

## HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

### Tuesday, 18 February 2025

**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.

#### *Bills*

### **BIOSECURITY BILL**

#### *Final Stages*

The Legislative Council agreed to the amendment made by the House of Assembly without any amendment.

### **STATUTES AMENDMENT (BUDGET MEASURES) BILL**

#### *Final Stages*

The Legislative Council agreed to the bill without any amendment.

#### *Parliamentary Procedure*

### **VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** Before I call the member for Black, I would like to do a couple of things. The first is to welcome to parliament today Senator Don Farrell, the Minister for Trade and Tourism; and the member for Kingston and the Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme, Amanda Rishworth, who has been the local member down in the south of Adelaide since 2007. It is great to have you here as well, Amanda. I would also like to acknowledge that the member for Black's family and friends are in the gallery today, including Alex's wife, Claire, and son, Albie. It is great to have you in the chamber with us for this very important occasion.

#### *Bills*

### **INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION (CONDITIONS OF APPOINTMENT - INTEGRITY MEASURES) AMENDMENT BILL**

#### *Second Reading*

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 6 February 2025.)

**The SPEAKER:** I would like to remind the house that as this is the member's first speech, he should be accorded the normal courtesies and respect afforded to new members on this important occasion. Enjoy it while you can, member for Black, because it is going to get rowdy from here on in.

**Mr DIGHTON (Black) (11:04):** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, and can I start by thanking you for the professional development that you have organised for MPs. As the newest MP I particularly enjoyed learning how to do my job, or part of it, so thank you very much. I would also like to acknowledge that where we meet today is the land of the Kurna people and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging. It was a privilege to be sworn into parliament last November on the same day that the first address by the First Nations Voice to Parliament was delivered. I am proud to be part of a Labor government that has delivered an Aboriginal Voice to Parliament as part of honouring the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

It is a great responsibility and privilege to be standing here, having been elected by the people of my community in Black. My family and I have been very fortunate to be members of such a beautiful and welcoming community for the past nine years, and it is a great honour to now be able to represent, advocate and deliver for my community.

The electorate of Black contains some of the most beautiful coastline and green spaces in South Australia, including Glenthorne National Park, Hallett Cove Conservation Park, Marino Conservation Park and the newly proclaimed Field River Conservation Park, thanks to our Deputy Premier, Susan Close, and her department's commitment to these significant environmental spaces.

Of course, the electorate is much more than the environment. It is the community that makes it a very special place to live, and I want to pay tribute to the Friends of Parks groups; the service clubs, including the Lions Club of Hallett Cove and Districts, where I was recently inducted as a member; the many sporting clubs; the residents associations; and other community groups. I also want to acknowledge the local churches and parishes that support our community. As a child who grew up as part of a church parish I know firsthand how important our churches are to support spiritual and social wellbeing and development in our communities.

As I said throughout the campaign, building a stronger community is the number one aim of mine, so I say to those organisations and clubs: thank you for the work you do, and I look forward to continuing to work with you to support and build a stronger community.

I would also like to acknowledge the former member for Black, David Speirs. David represented our community for over 10 years, and on behalf of our community I want to thank him for his service to the people of Black and to our state as environment minister and Leader of the Opposition.

Putting oneself up for election is not an easy decision, nor an easy experience, but it is vital for our democracy that candidates put themselves and their ideals forward to represent their party and be a choice in our community. Thank you to my fellow candidates at the last election, Sarah Luscombe, Jonathan Parkin and Amanda Wilson, for their and their families' sacrifice and contribution to our democratic process.

There are many reasons why I stand here, but most importantly it is because I am a member of the Australian Labor Party. I joined the ALP 26 years ago, and it is because of the endurance of our party, of our movement, of our ideals that our party continues to be a party of government. There are others who claim to be proponents of a fairer and more just society, but it is only the Australian Labor Party that can truly deliver a progressive agenda. Thank you to the Australian Labor Party for the opportunity to represent our party.

I would never have imagined that I would be the recipient of such incredible support as I received from across our party during the recent by-election. I want to thank as many as I can of those who supported me to be standing here today. I have known the Premier for over 20 years. In many ways he believed in me before I believed in myself. I thank the Premier for that belief and his support in helping me to be here. We are so fortunate to be led in this state by a person with such a vision, such energy and such determination to progress our state and its people forward.

Our campaign for the seat of Black included a huge effort to doorknock, letterbox and wobbleboard the electorate. I want to thank my fellow Labor MPs—and I am humbled by having you here right now—and Labor ministers for the support. In particular I want to thank the member for West Torrens and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, and the member for Wright and Minister for Education for some particular portfolio support during and since the election.

To my now fellow inner and outer southern MPs—talk about southern hospitality—I was so fortunate to have the support of the member for Kaurana and Minister for Health, the member for Reynell and Minister for Child Protection, the member for Hurtle Vale and Minister for Human Services, the member for Elder, the member for Gibson and the member for Davenport throughout the campaign, and I look forward to delivering for our southern communities moving forward.

Thank you to the union movement and, in particular, to the SDA and United Workers Union for their support and to my local sub-branch, led by President Alex Bond. Alex has been an enthusiastic and vocal supporter of myself for a long time and I thank him for his friendship and

support. To other sub-branch volunteers; Bob Dittmar, Sidique Bah, Phil Giles, Greg Kurtzer, Jim Maher, Julie McCrossin, Bella Nicholls-Newman, Darrell Scanlon, Shannon Schedlich, Zara Smith and Claire Smith, thank you.

There are many, many volunteers—and I am, of course, committing a sin by trying to name them and I will not get everyone, so apologies for that—thanks to Alistair Douglas, Isaac Southern, Kylie Douglas, Anna Passmore, Callum Barrott-Walsh, Jim Digance, Tony and Rosemary Clancy, John Bistrovic and many within the Premier's office. I also thank Lydia Heise, May Harrington, Tara Yoon, John Atkinson, David Wilkins, Michael Hicks, Rhiannon Newman and Josh Rayner, as well as many others.

To Lawrence Ben, who had the poor timing to come back to Australia in 2022 and ended up being the campaign manager of a very speculative campaign at that time, thank you very much for your support then and continued support. To Lucas Fragnito, Tanya Fatehi, Ella Shaw, Penni Pappas from the ALP office, thank you for creating the campaign structure to support our campaign.

To the Hon. Emily Bourke—now Minister for Emergency Services, and Correctional Services, Minister for Autism and Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing—your advice and persistence helped me to be a better candidate and probably a better person, but unfortunately not a better dresser. It is not every day or indeed every campaign that a candidate is able to have the state secretary as their campaign manager. Thank you so much to Aemon Bourke for the incredible coordination of the campaign and his ability to keep me mostly calm throughout the process.

To Alison Taylor, my office manager, who helped coordinate volunteers during the campaign and thankfully is now coordinating my office, thank you. Thank you also to Phoebe Redington, Ed Archer, Tory Schiller, Nathaniel Winter and Liam Southern for your help during the campaign and since to get our office up and functioning.

My journey to this place is, of course, much more than just a by-election and the past few months. I would now like to share a bit about my life journey to this place. I am lucky to say that I had a very fortunate childhood. As the middle child of three children, I benefited from both the love of my family and also the involvement of our family in the community.

I have such great childhood memories of family trips to Foul Bay on the Yorke Peninsula to stay in the Vondy's shack—and thank you very much to the Von der Borch family for their friendship and for sharing this spectacular place with us—and of catching yabbies at Brown Hill Creek and fishing with my best mate JB. Thank you, JB, for your love and friendship over 40 years and for being here today: there will be some hard work on the pergolas tomorrow. I have fond memories of camping with my family friends the Laws and thank you to Adrian and Jenny for being here and your friendship over many years.

Of course, my upbringing was not just a highlight reel. My parents demonstrated through both their work and their involvement in our community that the world is interconnected and that we have an obligation to work for the common good. My mum, Chris Dighton, was the coordinator of various community centres: Hackham West, Eastwood, Clarence Park, Ascot Park and Gilles Plains. Mum's respect for the dignity of all members of our community and her commitment to fostering participation through providing services, activities and engagement left an impression on me about the importance of community in our society.

My dad, John Dighton, worked at the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)—I was never aware of what it stood for until now. As a kid I was fascinated when visiting the labs and seeing the multitude of test tubes. It was dad's sense of curiosity and dedication to systematic research that I have reflected on throughout my life: the importance of trying to make sense of the world, whilst also trying to solve the problems. Thank you, mum and dad, for the life you have given me, the opportunities you have created for me and the example you have set for me.

To my older brother, Sam Dighton, who was a trailblazer in our family and created a path for us to follow into student and then Labor Party politics and living overseas: I would not be here today

but for the path you created, and you continue to encourage me with your ability to navigate life's many ups and downs with ambition and energy.

To my younger sister, Brigid Dighton, whose passion, creativity and bravery inspire me—I am in awe of what she has achieved and continues to achieve in her life—thank you for the love and commitment you show to bringing our family together. Thanks also to my nephews and nieces, Levi Poletto, Iris Poletto, Athena Rogers-Dighton and Louis Rogers-Dighton, for their love and support. I also want to acknowledge other members of my family: Johnny Hilhorst and McKenzie and Austin, Kylie Rogers and Vince Poletto.

My childhood and my life were enriched by the love and presence of my large extended families, which were led by my two late grandmothers: my nana, Eileen Griffin, was one of the kindest and most gentle people and modelled to me the importance of compassion and inclusivity for all people. My granny, Joan Dighton, demonstrated such dignity and independence, along with a healthy dose of candour or unrequested advice.

My mum, Chris, is the youngest of four sisters and my dad, John, is the oldest of four brothers, and I want to acknowledge my aunts and uncles and cousins for their support: my Aunt Marie Hennessy and the Hennessy family; my aunt, the late Jan Taylor, and the Taylor family, and in particular Naomi Szetu; my Aunt Pauline Griffin, my godmother, who has been a great support to me over many years and who is here with us today; along with my Uncle Bill Marshall. I would also like to acknowledge my Uncle Tom Dighton and Aunt Amy Fung—thank you for being here today—as well as my Uncle Simon Dighton and Aunt Josie Rizza and Bella and Harry, whose love and generosity have provided such important life nourishment for my family over many years.

I would also like to thank my Uncle Peter Lawrence and the Lawrence family, and in particular Dash and Suzie. I also want to acknowledge and thank my parents-in-law, Annette and Geoff Jarrett. Geoff and Annette have given me so much. Through them, I have developed and widened my appreciation and understanding of music, of theology, of ceremony and of culture—thank you. Thanks also to my sister-in-law, Danielle Schneider, and Kate Jarrett, and also to David Schneider, Joel Schneider, Luke Schneider, Amelia Murrie, Matt Hendry, Adie and Evan. I feel very blessed to be part of the Jarrett family.

As I mentioned earlier, my family was involved in parish life and we regularly attended the Sunday Eucharistic mass at St Joseph's Kingswood. Whilst it would be perhaps good for the parish priest to say that the most I got out of it was actually listening to his homilies, that was not the case; it was far more about the social gatherings and what transpired after mass. My dad started a men's group and I played basketball for over 20 years for a team that was started by parish families. I want to recognise family friends from the parish: the Swift and the Chorley families for their support both in basketball and in life.

As a family, we have been so blessed to have the grace of former parish priest Father Bob Wilkinson in our lives. Bob baptised me, he married Claire and I, he baptised both my children, Albie and Clancy, and he celebrated several family funerals and other significant occasions. Bob's intellect and compassion and understanding of theology has been a blessing in our lives.

Mum and dad were also involved in the Teams of Our Lady, a Catholic movement founded to support couples in their married life and spirituality. Mum and dad formed a team with five other couples and have been in that team for over 50 years, and those five other families have become the village that helped to raise us. I want to thank the Blencowe, White, Cahalan, Leeson and Wainwright families for their support in my development and their ongoing support of me today. It is through my childhood interactions with my family, with the parish and with the Teams of Our Lady, that I developed an early sense of identity and gained a confidence to engage with the ideas and values that make up our society.

My schooling, too, provided a foundation for my political activism and identity. The Dominican ethos of Veritas and the search for truth and justice that I experienced at Cabra Dominican College was foundational in developing my sense of compassion, social justice and responsibility for action.

