year. You should know that; you FOI my diary all the time. We will accommodate if appropriate if the issue isn't able to be resolved through the ordinary channels.

UNITED FIREFIGHTERS UNION OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Mr WHETSTONE (Chaffey) (15:03): My question is to the Minister for Emergency Services. Has the government undertaken a cost analysis in relation to expanding the list of presumptive cancers for firefighters in line with the Queensland scheme and, if so, what was the total cost?

The Hon. D.R. CREGAN (Kavel—Minister for Police, Emergency Services and Correctional Services, Special Minister of State) (15:03): I thank the shadow minister for emergency services for this important question. It is necessary for me to provide some context in terms of the progression or development of this legislation or type of legislation in our jurisdiction. Presumptive cancer legislation was introduced in South Australia in 2014 under advice of the Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1986.

It is also necessary for me to observe that many of these matters are carried by the Attorney-General as Minister for Industrial Relations in the other place. Nevertheless, as the shadow minister will be aware, there has been a considerable focus not only on these types of cancers but, equally, on steps that might be taken to ensure that we can provide as much support as we possibly can to South Australian firefighters.

As the Premier has indicated, the South Australian government announced that it would move to amend the Return to Work Act to add primary site cervical, ovarian and uterine cancer to the list of cancers presumed to arise from employment as a firefighter. That is not to say that cancers that fall outside that specific list, which is intended to complement the list of 12 cancers where the presumption has been reversed, won't be matters that could form the basis of a claim. Instead, it is that those cancers are being brought inside the scheme. I will consult with the Attorney-General and seek additional advice in relation to that matter.

Grievance Debate

KELLY OAM, MRS J.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER (Morialta—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (15:05): Last Thursday evening, as you may be aware, Kangaroo Island lost a living legend with the passing of Mrs Janice Kelly OAM, commonly known as Jackie. Jackie Kelly was the last Mayor of the District Council of Kingscote, and the first Mayor of Kangaroo Island Council upon amalgamation in 1996.

She was the much-loved wife of Bryan, the mother of Phillip, Simon, Tim and families. She was a mother-in-law, a grandmother and great-grandmother. I acknowledge Tim and Julianne in the gallery today. Jackie came to Kangaroo Island as a young schoolteacher, met Bryan, and the rest is history. Jackie was a Legacy ward as her father was killed early in the Second World War whilst serving his country overseas. Her mother later remarried and Jackie had stepbrothers and sisters.

She was a redoubtable teacher. She taught many children during her career and, like so many of our outstanding public schoolteachers and non-government schoolteachers, has had an incredible impact on thousands of lives over the period of time that she taught. She was elected as a councillor on the Kingscote District Council and went on to become mayor on the retirement of Mayor Judith Morris.

She was always one to take up the fight for Kangaroo Island. Notable achievements for her include winning the fight against a local group alleging illegal roadside vegetation clearance. Her determination to prevail over a group refusing to pay rates was widely noted. She led the charge, along with Dudley district council chairman, the late Hartley Wilson, to get the best possible deal for the new entity being the Kangaroo Island Council.

Her community activities covered many organisations and she was still active in the community even into her mid-eighties, at the time of her death. She was President of the Kangaroo Island Cancer Support Group and presiding member of the community development panel.

During the Kangaroo Island bushfires several years ago, the Kelly farm was burnt out but the two homes, fortunately, were saved. Prime Minister Scott Morrison visited the island and met local families whose properties had been burnt, at the Kelly farm, even while their property was still burning. I am told by the then and now local mayor, former member for Finniss, Michael Pengilly, that she collared him and said she wanted to meet the Prime Minister to ask for a rural financial counsellor to be put in place.

The mayor relays the story that on being introduced to Scott Morrison, he asked what she would like. On saying, 'A rural financial counsellor,' he replied, 'How many do you need?' And, quick as a flash, Jackie said, 'Well, two then, please, Prime Minister.' He turned to his Chief of Staff and said, 'Make it happen,' and it did. I am told that Jackie chuckled long and hard over that one.

Her commitment to Stokes Bay Hall, that community, and the Parndana bowling and golf clubs was legendary. I note the Parndana Bowling Club, on their Facebook, has a statement from Meaghan May stating:

Members of the Parndana Bowling Club are deeply saddened to hear that our Life Member & great friend Jackie Kelly passed away on 25 October 2024 after a short illness.

Jackie's service to our club, Kangaroo Island Association, Region 7 & Bowls SA has been considerable. Her enthusiasm, sense of humour, care for others & wealth of knowledge will be sadly missed. A list of Jackie's impressive achievements will be posted at a later date.

We extend our deepest sympathies to Bryan, Phillip, Simon, Tim & their families.

A memorial service for Jackie will be held at the Stokes Bay Community Hall on Monday 4 November at 1pm, with an afternoon tea to follow. Kangaroo Island has lost somebody who many people on the island considered to be a true giant. The world is a better place for having had Jackie in it. Vale Jackie Kelly.

LEE, HON. J.S.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier) (15:09): I want to take this opportunity to address some very concerning matters that have arisen during the course of question time as a result of, I think, a rather frank expression from the Hon. Jing Lee in the other place. I think all of us would be rather alarmed to have learned during the course of question time that the Hon. Jing Lee has felt compelled to stand up and offer an apology on account of the rather unprecedented and reprehensible events that occurred during the course of debate in the upper house on the Hon. Mr Hood's proposed abortion law changes.

Can I say this from the outset: I commend the Hon. Jing Lee for having the courage to apologise for her reprehensible actions. I think it takes a degree of courage to be able to apologise, which is worthy of commendation, but what is so alarming is during the course of the Hon. Jing Lee's apology for her actions she has made plain the motivations that she had in withdrawing her pair from the Hon. Michelle Lensink who is currently suffering from breast cancer and undertaking important treatment.

There is a crisis at the heart of the alternative government of this state when a woman feels as though she should have to withdraw her pair from a fellow colleague who is undertaking treatment for breast cancer because she believes her preselection is at risk—because her preselection is at risk. She makes it clear, and I will quote the remarks of the Hon. Jing Lee:

I wasn't thinking clearly and was put into a compromising situation.

I made an unthinkable decision under pressure because I had a grave concern about my upper house preselection...

What sort of show is the Leader of the Opposition running? What sort of show and outfit is the alternate government of the state when a woman is feeling as though—or any member of parliament for that matter—her preselection is going to be compromised if she honours a pair with someone suffering from breast cancer?

Members interjecting:

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Odenwalder): Order, members to my left!

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: It is now time—

Members interjecting:

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Odenwalder): Leader!

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: —for the Leader of the Opposition—

Members interjecting:

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Odenwalder): The leader is warned.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: It is now time for the Leader of the Opposition to show some leadership and make some active inquiries as to who was threatening the preselection of the Hon. Jing Lee.

Members interjecting:

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Odenwalder): Premier—

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: Who was threatening the preselection?

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Odenwalder): Premier, please resume your seat. The next person who interjects on my left will be ejected from the parliament.

The Hon. V.A. Tarzia interjecting:

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Odenwalder): Well, no, you are starting it, leader. Is this an interjection? Are you disagreeing with my ruling?

Members interjecting:

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Odenwalder): Have you finished? Premier.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: When matters of conscience are debated in this place, it is entirely appropriate for people to have different opinions, to be able to argue their case with passion and enthusiasm. I have always stated that people of good intent can arrive at very different conclusions on these matters, and that is something that we have been able to practise and honour in this house for time immemorial, and respect one another.

When someone is having their preselection threatened, not on the substantive matter of the bill but having their preselection threatened on whether or not they honour a pair with a colleague—ostensibly from the same party—who is suffering cancer, then something is seriously wrong. The Hon. Ms Lee has said that:

...events in the lead-up to the vote left her feeling unsafe, unsupported, panicked and ultimately 'blindsided by fear'.

That requires a response from the Leader of the Opposition. That requires a response from the South Australian division—

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Odenwalder): Premier, I understand what you are saying. It is the convention that we do not quote from the *Hansard* of the other house, so feel free to make your point but the other house has no opportunity to respond. This is my advice.

An honourable member: It's in *The Advertiser*.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Odenwalder): It's reported in *The Advertiser*? If you are quoting from *The Advertiser* I will listen to it.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: I think South Australians are right to be concerned about what forces are infiltrating the Liberal Party. We have heard about dark forces from others who have elected to leave. What dark forces are infiltrating the Liberal Party to result in an increasingly extreme view that will allow this outcome to occur?

John Howard spoke at length about the idea of a broad church within the Liberal Party. Well, there is no broad church when people of a different view on a conscience matter have been kicked

out at the very prospect of honouring a pair. There is no broad church in the Liberal Party. There is only extremism, and the Leader of the Opposition should call it out and do something about it.

RIVERLAND SPRING EVENTS

Mr WHETSTONE (Chaffey) (15:15): I rise to speak about some of the spring events happening in the Riverland in recent weeks. First and foremost was the Waikerie Flower Show. This year's theme was 'At the Bottom of the Garden'. I attended it this year at the Waikerie Institute, and what a great event it was. The colours, the smells, the beautiful cut flowers at this show were nothing but exceptional. I have been to many flower shows in my time, and the flower show at Waikerie was an absolutely exceptional experience. Alethia Quick OAM was a special guest judge, and she also did an adult floral art demonstration, as well as a children's floral art workshop.

There were nearly 700 entries across the exhibitors, but what really shone out among those exhibitors were the 167 children's entries from 120 individual exhibitors. What that meant was that we are seeing the next generation of flower growers coming out of schools, out of the gardens, to demonstrate their skills and their art capabilities in entering these flower shows. The 600 visitors who came across into Waikerie to visit that flower show was truly inspirational. Next year's theme, 'Immersed in your Garden', will happen on 17 and 18 October in 2025.

The major event in the spring calendar was the Riverland Rose and Garden Festival. It was their 30th anniversary this year and it was kicked off with a gala dinner. I did attend it, and it really was something special. Sophie Thomson, who is a renowned media personality, gardener, guru, was there to entertain us. She was also there the following morning to officially open the Rose and Garden Festival. What we saw there was a showcase of all things Riverland.

Many of you would understand and know that the Riverland is said to be the rose capital of the world, and I guess obviously one of our pioneers of the roses was David Ruston, may he rest in peace. He was the pioneer, and he had one of the largest rose collections in the Southern Hemisphere. That was all-inspiring to people who have visited his rose garden over the many years. Those 30 years were encapsulated this year particularly with the open gardens right around the Riverland, all 35 of them. I have visited some of those labours of love through the course of time.

What we must say is that the festival is continuing to grow. The committee is just outstanding. Michelle Dominic did an outstanding job, ably assisted by Rebecca Kennedy and Frankie Dunhill. Some of those committee members are John Chapple, Murray Harvey, Graham Matthews, Glenys Matthews, and Glenda Malinovski. They did an outstanding job, and also assisted with the guests of the committee.

I also want to touch on another event that I attended through the course of the weekend, and that was the Renmark North Primary School Centenary. Many people in this chamber would be envious of any primary school, any school at all, that has lasted a century, has been around for 100 years through the thick and thin, and the boom and bust of a regional setting.

The kicking off of the celebration was, of course, the 65th annual school continental, then followed by a centenary dinner at the Renmark Club. One hundred and eighty people attended from a very, very small regional school and we were entertained by a number of those ex-students and ex-teachers. There was Pat Mickan of the Mickan family—who are very widely known—a sporting hero, not only in the Riverland but in South Australia, and ably assisted by Anne Ruston. We all know Senator Anne Ruston, who has a significant background in roses, gardens and also representing South Australia in the Senate.