Attending Cabra also gave me opportunities, and an immersion trip to the Philippines was one of the most singularly life-changing experiences for me. I left Australia a fairly shy and awkward

pimply teenager and returned 2½ weeks later with confidence and purpose to talk about my experience of the amazing culture and beautiful people, as well as the myriad social development challenges that existed in the Philippines that were so different from my own experience.

The Cabra Chapel community remains very important to my family; it is where we regularly celebrate mass and Eucharist. The community has supported my family through life's many ups and downs, and I particularly recognise congregational leaders Sister Bernadette Kiley, Sister Maureen O'Connell, Sister Angela Maroney and Sister Patricia Brady, who are here with us today. Sister Pat coincidentally was my year 8 English teacher and now is one of my top fans on Facebook—thank you, Sister Pat. These women and the Dominican faith and spirituality that they embody inspired me as a school student to be involved in social justice, and today they drive me to use the privilege and responsibility as a member of this place to strive for a world of compassion, of dignity and of truth.

Whilst I was an average university scholar, it was my involvement in student politics at Flinders University where I learnt some important skills that have benefited me today: how to represent a community, bring a team together and engage those who do not want to be engaged. Student politics is also where I made several lifelong friends, including the current federal social services minister and federal member for Kingston, Amanda Rishworth; the Treasurer and member for Lee; the health minister and member for Kaurana; the Victorian Minister for Children and Disability, Lizzie Blandthorn; the former federal minister and member for Adelaide, Kate Ellis; and Sarah Callaghan, Xanthe Kleinig, Brer Adams, Ben Bridge, Jeremy Makin and Henry Parham.

Whilst my journey to this place was a little different from theirs, there is a sense of coming full circle to again have the opportunity to work with the member for Lee and the member for Kaurana, and I thank them for their significant support as I campaigned to enter this place. Special thanks to Amanda Rishworth and Tim. Despite the incredible busyness of her life, her commitment to our community and service to our nation, Amanda has been a dedicated friend to me for 25 years—her presence here is testament to our great friendship, thank you.

At university I joined the Labor Party and I met Justin Jarvis. Justin was the Labor candidate for the seat of Stuart at the 2002 and 2006 state elections, and I worked on both campaigns, including relocating to Port Augusta for the 2006 campaign to be his campaign manager. Justin missed out by less than 1 per cent at both elections. As a Quorn local Justin would have been a wonderful member of this place, and the communities of Port Augusta, Flinders and the Mid North missed the opportunity to be served by a member of parliament who instinctively understood how Labor government policy can make a difference to people in our regional areas. Justin and his family—Carli, Chifley and Maya—remain an important source of advice and friendship to me.

My first full-time political job was working for Senator Linda Kirk. Perhaps the most important experience at Senator Kirk's office was the opportunity to work with Nimfa Farrell. I hope I do not offend her by saying this, but Nimfa was a bit of a political mum to me back then, and I have appreciated her support over many years. Nimfa's support and friendship led me to working at the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association—the largest trade union in Australia.

The SDA represents some of the lowest paid and vulnerable workers in society—workers who form part of an easily replaceable workforce and who are often treated as commodities because someone else is lining up for their job. The opportunity to represent and advocate for the needs of workers and to train shop floor delegates and health and safety representatives to empower them to make a difference in their workplaces was very fulfilling and politically formative for me. Thank you to the then secretary and now federal trade minister, Senator Don Farrell, for giving me the opportunity to be the trainer—arguably the best job in the union—for being a great boss and for his ongoing support over many years, and thanks for being here, Don.

Thanks also to the Hon. Reggie Martin, Sonia Romeo, and the Minister for Planning and member for Taylor, who I shared an office with back then and now have the opportunity to share a chamber with. It is another sense of coming full circle to be again working with you after so long.

Twenty years later I can safely say that I would not be in this place without the support of the SDA, both in my formative political years and in my recent campaigns. I want to thank Secretary, Josh Peak, and Assistant Secretary, Jordan Mumford, for their continued faith in me to represent the interests not just of SDA members but of all working people and their families.

After the SDA, I had the opportunity to work in public affairs and relations. Whilst I was particularly average at generating new clients, I learnt a lot about the intersection between corporate and government affairs. I was very fortunate to work with Cathie King. Cathie has an amazing understanding of government and political strategy. What I learnt from her then is arguably much more important to me now. Thank you, Cathie.

Having completed a Bachelor of Secondary Education whilst working at the SDA, I decided after working as a government relations adviser that I needed to save my soul, so I took the plunge into teaching. It was fortuitous that I had completed a teaching placement at Sacred Heart as part of my studies. I managed to get a contract for one year. Sacred Heart became my job and more importantly my community for the next 16 years.

I found that being a teacher was an immensely satisfying and fulfilling vocation. The opportunity to have a direct impact on the lives of young people and to see them learn was very rewarding. Of course, teaching is not without its challenges. In my time as a teacher, I have seen the changes in complexity of the teaching profession. One particular change was the increase in students with a disability.

According to the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), last year over 25 per cent of school students received an educational adjustment due to disability. This is up from 18 per cent in 2015. Supporting our teachers and school support staff so that they can provide quality education to all students must be a critical aim. I am proud that this government is leading our nation with the implementation of autism inclusion teachers in every public primary school.

As a former legal studies teacher, I am very passionate about civics and democracy education. I loved supporting my students to learn and understand our democracy, our systems of justice, our systems of government and even about this very place. Teaching students about democracy is crucial to maintaining a socially cohesive society and to ensure that all students understand their responsibilities to be active students and citizens.

Like many in here, I was disappointed and shocked to read this morning the report from ACARA that there has been a significant decline in civics knowledge amongst our school students. I look forward to supporting the work of the education minister and the government in the implementation of curriculum reforms in civics and citizenship.

I want to thank my mentor teacher, Shane Hennessey, who is with us today. Shane's passion for legal studies, for social cohesion and even for our constitution, was inspiring to me as a young teacher and is inspiring to all the students he taught. Thank you, Shane.

I also had the opportunity to hold several leadership positions during my time at Sacred Heart. Those roles allowed me to support the strong sense of community and belonging that exists at Sacred Heart. The values of the Marist charism and ethos, which emphasise family spirit and being present and nurturing to one another, permeate the lived experience for staff, students and families.

In the recent by-election, I was often surprised and reminded when I met a former Sacred Heart student or family how strong that sense of belonging is and they would talk about the positive experience they had. I believe that building a sense of belonging is crucial to academic and wellbeing outcomes.

I note the most recent Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) found that students in countries with better PISA results than Australia also had higher levels of belonging. We have a job on our hands to improve the sense of belonging that Australian students feel at their school. I am pleased to see that the government's public education strategy places belonging and wellbeing as a central aim within that strategy.

Of course, belonging is not just relevant for student development and achievement. It is critical to wellbeing in our society. I reiterate my commitment to building a stronger sense of belonging in the community I now represent. I want to thank the Sacred Heart community. As I embark on a new journey and a new career, I do so with the confidence and strength of that community, having learnt so much from the staff, the students and the families.

In 16 years, I have worked with so many fantastic teachers and educators. I cannot name them all, but the following have been particularly important friends and colleagues: George Chyer, Karen Bailey, James Grant, John Cadd, Mick Boers, Adriana Cvorkov, Tim Fernandez, James Gill, Robert Gill, Beth Caldwell, Meagan Kozlowski, Sarah Martin, Belinda Barrile, Daniel Head—who is here today representing the Sacred Heart community; thank you—Shana Bennett, Trevor Freeman, Andrew Boeyen, Julie Hext, Kathryn Mortlock, Deborah Hearl and Deb Winchester.

Thanks also to the Marist Brothers, who live at Somerton Park. They are a constant and dignified presence within the community and I learned a lot about how important it is to turn up and be present, thanks to Brother Des Howard, Brother Greg McCrystal, Brother Pat, Brother Brian and Father Mick Brennan.

I was fortunate to work closely with two principals at Sacred Heart: Steve Byrne and Daniel Lynch. Steve and Dan supported my leadership, supported me through some of life's greatest challenges, and supported me as I entered this place. I have learnt so much from their authentic, strategic, courageous and empathetic leadership. Thank you, Steve and Dan.

Throughout my teaching career, I was—and I remain—a member, and for a brief period even a delegate, of the Independent Education Union. I want to thank and acknowledge the work of the IEU and its current secretary, Tim Oosterbaan, for their work in representing teachers and educators.

It is safe to say that life does not always turn out the way you would expect. In July 2023, our second son, Clancy Alexander Jarrett-Dighton, was born at Flinders Medical Centre. Clancy was named after the poem *Clancy of the Overflow* by Banjo Paterson, and in particular the lines that we loved:

And he sees the vision splendid of the sunlit plains extended,

And at night the wondrous glory of the everlasting stars.

We had hoped that our child would love being in nature and experiencing that wondrous glory of the everlasting stars.

Clancy's journey proved to be different to what we had hoped. After spending the first week out in the world with us at home, Clancy returned to hospital, as we were concerned about his breathing. For the next six weeks, Clancy remained at Flinders and then at the Women's and Children's Hospital, undergoing many tests to try to determine what was responsible for his deteriorating condition. Finally, it was determined that Clancy had a very rare, severe and degenerative neuromuscular disorder, nemaline rod myopathy, for which there is no cure. This result explained why Clancy's muscles had continued to weaken and he became more and more reliant on ventilation.

At the start of September, aged nine weeks, Clancy died. Clancy's death was a shattering tragedy for us, one that continues to impact us each day as we navigate the loss of our child and of our hopes and dreams. Despite our ongoing grief at losing Clancy, we feel so blessed to have had the opportunity to know and love Clancy, to see him smile and be known and loved by him. We know not all parents and families who experience infant loss get the same amount of time with their child. I want to acknowledge the stillbirth community and the work of my colleague, the member for Newland, for setting up an inquiry into stillbirth in South Australia.

Clancy's life and death taught us a great deal about love and grief and grace. The Irish poet and Celtic theologian John O'Donohue describes grace as the 'permanent climate of divine kindness'. It suggests a compassion and understanding for all the ambivalent and contradictory dimensions of the human experience and pain. This climate of kindness nurtures the sore landscape of the human heart and urges torn ground to heal.

Grace is the perennial infusion of springtime into the winter of bleakness. Remembering the grace of, through, and because of Clancy, has helped us to navigate our grief. Clancy demonstrated so much grace and strength as he dealt with his condition and his treatment. He put up with so much, so that we could get to know him and to see him smile.

Clancy showed us the grace of doctors, nurses and health workers, who provided such high levels of kindness and care and respect. Having spent more time in hospitals than I would like, I

speak from experience about the incredible work that our frontline health workers do for our community.

Clancy showed us the grace of our family, friends and community, who supported us with love, with food, and with prayers. I want to thank all members of our community who continue to check in about how we are going, and who mention Clancy's name. For many in the infant loss community, there is a great sense of comfort and honouring when people say our little one's names. We should not be worried about saying the wrong thing or upsetting people. What is more important is that people create a space for families to grieve and honour their child and, if that does make us upset, then that is a healthy response to something we need to accept more in our society.

Clancy showed me the grace of my son, Albie, who dealt with an absent family and continues to include and honour Clancy in our life. Clancy showed me the grace of my wife, Claire, who demonstrated such dignity and strength throughout Clancy's life. Claire spent two months living in hospital wards, often sleeping on chairs. Whilst patient care and facilities are obviously the number one priority, our experience as parents with a child in ICU demonstrated the need for improved parent facilities in our hospitals so that the primary care relationship between a parent and a child can be maintained.

I am proud to stand here as the father of two children: Clancy and Albie. Albie reminds me every day how lucky I am to be his dad. Albie, you have such determination, strength of character, a great sense of humour—in fact, his favourite thing to say at the moment and shout out from our living room window is 'MP in his undies'. My apologies for the mental image I have just provided you with. I think it is some sort of payback for my declaration during the by-election that being a local from Hallett Cove was more important than being a dad. I am so proud of you Albie. Thank you so much for being my son.

To my wife, Claire, you are my best friend, and I am so grateful it is you I walk this life with. Your compassion, your patience and your creativity is crucial to balancing our family. Thank you for the love, the advice, the support, and the sacrifice you have made throughout our life together, but particularly now as I sit in this place. I would not be here but for you. I love you so much.