What I must say is that the open day was the highlight. It was walking down memory lane, open classrooms, the memorabilia room with that 100 years of history on display. They dug up the time capsule from 1974 and the 75th anniversary time capsule from 1999 was also opened, so sealing off that official centenary time capsule. I want to say thank you to all of the people who brought the event together, and to Leona Rover, Athina Lioutas and Helen McInerney, for making the event such a great success. It really does demonstrate and highlight the community, in a small country setting, coming together for what is now one of the great events on the country calendar.

MULLIGAN, DR EA

The Hon. N.F. COOK (Hurtle Vale—Minister for Human Services, Minister for Seniors and Ageing Well) (15:21): I am rising today to reflect on an extraordinary life. Prior to coming into parliament, for 28 years I worked as a registered nurse. I worked across a whole range of different areas, some of them more challenging than others and some more rewarding than others. But I reflect briefly on my time as a very young registered nurse working in the pregnancy clinic of The Queen Elizabeth Hospital, and at a very early age really understanding some of the breadth of the challenges that young women and their families faced, sometimes with pregnancies that were going to compromise their health and, of course, the health as well of the baby in terms of its capacity to survive outside of the womb.

We wind the clock forward today and after many years of campaigning, fighting and advocating the world is a very different place, although we know only too well, those of us who are advocating for safe access to abortion services, exactly how challenging this right can and might remain so for the future.

I say vale to Dr Ea Mulligan MBBS, BMSc, PhD, FRACGP and FACHA. Ea passed away on 26 July this year. Ea was an abortion provider, an educator, a researcher and a stigma resistor. It was Ea who ultimately prevailed against the barriers of the Therapeutic Goods Administration in 2008 to achieve approval for the routine provision of Mifepristone in Australia and for her early medical abortions for doctors at Adelaide's Pregnancy Advisory Centre.

Ea had a prolific career at the Pregnancy Advisory Centre, a skilful doctor with access, fairness and equity always at the front of her mind. Aware of the need for more skilled abortion providers, Ea recognised that medical students' education did not include abortion and undertook to change that by speaking about abortion provision at hospital orientations, for resident medical officers, making an open invitation for interns to come, to watch and to learn. There are now many abortion-providing doctors in South Australia and beyond whose commitment to providing abortion care originated from this initiative. Ea published research to demonstrate the safety of early medication abortion and the legal barriers to its provision.

Joining Dr Helen O'Connell and The Cliteracy Project, Ea designed and developed the first anatomically correct models of the clitoris, advancing medical knowledge, but I am absolutely sure there are many uses outside of medicine that this model would be extremely useful for. I also understand that this may be the first time that the word 'clitoris' has been said in this chamber, something I think Ea would be really pleased to hear. Rest in power, Dr Ea Mulligan, vale.

AUSTRALIAN HOTELS ASSOCIATION

Mr TEAGUE (Heysen) (15:25): I rise to recognise the significant achievement of this year's AHA (SA) Hotel Industry Awards for Excellence. They were awarded just a few hours from now this time last week. It has been said that South Australia showcases excellence in hotels and all the services they provide and that is true, but the house might forgive me a bit of parochialism in these circumstances because it is fair to say that the Hills really did shine at the awards last Tuesday.

I want to recognise the AHA for its tradition of hosting this excellent occasion. Having been fortunate to attend now on several occasions it is marvellous to see those who are used to serving in hotels all around the state gathering, nearly a thousand of them, over at the Entertainment Centre and enjoying the party, enjoying the recognition of the delivery of excellence that they do.

A roll call of those winners in the Hills really tells the story and I will save a few words for Mount Lofty House in a moment. First of all, the award for Bar Presentation and Experience (Metropolitan) went to Stirling Hotel, which shared it with The Highway. Stanley Bridge Tavern at Verdun won Bistro Casual Dining (Outer Metropolitan). Uraidla Hotel was a standout, winning two awards: Employee Excellence in Service (General Division)—that was awarded to Heath Johansen of Uraidla Hotel—and Innovation, Sustainability and Energy Efficiency Practice. That is something that Uraidla Hotel has been well known for now for many years and I congratulate Julie Peter in particular in that regard on her ongoing innovations.

Mount Lofty House was a total standout, winning several awards. We got a foretaste of what was to come when Mount Lofty House won Best Bar Presentation and Experience (Accommodation

Division). It also won Employee Excellence in Service (Accommodation Division), singling out Christopher Speck, and unsurprisingly Mount Lofty House Sequoia won Best Luxury Hotel Accommodation. David Horbelt and all the staff at Mount Lofty House are right to be proud of those achievements, but that was not all because Mount Lofty House also won one of the three marquee awards to conclude the night. It was the winner of the Best Overall Hotel Accommodation Division.

So it was a proud night indeed for the Hills and for those venues in particular and I might say that the hotel that I have not mentioned, Crafers Hotel, might have been just sort of sitting this one out a little bit because it has been winning best hotel in the state, the nation, the universe and best all round, so it is good that it takes a back seat every now and then. We certainly have some sensational hotel venues in the Hills.

It would be remiss of me to conclude these congratulatory remarks without a special mention to Arkaba Hotel. Apart from anything else, it was the winner of the Best Overall Hotel (General Division) and that tells a story. I say especially to Peter and Jenny Hurley, special congratulations on leading the way. They have committed themselves to the industry, to their venues and to the overall health of South Australians who interact with hotels all the way around the country, not just in the metro area but everywhere else.

That was not the only one the Arkaba won, by the way. Peter was moved to come to the stage to receive that award and he made some remarks. You could clearly see just how heartfelt the investment at Arkaba was and they were worthy winners of the best overall hotel. Congratulations to everyone and well done to the AHA.

PLAYFORD ELECTORATE EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

Mr FULBROOK (Playford) (15:30): Last week was a time of celebration for early learning within my electorate, with two fantastic awards being given to two very hardworking teams. Our community is blessed with many people who put in an amazing effort beyond the mainstream classroom to make sure our children are safe and developing in outstanding, caring environments. While I am proud of the great schools we have within the community, in the wake of World Teachers' Day I feel it is also timely to give credit to those services that also play a pivotal role in shaping our young people for great futures.

To begin, the brilliant staff at Lantana Kindergarten and the Parafield Gardens Goodstart Early Learning Centre really must stand and take a bow. As a proud local MP, it is my honour to celebrate and weld into *Hansard* Lantana Kindergarten as the recipients of the inaugural Minister's Preschool Arts Award. This was awarded on Friday night as part of the prestigious World Teachers' Day awards night, hosted by Educators SA.

On the same night, staff at Parafield Gardens Goodstart Early Learning Centre attended the South Australian Goodstart awards night, also known as 'the Goodies', and took out Centre of the Year. In speaking with Sarah Chircop, centre director, she believed that her dedicated team of over 25 staff committed to inclusion and supporting children with additional needs is the key reason behind its success. With over 70 children a day in their care, they go above and beyond by encouraging children to have fun and build friendships in a safe, secure and well-supervised environment.

As is the term, it takes a village to raise a child, and through the many amazing community connections the centre has established, this is also an opportunity to highlight how this success extends well beyond its front gate. This includes access to speech pathology, occupational therapy, social inclusion consultants, child and safety practitioners, as well as many other amazing suppliers and services within our community.

I also note recently how team member Raji is now working hard to upskill herself to become an early childhood teacher as part of the government's \$96.6 million Early Years Workforce Strategy. As a government, we recognise that the first 1,000 days of a child's life is their most pivotal, and it is fantastic that staff members like Raji share this vision.

Across town, my good friends at Lantana Kindergarten are overjoyed with their recognition through the inaugural Minister's Preschool Arts Award. I can vouch personally how much pride they take in their artwork, and for the past two years my office has been emblazoned with many wonderful examples. This talented team, consisting of director Kylie Millington, Bethany Burton, Cecilia Ferrira,

Susana Zozuk, Sean Gunn, Ling Ji, Samantha Ballard and Rosie Keen, do an incredible job. I am really looking forward to hosting them at what one of their children has dubbed 'Mr Fulbrook's big office', also known as Parliament House, very soon.

In many ways art is just scratching the surface on all the incredible work achieved at Lantana, and I would not at all be surprised if there were more accolades to follow. That said, in many ways ensuring our kids are in the best possible position to excel at primary school is reward enough. I am pleased to say that Lantana and the many great preschools in the community are doing an outstanding job.

Noting that this speech aims to highlight some of the services beyond the conventional classroom, I would like to highlight the work of the OSHC service at Parafield Gardens Primary School. Only the other day, I was on the phone to director Aida Chapman, congratulating her and her team as the only public school to be featured in the OSHC Showcase in August. There are a lot of amazing things going on in this space and we cannot ignore the significant role these services play in shaping young lives.

Special mention also goes to Ella-Louise Ailmore, Belinda Carol and the dedicated team at Karrendi Primary School for working hard in recent years to establish an OSHC service. This was deeply needed by the community and it is fantastic how they have worked hard to make it all happen. Be it child care, preschool or OSHC, amazing things across our community are achieved daily. While I have highlighted a few successes, I end by extending my deep appreciation to everyone embedded within these vital services.

Private Members' Statements

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Mr WHETSTONE (Chaffey) (15:35): I rise to follow on from the member for Heysen on the AHA SA Hotel Industry Awards for Excellence. There is no better experience than visiting a regional pub or club, and up in the Riverland they certainly held their heads high at the award ceremony last week.

The Hotel Renmark really did shine at the awards. The Hotel Renmark is a community-owned hotel. It is not a privately owned consortium; it is owned by the community and it is run by a board. I met with that board only in the last week, just before the awards, and it really did highlight the commitment of that board to striving for excellence and providing a destination for people who are travelling to a regional centre, whether it is for a holiday or a conference. What we have seen at Renmark has been the expansion, the renovation and the upgrade of the community hotel, and we have now seen that it received the award for the best Restaurant General Division—Country in the state, which is an outstanding achievement.

What I really must say is that I am very proud of a young fellow who has grown up in the Riverland, travelled around the globe working in high-end restaurants and has come home to set up the Temperance Restaurant. Hugh Hazelwood was awarded Chef of the Year and I think it is absolutely outstanding that a country boy does good on a big stage.

Time expired.

Mr ELLIS (Narungga) (15:37): I rise to update the house on some significant local recognition given to a sporting icon over the weekend, namely Steph Talbot. The Adelaide Lightning came and gave a coaching clinic, as they are wont to do regularly, and at that clinic it was announced that court 1 at the Kadina Copper Coast Sport and Leisure Centre would be renamed the Steph Talbot Court, which is a tremendously fitting thing.

Steph grew up in Kadina and started playing junior basketball on that very court, and went on to become one of the top handful of basketballers we have on the planet. She has played for Australia since the under 16s and has represented the country in every single age group, and has won medals at every single major sporting event, be it the Commonwealth Games, the Olympic Games or any other major sporting event. She has played for four teams in the WNBA—Phoenix, Minnesota, Seattle and LA—she has played in the EuroLeague in Poland and France and,

importantly, in the WNBL, most notably for Adelaide where she is the current captain and a former MVP of the league.

Steph is a tremendous local product. She comes from a wonderful family: Mayor Ros Talbot is a tremendous community servant; her dad, Trevor, is a wonderful servant and a particularly long-serving president of the basketball league; and her partner, Heff, is a local business owner. She is a valued member of our community and this is tremendous recognition. My thanks to the Yorke Valley Basketball Association for initiating this proposal, and thank you to all for getting on board. I look forward to going down there this weekend for the local basketball and seeing the wonderful badge of the Steph Talbot Court adorned across the stadium. Congratulations, Steph Talbot, on a wonderful career and we look forward to seeing the Lightning this season.

Mr COWDREY (Colton) (15:38): Today I rise to recognise 100 years of the Henley Beach Primary School. On the weekend, the school and broader local community celebrated the school's centenary. The school, which sits on the corner of Lexington and Military roads in Henley Beach South, has been a place where multiple generations in the western suburbs have started their schooling journey.

Celebrations on the weekend to celebrate the centenary of the school from 1924 to 2024 involved a barbecue; food trucks; market stalls; a raffle; face painting; SAPOL and the MFS were generous enough to provide a visit from a police car and fire truck; an art show; commemorative merchandise for purchase; and much more. I am reliably told that Adam and Suzie, the two Foundation Frog teachers, were very popular: they were in charge of ice cream sales.

One of the other great initiatives is the Buy a Brick fundraiser, where all current and former families and staff can have their family name or child's picture embedded as part of history in the school. The commemorative pavers will be going in next year, when Henley Beach Primary School is looking at upgrading the Metcalfe Lawn at the entry to the school just off Burford Road.

My family has already purchased our brick, and I encourage anyone who might be interested in purchasing a commemorative paver to do so. The plan is to forever link the school to the school's community, past, present and future. You can jump on the school's website if you are interested in doing that.

Finally, thank you to the governing council, to the teaching staff and parent volunteers, and to our whole community for getting behind the centenary celebrations. Henley Beach Primary School is a special place, where schooling journeys start, where friends are made and lifelong connections to our community ignited. Here is to the next 100 years of the Henley Beach Primary School.

The Hon. A. PICCOLO (Light) (15:40): This month has been significant for the Wasleys community, highlighting its deep roots and strong bonds. I attended the unveiling of 'Charlie', a metal sculpture by Glenn Haar, in tribute to his great-uncle Lance Corporal Charles Henry Haar, and all service personnel.

The Wasleys Community Group Chair, Jenny Polley, noted that the gaps in 'Charlie' symbolised the invisible wounds of conflict, which is poignant given the recent royal commission findings. It is a reminder of how we all need to do better for our veterans. A remembrance chair from Light Regional Council was also unveiled to honour the town's proud defence personnel.

Later we celebrated the 150th anniversary of Wasleys Primary School, with old class photographs and many memories. It was a true community event, with locals volunteering to create displays and provide afternoon tea. I was honoured to join school staff, the Wasleys History Committee, and other guests to hear stories from past students Graham Hillman and Bettie Rundle. Tales of Graham riding a donkey to school, students taking cover in trenches during World War II, and sharing a single classroom remind us how much things have changed in those years. Despite past challenges, it is heartening to see the school thriving today.

I admire the passion and pride of the Wasleys community. Though not part of my electorate since the 2018 election, I am pleased to still have a connection with this community. I would also like to acknowledge that the member for Frome, Penny Pratt, also attended both events.

*Bills***CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE (SAFETY AND SUPPORT) BILL***Second Reading*

Adjourned debate on second reading (resumed on motion).

Ms O'HANLON (Dunstan) (15:42): I rise to speak on the Children and Young People (Safety and Support) Bill 2024, which is a transformative piece of legislative reform in our government's journey to reform and improve the child protection and family support system.

As a parent myself—and probably just like any other member of society, frankly—we are all devastated when we hear of the neglect or harm inflicted on a child by people who are supposed to provide a loving and safe environment for that child to grow and thrive. However, we know that neglectful, and indeed harmful, parenting has been part of society probably throughout human history.

As a government in the modern day, we must do all we can to alleviate the likelihood of this occurring or, when it does, to provide the most appropriate intervention possible. This bill has been designed to create a legislative foundation and framework for profound and significant change, change that ensures that the child protection system has, at its core, a focus on the safety and support of the child while, of course, retaining that which is working well.

It grieves us all that these measures remain such an important part of the services that a modern government must provide but, like others in this place, when I talk about abuse and neglect I speak from personal experience when I say that the harm and the effects of it never leave you. In many respects you never recover from it, so it is best that we all do everything we can to prevent it ever happening and, if it does, that we do all we can to support families to do better, to parent better, to place the wellbeing of the child at the forefront of all they do.

This bill follows a review of the current act in which nearly 1,000 people engaged via public forums in both metropolitan and regional locations, online surveys, written submissions and targeted discussions to generously share their expertise, wisdom and insights into what was working and what could be improved.

The review also considered relevant findings from several external reviews and in response to the review stakeholders suggested and supported a range of reforms to deliver better outcomes for children, young people, families and carers, with a particular focus on improving child protection responses and support for Aboriginal children and young people, families and communities.

What is most important about this bill, I think, is the idea that it creates a responsive, cohesive and practical child protection and family support framework. Amongst other changes, the bill recognises a commitment to privileging the voices of children and young people by introducing a new division requiring reasonable steps to be taken to ensure their voices are heard in prescribed decisions which affect them, including family group conferencing, placement decisions, contact decisions and reviews. This is so important because we have to listen to and believe children when they talk about themselves and their wellbeing. They know when they are doing well and they know when the people around them actually care and have their interests at heart.

I want to thank Minister Hildyard for her incredible dedication to the children of our state, to her portfolio and to the children she is responsible for as minister. I do not think there could be a warmer, more loving and genuine person to hold this portfolio. I know she places the utmost importance in placing children at the centre of her work in this area.

I also want to thank all the carers in our state who take a child in—and, of course, our own member for Elder is one such carer—who take on the care of a child who is not their birth child but you would never know because they love the child in their care like they are their own. I want to acknowledge the incredible contributions of all who contributed to the review and to the department for their dedication and hard work to ensure we have the best child protection system we can possibly have.

This bill is an example of the Malinauskas Labor government's dedication to the wellbeing of all children in all facets of their life. It is my pleasure to give my voice and my support to this bill.

Ms CLANCY (Elder) (15:46): I rise today in support of the Children and Young People (Safety and Support) Bill 2024, which seeks to repeal and replace the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017. The Children and Young People (Safety) Act commenced in 2018 to provide a new legislative framework for the child protection system in South Australia, following the child protection system's royal commission.

In 2022, our Minister for Child Protection initiated a review of the act to be undertaken by a team within the Department for Child Protection with the support of an independent Aboriginal facilitator and non-Aboriginal facilitator. The review sought feedback from children, young people and family members with experience of the child protection system, foster and kinship carers, people who work within and interact with the child protection system, non-government and government partners, the legal profession and peak bodies.

The review also specifically undertook targeted consultation with Aboriginal people, including community members, leaders and representatives from Aboriginal organisations. Nearly 1,000 people engaged in this review, through public forums in metropolitan Adelaide and regional South Australia, online surveys, written submissions or targeted consultation.

We are all really, really grateful for the contributions, experiences and honest feedback that everyone who participated in this review took the time to share. You would not have participated if you did not care. While I know there are many different experiences and views of how we can do this best, I think this bill before us today shows that there are a number of things that a vast majority of us can agree on. The bill before us today would not be possible without the expertise and passion of everyone who took part, who want to develop a better system of care for children and young people, their families and their carers.

The review found community consensus that support needed to be reflected in any new legislative framework to reinforce the importance of keeping families safely together. The reforms included throughout this bill acknowledge this consensus from its very title, with the inclusion of the words 'and Support'.

The new legislative framework provided for with this bill responds directly to five key messages that came from the review of the previous act, including principles for Aboriginal children, young people and families, getting the settings right, children at the centre, and supporting our partners.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principle was developed in recognition of the devastating effects of forced separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, communities and culture, and to ensure that the atrocities of the stolen generation are never ever repeated. The principle consists of five interrelated elements: placement, connection, prevention, partnership and participation.

Through the review of the existing Children and Young People (Safety) Act, a majority of stakeholders were overwhelmingly supportive of embedding this principle and all five elements. In response, this bill fully articulates and embeds the principle as the key decision-making framework for Aboriginal children, applying the standard of active efforts within an embedded accountability mechanism.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am sure you are wondering: what does 'active efforts' mean? Active efforts require that steps taken must be timely, practicable, thorough and purposeful. This reform also introduces identification as the precursor to applying the principle and requires active efforts from the earliest point of contact to identify Aboriginal children and young people, to connect them with culture, country, and kin, and for that connection to be maintained.

It is imperative that such a framework recognises and respects, but also supports, the self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by embedding the principle of family-led decision-making, another amendment that this bill introduces in response to the review. Further amendments include enabling the progressive delegation of legislative authority to recognise Aboriginal entities, requiring the chief executive to offer family group conferencing to Aboriginal

families and providing a new scheme for the involvement of respected persons in court proceedings to support Aboriginal children and young people.

The second key message heard from the review of existing legislation was getting the settings right in a new legislative framework. The review enjoyed overwhelming support for a public health approach to child protection as a general principle, with a range of views on how to include this in legislation. New provisions included in this bill support a public health approach to child protection, including requiring the development of a state strategy for children and young people, recognising the role of agencies in providing service responses that address child abuse and neglect, and introducing a power to direct chief executives of health, education and human services to meet to enable an interagency support response.

Furthermore, this bill seeks to recognise the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Our Minister for Child Protection and this state government is committed to amplifying voices of children and young people. The review agreed with overwhelming support for child-focused legislation, privileging those voices in decision-making. This bill puts children at the centre of a new legislative framework by introducing a new division requiring reasonable steps be taken to ensure their voices are heard in prescribed decisions which affect them.

The voices of children and young people will be elevated in family group conferencing, case planning, placement and contact decisions, annual reviews, leaving care plans, and internal reviews. This bill also requires the provision of a copy of the charter of rights to children. I am so proud to be part of a government that is putting the voices of children and young people at the centre of this work.

It should be the children who are talking about what contact actually works best for them, what they actually want, and what they feel comfortable with, and also engaging them in their annual reviews and everything, because all of us are working really, really hard to support young people but we actually need to be making sure we are listening to them as well.

Further requirements introduced in this bill include considering the case plan as part of a child's annual review, a panel of the South Australian Civil and Administrative Tribunal to include at least one member with social work and/or child protection experience, and one member to be Aboriginal where the matter relates to an Aboriginal child, and a contact arrangements review panel to have regard to submissions made by the child.

This reform also specifies matters to be considered in a leaving care plan, including access to personal information, and strengthens provisions to prevent the publication of material that identifies the child as being under guardianship.

The final key message found in the review was supporting our partners, with many stakeholders supporting the statement of commitment to foster and kinship carers being embedded in the legislation with greater recognition of the invaluable role carers play. This bill enshrines that statement and provides, as advocated for, a new statement of commitment to parents and families. It also seeks to introduce a specific pathway for assessing reports of harm to children in care and new provisions for the Contact Arrangements Review Panel, such as new timeframes and independence of the Presiding Member.

Additional reform includes assurance that carers are offered the opportunity to attend the annual review of the child in their care, and explicitly enables payments to carers to support eligible care leavers up to 25 years old. I have done this a couple of times in this chamber, but I would like to take this opportunity to again do another call out for kinship and foster carers. There are so many children in our state who need support.

While I am very proud that our government is doing so much in this space, I do think we also have a role as members of our communities to contribute. Whether that be through a formal way of becoming a foster carer—and that might mean that you have every Sunday free and you can provide respite every Sunday to a child, or you might be up for becoming a full-time foster carer—there are so many different ways that you can support the children in our world, and in our communities and in our state, and I would really like people to seriously take a moment to consider becoming a foster carer.