It is a true honour to serve in this place, to serve my community, to serve our future generations and, as former Labor Prime Minister Ben Chifley declared, to strive for the light on the hill and the betterment of all our society not only here but anywhere we may give a helping hand.

**The SPEAKER:** Congratulations to the member for Black on an outstanding first speech. We wish you all the best for your work in here and also in your community.

#### *Parliamentary Procedure*

### **VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** I would like to also acknowledge that in the gallery today we have from another place Minister Clare Scriven and Minister Emily Bourke. I counted about 70 people in the gallery, and when you put that on top of the 40-odd people in the chamber, I think it might be the largest crowd I have seen for a first speech. It was great to see all of you in here to witness the member for Black's first speech.

#### *Bills*

### **INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION (CONDITIONS OF APPOINTMENT - INTEGRITY MEASURES) AMENDMENT BILL**

#### *Second Reading*

Debate resumed.

**Mr TEAGUE (Heysen—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (11:41):** By reference to those eloquent remarks just now, I can say from firsthand experience that there is nothing like playing against the Sacred Heart football team. They know how to play the game for sure.

I rise to address the bill and indicate that I am the lead speaker. I also indicate the opposition's support for the bill. The Deputy Premier gave the government's speech at the end of the



last sitting week. I will address the bill briefly and make some remarks about the context in which we are navigating this step. First of all, we are seeing the adaption of the act to apply what the government has said very clearly at the outset is an integrity measure, an integrity measure that applied automatically for so long as a former judicial officer was in the role of commissioner, and that integrity measure no longer carries across because for the first time a non-judicial officer, someone other than a retired judge, has been appointed to the role of commissioner. That occurred on 12 December last year.

I take this opportunity to indicate my appreciation for the service of the commissioner and for the appointment of the first non-judicial commissioner. This is a first for South Australia in the relatively short life span of the ICAC. It is also an appointment that I am particularly pleased to see, to endorse and to offer every encouragement.

In my short time in the role of Attorney, I had the occasion to appoint Emma Townsend as Director of the Office for Public Integrity, so I had the opportunity to be closely considering who would take on that role at a time when the triumvirate, if I call it that, had just been newly reformed and the person who was going to take on the role of Director of the OPI was very much taking a step that was a first. The OPI had existed, but it was wrapped up in the ICAC until then. Without unpacking all the whys and wherefores and the merits and so on, we had a newly separate OPI, and the Director of the OPI was all of a sudden cast in a significant and substantial role of senior responsibility.

Emma Townsend undertook that role with distinction and, for I think around about three years, was the first director in that new structure. Including, among other things, as a member of the Crime and Public Integrity Policy Committee, I have had occasion to cross paths with the director and to understand the role that she has been navigating. I am sure she will undertake the office of commissioner now with the same dedication and, I expect, distinction. So, for the first time, we have in South Australia a commissioner who has not been a judge appointed to this very significant and senior integrity role.

The government has formed the view that in order to maintain that point of independence and integrity, as an integrity measure, the application of an equivalence to a judicial pension, albeit by way of an adapted scheme—it is the subject of clause 4—will ensure that high level of independence and integrity is maintained. I just stay with the point because what is clear in all of that and might be noted for public record is that—and I think a distinction might be drawn with what occurred for similarly meritorious reasons a few years ago, when the DPP was appointed and coming off the bench to that appointment. Arrangements were made in relation to the application of judicial pension at that time.

In this case, what the government has made clear is that this is a point the government has considered as an integrity measure, well and truly after the appointment, as I understand it. It is not some sort of enterprise bargaining arrangement. It might be that it is a good thing to place the now former director in that kind of clear air: it is not something that is specifically at the feet of the former director in coming to the role of commissioner but rather the government, as the government said in its speech, coming to this considered view on its own in terms of the application of this integrity measure to a role of independence. That is understood and appreciated.

There is no doubt that, at all times, for those of us in roles that are looked at closely and daily in terms of their capacity to be free from influence, free from corruption in all its forms, integrity measures of this kind are well to be within the consideration of government. So this occasion to apply that judicial pension structure to this role, albeit in an adapted form, is well and truly understood in terms of the government's independent consideration of that matter regardless of the particular appointment and the particular occupant of the office. I think it was important just to make that point clear.

In further addressing the government's view of the matter the minister has highlighted that we have seen a mixture, now, of judicial and non-judicial participants in anti-corruption roles around the country. It is neither ipso facto that this sort of pension arrangement applies, nor is there a complete absence of precedent, so it is important to navigate this territory. But I think for the purposes of this bill it is important to highlight—and I say so with the endorsement of the opposition—that the

consideration of the application of an integrity measure of this kind is one that has important work to do.

The government has already addressed the way in which the structure will apply in terms of a minimum period of service, the avoidance of having been removed or on the other hand circumstances where the commissioner might later be appointed a judge, incremental arrangements for time served and so on. That is all clear on the face of the structure.

I just indicate that while there is always an imperfect analogy when one is comparing one role to another, of course judges are appointed—and necessarily so—until a statutory retirement age of 70. The commissioner in this case is appointed for a term, and there is the possibility for extension, and there is therefore a structure about how much time is served and a rational treatment of the way in which the pension accrues. One can always point to some less than complete freedom, therefore, from the connection between time served, reappointment and so on and that complete independence. It is a balance that has been struck and a structure that has been reached that recognises both the actual amount of time served and the fact that that is done in accordance with a contract or at least a term of appointment. That is noted.

The only other broad point I would just address about the government's consideration of a subsequent appointment is one that I perhaps thought to share in terms of advancement, for want of a better word, not only from this role to a judicial appointment but from one judicial appointment to another, as has happened in very many cases now over recent decades. There is I think a respectable view that, wherever it is practical to do so, these roles of independence ought not be connected with the possibility of, as it were, seeing advancement within them.

I do not quarrel with it for a moment, but where there might be a judge first appointed to the District Court, later appointed to the Supreme Court and, these days, later appointed to the Court of Appeal—and we have not yet had a High Court judge but we have had plenty of Supreme Court judges who have gone over to the Federal Court—we have to do all we can, with in this case reference being made to the commissioner possibly being appointed as a judge, to ensure that appointments of this nature are made with the utmost independence and that we do not, as it were, establish a sort of structure in which we are seeing the search for advancement within these roles as being somehow on display from one to the other. I do not think it is and to the extent that public barracking and parochialism goes on in this space broadly, I think South Australians—rightly—are highly impatient for the appointment of a South Australian High Court judge. It is a rare thing for a High Court judge to come from a completely non-judicial starting point to that court.

To couch all those remarks in some context: the point about this whole bill is what the government has described as an important integrity measure by the application of a pension to an independent role, highly associated with integrity and in that sense the necessity for that role to be whole unto itself is important to emphasise. The government has further highlighted—and I mentioned the DPP earlier—it is also not without precedent in other roles, in terms of the arrangements in place for the Solicitor-General.

To conclude where I started: the opposition supports the bill. In particular, I draw attention to the fact that this is the government's consideration to an integrity measure that is about reinforcing what it takes to be independent in this particular role and it is not something that has arisen in the course of the circumstances otherwise of this particular appointment, except for the fact that the person appointed happens to be the first non-judicial appointee to the role. Again, I wish the commissioner all the very best in the role and I commend the bill to the house.

**Mr BROWN (Florey) (11:57):** It is with great pleasure that I rise to support the Independent Commission Against Corruption (Conditions of Appointment—Integrity Measures) Amendment Bill.

This bill seeks to ensure that the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption is entitled to the same remuneration as a puisne judge, which is to say an ordinary judge of the Supreme Court. The bill also seeks to provide that the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption is entitled to a pension that aligns with the pension entitlements of judges under the Judges' Pensions Act 1971.

This bill was prompted by the appointment of South Australia's third ICAC commissioner, Ms Emma Townsend at the end of last year. On 3 February this year Ms Townsend's five-year term

commenced. Ms Townsend has replaced Acting Commissioner Ben Broyd, who held the role following the retirement of the Hon. Ann Vanstone KC.

Commissioner Townsend possesses extensive experience in public integrity. In 2021 she was appointed by the former Liberal government as the Director of the Office for Public Integrity (OPI). The OPI is the agency which receives complaints about public integrity. It assesses those complaints and then makes referrals to the ICAC, the Ombudsman or the police as appropriate.

The OPI was established as a standalone agency separate to the ICAC in 2021. Ms Townsend was integral in setting up the OPI as a standalone agency and she remained at the helm from its establishment until her recent appointment as the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption.

Prior to joining the OPI, Ms Townsend spent more than 18 years as a prosecutor with the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, as well as other roles within the Attorney-General's Department and with the commercial law firm of Thomson Playford.

In her role at the DPP, amongst other responsibilities, Ms Townsend was responsible for establishing the office's vulnerable witness team, which manages the prosecution of child sexual abuse cases and other matters involving vulnerable victims and witnesses. As Director of the OPI, Ms Townsend was responsible for assessing complaints under the ICAC Act, the oversight of complaints and investigations under the Police Complaints and Discipline Act and for broadly managing the complex work undertaken by an integrity agency.

Commissioner Townsend's appointment has followed a public expression of interest process and a period of nationwide advertising. Although it is the case that Commissioner Townsend's two predecessors, those being the Hon. Bruce Lander KC and the Hon. Ann Vanstone KC, were both former judges of the Supreme Court of South Australia, it is not unusual in other jurisdictions around the nation for anti-corruption commissions to be headed by persons who have not previously served as judges. In fact, it is the case that a majority of Australian jurisdictions now have anti-corruption commissions headed by persons with backgrounds other than having served as judges.

The Independent Commission Against Corruption Act provides that where a person has served as a judicial officer prior to being appointed as South Australia's ICAC commissioner their conditions of appointment must be no less favourable than the conditions of their judicial office. This provision effectively entitled commissioners Lander and Vanstone to the same level of remuneration they received as judges of the Supreme Court.

In the case of Commissioner Townsend's appointment, this represents the first time the South Australian government has had a discretion in relation to the level of remuneration for the commissioner. It is also the case that the judges of the District Court and the Supreme Court are entitled to a pension in accordance with the Judges' Pensions Act 1971. The ICAC Act under current arrangements provides that when appointing an ICAC commissioner the Governor of South Australia may entitle the commissioner to a pension under the Judges' Pensions Act, but it is not a requirement that such an entitlement be given.

The bill seeks to achieve this by providing that the ICAC commissioner is entitled to remuneration at rates which are commensurate to those of judges of the Supreme Court. This includes not only the commissioner's salary but also allowances, such as the security allowance that is payable to judges. It is worth noting that the level of remuneration for judges is set by the independent Remuneration Tribunal. The bill also entitles the commissioner to a pension by applying the Judges' Pensions Act, albeit with some necessary modifications.

The Malinauskas government has elected to pursue this reform as an integrity measure aimed at ensuring the ability of the ICAC commissioner to undertake their duties fully and freely and to ensure consistent remuneration befitting the position and reflecting the service of all those who hold the office. It is worth noting that Victoria, Western Australia and Queensland all have legislative provisions for a pension payable to persons occupying equivalent roles to our ICAC commissioner.

Under the provisions of the bill before the house, the pension will apply as follows. The pension entitlement will accrue after five years of service. Once that period of five years' service has been reached, there is an entitlement to a pension of 50 per cent of salary with incremental

progressions of 1 per cent for each additional six months of service up to 60 per cent at a maximum of 10 years of service. A period as acting commissioner under section 11 of the ICAC Act is to count as service for the purposes of calculating the pension entitlement. The pension entitlement is not to be paid out until the commissioner reaches 60 years of age, consistent with the manner in which the Judges' Pensions Act applies to judges.

Spouse or domestic partner entitlements and child entitlements are to apply as they do for judges under the Judges' Pensions Act but with any necessary modifications to the application of that act to tailor it for the bespoke accrual and qualifying periods for the commissioner pension. In the event that a commissioner is suspended, time under suspension does not count as service for the purposes of the pension. In the event that a commissioner is removed by the Governor, the pension is not payable unless the Governor otherwise directs.

If a commissioner is later appointed as a judge, any pension payments from their appointment as commissioner cease upon their appointment as a judge; however, previous service as commissioner is to be counted as judicial service for the purposes of the judge's pension. If a former commissioner is appointed to a judicial office with a salary less than that of a puisne judge of the Supreme Court, they will be entitled to a pension that reflects the salary of a Supreme Court judge.