It takes time, and it might be that you can start the process and you get halfway through and decide that it actually is not the right thing for you, but I think what most people would find is you get halfway through the process and become more and more desperate to make a difference. As I have said before in this chamber, becoming a foster carer is the best thing I have ever done in my life. I love being the member for Elder but being a foster carer is the absolute best. It is a privilege. It does not really feel like I make a difference anymore, because it is just life, but I cannot recommend becoming a foster carer enough—so please do. I have sent everyone the link.

In closing, I would like to sincerely thank everyone who took the time to contribute to the review of the Children and Young People (Safety) Act, and the consultation on the draft to the bill before us today. Your experience, expertise and guidance has played a crucial role in bringing this new legislative framework before the parliament. I would also like to thank my friend, the Minister for Child Protection. You know just how complex this area is. There are a lot of competing interests and needs, and there can be a lot of hurt and a lot of pain. But there can also be a lot of hope and repair, and, minister, I really appreciate that you take this role so seriously and that you are so determined to make a difference—so, thank you. I also thank her excellent team and the Department for Child Protection.

There should not be the need for thousands of people in our state to be employed to do this work but there is. The people who choose to work in child protection do not do it for super-high salaries or perks; they do it because they want to make a difference, and I want all the staff at the Department for Child Protection to know that you are making a difference—so, thank you; I thank each and every one of you. Thank you to everyone for your commitment to improving the child protection and family support system with a focus on safety and support, and I really look forward to the passing of this bill.

The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD (Reynell—Minister for Child Protection, Minister for Women and the Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence, Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing) (15:58): I do rise to close this second reading debate, and I have quite a few reflections on the really lovely contributions of the member for Dunstan and the member for Elder, and the important contribution from the member for Heysen. Given the time, I will leave that until we go to the next stage of this debate. I seek leave to continue my remarks.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

Auditor-General's Report

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT

In committee.

The CHAIR: I declare the examination of the report of the Auditor-General 2023-24 open. I remind members that the committee is in normal session. Any questions have to be asked by members on their feet and all questions must be directly referenced to the Auditor-General's 2023-24 Report and Agency Statements for the year ending 2023-24, as published on the Auditor-General's website, and the Update to the Annual Report, as tabled in this house on 15 October. I welcome the Premier and the member for Hartley, the leader, and I call for questions.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Question one references Part A, Agency outcomes of note, SA Health, page 17. The Auditor-General noted a \$956 million overspend by SA Health, an 11.5 per cent overspend for the second year in a row. Premier, do you concede that you have no plan to fix the health system and the ramping crisis?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: No.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Referring to the same page, given the budget blowout in 2022-23, why were these issues here not anticipated for the last financial year? Every single consolidated entity exceeded the expenditure of the budget set out in financial year 2023-24.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: Obviously, when it comes to health funding, the budget contemplates a range of variables and, as the Leader of the Opposition would appreciate, much of health funding is activity based. What we have seen within the health system over a sustained period now, and certainly over the last 12 months, is a range of variables in terms of increasing demand,

not just in terms of volume but also in terms of complexity: comorbidities, the health system being burdened with an increasing number of aged-care patients stuck in beds. All of these variables add considerable cost and that reflects itself in the system.

Of course, one must contemplate the counterfactual, which looks like severe cuts to the health system that are driven through an appetite to achieve a particular budgetary outcome as distinct from delivering the health care that people require as determined by our clinicians and medical professionals.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I refer to Part C: Agency Audit Reports, page 114. The Auditor-General notes the budget set for the consolidated entity in the 2024-25 state budget is \$160 million less than its actual expenditure for 2023-24. The question to the Premier is: on what assumptions are you relying that you will spend less this year than the last?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: Is that across the government or in health?

The CHAIR: Leader, can I just remind you the Premier is not the minister responsible for health. While I have allowed some questions in a general sense, I think if we get to the specifics they should be directed to the Minister for Health because the ministers also have the respective advisers who can advise them. I assume this officer is from Premier and Cabinet and not the health department. Premier, I am happy for you to leave it to the health minister to answer.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: It is 40 per cent of the budget, so he might want to answer accordingly.

The CHAIR: I think it is going to be more productive for us to have the relevant ministers cover their portfolios. I have allowed a few questions because you are new to the job, but now we will get back to it.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I thought it was a reasonable question.

The CHAIR: I did not say it was not a reasonable question. You need to ask it to the right person.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Do you want to rule accordingly? You are the boss. I take it that I am also not able to ask about FTEs; are you going to shut down that as well?

The CHAIR: First of all, that is commentary and a reflection on the Chair and you will withdraw that comment.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I am just asking.

The CHAIR: No, you will withdraw the comment.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I can withdraw it.

The CHAIR: Secondly, in net terms of FTEs, the Premier would not have that level of detail, nor would his advisers have that level of detail. Can I suggest you interrogate the Premier about anything to do with Premier and Cabinet and any other ministerial responsibility that he has.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: What I will do then is move to Part A, chapter 5, emerging issues, page 29. The Auditor-General has raised concerns about forecasted significant increases in net debt, reflecting the SA government's large capital program, over four years of the budget, including spending on a number of significant infrastructure projects. Just speaking generally, is the government concerned about net debt?

The CHAIR: I think you are straying again. That is a question which should be directed to the Treasurer as he would have more details. You will have an opportunity to do so shortly. If the Premier is happy to provide an overview, that is fine, but I would not expect the Premier to have the detailed break-up.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: Obviously the government has been rather diligent in its fiscal settings—both diligent and deliberate. The government has obviously delivered surpluses—not just forecast surpluses but we have actually got to the business of delivering surpluses to make sure the budget is in a strong fiscal position. Naturally, as the government starts to roll out its major

infrastructure projects, ones that indeed I understand enjoy bipartisan support, such as the biggest infrastructure project in the history of the state, the completion of the north-south corridor, as that comes on the books we see debt escalate accordingly. But it has been the government's view to make sure that we are in a position to be able to manage that appropriately, consistent with strong fiscal settings, and hence our determination to deliver the budget surpluses that we have delivered.

The government has been able to maintain our strong credit rating with our credit rating agencies, but this is naturally something that we monitor closely, particularly with other ambitions the government has, like the Northern Water project and so forth. I am happy to indulge the Leader of the Opposition on the matter. I would hate for him to misunderstand the determination for this session to focus on the criteria that governs its operations by me not answering these questions.

Given the indulgence that I have afforded the Leader of the Opposition in answering his questions, because I am willing to, I do think that for the purposes of the remainder of the session we are best placed to abide by the rules that govern the process which, of course, is a focus on the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I am happy to abide by your ruling, sir, so I will do my level best. There are various statistics referred to on page 283, relating to 'income, expenses, assets, liabilities' and effectively the financial position. You have answered a question about net debt, but I understand that a relatively small percentage of the budget overruns on the capital program could significantly impact the state's overall financial position. Are you concerned about any of those risks at all?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: I am just trying to find the reference to anything that the Leader of the Opposition just referred to on page 283.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: It is talking generally about financial statistics.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: We are not here to ruminate on general financial statistics. That would invite discussions about the share market, the strong performance of the South Australian labour market and our record export growth. We could talk about other key metrics we are seeing in South Australia, such as nation-leading construction activity and nation-leading dwelling starts. If we want to talk about general statistics, I fear that would lend itself to the government talking about South Australia's relatively strong economic performance relative to the rest of the country, but I fear that would deny the Leader of the Opposition the chance to interrogate the government as is his responsibility on matters pertaining to the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: On page 283, in terms of significant events and transactions, \$995.4 million of assets relating to the Adelaide Festival Centre, Festival Plaza Public Realm and associated—

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: It is 195.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: \$195.4 million of assets relating to the Adelaide Festival Centre, Festival Plaza Public Realm and associated land were sold to the Adelaide Festival Centre Trust and Urban Renewal Authority. Why was that done?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: I am advised this is actually within the Minister for Arts portfolio, but that is connected to DPC so I am happy to try to avail the Leader of the Opposition with some details. The Minister for Arts is responsible for the arts components that sit within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, for the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition, but nonetheless the Urban Renewal Authority has led efforts to implement a revised ownership structure for the Festival Plaza's precinct that aligns with the new buildings onsite and the state's contracts with developers of the site.

In November 2021, cabinet noted the proposed division of title for land within the Adelaide Festival Precinct owned by the Premier, separating the land occupied by the Adelaide Festival Centre and surrounding curtilage from Walker Corporation's integrated development and SkyCity's expansion building.

In 2022-23, two of three new land titles were created, with ownership to be Renewal SA. Land assets for one title primarily incorporate the SkyCity expansion building and transfer to Renewal SA during 2022-23 recognises a donated asset of \$3.011 million. The second allotment primarily

incorporates the Walker Corporation's integrity development works and surrounding public realm, including Walker-delivered components of the public realm.

The remaining assets associated with this allotment and a proportion of the state-delivered Festival Plaza Public Realm and the finance lease were sold to Renewal SA during 2023-24. The total value of assets sold to Renewal SA was \$96.3 million, Renewal SA of course being a state owned entity; however, consideration was provided for the sale, resulting in the outcome. A section of the land comprises assets controlled by ASER Services Corporation under the Riverbank Act 1997 and therefore no consideration was provided for the transfer of this land.

The third allotment, which includes the Adelaide Festival Centre and surrounding curtilage assets and a portion of the state-delivered Festival Plaza Public Realm, was sold to the Adelaide Festival Trust. The funds were received from the sale and returned to the Treasurer's Consolidated Account.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I refer again to page 283 in terms of financial statistics. The number mentioned there is 515 FTEs. How does that compare to last year?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: Do you want to ask another question while they are getting it?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Respecting the will of the Chair, in terms of Part B: Controls Opinion, page 22, these apply to all agencies. In terms of page 22, under 'Summary of findings and recommendations', it states:

What we found

Our audit of a sample of goods, services and asset procurements found that public authorities need to better manage their procurement planning and evaluation processes.

The Auditor there has raised what I think are really concerning findings around potentially government procurement practices, including contracts signed after services started. Is the Premier aware of any of those contracts that applied to the Department of the Premier and Cabinet?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: I have just been advised that there are no such findings that are related to DPC.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: In the same section in Part B, page 22, the Auditor also noted that sometimes key records were missing, incomplete or inadequate, including complexity assessments. Does the Premier have any evidence that any of those records were within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: I am advised not.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Again, '4.2.1 Summary of findings and recommendations':

- the contract value was not specified in a number of contracts. During the procurement process the supplier provided their average annual volume and intended fixed price for the service with no limit on the total contract value specified

Does the Premier have any evidence that that contract value and those issues applied to any contract within DPC?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: I am advised not.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Again, in the same section, 'Summary of findings and recommendations', the Auditor noted:

- conflict of interest documents and confidentiality agreements could not be located or were not completed

Is there any evidence that any of those findings applied to any contract within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: Probably the best way to answer that question—given the sequence of questioning that the Leader of the Opposition is asking about those matters as identified in Part B pertaining to DPC—is that on page 285 of Part C: Agency Audit Reports under audit findings in respect of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, you will see in the last sentence there it

says, 'There were no significant findings.' That was in respect of DPC generally, as written by the Auditor-General.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I refer to Part C, page 287, within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet:

Total expenses increased by \$210 million (49%) to \$636 million in 2023-24. Employee benefits expense increased by \$4.1 million (6.1%) and supplies and services increased by \$36.2 million (29.4%).