The Malinauskas government considers that for such an important position for our community and for the integrity of our public institutions as the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption, it is essential that persons who serve in the role are appropriately remunerated. What is proposed in this bill reflects reasonable arrangements for remuneration and for the provision of a pension such that a person need not to have been a judge in order to have their service as ICAC commissioner recognised on equitable terms to others who have served in a judicial office.

I trust that South Australia's Independent Commission Against Corruption will be well served by Commissioner Townsend's wealth of experience as a prosecutor and as the head of the Office for Public Integrity, and I wish her the best in the role. I also commend the service of Mr Ben Broyd as acting commissioner over the past several months prior to the appointment of Commissioner Townsend. I am pleased to commend the bill to the house.

**Ms O'HANLON (Dunstan) (12:04):** It is a great pleasure to rise today to speak on the Independent Commission Against Corruption (Conditions of Appointment—Integrity Measures) Amendment Bill 2025, a significant piece of legislation that strengthens the foundations of our anti-corruption framework in South Australia. At its core, this bill is about integrity. It ensures that our ICAC commissioner receives remuneration and pension entitlements commensurate with the gravity and independence of their role. Specifically, it aligns the commissioner's entitlements with those of Supreme Court judges, continuing a tradition of ensuring our anti-corruption watchdog operates with complete autonomy and security.

The ICAC Act stipulates that if a person has held a judicial office before being appointed as an ICAC commissioner, their conditions of appointment cannot be less favourable than those of their judicial office; hence, commissioners Lander and Vanstone were effectively entitled to receive the same salary as a Supreme Court judge.

This bill was prompted by the appointment of Ms Emma Townsend as South Australia's third ICAC commissioner on 3 February 2025. Ms Townsend brings to this role an extraordinary depth of experience in public integrity and law enforcement that makes her uniquely qualified to serve as our state's chief anti-corruption officer. Unlike her predecessors, the Hon. Bruce Lander and the Hon. Ann Vanstone, Commissioner Townsend comes to this role not from the Supreme Court bench but with a rich background in public prosecution and integrity oversight.

For the past four years, she has served as Director of the Office for Public Integrity where she played an instrumental role in establishing it as a standalone agency. Her leadership in this position demonstrated her commitment to maintaining the highest standards of public sector integrity. Before her role at the OPI, Ms Townsend spent more than 18 years as a prosecutor with the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. During this time, she showed particular dedication to protecting our most vulnerable citizens, establishing the office's vulnerable witness team. This initiative has

been crucial in managing the prosecution of child sexual abuse cases and supporting vulnerable victims and witnesses through the justice system.

Commissioner Townsend's appointment, following a rigorous nationwide search, reflects a broader trend across Australia. Many jurisdictions now recognise that the leadership of anti-corruption bodies need not be limited to former judges but can benefit from diverse legal and investigative backgrounds that bring fresh perspectives to this critical role. Indeed, with this appointment, South Australia now joins the majority of jurisdictions in Australia who have anti-corruption commissioners from backgrounds other than the judiciary.

This bill ensures that, regardless of their professional background, future ICAC commissioners will receive consistent and appropriate remuneration. It provides for a pension that accrues over time, reaching 50 per cent of salary after five years of service, with the potential to increase to 60 per cent after 10 years. These provisions mirror those available to Supreme Court judges and include appropriate protections for the commissioner's family.

This legislation sends a clear message: we value the independence and integrity of our anti-corruption commission. By ensuring appropriate remuneration and security for those who take on this crucial role, we strengthen the commission's ability to serve the people of South Australia without fear or favour. The appointment of Commissioner Townsend marks a new chapter in South Australia's fight against corruption. This bill ensures she and all future commissioners can fulfil their duties with the same independence and security as their predecessors.

There is no doubt that members of my community are interested in very strong protections for the integrity of the ICAC. I feel confident they will support this integrity measure. I commend this bill to the house.

**Ms STINSON (Badcoe) (12:08):** I rise to lend my support to this bill, the Independent Commission Against Corruption (Conditions of Appointment—Integrity Measures) Amendment Bill 2025. There are a few key points I wanted to make in relation to this, but I wanted to start by congratulating Ms Emma Townsend, who, just in the last few days, in fact, has become the new commissioner.

I have to confess, I did not know a lot about Ms Townsend and have taken the opportunity to do a little research about her career and her contributions. As those in this house have heard from the previous speakers, she has quite a deep knowledge of the integrity area and some quite striking experience, which puts her in an exceptional position to carry out this very important role.

Ms Townsend obviously has an extensive legal background, including 18 years as prosecutor with the Office of the DPP, other roles in the Attorney-General's Department and also experience with the commercial law firm Thomson Playford. Most recently, and maybe most notably for this role, she has been at the helm of the OPI since shortly after it was established as a standalone entity in late 2021. From a personal point of view, the thing I find most impressive that Ms Townsend has done in her career is establishing the DPP's vulnerable witness team. That is a team that manages the prosecution of child sex abuse cases and other matters involving vulnerable victims and witnesses.

Having spent a large proportion of my career working as a court reporter and bearing witness each day to the cases before our courts, I know the incredible volume, sadly, of work in relation to sexual offences, particularly sexual offences against children in our state—contemporary offences but also offences that date back many decades. I have also seen the incredible, absolutely heart-wrenching pain those offences have caused for victims and their families, even for partners and children of victims. It really is an offence that impacts and spans a victim's life and has such incredible complexity to it.

The establishment of this office has done an incredible amount of good in our state, and Ms Townsend, amongst her many achievements, should be particularly commended, from my point of view, for establishing that vulnerable witness team, which obviously works to ensure not only that matters are investigated and justice is applied but that witnesses and vulnerable people are supported. Certainly, I have seen the depth of support that some people need, and I think we as a

community owe a great deal and should be spending our time and energies supporting people who, unfortunately, have had to endure such treatment, whether or not they achieve a conviction.

My congratulations go to Ms Townsend and we in this house wish her well in the work she has ahead. Obviously, her experience, particularly as the director of the OPI, puts her in the perfect position to be able to take up the ICAC commissioner role as well. That is an agency that is responsible for assessing complaints under the ICAC Act, as well as oversight of complaints and investigations under the Police Complaints and Discipline Act and managing the complex work of an integrity agency. There are not that many integrity agencies at this level, but the OPI is certainly one of them, and that would have afforded her great experience and knowledge that she will be able to carry into this role.

Secondly, I want to go to the point of fairness. This bill aims to ensure that the ICAC commissioner is entitled to the same remuneration as a puisne judge of the Supreme Court, both in terms of their pay and also in terms of their pension and even some of the allowances they might be afforded, for example, in relation to their security. It is obvious really. I do not know that there is any great case why someone who has a background as a judge should receive different entitlements from a person with a different background who has come into this role.

I deeply respect the work of judges: they have an incredibly difficult task, they do a great service for our state, but if the government and cabinet have judged that a person is of the calibre that they should be appointed as ICAC commissioner, then they should be afforded the same remuneration as someone with a background as a judge. This is a measure of making sure there is an even playing field between people who are ultimately appointed to this very high office, this very responsible, important job in our system.

I might also point out that these days ICAC commissioners are not always judges. I think there has been a custom over the years of looking to our former judicial officers or even serving judicial officers—judges—to fill roles of importance, whether that be as royal commissioners or others who are doing special investigations. Obviously, often judges do have the skills and experience to be taking up those very serious and very weighty positions. But I do not think that should mean that we as a parliament, a government or a society should be overlooking those who may have different backgrounds, who bring the necessary skills, experience and integrity to be able to lead agencies such as ICAC.

Certainly, other jurisdictions have obviously felt the same, and we are certainly no orphans in appointing someone with a non-judicial background to fill now this ICAC position in terms of Ms Townsend's appointment. Commissioner Townsend was appointed following a public expression of interest process and nationwide advertising. Her two predecessors, as the house would know, the Hon. Bruce Lander and the Hon. Ann Vanstone, obviously were both former judges of the Supreme Court, but around Australia it is not unusual for anti-corruption commissions to be headed by individuals who have not been judges.

With this appointment of Ms Townsend, it actually means that a majority of jurisdictions now have anti-corruption commissions headed by those with other backgrounds. I think that is a good thing. I think we should be looking for the right person for the right job, the right background and experience, the right expertise, the right temperament and someone who, above all, the community can have utter faith in.

This is a job not like many others in terms of the utter faith that the community has to have in this role. Obviously, this role is about investigating when there are allegations of corruption or other forms of maladministration and misbehaviour. Of course, the person who sits at the top of that process needs to have the absolute confidence of the community.

While that could be said of our judges, absolutely—I think the community does have great faith in our judges—it also can be said of others in our community, for example, someone with the experience that Ms Townsend has, in particular leading the OPI and the extensive legal experience she has in the DPP. We should not be ruling out people with the skills and knowledge to do an excellent job simply for the fact that they have not actually served as judges.

The ICAC Act provides that where a person is a judicial officer prior to being appointed as the ICAC commissioner, their terms and conditions of employment must be no less favourable than the conditions of their judicial office. This effectively entitled commissioners Lander and Vanstone to the same level of pay as they received as judges of the Supreme Court.

The appointment of Commissioner Townsend is the first time the government has really had discretion as to the level of pay for the commissioner. Judges of the District and Supreme courts are also entitled to a pension in accordance with the Judges' Pensions Act 1971. The ICAC Act currently provides that the Governor, when appointing an ICAC commissioner, may entitle them to a pension under the Judges' Pensions Act, but that is not actually a requirement.

This bill is obviously an integrity measure. That is how the government sees it. It may be a bit odd to some that this would be considered as an integrity measure. I am sure all of us would expect that our ICAC commissioner would have integrity in applying the role, despite what their pay or conditions might be. Of course, this house has an important role in considering all circumstances, in considering the possibility of bad actors and of considering the worst-case scenarios.

I cannot help but think about some judicial systems overseas, through parts of Asia where I have been lucky enough to travel, report and work, where there are not the same levels of integrity, where in fact judges are paid quite poorly and judicial officers are paid very poorly and that has actually resulted in the opportunity for bribery, for misbehaviour and for some quite scandalous behaviour that certainly would not be accepted in the Australian context. It is horrible for those communities, those overseas nations that do have those issues pervading their justice systems, and I would hate to think that there was ever an opportunity for that to happen in our judicial system in Australia.

Although this idea of integrity being linked to pay and conditions may seem a bit silly in the Australian context, I think that we have that view because we are so lucky to have judicial systems and judicial officers who have come up through a culture of great integrity, and we cannot really imagine that these circumstances might arise in Australia. But as I said, we need only look overseas, sometimes to some quite developed nations, to see that opportunities arise where we do not have systems that are really focused on maintaining integrity.

This bill tries to ensure integrity by providing that the ICAC commissioner is entitled to a salary and allowances at the rate of judges of the Supreme Court. This includes not only salary but also allowances, as I mentioned, such as the security allowance payable to judges. Again, it is quite a sad thing that in our modern society we do have to think about additional and exceptional security measures being allowed and funded for people who hold high office like a judge.

Unfortunately, we are seeing, I think, an increasing environment where there are threats made against those who take up these roles, these high offices, and find themselves in judgement of others. We need them to do that. We need them to feel safe doing that, and so we need to make sure that we are providing them with the means to be and to feel safe, through things like security provisions.

It is important to note that the remuneration for judges is set by the independent Remuneration Tribunal. When I speak with members of my community about the justice system, sometimes people have the misconception that parliament sets the pay for judges. That is not the case, and nor should it be the case, but a lot of people do hold that opinion.

In fact, I was listening to the radio this morning and there was quite a lot of discussion about civics education. I am glad the Malinauskas Labor government, and particularly the education minister, Blair Boyer, is devoting quite some time to ensuring that we improve civics education in our schools. Things like whether we have a President, whether judges are the Speaker of the House of Assembly, indeed the role of judges and how they are paid and how their pay is set, are all things that there seems to be confusion about in the community. A bit of civics education, I am sure, would help shine some light on that, maybe not just for students but for others as well.

The bill also entitles the commissioner to a pension by applying the Judges' Pensions Act, as far as it can be applied, in the circumstance where an ICAC commissioner does not have a

background of being a judge. There are some necessary modifications to that act to make sure that it accords with that different experience.

The pension entitlement is to accrue after five years of service, the pension entitlement of 50 per cent of salary after five years—that is what it will be—with incremental progression of 1 per cent for each additional six months of service, up to a 60 per cent maximum for 10 years of service. The pension entitlement is payable after the commissioner reaches 60 years of age, consistent with the Judges' Pensions Act. A spouse or domestic partner and children are entitled to the same provisions as under the Judges' Pensions Act, but with any necessary modifications, as I mentioned.

Importantly, if a commissioner is suspended—and this goes to the government's aim of ensuring integrity—the time under suspension does not count as service for the pension, so a suspended commissioner would not be accruing pension entitlements while they were in a period of suspension. If a commissioner is removed by the Governor, the pension is not payable at all, unless the Governor directs otherwise. That is consistent with the integrity objective that the government is trying to achieve here. Obviously, it would not be consistent for this measure to be applied to ensure integrity while also rewarding or being seen to reward a breach of that integrity.

If a commissioner is later appointed as a judge, any pension payments from their appointment as commissioner cease upon their appointment as a judge. Effectively, to use common language, there is no double-dipping. You cannot have it both ways; you can only be getting your pension from one source to do with one job.

It is worth noting that those are generous provisions. They are very generous. Certainly, those pension entitlements exceed what your average person would be receiving in their positions, but I think that does reflect the gravity and the status that this parliament attaches to this role. It is an incredibly important role. It is incredibly important that the public has faith, that this house has faith, in the workings of the ICAC commissioner; that they are doing all they can to execute their role independently, without bias and without external influence; and that they are assessing matters as they should be—thoroughly—and applying the law as the public would expect it to be. For that reason, these pension provisions are what I think most people would consider generous.

As I mentioned, other jurisdictions are similar to what we are doing and achieving here. Victoria, Western Australia and Queensland all have legislative provisions for a pension payable to their ICAC commissioner even if they did not have a background as a judge. Following the Albanese Labor government's creation of the NACC, the National Anti-Corruption Commission, all jurisdictions now have some form of anti-corruption watchdog.

I will leave my remarks there; needless to say, I do support the bill. I commend those who have worked on it, particularly the Attorney-General and the Attorney-General's office, and I commend this bill to the house.

**The Hon. S.E. CLOSE (Port Adelaide—Deputy Premier, Minister for Climate, Environment and Water, Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science, Minister for Workforce and Population Strategy) (12:26):** I am pleased to close the debate. It is one of those bills that I think everyone has recognised as being a useful and sensible piece of legislation. I am pleased that it has enjoyed the support of the house in the speeches thus far, and I commend the bill to the house.

Bill read a second time.

*Third Reading*

**The Hon. S.E. CLOSE (Port Adelaide—Deputy Premier, Minister for Climate, Environment and Water, Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science, Minister for Workforce and Population Strategy) (12:27):** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Bill read a third time and passed.



**PASSENGER TRANSPORT (POINT TO POINT TRANSPORT SERVICES) AMENDMENT BILL***Second Reading*

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 5 February 2025.)

**The Hon. D.G. PISONI (Unley) (12:28):** I advise the house that I am the lead speaker for the opposition on this bill. The Passenger Transport (Point to Point Transport Services) Amendment Bill comes to this place almost exactly 10 years from when we first started seeing Uber popping up around the world, and things have changed enormously. I remember there were even riots. I remember seeing on the news riots in France, with taxidriviers ripping off the doors of Uber vehicles. I can remember the commentary interstate and in South Australia about how it would damage the industry.

What we did see was a change in the way in which people could get from point A to point B. We saw efficiencies in a traditional service that was heavily regulated, and we saw many of the things that were being offered in the new ridesharing schemes that were popping up at the time being adopted by the taxi industry.

This bill, of course, proposes significant changes to the taxi industry and the licensing system. I think since the first model T Ford rolled off the production line countries around the world have adopted a perpetual licence system, although not all of them. There were some that started with a different system, but predominantly you buy a licence, and they are limited. Governments release them.

I can remember often reading the *Gazette*—something I did regularly when I was first in this place—about a new release or tender for licence plates being released by the Department of Transport. The idea there, of course, is that they were controlled to keep the licence plate as an asset, a business investment, a bit like buying an apartment that you might rent out or a building you might rent out, either a commercial building or a residential building. We know that many of those taxi licence holders would also lease their plates, and so you would have people who would lease the plate and either buy their own taxi for that leased plate or lease the plate and the taxi itself.

There were all sorts of business opportunities at different levels of entry point for people who wanted to work in that industry. What ridesharing did close on 10 years ago was open that opportunity up for so many more people to offer a different type of service, and for consumers to have choice in service. We saw a transformation of point-to-point servicing.

In 2016 or 2017, I learnt a little bit about how the rating system for passengers and for drivers can certainly be dictated by the local culture. The first time I used Uber was when I was in the United States. When I returned, I looked up my rating, and I was not rated very well. I was thinking, I was well behaved, I do not know what has happened there, and then I did a bit of research and I found that if you do not tip, you get a poor rating.

Of course, I had no idea that you had to tip the Uber driver. Coming from Australia, it is not something that we are familiar with and, consequently, it cost you, and it might cost you being picked up if you do not have a very good rating or a high rating. It does suggest that maybe you do not tip. When things are busy in places like America, you may be left standing on the side of the road because people do not want to pick someone up who does not tip, so that was a lesson learnt. I did not have to wait for an Uber, but I think that was before my rating became known to other Uber drivers in the United States. Fortunately, here we do not have that tipping culture, and so consequently it is not usually an issue.

This bill proposes significant reforms to the South Australian point-to-point transport industry, impacting taxis, rideshare, and chauffeured services. The government claims the bill is necessary to modernise the industry and implement elements of the taxi industry support package from the 2024-25 state budget. There are significant concerns in the industry regarding the bill's removal of independent oversight, and the significant increase of ministerial authority.

The bill also proposes to open up all of South Australia to rideshare operators. This is long overdue, and I congratulate the member for Schubert on her advocacy in this area. Living in the

Barossa Valley, we all know it is world famous for its wineries and its wine tours, but without ridesharing it severely restricts the ability for people to travel for a day, unless they hire a bus or a chauffeur in a chauffeured vehicle. They would have to find something else to do or find someone who is prepared to drive for the wine tasting and not drink, of course.

So this will be great for the wine districts in South Australia and for other restaurant destinations in regional towns where the food is renowned for its quality, its uniqueness and the atmosphere. It is all about experiences, and bringing rideshare out to the regions will expand that experience. However, we know that will take some time. This is not a switch process. Yes, it pushes the go button, but there will be people who will need to come forward to offer those ridesharing facilities in the regions, and that will take some time.

The bill abolishes the Passenger Transport Standards Committee, which previously provided independent oversight and industry consultation on regulatory matters. I know that this has caused some angst and concern within the industry because it puts all of the power and decision-making process with the minister. There is no requirement for consultation and there is no independent review, so it is obviously subject to a political agenda that any current or future minister may have in that sector. That is something that I understand the industry has been concerned about.

The minister will have unilateral power to impose new conditions on transport operators, to approve or revoke licences and to make regulatory changes without prior consultation. We know that consultation is an important factor, particularly when you are dealing with small businesses. Remember, these are all small business operators: taxi owners, taxi operators, taxidrivers, Uber drivers, drivers of other point-to-point or ridesharing providers.

These are all small business people. They work by providing a service. They are not hourly paid. They do not accrue superannuation, long service leave and annual leave. They do not get penalty rates on weekends, and I will touch on that a little bit later because there is something unique to the changes here in South Australia that seems to be at odds with the entire philosophy of the Malinauskas Labor government.

The government argues that SACAT will provide a mechanism for review, but industry leaders have raised concerns that SACAT is already overloaded, meaning accreditation appeals will be costly and delayed. I think that is a legitimate concern. As you give bodies like SACAT more work and more scope, they need to have the resources to be able to do that. Justice delayed is justice denied. When you are running a business and if you have a house, supporting the finances that you have arranged to run that business, you want any dispute or any issue that you feel is unfair dealt with in a timely manner.

The Taxi Council has warned that the minister will now act as a judge, jury and executioner over transport industry decisions, creating significant uncertainty for operators. That may sound alarmist, but that is the view that many people who are running businesses have. Something that could end your business or severely disrupt your business, you would see that as an execution, and I certainly sympathise with that view.

The bill removes the existing metropolitan boundary for rideshare services, allowing rideshare companies like Uber and DiDi to operate statewide, including in regional areas. Regional councils generally support the change, arguing that it will increase transport options in communities that struggle with taxi availability. However, taxi operators have warned that an influx of new competitors in already now low-demand areas could destabilise services, leading to inconsistent availability and driver shortages in off-peak periods. That may very well happen, but we saw that concern also raised with the introduction of Uber in the metropolitan area about a decade ago. Yes, there were changes to the way the taxi industry operated, but we certainly did not see devastation for consumers or for operators. There was significant change—I understand that—and there was some pain, but it certainly was not the end.

Uber Australia has indicated that, while it supports the change, it will take time to onboard enough drivers in regional areas. That in itself does give those established taxi operators time to change their model and prepare for some additional competition. However, I will say that the research that I have seen about the introduction of rideshare is that we actually saw more people using point-to-point transport services. We did not actually see a shrinkage of services being delivered by taxis.

People who were not using taxis started using rideshare. It is like introducing a vegan menu to your barbecue inn. You were not getting those vegans coming to your restaurant before then, but when you introduced that menu they did not come in and buy vegan meals instead of their steak meals. I think it is a similar sort of analogy—it is a bit crude, but I think it is a similar analogy.

Surge pricing will be banned in certain circumstances. In those circumstances, it will be interesting to understand what they are and why they are. We have a government that has introduced new public holidays to increase penalty rates for staff. Now, at a time when there is a demand, when there are public holidays for some reason, there is government intervention here that will prevent those Uber drivers from getting a surge price to cover the fact that they are working on a public holiday.

There are inconsistencies there. I am not aware of that happening elsewhere. It sounds to me to be something that might be based on populist ideology or populist theory, that the public will not like surge pricing and we can punish these Uber drivers because they are not members of the shoppies union or anything like that, so it does not matter that they are not getting penalty rates or getting more for working on a public holiday, which we demand that shop workers get, for example. I would be very keen to understand what those circumstances are and why we have that condition.

Without the ability to use surge pricing, rideshare drivers may be less willing to work during these periods. That is the exact argument that we hear from the government when it comes to penalty rates being introduced on New Year's Eve and Christmas Eve, for example. One Christmas Day every six years, when it is here on a Sunday, is declared a public holiday for penalty rates, because how are you going to get people to work if you are not paying higher wages on those particular days? I agree with that. Usually the market sorts it out, and that is what this system is: it is a market system. It is not a regulated system like the award system or the industrial system; the market makes it work. If people do not want to pay that price, they will walk, they use public transport or they will not go out, so it is difficult to understand why it is needed. It will reduce the availability during those busy times: weekend nights, special events and public holidays, for example.

The bill also prohibits queue-jumping fees, meaning customers cannot pay extra for priority service. This is a restriction that removes flexibility for passengers willing to pay more for faster rides—again, an interference with the marketplace. With that view, you might as well say, 'No-one is allowed to have private health insurance because you don't have to wait for surgery in most instances when you have private health insurance.' Where does it end? It is bizarre that ridesharing has been pulled out where people cannot pay for a faster service.

Even when you go to Disneyland you can buy a fast pass and skip the queues. Everywhere in the world there is a market mechanism for helping to manage things that are in limited supply, whether that is waiting or whether that is paying a fee. Often, particularly in the health service, it is a mix of both: a list or waiting time, or you pay a fee in order to avoid that. That has been accepted even for something as essential as health, but for some bizarre reason it is not being accepted for getting from point A to point B. Imagine if the *Shinkansen* fast train in Japan was not allowed to charge more than the slow train; I think that is how bizarre it is.

Industry experts warn that overly rigid fare controls could make taxi and rideshare services financially unsustainable. I do not know if that is the intention here, for the purpose of the media release by the government: 'We have done this but really we don't want it to work so we'll put some things in there that severely distort the marketplace and severely distort the ability for the market to respond.' We actually think this is the only place in any jurisdiction with such restrictions. We are not aware of them elsewhere. I would certainly be happy to be advised otherwise, but that is the information that we have to hand at the moment.