Are we concerned that employee benefits in DPC are increasing faster than wages statewide?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: This is able to be explained quite readily by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet taking on new responsibilities or taking control of other functions from other agencies. The Leader of the Opposition will see on page 287, in the first dot point under expenses, that the increase in salaries and wages is \$5.2 million. It goes on to say, and it is very explicit here for the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition, who must have missed it, that that increase of 11.2 per cent is:

...mainly due to an increase in FTEs for the new Office for AUKUS, the transfer of Creative Industries employees from DIIS—

so we have taken over that responsibility from DIIS and transferred it to DPC—

and digital and cyber initiatives funded from the Digital Investment Fund—

which was set up by the Treasurer in the last state budget.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I refer to Part C, page 287, in terms of ICT charges:

ICT charges, up \$5.5 million (21%), mainly due to additional ICT costs of \$5.8 million associated with the Microsoft 365 operating model, including electronic messaging, licence fees and cloud platform services.

I notice that charges there are increasing quite rapidly. The question there is: what productivity output are we seeing as a result of that?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: A high-quality Public Service delivering for the South Australian government and for the people of South Australia.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Yes, but it seems quite significant. Can you point to any examples of that efficiency, that productivity? It is up by \$5.5 million just in charges alone.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: The advice I have received is the figure that the Leader of the Opposition refers to going up by \$5.5 million is not exclusively for DPC, it is for other ICT services across the government. I am advised that the agency that is responsible for the management of these types of services for other agencies is, indeed, DPC. I am advised that it is not an increase that is exclusively for the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, it is an increase that we see across government. Of course, as the Leader of the Opposition would be aware, there is any number of ICT functions that are being performed and upgrades, reforms and changes that are being applied across government throughout every agency.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I refer to Part C, page 288: 'the Music Development Office transferring from DIIS to DPC in October 2023.' Why was that? I notice that there was an increase in funding of \$1.5 million (39.4 per cent). Why did that transfer occur? Can you talk me through that?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: Part of the effort the government has undertaken to boost support for arts and cultural sectors in this state is to try to have a consolidated effort. We have found that there has been a disparate spread, and I think this has been a challenge for state government for a sustained period, about where is the natural home for many of these organisations or offices to sit. We have formed the view, as a government, that there is a value in bringing all the arts-related functions of government into a central agency within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. This is a reform being pursued by the minister, one that enjoys my and the rest of the government's support.

If we are honest about it, there is no perfect solution here. There are good arguments for having some elements of the creative industries within an organisation like DIIS—or now DSD—but we have formed the view that arts-related functions should be within the Department of the Premier

and Cabinet, having a consolidated policy with a consolidated set of motivations around the performance of those functions. That is why the move.

It would be very easy to simplistically disparage the decision of former governments to put these functions into DIIS, but I can actually understand the motivations for why that was done. It was a weighing up of competing variables, but we decided that it is better to have it in a central agency. That gives it the ability to focus on both a cultural element and also an economic element.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: There was an offsetting and decreases in grant funding—this is page 288—in relation to multicultural grants of \$940,000, 14 per cent. Is the Premier able to provide a list of those grants?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: That is a question best put to the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, but I will take this opportunity to come back to the answer regarding the FTEs that the Leader of the Opposition was looking for. As the Leader of the Opposition noted, it was 515 this year and it was 480 last year.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: How many of those do social media?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: How many of them have social media accounts or—

The Hon. V.A. Tarzia: No; how many operate on social media?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: My social media? I do not know; that would be my office rather than the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. My advice is that that increase is a function of the centralisation of a number of functions, including the arts-related functions I referred to earlier.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: In relation to page 286, and specifically from the DPC area—as per your request, sir—DPC's appropriation funding has varied markedly over the last five years, reflecting different responsibilities it has had over that time, as it is shown in that chart. I am curious to understand why the responsibilities of DPC seem to continually be altered. Why is that changing?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: You will see the graph at the bottom of page 286 there. You will see there was a huge explosion in the resources that were allocated to the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. I cannot speak to that; that happened under a former administration.

Once we got elected, being a really fiscally disciplined outfit, what you will see is that we said, 'Well, enough of this huge growth in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.' What we have done is we have curtailed that growth. You will see that it came down once we had that discipline and focus put in place. It is difficult for me to comment, though, on the decisions that were made when the Leader of the Opposition was sitting around the cabinet table as part of the budget process.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: In that case then, why has the funding not decreased? Are you saying it has?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: You will see it has come down. The Leader of the Opposition will see that steep curve going up there. Imagine if that had continued. I shudder to think. What we have seen there is that it has come down.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Other income is up \$4 million, 189 per cent, mainly due to an increase in the return of unspent grant funding of \$2.6 million and an \$860,000 payment received for a recovered doubtful debt. Are you able to explain that? It is on page 286. That will take us to the bells, sir.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: I am advised that this is a sum that was owed to the people of South Australia from the New South Wales government. With our disciplined focus, I am trying to recover everything that is owed to the South Australian taxpayer for various services that we performed for the New South Wales government. We went chasing it down and we got the convicts to pay. I say that with affection. That was a debt that was owed to the South Australian government from the New South Wales government for services rendered. It is paid and we are grateful for it.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: What was it?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: Some bicentennial functions that we performed for New South Wales.

The CHAIR: Time has expired and there will be a change in ministers. While the next minister and member of the opposition take their seats, I will quickly read out what I am required to do here. I remind members that the committee is in normal session. Any questions have to be asked by members on their feet and all questions must be directly referenced to the Auditor-General's 2023-24 Report and Agency Statements for the year ending 2023-24, as published on the Auditor-General's website, and the Update to the Annual Report, as tabled in the house on 15 October. I remind members that questions should relate to the minister's portfolio responsibilities. I welcome the Treasurer and the member for Flinders and call for questions.

Mr TELFER: Thank you, sir, and being the Treasurer, as we have heard this morning on radio, it encompasses everything. I look forward to that fulsome and thorough analysis. In Part A, on page 29, there is some commentary from the Auditor-General. In that the Auditor-General raised concern around the forecasted significant increases in net debt reflecting the SA government's large capital program over the four years of the budget, including spending on a number of significant infrastructure projects. Are you surprised that the Auditor-General has flagged this as a significant issue?

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: I thank the member for Flinders for his question. I am not surprised that it is highlighted by the Auditor-General because it is a prominent feature of this government's budgets that we are investing so heavily in infrastructure, largely on projects that have enjoyed bipartisan support for more than five years in South Australia. I am talking about the completion of the north-south corridor and also the establishment of a new Women's and Children's Hospital, which the member probably sees is what is contributing mainly to the increase in general government sector debt and that contributes mainly to the increase in overall government debt across the forward estimates.

Mr TELFER: Net debt for the non-financial public sector is expected to increase from \$27.9 billion at 30 June 2024 to \$44.2 billion in June 2028. What is your plan to stop government debt spiralling, or is it your government's plan to continue to see this figure increase every year?

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: I have made it clear as I have handed down each of the government's three budgets that we expect debt to increase as we take on the task of building these two major infrastructure projects in particular. Both of them are due to be complete around 2030 or 2031, and two things follow from that: one is that necessarily the government has less flexibility to embark on a broad range of other projects at the same time as we are undertaking these two major projects, and it also means once the substantial task of building those two projects is complete then there will need to be a pretty quick return to a more normal level of annual capital expenditure out of the state budget.

Those two elements will mean that the increases in debt which come onto the state's balance sheet not only are primarily in the general government sector and primarily because of those two major projects but that will lead to a curtailing of further debt beyond those two projects and an ability, as the budget grows between now and then, to start reducing that debt after those two projects are built out.

Not only is that the task that the government has set itself in agreeing to carry out these two projects and take on the debt necessary for it but that will be the strategy by which the state's debt is managed into the medium term.

Mr TELFER: Continuing on page 29, there is some commentary from the Auditor-General around the Northern Water project. What is the estimated cost and timeline for completion for Northern Water?

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: That is a project that is being managed by the Minister for Infrastructure, so he would be able to provide more accurate particulars than me, but there are, of course, a couple of different things to consider. One is the cost of the project and also how the cost of the project is met, and there remains a range of options before the government in how to meet the cost of that project.

Only one option is for the government to fund it itself, but it is also possible that we may partner with other funders for that, including, for example, whether there is some form of contribution

from the offtakers—the offtakers being the entities that purchase the water from the desalination project, one of which may be BHP. There may be other offtakers, and there may be other funding contributors towards it, but we still have I think a good 12 months—and, again, the Minister for Transport will be able to provide more accurate details around this, but we still have at least a good 12 months before we get to a position where we reach what is called the final investment decision (FID) about whether the project is investable or not.

Over the course of the next 12 months or so the funding arrangements for the Northern Water project will also be considered, so the funding arrangements for that, I guess what I can say in short, or to summarise that answer, are not yet finalised.

Mr TELFER: Just on that, when is the expected date for the final investment decision?

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: I think we are looking at—and, again, I will have to defer to my colleague the Minister for Infrastructure—some time either at the very end of 2025 or in the first half of 2026, but I will just have to confer with him and bring back a more accurate answer for you.

Mr TELFER: What is the expenditure so far on the Northern Water project?

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: I do not have that figure with me but I am happy to confer with him and bring back what detail I have available.

Mr TELFER: Is the Treasurer aware if the government is still committed to Cape Hardy as the preferred location for the project?

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: My understanding is that Cape Hardy has certainly been a focus of investigations, but my understanding is that the project team has been careful not to be exclusive in those site investigations and that, during the course of the project to date, there have been a number of locations which have been looked at. Again, I will have to check with the Minister for Infrastructure who is managing this project directly, but I do not think a final decision has been taken on the site. I am certainly aware that a significant amount of investigation has gone into Cape Hardy.

Mr TELFER: Just on that answer, do you know how many locations have had a significant amount of investment put into them? Is Cape Hardy the one that has had a significant proportion put into it or are there several that you speak of that have received the same sort of attention?

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Not being the minister responsible for delivering the project, I do not have those details front of mind but I am happy to take that away and see what information I can provide after conferring with the minister responsible: the Minister for Infrastructure.

Mr TELFER: Continuing on at page 30 of Part A, it speaks a bit about the proton therapy unit. What is the current status of the proton therapy unit?

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: This is a project which was entered into by SAHMRI, which is not a government organisation but an organisation that the government has some membership of: the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute. Back in 2017 I think it was, the then SAHMRI board entered into this proton therapy initiative and that involved them going through a market process to select a supplier and provider of proton therapy for the proton therapy initiative. They selected a US-based company called ProTom International, and it became clear—I think I am correct in saying—before the March 2022 election, but certainly since the March 2022 election, that there were challenges for ProTom International to deliver against the contract that it had signed.

Parking that to one side, the proton therapy initiative was to be provided within a newly constructed building which was given the working title of SAHMRI 2—now known as the Australian Bragg Centre: the building which has been built adjacent to or immediately to the east of the original SAHMRI building. That building was built by Commercial & General in an arrangement that had been struck with the then SAHMRI board and, as I came to understand it, on the basis that the proton therapy initiative would be housed in the basement, in a specially constructed and specifically designed bunker for the proton therapy facilities and treatment rooms, and then the remainder of the building would be then made available for rental for certain commercial purposes, whether that be research space or office space or similar uses.

During the course of 2019, under the term of the previous government, the building developer Commercial & General approached the then Liberal government and in particular the then Treasurer, Rob Lucas, asking for additional government support for that proton therapy initiative. In early 2020—in April 2020 I think it was—the then Liberal government made a series of undertakings to try to provide greater financial support and comfort for the construction of that building, which meant that SAHMRI would be required to underwrite a level of commercial rent for the Australian Bragg Centre building, including rental for the bunker space, as well as commit to taking out a number of floors within the upper floors of the Australian Bragg Centre building for more than 10 years, I think. You can imagine what taking out multiple floors of commercial rental space is worth in the current market. We are talking millions of dollars a year and, over more than a 10-year period, tens if not hundreds of millions of dollars.

It then became clear once we were in government that, as the proton therapy initiative was struggling to be delivered, they were seeking additional support from the state government. The only support which we provided to them was to provide them with some changed payment arrangements, so no additional payments but paying payments according to different milestones and including making payments so that they could pay their suppliers.

It quickly became clear at the end of last year that there were serious concerns over whether they could deliver the initiative, and we took the decision to send officials from both SA Health and the Department of Treasury and Finance over to the US to visit ProTom International directly to try to establish whether they had the capacity still to provide this project. Since that time, over the last nine or so months, the SAHMRI subsidiary company, the Australian Bragg Centre for Proton Therapy and Research (ABCPTR), has been negotiating with ProTom International in an effort to try to get that project back on track. At the same time, SAHMRI, assisted by the state government, has tried to investigate whether there are alternatives for the bunker should ProTom International not be able to make good on their contract, particularly around whether another proton therapy initiative can be placed into that.

My understanding is that those processes still continue. It is taking a long time, and longer I think than anyone envisaged, but it is necessary that we take our time with this because if we do not exhaust every opportunity to try to succeed at delivering proton therapy in the Australian Bragg Centre it will delay the access to this important new form of cancer treatment for Australian patients—not just South Australian patients but Australian patients—and Australian patients, including South Australian patients, will continue to have to fly overseas to get this particular type of cancer therapy.

I realise the frustration it is causing everyone and the consternation over it. This is not a situation which is of this government's making. We have inherited this particular problem, but we are working through it as diligently as possible and trying to leave no stone unturned to make sure that we exhaust every avenue to make sure we give this the best chance of succeeding.

Mr TELFER: Is the Treasurer confident that the initiative can be delivered?

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: I would like to be more confident. The principal challenge with this is that the preferred supplier of the proton therapy initiative, ProTom International, their particular treatment unit, or their particular technology, was then used and the building was designed for that particular treatment equipment, that particular proton therapy equipment. As I understand it, not having actually physically seen one of these pieces of equipment myself, these things weigh in the tens of tonnes. They are very, very big, and while there are a handful of manufacturers and suppliers of these pieces of equipment worldwide, each one tends to be particular and different to other suppliers in terms of size and technology and physical make-up.

The challenge has always been trying to give ProTom International every chance to make good on its contractual obligations but, failing that, can somebody else's technology fit in the bunker which was specifically built for another model? That is what SAHMRI and its subsidiary ABCPTR, supported by the state government, has been trying to investigate over the last nine months. I would not even be confident giving a percentage chance of success. All I can say is we are trying to exhaust every avenue to make sure that we can succeed in this endeavour.

Mr TELFER: Can the Treasurer give an indication to the committee of his expectation of the timeframes around delivery?

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: I will come back to you on the specific dates, but my recollection from the original plan for ProTom International was that they were due to deliver equipment onsite and that there was a process of approximately 18 months to two years for installation, testing and commissioning before the first treatment for patients. It is my recollection they have already missed the initial date of bringing the equipment to site, so they are already late, but I will come back to you with what dates we have got access to.

Mr TELFER: Thank you Treasurer for taking that on notice. The commentary on page 30 speaks a bit about the costs. Can the Treasurer give the committee an indication on the expected budget implications, in recognition of the commentary that the Auditor-General put in there around the agreement between the state and the commonwealth? What are the budget implications for the state?

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Really there were two forms of financial support from this. There was the \$68 million which represented the amount that the commonwealth is providing. The commonwealth is providing that money for the state and then the state to make it available to SAHMRI, to then make it available to ProTom International. As with most money that is provided to an entity from the commonwealth, it usually has to come through state and territory governments.

There was also an initial contribution from the then state government in the order of \$9 million or \$10 million from the state government. I have not got that detail in front of me, but I will refresh my memory. The budget impact has already occurred on the state's finances. What is left is the unspent portion of the commonwealth's funding on the ProTom International contract.

If we are to enter into some future arrangement, of course, with a different supplier, we will be starting afresh with a new contractual arrangement and likely afresh with a new cost. We don't know if that is possible yet, but in the event that it does become possible then there will need to be a further discussion between the commonwealth and the state about how that is to be funded and who funds it. We are not at that point yet and I think we have still got some months to go yet until we understand whether another provider can use the facility that has been built to deliver the initiative.

Mr TELFER: At the bottom of page 30 the Auditor-General highlights his intention to provide a status update on the project in a separate report to parliament this year. Can the Treasurer give an indication of when he expects that report to be available to be tabled in parliament?

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: I can't. That is a matter entirely for the Auditor-General. He might consult with the Department of Treasury and Finance and SA Health, for example, in seeking information or documents, but we will not have direct control over whether he provides that. It may well be that if he completes the report before the end of the year—sometimes I think we have received Auditor-Generals' reports out of session. But I am also advised by Treasury that it may, in fact, mean that he does not finalise his report until February next year, is my latest advice from Treasury just now.

Mr TELFER: In Part C of the Auditor-General's documentation, pages 91 and 92, there is some commentary and structure around some of the royalty payments that come into the state government's coffers. Can the Treasurer give me an indication: are there mining royalty payments currently in arrears and, if so, what is the total dollar figure of the amount in arrears?

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: As the member might appreciate, there are a number of mining and mineral extraction operations that are liable to pay royalties to the state government and, off the top of my head, this is directly managed by the Department for Energy and Mining, so I could not speak authoritatively on what the required payment regime is without getting a more detailed briefing from them.

I am only aware of unpaid royalties of substance from one company and that is GFG, as I have previously disclosed to the house. My understanding is that that liability remains for GFG, that there is still an outstanding amount of royalties. The government is currently engaged with GFG about their capacity to make good on how far behind they are with their royalties and to make sure that that is done as expeditiously as possible.

I am also advised that, under the terms of the Mining Act, it is not for me or indeed the Minister for Energy and Mining to disclose the individual financial circumstances of particular companies that are regulated by that act. I am willing to confirm that they are behind in their royalties—I think that is appropriate to do and I have done that from day one in this house—but I am advised that I cannot particularise the amount by which they are behind.

Mr TELFER: I certainly respect that, Treasurer. I was talking generally about arrears in royalties and the risks to the Treasury bottom line when it comes to arrear payments, but if you have indicated that only the one company is in arrears I will respect the commentary you have provided.

Continuing on in Part C, page 440, there is a designation of FTE-equivalent employees and by my calculations there are an additional 74 new FTE employees filled within the department this financial year. Can you give an explanation as to that, by my calculations, near on 5 per cent increase in FTE?

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Yes, sure. There has been a transfer of responsibilities particularly from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet to the Department of Treasury and Finance. Without having the details in front of me, that relates primarily to some of the ICT functions that were previously housed within DPC that are now located within Treasury and Finance and that includes the Office of the Chief Information Officer and staff and also includes the Office for Data Analytics and their staff, but I can bring back some further details about that if that is of interest to the member.

Mr TELFER: Thank you, I would appreciate that. On page 450 in Part C, the Auditor-General has found an increase of \$57 million in increased revenue into DTF from the SA Water Corporation this financial year. How much of that revenue has gone into consolidated revenue as opposed to SA Water infrastructure projects?

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: I am happy to check that. My recollection from the budget papers is that, while dividends may increase or indeed decrease year on year, most often the community service obligation, or the amount of money that is required to be paid by the state government back to SA Water, is usually greater than that dividend payment, meaning it is rare to have an overall net benefit from SA Water's operations, but I am happy to check that and come back to you if you like.

Mr TELFER: I would appreciate that. On page 443 of Part C there is some commentary around payroll. According to the Auditor-General's Report:

- From a sample of 19, we found six instances where there was no evidence that quality assurance checks for new starters were performed.
- From a sample of 19, we found 13 instances where employee transfer supporting documents could not be provided or the documents were not signed as reviewed.
- From a sample of 19, we found seven instances where there was no evidence that the employee pay increment report was reviewed.

Given that a third of instances examined found no quality assurance checks for new starters were conducted, two-thirds of employee transfer documents were not completed in adherence with standards and more than a third of examined instances of employee pay increment reports were not examined, how can the public have confidence in the internal auditing processes of the department?

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: I am happy to take that on notice. From the Auditor-General's commentary here it is not clear to me whether, with the sample of 19, there are three different samples of 19 or whether there is a sample of 19 and three different findings are made. I might take that back to Shared Services. There was also a change in accommodation arrangements for Shared Services during the course of the year and I will ask Shared Services whether the disruption to their physical workspace contributed to any of the issues that are highlighted here. I am happy to take that on notice and bring that back.

Mr TELFER: On page 3 of Part B, the Auditor-General declares continuing concerns regarding government operations in the space of asset management, contract management, procurement and payroll, after previous warnings. What measures were recommended—e.g. what

warnings were previously made by the Auditor-General—but not put in place to address these concerns?

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Perhaps in the interests of time I can bring back an answer for the member so as not to interrupt the examination of the next minister. Thank you, shadow treasurer.

The CHAIR: I declare the examination of the Treasurer on the Auditor-General's Report complete. I now call on the Minister for Climate, Environment and Water to be examined on her portion of the Auditor-General's Report. I remind members that the committee is in normal session. Any questions have to be asked by members on their feet and all questions must be directly referenced to the Auditor-General's Report 2023-24 and Agency Statements for the year ending 2023-24, as published on the Auditor-General's website, and the Update to the Annual Report, as tabled in this house on 15 October. I welcome the Deputy Premier and the members for Colton and Chaffey.

Mr COWDREY: I refer to page 100 of Part C of the report, the third dot point:

- Floods in 2022-23 caused damage to assets owned by DEW along the River Murray...

Can the minister confirm which body, whether that be SA Water of the Department for Environment and Water, is responsible for the maintenance and repairs of the salt interception scheme infrastructure in South Australia?

The Hon. S.E. CLOSE: We have started with a nice complex set of arrangements to convey. Essentially, this is a relationship between the MDBA, DEW and SA Water: the MDBA is, in most cases, directing what is to happen; SA Water does the operational activities under that direction; and DEW is responsible for monitoring and providing information.

Mr COWDREY: In the context of that answer, given that DEW essentially monitors the equipment—that is the understanding from the answer provided—can the minister confirm whether all infrastructure associated with the salt interception scheme that was damaged during the floods has been repaired and is now operational?

The Hon. S.E. CLOSE: Just to clarify, the monitoring to which I referred is more the monitoring of the river that the department does and provides to the MDBA. In terms of the infrastructure, we would have to check with the MDBA what the status of the infrastructure is.

Mr COWDREY: In the context of the answer provided, are you able to, when seeking that answer from the MDBA, provide an indication to the house of the particular locations of the infrastructure that is still to be repaired?

The Hon. S.E. CLOSE: We will take all of that on notice and get that level of detail.

Mr COWDREY: Has the department done any modelling on the impact of the potentially failed repairs in regard to the salt interception scheme and any issues in regard to crop irrigation due to high salinity?