Small taxi businesses, particularly in regional areas, have raised concerns that additional compliance costs could push operators out of the market. I think this is a thing that was badly managed when rideshare was first introduced. It was an enormous impost for third-party insurance for taxidrivers that was not there for rideshare drivers, and an easy adjustment could have been made for taxis which were then in a competitive environment by what was a regulated fee by the department for such insurance. It could have been a market fee.

If that was the case, we would have seen a dramatic drop in the cost of third-party insurance for taxidriviers at that time. But that was not the case. It was locked in through a deal that was done by the Treasurer at the time, I think. When it privatised the third-party insurance sector in South Australia, it locked in that higher price for taxi users and that was a substantial penalty, if you like, for those who already had taxi licences competing in the new environment.

The bill will allow the minister to impose new vehicle requirements, including cameras and prescribed vehicle markings, without industry consultation, raising privacy, cost and practicality concerns for rideshare drivers using personal devices. Again, I can remember that whenever there has been a requirement on the taxi industry for additional safety requirements, there has always been something chipped in from the department at the time in order to do that—even the compensation payment. It was not a buyback scheme like this one is, but the compensation payment was paid to existing taxi plate holders.

When cameras went in I think there was support from the state government at the time, so it will be interesting to see what will happen in regional South Australia if the minister decides that will be the case, that there will be some new requirements in rideshare vehicles and taxis that are not there at the moment.

The minister has confirmed that doubling the existing point-to-point transport levy from \$1 to \$2 a trip will directly increase the cost of rideshare and taxi fares. This is in the middle of a cost of living crisis, of course, that we are seeing a 100 per cent increase in that levy. I remember when that \$1 fee was first introduced for rideshare it was said it was going to be used to offset the payment the government was giving to existing taxi plate holders, and when that was paid the levy would go. Ten years later the levy is still here, and this legislation is going to see it double.

The minister has earmarked the additional revenue to fund the buyback of perpetual taxi licences, but there are concerns that passengers are being unfairly forced to pay for this industry. Of course, it is always the case that any increase in government charges are paid for by the public; whether it is an increase in bus or tram or train fares or whether it is a taxi surcharge it is the user who pays for it, the operator simply passes it on. It also may reduce the number of customers available for those rideshare providers and taxidriviers.

Many taxidriviers originally paid upwards of \$300,000 for perpetual licences, particularly those who bought them in the few years before ridesharing was introduced. I can remember seeing that in almost every budget, I think, there was a release of extra taxi licences out to tender. I know that at times the taxi industry was concerned they were getting ahead of demand and so they were having a devalued effect on the existing taxi licences. I think the market price they paid was lower than ones that were sold a few years earlier or those that were sold in the marketplace.

Under this bill the government will buy back perpetual taxi licences for \$200,000 for the first licence and then \$10,000 for each subsequent licence—a fraction of what the operators originally paid. Quite possibly you could have situation where somebody who bought a taxi licence in the 1970s or 1980s, or handed it down to children or others, would make quite a windfall. It will not be a market windfall, because the changes to rideshare and so forth have reduced the market rate of taxi licences, yet someone who may have bought one just months prior to the announcement of rideshare here may very well be down \$100,000 or \$150,000. If they bought more than one, then they are only getting \$10,000 for that significant investment.

We are very interested to know where the pricing came from, because we know that whenever there is compulsory acquisition of property the government has an obligation to ensure that people are not disadvantaged, so I would be interested to hear the rationale for the figures quoted in the bill. There is no structured appeal process for licence holders who believe they are undercompensated, leaving many longstanding operators at risk of facing financial hardship, and I gave some examples of that earlier.

The buyback scheme will operate on an eight-year timeframe, meaning some operators will be left in limbo for nearly a decade before receiving their full payments. We know that many of the plate holders are more senior South Australians who may not have eight years to enjoy cashing in the asset they have in the plate, but they may have to wait eight years, so they could be left in limbo for nearly a decade before receiving their full payments.

It is looking to me like a lay-by system. The only difference is the government takes your licence away and then pays you over time rather than paying you over time and then taking your licence away. I think there are some questions about the process there and just how fair that is. The Taxi Council has called for a shorter timeframe, citing the fact that many taxidrivers are elderly.

The minister will have full discretion to set and change the levy via regulation, meaning future levy increases can happen without parliamentary oversight. That is something that is becoming very common with this government. They have such a large majority, particularly in this chamber, that at various opportunities they will use mechanisms such as the guillotine. I think it was 17 times in one day before Christmas that we saw the guillotine being used. It was more times than the whole time I have been in this place, which is now coming up for 19 years. So there is just no guarantee that there will be an oversight process with these changes.

The opposition and industry alike will be interested to know from the minister how he arrived at these buyback figures and the buyback process, and we will be pursuing those questions in the committee.

The bill abolishes the perpetual taxi licence and replaces it with an uncapped annual licensing system. This legislation does not specify how much an annual taxi licence will cost, so you could have a situation where the government has taken away a perpetual licence—this is how I see it, and I would love the minister to explain it—and then a person could have to start paying an annual fee before they have even been fully compensated their \$200,000 for the licence that has been removed.

The minister will have full discretion to set the licence fee via regulation, meaning the cost could increase unpredictably, without parliamentary approval. If I know the way this government works we will see initially a very low fee for the annual licence, but then we will see that creeping up over time, usually a long way away from election cycle. So watch out for the first budget after the election if Labor is returned.

The bill also allows the minister to mandate the installation of in-vehicle cameras for taxis and other passenger transport services. The bill does not provide clear privacy protections for camera footage, raising concerns about how recordings will be stored, accessed and used. We know there has been legislation brought into parliaments all around the country about how you use images of people. Will those images be subject to the same laws that are there to protect people from being exposed on social media or protect people from being victims of AI manipulation, for example?

There are no provisions for financial support to assist small operators with the cost of installing or maintaining in-vehicle cameras, and I touched on that earlier. Previously, when safety measures have been introduced into taxis, there has been some support from the state government, but in this instance we are seeing a levy doubled: the existing levy is going up from \$1 to \$2. So it is the reverse that is happening: the taxidrivers have to provide through their customers more money in order to comply with these changes.

Debate adjourned on motion of Hon. A. Michaels.

*Sitting suspended from 12:59 to 14:00.*

#### **CRIMINAL LAW CONSOLIDATION (STALKING AND HARASSMENT) AMENDMENT BILL**

*Assent*

Her Excellency the Governor assented to the bill.

#### **PLASTIC SHOPPING BAGS (WASTE AVOIDANCE) REPEAL BILL**

*Assent*

Her Excellency the Governor assented to the bill.

#### **STATUTES AMENDMENT (CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS) BILL**

*Assent*

Her Excellency the Governor assented to the bill.

**STATUTES AMENDMENT (BUDGET MEASURES) BILL***Assent*

Her Excellency the Governor assented to the bill.

**BIOSECURITY BILL***Assent*

Her Excellency the Governor assented to the bill.

*Parliamentary Procedure***VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** I would like to welcome to parliament today year 11 and year 12 students from Glenunga International High School, who are the guests of the member for Bragg, and year 11 and year 12 students from St Aloysius College, who are the guests of the member for Adelaide. Welcome to parliament. I hope you enjoy the next hour or so and that you have had a good look around while you have been here so far.

**PAPERS**

The following papers were laid on the table:

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

Regulation made under the following Act—  
Supreme Court—Fees Notice—No. 2 (2024)

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

State of the Environment Report for South Australia 2023—  
Government Response November 2024  
Single-use and Other Plastic Products (Waste Avoidance) Act 2020—  
Review of Report December 2024

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

Infrastructure and Transport, Department for—Service Contract for the Provision of  
Transport Services (Train and Tram) Report January 2025

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

Health and Wellbeing, Department for—Palliative Care Spending in South Australia  
Report 2023-24  
Preventive Health SA—Maternal and Perinatal Mortality in South Australia  
Annual Report 2021-22  
Suicide Prevention Council—South Australian Suicide Prevention Plan 2023-26  
Annual Report 2023-24

By the Minister for Consumer and Business Affairs (Hon. A. Michaels)—

Regulation made under the following Act—  
Gaming Machines—Fees Notice—Approved Trading System

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

Regulation made under the following Act—  
Planning, Development and Infrastructure—General—Land Use Continuance

*Parliamentary Committees***PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE**

**Mr ODENWALDER (Elizabeth) (14:08):** On behalf of the member for Adelaide, I bring up the 124<sup>th</sup> report, entitled Virginia Primary School Redevelopment.

Report received and ordered to be published.

**Mr ODENWALDER:** On behalf of the member for Adelaide, I bring up the 125<sup>th</sup> report, entitled Open Access College Library and Student Services Refurbishment.

Report received and ordered to be published.

**Mr ODENWALDER:** On behalf of the member for Adelaide, I bring up the 126<sup>th</sup> report, entitled Port Augusta Health Service Upgrade.

Report received and ordered to be published.

**Mr ODENWALDER:** On behalf of the member for Adelaide, I bring up the 127<sup>th</sup> report, entitled Lyell McEwin Hospital 20 Fast-tracked Beds Project.

Report received and ordered to be published.

*Parliament House Matters***TEEN PARLIAMENT**

**The SPEAKER (14:10):** Before we move to question time, I would like to let members know that last week we were very privileged to have young people from around South Australia in the chamber for *The Advertiser's* Teen Parliament. I want to put on the record my thanks to Gemma Jones and all the staff at *The Advertiser*, and to the management.

It was an outstanding day on which we heard some unbelievable speeches, including one from a young man, a 15 year old, called Patrick Saunders, who is non-verbal. It was one of the most moving speeches I have heard in this place in 19 years, as he gave his account of the challenges that he faces. He then threw out a challenge to the state of South Australia to do better in the world of autism and disability. If you get the chance to go back and have a look at some of the videos—they were excellent.

I want to thank all those members of parliament, including the Premier, who were here, and also the education staff who do such a great job: Natalie, Shannon and the team. It was a terrific day, and I think we are in safe hands with the 30 young people who we had here putting across their points of view last Friday.

*Question Time***WHYALLA STEELWORKS**

**The Hon. V.A. TARZIA (Hartley—Leader of the Opposition) (14:11):** My question is to the Premier. What is the government's big reveal on Friday regarding Whyalla? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

**The Hon. V.A. TARZIA:** On Channel 7 news last night it was reported that the government would be making a major announcement on Whyalla on Friday.

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier) (14:11):** I appreciate that the Leader of the Opposition isn't in a position to be fully abreast of the government's planning. In the event that the government was going to make an announcement at any particular time, we will make it at the time that we see fit. But I would say to the Leader of the Opposition that he act and speak with a degree of caution and not place all his assumptions around a single news report, as credible as Channel 7 news may be.

### WHYALLA STEELWORKS

**The Hon. V.A. TARZIA (Hartley—Leader of the Opposition) (14:12):** My question is again to the Premier. Will the government utilise the \$50 million that it holds for GFG Alliance to provide bridging loans or other financial assistance to creditors?

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier) (14:12):** The \$50 million to which the Leader of the Opposition refers is a fund that has been sitting in the South Australian budget ever since the ownership of the steelworks was transferred from Arrium into administration and then over to GFG. That \$50 million has been set aside for a very explicit purpose, which is to help fund the transformation of the steelworks in the way that we know is required to set it up for a sustainable future. That \$50 million was allocated under the former Weatherill government when the minister for transport, energy and mining was also the Treasurer. That was then sustained throughout the life of the Marshall Liberal government, and it remains in place under this government.

The purpose of the \$50 million was linked to a specific criterion, a criterion that has not yet been met by GFG. Quite appropriately, those funds will not be expended until such time that GFG does so, or indeed the plans for the funds are altered.

### WHYALLA STEELWORKS

**The Hon. V.A. TARZIA (Hartley—Leader of the Opposition) (14:13):** Supplementary: will the Premier amend the terms of that fund, given the precarious state of the Whyalla Steelworks, in terms of more flexibility for that fund to be applied?