The Hon. S.E. CLOSE: I am advised that it is the MDBA's responsibility to oversee the management and operation of the interception schemes; however, we are not at present aware of any concerns that have been raised about salinity in the river and, therefore, we are not aware that that would be a matter of concern for the MDBA.

Mr COWDREY: So there has been no advice provided to you as minister that there are any salt issues? In raising that, are you aware of the targets that were met in regard to the salt interception scheme in 2019-21 not being met?

The Hon. S.E. CLOSE: The advice I have is that the overall management of the salinity in the river is considered to be done well. There was a spike when Lake Bonney came back but apart from that we consider that to be well-managed.

I think part of the question the member asked is taking us to a previous reporting period. We can take that on notice and get a proper briefing for the member. It is not something we have here for the Auditor-General's Report.

Mr COWDREY: In regard to page 108 in the Murray-Darling Basin Authority commentary provided within the report, has the department provided any advice to the minister in regard to the draft new water agreement and the principles underpinning that draft?

The Hon. S.E. CLOSE: I understand that draft principles have been circulated and have been available for us to comment on. However, if we can just understand that with the National Water Agreement—which I believe is what the member is asking about—the commonwealth government will propose what the National Water Agreement ought to look like, the new one under the National Water Initiative. Once they make that proposition—which has not yet taken place—we will undertake consultation with our communities in order to help determine what the state government's position will be.

I appreciate that there has been some concern amongst the community about what that might look like, but we have been reassuring the community that whatever the commonwealth is presently doing—which is still in process and still being drafted—there will be a separate consultation that we will undertake in order to determine our position in relation to that.

I attended a meeting recently with Minister Tanya Plibersek, a water stakeholder meeting led by her. I was very happy to be there to hear from a number of people about what their concerns and interests were both about the National Water Agreement and also, of course, the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. That was useful for me, but that will not be sufficient consultation for us to determine what the state government's view will be.

Mr COWDREY: In regard to the consultation you have just outlined, are you able to provide any more detail to the committee in terms of what the South Australian government will be committed to in terms of that consultation, what that looks like, how rigorous it would be?

The Hon. S.E. CLOSE: We will meet with all the stakeholders once they have the documentation so that we are able to understand what their views are. There are a lot of stakeholders, but it is a defined group of people who will be interested, and we will make sure we are hearing from all of them.

Mr COWDREY: In regard to the same issue, will the minister be undertaking a Regulatory Impact Statement in regard to the potential new water agreement prior to becoming a signatory?

The Hon. S.E. CLOSE: That is a possibility. We will wait until we see it to determine whether that would be a useful input.

Mr COWDREY: So it won't be required. You will take a view first?

The Hon. S.E. CLOSE: I do not believe it is a required part of the process. The government needs to form a view about what its position will be on the commonwealth's proposition. If a Regulatory Impact Statement is deemed to be merited, depending on what is in the draft agreement from the commonwealth, then we will do that, but we would not do one unnecessarily.

Mr COWDREY: I take you to the financial report, which is attached to appendix 2, part 3, of the report. In section 3.2, under board and committee remuneration, the department has indicated that there has been a significant increase in terms of the number of people with board positions this financial year on last: 133 in 2023 jumping to 168 this financial year. Are you able to provide an indication to the committee why the sudden increase in board positions?

The Hon. S.E. CLOSE: We are not certain. We do not believe we have created a number of new boards. We will take that on notice. It may be a function of the salary margin, but probably not, or perhaps board vacancies that had occurred previously that had not been filled. That can happen. I recall when we were in opposition, the Native Vegetation Council entirely stopped functioning because the board had not been replaced. It may be that we are still catching up on some of those, but we will look into it and provide an answer.

Mr COWDREY: So despite recording these numbers in the financial statement of the department, the department has no view as to why the increase?

The Hon. S.E. CLOSE: We will provide the advice on what has occurred. It may well be filling vacancies that have been left for some time.

Mr COWDREY: Just one more point of confirmation before we turn to the member for Chaffey, confirmation from the minister in regard to again the financial report attached to section A at item 4, 4.1, which lists the expenses for the department. Adelaide Beach Management has had nearly \$3 million less spent this financial year. Are you able to confirm that that is the case?

The Hon. S.E. CLOSE: I understand that is a question of carryover, that we had a carryover at year end so we will be spending that money.

The CHAIR: Member for Chaffey, you have the call next.

Mr WHETSTONE: I would like to move on to the Department for Industry, Innovation and Science. On page 472, the agency financial statements, was the department's audit completed before the annual report was tabled?

The Hon. S.E. CLOSE: I understand this is a function not of being late, it was not late, but that the Department for Industry, Innovation and Science, as it was then, was such a small department that it is not one of the ones that was chosen to be published. There are smaller agencies that are not.

Mr WHETSTONE: Just for clarification, were the relevant financial statements presented to the Auditor after the report was tabled, or were there any financial statements presented after the report was tabled?

The Hon. S.E. CLOSE: The financial statements are part of the pack that was presented on time, it is just that the audit report is published later by choice of the Auditor.

Mr WHETSTONE: Moving on to page 3 regarding income, the appropriations are \$7 million less than the previous year. Is any of this change due to cuts within the department?

The Hon. S.E. CLOSE: I understand substantially that was about Creative Industries moving out of the Department for Industry, Innovation and Science and into the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

Mr WHETSTONE: Regarding expenses on page 3, there was \$13 million less in grants and subsidies that were issued this year compared to last, but have any of the grants been cancelled or unallocated?

The Hon. S.E. CLOSE: Again, largely the answer lies with that changing machinery of government where Creative Industries moved out and took a grant stream with it. The Research and Innovation Fund dropped a bit, which was part of a natural decrease that had been foreshadowed in forward estimates, and then there were two time-limited projects. There was the See It LIVE music support package, which was a function of post-COVID recovery, and the River Murray Flood grant program which, again, came to an end because of the flood coming to an end.

Mr WHETSTONE: On page 4 regarding assets, DIIS's assets have seen a significant reduction since 2023, so what is the reason for the change?

The Hon. S.E. CLOSE: I understand that the assets decreased substantially and that it was overwhelmingly a transfer of cash. The explanation for that is that there is a return of surplus cash to Treasury which is a function of—as the member may well be aware, having been a minister, the departments hold some surplus cash to be able to meet expenses, but there is a Treasury policy about agencies not holding too much. It is not that the money disappears, it is where it sits, so only a certain amount can be held by an agency and the rest sits with Treasury, and so that was a transfer that related to that. There was a little bit with Creative Industries, but overwhelmingly that is the explanation.

Mr WHETSTONE: Has the Department for Industry, Innovation and Science had to limit its assets as part of the transition to DSD?

The Hon. S.E. CLOSE: I think the simple answer is no.

Mr WHETSTONE: On page 6 regarding cash flows and the investing, last year the Department for Industry, Innovation and Science made nearly \$6 million in proceeds from selling

property, plant and equipment, yet there was none this year. Is that part of the transfer? Can you just give me an understanding?

The Hon. S.E. CLOSE: It is not an agency that is normally selling land. That was an unusual year, and it was about the winding up and the sale of TechInSA, which is part of the north-south corridor development. That land that had been held was effectively sold and otherwise, in the normal course of events, it is not something that this agency does.

Mr WHETSTONE: If that was sold last year, you are saying there was an asset, whether it was a piece of land; is that what you are saying? Yes. That was sold last year. Were there any sales this year?

The Hon. S.E. CLOSE: No, there were not.

Mr WHETSTONE: Again, referring to page 6, the department also received over \$6 million in capital contributions from government last year and none this year, so was there a purchase?

The Hon. S.E. CLOSE: We will have to take that on notice. We did get that, and it is probably one of those one-off transactions, but we need to track back through what that was and we will explain that.

Mr WHETSTONE: I refer to net cash. For Industry, Innovation and Science, cash on hand is down \$12 million on last year. Can you give me an understanding of why that is?

The Hon. S.E. CLOSE: That is what I was starting to get to when we were talking before about the drop in assets. Nearly \$12 million of surplus cash moved from the department to Treasury, not that it is not accessible and still part of government, it just triggered that policy of agencies not holding too much surplus cash. There is a buffer that they are able to hold, as I say, to meet the requirements of making sure they meet payroll and other obligations, but when that gets too much it gets transferred into the Treasury line rather than the agency line and that is what occurred for the agency at that time.

Mr WHETSTONE: Can you just clarify that? Did that money disappear into the Treasurer's black bucket or is that there for a claw back at any time?

The Hon. S.E. CLOSE: It really is where it is held. Should we need it, we just go to Treasury to ask for it. I like the idea of the black bucket that the Treasurer has, but in fact the way that Treasury operates is pretty transparently within government. It is sitting with them but is accessible by the agency in need.

Mr WHETSTONE: Very unusual that a Treasurer would give anything back. Referring to the budget performance expenses on page 16, the department spent \$17 million less on grants than was budgeted for, so why was the grant program so heavily overbudgeted?

The Hon. S.E. CLOSE: Again, that transfer of Creative Industries is by far the largest part of the explanation, so it was \$17.2 million lower than the original budget, as the member has identified. With Creative Industries, that explains \$16.6 million of it. So it is essentially the move of Creative Industries taking that with them.

Mr WHETSTONE: Just on the budget performance income, why did the department receive \$3.3 million from the Governor's appropriation fund? That is on page 17.

The Hon. S.E. CLOSE: That is the language that is used that really describes when decisions are made during the year for the department to be able to do more and have a funded project. That is how the money is then identified as coming through from the Governor's Appropriation Fund. If I can just have a quick minute, earlier I was asked about an increase in the number of people on boards in the Department for Environment and Water. I am advised that the answer is that the way that co-management boards are treated is now different so that they are now being included, and that there are also two new co-management boards.

Mr WHETSTONE: I have a final question and then the member for Colton would like another. What corporate services did the department provide to the Department for Energy and Mining for \$1.2 million?

The Hon. S.E. CLOSE: ICT and procurement.

Mr COWDREY: Just very briefly, in Part C: Agency Audit Reports, page 93, in regard to the EPA section, there is commentary in relation to the Gillman warehouse that was procured by the EPA. Are you able to outline what the purpose of that facility is, whether it is additional storage/operation or whether there has been another site that has been disposed of?

The Hon. S.E. CLOSE: At Netley we had two separate labs and the lease has expired. One was for a radiation laboratory and the other was an air quality laboratory. We have consolidated those and located them at Gillman in an area where I went and opened different buildings that that company had recently built on the same property. We walked past that area, but I have not seen inside it. That is the explanation of what is in there.

Mr COWDREY: Two properties that were disposed of, I assume. Are you able to outline where those two properties were, and the total value?

The Hon. S.E. CLOSE: Sorry, I said they were both at Netley, and that is wrong. One was Netley and one was Byron Place in the city. They were leased, and so as their contract came to an end we moved out of those and moved into this single location in Gillman.

Mr COWDREY: Is the current arrangement a lease arrangement, and are you able to outline the procurement process or lease-seeking process that resulted in the new accommodation?

The Hon. S.E. CLOSE: As often happens, or as I think almost always happens, DIT coordinates the location of various parts of government and they found this place for us to lease. It is a 10-year plus tenure option.

The CHAIR: I declare the examination of the Deputy Premier and Minister for Climate, Environment and Water is now complete.

Progress reported; committee to sit again.

Bills

ANIMAL WELFARE BILL

Second Reading

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 11 September 2024.)