**The SPEAKER:** I will mark that down as a new question.

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier) (14:14):** I understand from the Leader of the Opposition's remarks, made publicly yesterday, that the Leader of the Opposition met with Mr Gupta on Sunday, as did I. I met Mr Gupta on Sunday morning as well. I think it is fair to say that Mr Gupta is an advocate of the terms of the fund being amended to suit his purposes. The Leader of the Opposition might have had one meeting and caved, and that's fine. The Leader of the Opposition has one meeting with Mr Gupta and now starts advocating on behalf of Mr Gupta; he is entitled to that position. If the Leader of the Opposition sees it fit to do Mr Gupta's bidding, that is his prerogative. On this side of the house it would be far more deliberate and far more considered to make sure that any expenditure of taxpayers' funds is in the long-term interest of a critical economic asset for the nation and the people of Whyalla.

**The SPEAKER:** Before I call the leader, I ask members on my left to listen to the Premier in silence and stop with the interjections. This is a very important matter for the state and it doesn't matter which electorate we come from we want to hear good answers and be able to listen to the answers as well.

### TAHMOOR COLLIERY

**The Hon. V.A. TARZIA (Hartley—Leader of the Opposition) (14:15):** My question again is to the Premier. Has the government sought and received any assurances from GFG that proceeds from the sale of its interest in the Tahmoor colmine will flow to South Australian creditors and, if so, when?

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier) (14:15):** Mr Gupta released today—or GFG released—a statement late last week making clear that it has the intention to sell its Tahmoor coal asset. The foreshadowed figure in the public arena is somewhere in the order of \$600 million, according to GFG. The state government has conducted our own analysis in conjunction with the Steel Task Force and the experts that we have at our disposal to make an independent assessment on the value of that asset. There is no doubt that that asset is worth a considerable sum of money—hundreds of millions of dollars—which, of course, is a good thing in the event that that sale were to transpire and at some point in the future moneys were to flow to creditors.

Certainly there has been an intimation from GFG that the funds raised from any such sale would help relieve its financial position and we have made consistently clear to GFG, over a long timeframe now, that it is the government's expectation that GFG should pay its creditors immediately, particularly those creditors on the ground in Whyalla that are so dependent upon that business.



Those debts are due and when businesses have debts they should pay them as and when they fall due as they are legally obliged and we continue to reiterate that to GFG in every forum, whether it be here in the parliament or whether it be when meetings are held with leaders at GFG in person, as has occurred on the weekend.

### SENIORS CARD

**Mr McBRIDE (MacKillop) (14:17):** My question is to the Minister for Human Services. Can the minister explain what the government is doing to encourage more businesses to participate in the Seniors Card directory? Mr Speaker, with your leave and the leave of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

**Mr McBRIDE:** The Seniors Card directory is around 130 pages. Four of those pages are dedicated to discounts that are available in the Limestone Coast and the majority of those are in Mount Gambier. We have a cost-of-living crisis. My constituents of MacKillop say there is not enough money in the directory for them.

**The Hon. N.F. COOK (Hurtle Vale—Minister for Human Services, Minister for Seniors and Ageing Well) (14:18):** Thank you to the member for the question. He is very connected to his community. I will take every opportunity to promote businesses getting involved in the program, while encouraging all 415,000 Seniors Card members to actually use it whenever they can. The member for MacKillop has asked several questions in relation to this program and heavily promotes it in his own community, so this is a fine example for others to follow.

The website shows, regarding the Seniors Card, that there are 598 offers which provide great opportunities to save money and be more active in their local communities, and the member noted the four pages out of the 130 that are dedicated to businesses in the Limestone Coast. It is true that there are many more offers in metropolitan and Greater Adelaide and that's partly to do with population, of course. The last census showed that 73 per cent of people aged over 60 live in Greater Adelaide compared to the percentages of 2½ per cent living in MacKillop and around 2 per cent who live in Mount Gambier.

It's important to note that many offers are in the directories, which are statewide, for things like pharmacy memberships, insurance, utility bill monitoring, online retail, professional services and also a 50 per cent discount on Statliner bus services in the regions. All Seniors Card members, whether locals or visiting from the regions, can access the 24-hour free public transport whenever they are in the Greater Adelaide region, and we know that that has saved around \$20 million so far and counting.

These broader offers may not be on the pages dedicated to the Limestone Coast, but they are available to all Seniors Card members wherever they live. I encourage people to check online for latest offers and find ones that may not be down the street. We are working to expand the program all the time and, if local businesses ask MPs about getting involved, please refer them to the Seniors Card website. It has some very easy-to-follow steps so that they can engage. The Seniors Card team did deliver a promotional campaign for the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this program in the last 12 months, and 55 new offerings have been made available on the program.

Everyone in this chamber can help the program by knowing their community and promoting their businesses in the local area and the offers of their businesses to their constituents. MacKillop has an older than average constituency than other areas with 12,000 people aged over 60 at the last census, being 32 per cent of residents. This is against a state average of 26 per cent.

It's not about highlighting how many Seniors Card members live locally. You need good reasons ready in case businesses have concerns. They may ask why they should get less from existing customers in a regional area, and the answer is a combination of things. It can unlock a new customer who lives in the area; it can get people passing through to stop, stay and spend; it's an easy way to engage with new people moving to the area; and it's a chance to help people who might be struggling but are often too proud to admit they are feeling the pinch.

It has been rightly pointed out that there are difficulties at the moment with cost of living, and we have put, as a government even last year, \$115 million additionally into the budget. Supports

across energy bill relief, concessions, investments in social housing, help for families and schoolchildren, and more, really are now getting close to \$1 billion. So I think we can all join together and send a message to our community that there are great benefits in being involved in the Seniors Card, whether you are a senior or whether you are a business.

### REBIRD THE RANGES

**Ms HUTCHESSON (Waite) (14:22):** My question is to the Deputy Premier. Can the Deputy Premier provide an update to the house on the ReBird the Ranges Action Plan?

**The Hon. S.E. CLOSE (Port Adelaide—Deputy Premier, Minister for Climate, Environment and Water, Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science, Minister for Workforce and Population Strategy) (14:22):** I am delighted to bring this to the attention of the house. This is not one of those party political partisan issues; this is one that we all share an interest in—including my very good friend, the Minister for Mining—which is the future of birdlife in South Australia. I recall discussing this with the previous minister for the environment and was very pleased that we were able to put \$1 million towards rebirding the Mount Lofty Ranges into the election commitments as part of a suite of environmental election commitments that we made and what we now have is this program called ReBird the Ranges.

But let me just give you some context. Australia is, of all countries, the country that has the second highest number of bird species in the world. Not only is that a good thing in itself but it actually has resulted in an enormous amount of bird tourism. I am not sure if people heard on the ABC yesterday, \$2.6 billion a year of international travel comes to this country in order to come and see the birdlife that exists here.

We also, of course, have our own biodiversity hotspots and the Mount Lofty Ranges are one of them. Although it's only 1 per cent of the landmass of South Australia, the Mount Lofty Ranges has about half the bird species that exist in South Australia, living through the Mount Lofty Ranges. But already about 60 per cent are in decline—officially in decline as species—and we have lost 10 per cent. They are regionally extinct, although they may well exist elsewhere.

Why do we care about birds? Although many people appreciate them in their own right—and it is, of course, a foundation of growing tourism—birds are pollinators, birds disperse seeds, birds are also involved in pest control but also birds are an indicator species. If you have healthy birdlife, you've probably got a pretty good and productive environment. If the birdlife starts to decline, it means that there are other problems within the environment.

I was delighted to launch the ReBird the Ranges Action Plan last week. Twenty partners are involved in this, organisations that are already deeply engaged in largely revegetation works. As I say, there is \$1.8 million that has been put towards this as a start from the environment department through that election commitment and also from the Landscape Board.

Some examples of the revegetation that is already occurring is Frahns Farm which is 550 acres—Bio R. If people know the Patons, David and Penny Paton are behind that and they do magnificent work restoring the vegetation there. There is Kanmantoo which is 300 acres run by Second Nature Conservancy. This is an area that's under private heritage agreements which is showing that landholders want to see nature be stronger for its own sake and also because it makes a difference to the quality of primary production and living that we can enjoy.

Trees For Life are involved. They have the Mount Lofty Paddock Tree Project, trying to restore those paddock trees that play such an important role in sustaining birdlife. We also have Nature Foundation involved and the Nature Conservation Society.

I listed some reasons why we should care about birdlife, not least that they are an indicator species of the health of the environment. When we did this launch, David Paton gave his personal view about why he cares so much about birdlife and why we so desperately need to act. He talked about the silencing of the dawn chorus. Most of us when we were young will remember a lively dawn chorus as we woke up in the morning. That is demonstrably silencing. We are losing species and we are losing that beautiful music of the morning and that's why I think, despite some hilarity on either side, this is something that sits across our chamber and is of interest to all of us.

**GFG ALLIANCE**

**The Hon. V.A. TARZIA (Hartley—Leader of the Opposition) (14:26):** My question is to the Premier. What recommendations has the Premier's Steel Task Force made about providing support to creditors of GFG and to the town of Whyalla? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

**The Hon. V.A. TARZIA:** On 10 February, the Under Treasurer said the following before the Budget and Finance Committee:

At the moment, a range of agencies are working together as part of the Steel Task Force providing advice to cabinet about the issues associated with GFG and we provide that advice regularly to cabinet about the whole raft of issues associated with GFG not paying its bills to suppliers and the impact on the Whyalla community.

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier) (14:27):** As enunciated during the course of the Under Treasurer's remarks to the Budget and Finance Committee of the parliament, that advice is provided to cabinet and therefore the Leader of the Opposition will well appreciate that that advice is provided on a cabinet-in-confidence basis.

**GFG ALLIANCE**

**Mr PATTERSON (Morphett) (14:27):** My question is to the Premier. How many contractors have now gone out of business as a result of GFG Alliance failing to pay creditors?

**The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS (West Torrens—Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Minister for Energy and Mining) (14:27):** The Steel Task Force and my department closely monitor the critical contractors in and around Whyalla. It's fair to say that the government as a whole is very concerned about the strategic resource that is in the contractors who service GFG. There are a number of large ASX-listed companies who service GFG and they are big enough and bad enough to look after themselves and they largely know what they are getting into.

What we are concerned about isn't just the smaller contractors but who the contractors also contract through. The stories that we have heard through our multiple trips to Whyalla are about contractors knowing that if they have been paid they have been paid at the expense of someone else because of the way that GFG are deciding how and when to pay their bills. It is having a devastating impact on contractors in Whyalla.

The government is working up options to make sure that we can see this through but the fastest way possible to fix this problem is for Mr Gupta to pay his bills when they fall due. They are his responsibility.

*Mr Telfer interjecting:*

**The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS:** And as much as the shadow treasurer murmurs under his breath 'there are other options'—

*Mr Telfer interjecting:*

**The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS:** Cold comfort. I just remind members opposite that the job of the South Australian government and the South Australian taxpayer is not to subsidise Mr Gupta. The job of the South Australian government is to ensure that the indenture in this parliament that requires steelmaking to continue, through the mining operations in the Middleback Range, proceeds. That is our ambition.

The prosperity plan as a whole is about the beneficiation of our raw materials into a product that can be sold globally and, ultimately, decarbonised. That's it in a nutshell. That adds value, that adds complexity and that adds jobs here in South Australia. We want to protect our smelters. We want to protect our smelter at Roxby. We want to protect our smelter in Whyalla. We want to protect our smelter in Port Pirie. This government is about protecting jobs, about protecting working families and making sure we do everything we can, but the way to fix this problem is for Mr Gupta to pay his bills.

### GFG ALLIANCE

**Mr PATTERSON (Morphett) (14:30):** My question is again to the Premier. Did the Premier or his team release a list of GFG's creditors to *The Advertiser*?

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier) (14:30):** No, and nor would we do something as reckless as that. The state government—any government—is in a privileged position to be in receipt of information from time to time. I am happy to say that while the state government is furnished with some information from GFG, none of it has been as detailed as we saw reported in *The Tiser*. Should we be furnished with information along those lines, it would not be good practice for us to disclose it. So, absolutely not.

The people who I care most about in this circumstance aren't actually GFG. Obviously, the report from *The Advertiser* was a revealing one—and, in many respects, that's a credit to the journo and *The Tiser*, that's them doing their job—but the people who pay a price from that leak are some individual creditors who, for whatever reason, may not want in the public realm the status of their position with GFG. In fact, we have had some representations from some creditors to that end. For some of them, it's a source of not just discomfort or embarrassment, it has other consequences. That's on whoever decided to disclose that information, but I can absolutely confirm it was not the South Australian government.