Mr COWDREY (Colton) (17:35): I rise today as the lead speaker for the opposition in regard to the bill before us today, the Animal Welfare Bill, and in doing so place on the record the opposition's position in regard to this bill, particularly at first instance, that we will not be opposing the passage of the bill through this place.

Given the nature of the bill, and the significant volume and changes that are being made through this bill, it is our belief that we should ensure that we have the appropriate level of scrutiny in regard to the significant changes and that there be a reasonably significant committee process to tease out some of the issues that have been raised both through stakeholder consultation and more broadly through the operation of the bill. Particularly in the context that a significant portion of the potential operational issues in regard to this bill are largely going to be borne out through regulation rather than legislation, I think it is imperative to have a good and clear understanding for the house as to the purpose and underlying reasoning that sits behind the particular clauses, providing the house an opportunity to scrutinise regulations when they are made under this potential future act.

In regard to my contribution more broadly on the bill, the minister stated in her introduction to the bill that this was one of the commitments the government made, to modernise animal welfare laws and to bring them into a manner that is more consistent with contemporary practices, science and community expectation. While I understand that there has been significant community interest in the review—at times I think the minister has used the number of more than 1,000 submissions received as part of the two-stage consultation process that has informed the bill—I think that is a good thing, that there is such significant interest in these reforms, but, again, I think there are still

some questions to be asked and some issues to be teased out further through the committee process.

It is also important to note that the bill will lead the nation in some areas. In particular, certainly it has become clear that there is a view from this government that penalties are going to lead the nation in regard to animal welfare and, more broadly, if we look at the Dog and Cat Management Board and other reforms that are potentially entering this place, the disincentive of significant financial penalties are at the forefront of some of the government's thinking in regard to this area.

In regard to the particular issues that this bill deals with, there were seven key reform areas that were identified through the process. Regarding the eighth area of reform around shelter licensing, the government has made a decision not to progress it as part of this bill and will signpost it, at least to the parliament, that they will progress with that more discrete reform in relation to shelter licensing at some stage in the next 12 months. Perhaps we can get some further details as to when the parliament can expect that reform as well and why that particular aspect of the reform is not included in such a significant bill that we see before us that has outlined the other seven areas that were identified through consultation. To outline the areas of the bill they touch on, they include:

- updating the purpose and including objects in the act to better explain why the law exists and to help readers interpret its intent;
- better recognising animal sentience to acknowledge that animals experience feelings, both positive, such as pleasure, and negative, such as pain and fear;
- broadening the definition of 'animal' so that more types of animals are covered by law—the exclusion of fish has been removed and cephalopods such as squid, octopus and cuttlefish are included in the context of scientific purposes;
- introducing a duty of care provision to create a positive requirement to provide a minimum level of protection;
- in the government's view, improving regulation, oversight and transparency of the research and teaching sectors, which enables greater accountability and addresses community concern;
- increased abilities to administer and enforce the act so that people who do not meet animal welfare requirements can be held to account and that cruelty can ultimately be prevented and welfare promoted; and
- contemporising the government's administrative provisions for the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee to ensure that animal welfare advice comes from a transparent and diverse group.

The government also says that this bill does a range of things to provide that reform as outlined. It does so through introducing a new framework with a multitude of improvements that puts animal welfare at the centre of decision-making. It also states that animals are recognised as living beings with the ability to experience positive and negative states. A broader range of animals were included in the definition so that law has a wider reach in protecting animal welfare and preventing harm. The bill introduces a new duty of care that proactively obliges owners to provide food, water and appropriate living conditions.

The bill also seeks to provide greater accountability within the research and teaching sectors, which will be introduced through updated terminology and improved licensing and registration requirements. The bill also for the first time creates an animal welfare fund to capture licence fees, fines and penalties that can be put back into supporting and promoting animal welfare outcomes. I think it will be no surprise to the minister that we are keen to understand exactly what the purposes of that fund are, how those funds can be expended and how the licensing fees associated will be collected and under what timeframe and, more broadly, the operation of that particular section.

Some of the enforcement tools included within the bill include seizure as a consequence of noncompliance. The seizure of animals is never undertaken lightly, as everybody can understand,

but it also needs to be used when required for the welfare of the animal. Under the changes proposed, the ongoing welfare of the seized animal is a priority.

The bill also proposes that, instead of seized animals being held for long periods of time while waiting for court outcomes, sometimes for years as noted by the minister in her second reading speech, the bill proposes and provides for the animal to be considered forfeited after 30 days unless the owner uses the appeal processes that are provided under the bill.

The bill also proactively prevents harm by addressing interstate offenders coming into South Australia through the recognition of interstate animal welfare orders. Additionally, the government has incorporated a recommendation from the Independent Inquiry into the Governance of the Greyhound Racing Industry within this bill.

Rightfully, I think the minister acknowledged in her second reading speech that perhaps some members of this place may feel cautious that the bill expands the definition of 'animal' to include fish and cephalopods, such as cuttlefish, squid and octopus for scientific purposes. I hope that we can take her on her word that the house can have assurance that the fishing and aquaculture industries will not be impacted or affected in any way whatsoever. I think there will be some questions in the committee stage to ensure that that specific carve out operates in a way that does exclude the activity that so many in our community undertake for pleasure on quite a regular occasion.

I know there are many jetties both in my electorate and more broadly around the state. Members opposite are chuckling a little bit. I think there is a jetty down the Minister for Human Services' way, so I am sure that she likewise would be seeking an assurance that fishing will be continued in her neck of the woods as well.

As I said earlier in this speech, I do have some concerns with the significant reliance on regulation, regulations that have not yet been drafted or presented in any way, shape or form to the opposition or for consultation, as I understand it, more broadly with other stakeholders in relation to the bill. As I said, those regulations will sway the operational effect of many of the aspects that are contained in the bill.

I look forward to a useful committee process where we will look to interrogate the bill clause by clause in more detail to ascertain as best we can and provide as much information for the house in regard to how the government proposes the practical operation of how a number of these issues will play out on a day-to-day basis and how things like the fund will be used, distributed and have funds collected.

With those short words, I again state the opposition's position in regard to the bill, that we will not be opposing the passage of the bill through this house, but of course we do reserve the right to draft some amendments to the bill for presentation in the upper house, based on the information that is obtained through the committee process.

Ms HUTCHESSON (Waite) (17:46): I rise today in support of the Animal Welfare Bill 2024. It is a piece of legislation that will replace the Animal Welfare Act 1985, and it represents a significant step forward in modernising our animal welfare laws, aligning them with contemporary practices, scientific understanding and community expectations. Our government made a clear election commitment to update our animal welfare laws, and I am proud to say that we are delivering on that promise.

The journey to this moment has been marked by extensive community engagement. Through two rounds of consultation we received over 1,000 submissions each time, demonstrating the deep interest and concern our citizens have for animal welfare. This bill addresses seven key areas for reform. First, we are updating the purpose and including objects in the act to better explain why the law exists and help readers interpret this intent.

Second, we are better recognising animal sentience, acknowledging that animals experience both positive and negative feelings. My dog Bowdee is a perfect example. When I come home late, she is there to greet me with a massive smile on her face. When it is time for a walk, she literally dances, smiling and so very excited about what is coming. On the flip side, when I am putting my runners on and have to break it to her that I am off to the gym rather than a walk, her attitude is real.

When my son is out late, both the cat and the dog worry about him and will sit at the front door until he comes home safe. They most definitely experience both positive and negative feelings.

Third, we are broadening the definition of 'animal' to include species under the law's protection. Notably, the exclusion of fish has been removed, and cephalopods such as squid, octopus and cuttlefish are now included in the context of scientific purposes. How good are our giant cuttlefish that inhabit the seas near Whyalla? These chameleons of the sea are one of the largest species of cuttlefish found, reaching up to 60 centimetres in length and weighing up to 5 kilos. They are intelligent creatures, able to change their colour, shape and texture as they move along the seabed to imitate rocks, sand and seaweed.

These giant sea creatures are already protected in the area, with the targeting and taking of all cephalopod species—that is, squid, cuttlefish and octopus—being prohibited at all times in the cephalopod exclusion zone in the waters of False Bay, Spencer Gulf near Whyalla. The targeting and taking of cuttlefish species, including giant Australian cuttlefish, is prohibited at all times in the Upper Spencer Gulf in the waters north of the line between Arno Bay and Wallaroo. These animals will now be protected more broadly in the context of scientific purposes. Fishing and aquaculture practices, however, will not be affected. These activities will continue to be regulated under the Fisheries Management Act 2007 and the Aquaculture Act 2001.

We are also introducing a duty of care provision, creating a positive requirement for owners to provide a minimum level of protection for their animals. If you are going to provide a home for an animal, it should be a loving one. You need to take care of them, nurture them and protect them from harm. They trust you with their lives and it is our responsibility to do good by them. The new duty of care provision proactively obliges owners to provide appropriate food, water and living conditions, and I am pleased to report that eight out of 10 respondents supported this provision during our consultation process.

We are also improving regulation oversight and transparency in the research and teaching sector, enabling greater accountability and addressing community concerns. This includes updated terminology and improved licensing and registration requirements. We are also increasing our ability to administer and enforce the act, ensuring that those who do not meet animal welfare requirements can be held accountable, cruelty can be prevented and welfare can be promoted. Lastly, we are modernising the governance and administrative provisions for the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, ensuring that animal welfare advice comes from a transparent and diverse group.

This bill provides a new framework that puts animal welfare at the centre of decision-making. Furthermore, the bill creates, for the first time, an Animal Welfare Fund to capture licence fees, fines and penalties that can be reinvested in supporting and promoting animal welfare outcomes. The range of enforcement tools available in this legislation will make its implementation much more effective, swift and animal-focused. Tools such as interim orders, notices to comply and enforceable undertakings are modern ways to achieve outcomes tailored to specific circumstances.

I want to highlight the significant increases in penalties for animal welfare offences. The bill includes fines of up to \$250,000 or 10 years in jail for people who mistreat animals, a substantial increase from the current maximum fine of \$50,000 or four years in jail for aggravated ill-treatment of an animal. This change follows extensive community consultation which showed widespread support for stronger penalties. To support these changes, the 2024-25 state budget has provided an extra \$16.4 million over four years to the RSPCA to deliver animal welfare compliance activities. This is in addition to the \$1 million provided to the organisation over four years by our government upon its election.

We have seen terrible things in the media about the mistreatment of greyhounds, such that we established the Independent Inquiry into the Governance of the Greyhound Racing Industry. Recommendations from this review have been incorporated into this bill, including animal welfare reporting obligations for employees, contractors and volunteers in the sector to report any suspicions of animal welfare offences. We are also bringing the provisions known as Koda's law to this legislation, recognising that harming or causing death to a working animal is a specific offence with penalties commensurate to other ill-treatment offences.

This bill represents a significant leap forward for animal welfare in South Australia. It reflects our community's values and expectations, provides stronger tools for enforcement and puts animal welfare at the centre of our decision-making. It presents a robust framework that will be of immediate use in responding to animal welfare issues and anticipates potential future regulatory needs.

Our community is blessed to live in an incredible part of the state, with national parks and recreational areas brimming with wildlife. Almost every home owner has a dog or a cat or both. I know that they would do anything to protect their animals and I am glad that these protections will be in place for those who do not value the joy animals can bring. I commend the Animal Welfare Bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Ms Thompson.

FAIR WORK (REGISTERED ASSOCIATIONS) AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction and First Reading

Received from the Legislative Council and read a first time.

At 17:54 the house adjourned until Wednesday 30 October 2024 at 10:30.