### INTEREST RATES

**Mr McBRIDE (MacKillop) (14:32):** My question is to the Treasurer. Could the Treasurer please explain to the house regarding what I have just recently heard: that the Reserve Bank has ruled that we are now down 25 basis points on the national interest rates? With your leave, Mr Speaker, and the leave of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

**Mr McBRIDE:** It is my understanding that under the Marshall government we were heading towards a \$35 billion debt beyond forward estimates, and I believe that the Malinauskas government has forward estimates going towards \$45 billion. If these 25 basis points are to stay in place every year, the government is going to be better off by about \$112 million a year. I am wondering, first of all, Treasurer, will you commit to saving the \$112 million? If you are not going to save it, could you spend it in MacKillop for me, please?

**The SPEAKER:** That's half ministerial statement, half cheeky question, I think, member for MacKillop. Treasurer, you may have some latitude in your answer.

**The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN (Lee—Treasurer, Minister for Defence and Space Industries, Minister for Police) (14:32):** Thank you, Mr Speaker. This is very good news announced by the Reserve Bank that they have cut the cash rate by 25 basis points. I am sure that there were many Australians who were waiting to hear what the Reserve Bank was going to decide at its board meeting today, providing some relief to those people exposed to interest rates—whether it's home owners through their mortgage rates, renters worrying about whether they are going to have some capacity from their landlord for some rental relief, or people who have other personal or car loans, for example, and what it might mean for them—as well as generally how that might flow through to the rest of the economy and how that might flow through to the cost of goods and services.

It has been an extraordinary journey over the last three years as the nation has suffered under high inflation. We have seen the pump priming of the national economy, with more than half a trillion dollars of stimulus to try to combat the economic and financial effects of COVID. That then led us to a period of very high inflation which has made life very difficult for Australian households and small businesses. Today's rate relief will be welcome news for those people who will feel the benefits of that relief.

What it will mean, of course, for the cost of borrowings to the South Australian government or to other semi bonds that state and territory governments will continue to put out into the market to raise capital for their record infrastructure programs, we will wait and see. As the previous government articulated, they had a commitment that they wanted to build a new Women's and Children's Hospital. They had a commitment that they wanted to complete the north-south corridor.

On coming into government, we undertook to review those projects to make sure that they were being done properly with the right scope and that they were being costed appropriately.

We have not only reaffirmed the commitment to those projects but made sure that we are making room to fund those projects, which means an increase in the state's debt. That is a bipartisan position, making sure that we've got the capacity financially to invest in the infrastructure of the future. But what we have done as a government is make sure that, as we are taking on those extra borrowings, we are also ensuring the budget is back in surplus. Getting the budget back into surplus under this term of government gives us the comfort to be able to take on these high levels of debt.

If there is any improvement in the cost of that debt, I think the member's question is: will we funnel the fulsome benefit of that into his electorate? I am sure there will be 46 other members lining up to experience as much of that largesse as possible. Of course, there isn't necessarily a directly causative relationship between the Reserve Bank's setting of the cash rate and the capacity for the state government to get bonds into the market at a particular price, but I will update the house when I release the budget in the first week of June.

### DOCTOR RECRUITMENT

**Ms O'HANLON (Dunstan) (14:36):** My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. Can the minister update the house on the recruitment of junior doctors across the South Australian public hospital system, and what has been the response to this?

**The Hon. C.J. PICTON (Karna—Minister for Health and Wellbeing) (14:37):** I thank the member for Dunstan for her question and note her strong interest in a strong public health system and also the significant number of doctors who no doubt live in her electorate as well. There is some really good news for health in South Australia in that we continue to recruit doctors to our public health system in record numbers.

Already in our first two years in office, we recruited an extra 329 doctors across the board above attrition. But just a couple of months ago, I was very pleased to be with the member for Adelaide at the Royal Adelaide Hospital, where we announced that this year we are bringing in a record number of intern doctors into our public health system. This means 313 newly minted doctors coming in to work in SA Health. I was very privileged to be able to speak to those doctors in CALHN, NALHN and SALHN during their induction days. This is an increase. This is 28 more than last year, and it is 40 more going back to the previous government in 2021. We are achieving record numbers of interns coming into the system—fresh perspectives, newly trained doctors, enthusiastic—to provide that increase in patient care.

Really excitingly, there has also been a big boost in terms of our regional doctors coming in. Back in 2020, there were only 12 of those interns going to work in regional areas. This year, that has increased to 30 of our program going into regional areas. Back in 2020, there were only three of our regional LHNs that were having intern doctors. Now all six have training programs for regional doctors across the board, so this is really positive news.

It comes at the same time that we are seeing an increase in the number of doctors going into training to become GPs in South Australia as well. The latest stats from the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners show that we have 114 junior doctors starting their training as specialist GPs in South Australia. That is a 34 per cent increase on last year. It includes 60 per cent more GPs training on a regional pathway compared to last year as well.

I was asked about what the reaction to this has been. It has been overwhelmingly positive. Certainly, the Rural Doctors Association has said that they are really pleased at South Australia's increase in intern numbers, particularly interns who are based in regional areas. The RACGP President, Dr Sian Goodson, said the increase in GP training numbers in South Australia is very positive news.

But unfortunately, there weren't only positive reactions to this. There was one person in South Australia who wasn't happy with these record numbers of doctors coming into training. I am sad to say it was again the member for Schubert, who just had to go out and again be the most negative person in South Australia and dismiss this news. The member for Schubert stood up, didn't welcome this news, didn't welcome these record numbers of doctors—

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** What did she say?

**The Hon. C.J. PICTON:** 'What did she say?' the Premier asks. She said that other states will be sniffing around looking for these interns, wanting to lure them across the border to Victoria, to WA and up to Queensland with some really tantalising incentives that they have on the table. What are these incentives on the table in Queensland? I was very interested in this. The member for Schubert says these are going to be tantalising incentives in Queensland. There are zero incentives because the new LNP government in Queensland cut them. As one of their first acts of office, they cut all the incentive programs, saying they didn't work and they didn't attract people. There are no incentives on the table.

#### GFG ALLIANCE

**Mr PATTERSON (Morphett) (14:41):** My question is to the Premier. What action, if any, is the government taking to support the employees of Fenner Dunlop? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

**Mr PATTERSON:** It was reported in *The Advertiser* today that Fenner Dunlop had gone to the wall as a result of unpaid invoices from GFG.

**The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS (West Torrens—Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Minister for Energy and Mining) (14:41):** It is always concerning when any business in South Australia has to enter either liquidation or administration because of lack of market share or market conditions, but it is even worse when you are living in a one-horse town where the major employer is a steelworks and that steelworks is not paying their bills. For us, the most important aspect of what Mr Gupta is proposing to do is that we do everything we can to make sure that the infrastructure is in place to allow the steelworks to operate and flourish.

The iron ore mines in the Middleback Range have been some of the most profitable iron ore mines anywhere in Australia over the last six years, generating untold wealth. There have been reports in *The Australian* of over \$400 million being taken out of the country and moved to other parts of GFG across the globe. Rather than asking the government about what we are doing, isn't the most appropriate question to one person in particular, which is GFG: why haven't they paid their bills?

Attempting to blame the government of South Australia for the unpaid debts of what is going on in Whyalla is the worst type of ambulance chasing I have ever seen. It is appalling, absolutely appalling. So far we have heard from the opposition, 'Give them the \$50 million without fulfilling the criteria that would require an upgrade and for that to be paid in arrears.' These are criteria that survived two changes of government, and now the opposition is attempting to blame this government because GFG isn't paying its bills. How about a bit of team South Australia rather than team GFG?

#### GFG ALLIANCE

**Mr PATTERSON (Morphett) (14:44):** My question is again to the Premier. What does the Premier say to Chrys Press, owner of Maaric Industrial Services? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

**Mr PATTERSON:** Mr Press stated that:

We've lost 70 per cent of our industrial work due to job losses and business closures. The impact on Whyalla has been enormous and it's far from over.

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier) (14:44):** What I would say to Mr Press is the same thing I have been saying to other creditors that I have gone out of my way to deliberately meet as many of as possible on the ground in Whyalla, and that is that this government is working overtime to address what is one of the more complex public policy challenges that the state has seen in decades. The shadow minister will be well aware that the South Australian government does not own GFG. We do not own the steelworks. These are not our debts: they are the debts of Mr Gupta and his businesses. They are his liabilities. He has incurred them consciously, deliberately, and therefore he should pay his creditors forthwith.

Any actions that are available to the government, of course, are somewhat limited by virtue of the fact that this is an asset that we do not own. What I would say to Mr Press, along with those other creditors, is that we are working almost literally around the clock to ensure that we have in place comprehensive and well thought-through plans. It is not in the government's liberty to make public commentary with rhetoric that does not fix the situation. It is not the liberty of the government to make a swift, rash decision that in many respects could exacerbate the problem rather than—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** The Leader of the Opposition, please listen to the Premier. This is a really important subject.

*The Hon. V.A. Tarzia interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Can you stop answering me back? Next peep out of you, you will be having a rest from this place.

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** We are making sure that creditors on the ground are only positively impacted as a result of any decisions that the government makes in the event it makes any decisions at all about the immediate future of GFG. We are engaged with GFG, we are engaged with creditors, and we are acting in a way that is prudent and consistent with the interests of those creditors themselves. Let me tell you, and I would say this to Mr Press or anyone else, it is a responsibility that we take really seriously. Much of the government's economic agenda we see Whyalla being a critical part of.

There is a big economic opportunity in the Upper Spencer Gulf. We have been plain about that from the outset, in fact, going back to when we were in opposition. We have a credible economic plan to seek to uplift the future of the Upper Spencer Gulf, particularly with the proximity of that magnetite resource to a steelworks to a port and also the incredible value that we see attached to the state's copper resource not too far north from Whyalla. Those elements underpin the State Prosperity Project, which we have put a lot of effort into. Only today, BHP has released its results, and contained within those results are an ever-increasing emphasis on the future of copper to that business. Of course, the state has a massive role to play there.

All of these matters of policy we take really seriously, and that is only exacerbated when you take the time to sit down and talk to these people. The member for Giles and I were together yesterday. I spoke earlier on the phone this morning to another creditor that I have a lot of regard for. The one thing they want from this government is thoughtful, considered decision-making because we can't afford to get this wrong, and that is why we are determined to get it right. I would make sure that every creditor in the state that is listening to these remarks knows that we are not going to let them down.

#### GFG ALLIANCE

**Mr PATTERSON (Morphett) (14:48):** My question is again to the Premier. What action, if any, is the Premier taking to address access to the Whyalla wharf? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

**Mr PATTERSON:** It was reported in *The Advertiser* today that companies operating in the region were struggling after losing vital access to the wharf operated by Whyalla Ports Pty Ltd, a subsidiary of GFG Alliance.

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier) (14:48):** Yesterday I took the time, again with the member for Giles, to meet firsthand those that are reliant upon access to the port to be able to get their product to international markets. The Whyalla port does not exclusively export iron ore or steel product from the Middleback Range: others use that port as well. As reported in the paper today, there have been issues around third party access to the port. There were processes in place that saw that run smoothly until more recently around complications of GFG not paying their contractors and the operator at the port, and those that service it, Horizon and Qube amongst others.

The Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Energy and Mining has been engaging with many of those companies, as have representatives of my office, people in the Premier's office as well. More recently, there has been an impasse that has been broken through a temporary solution that has been welcome for at least some of those, and I am not going to disclose the names of those businesses in this forum, but that is a welcome reprieve that has been arrived at in recent days that we are grateful for, and we will monitor that over the days ahead.

Needless to say, the minister and the government are of the view that a port is a critical piece of infrastructure. It is currently owned by Whyalla Ports Pty Ltd, which fits under the GFG umbrella, and we will continue to monitor the situation very closely. Again, in full public view for anyone that goes to the top of Hammock Hill or catches a plane into Whyalla, you will see ships in the port that are sitting there, getting paid very large sums of money by other parties, often, who are losing that every single day.

In fact, the numbers are eye-watering in terms of how much money it costs every day for those ships to be sitting there idle, paid for by someone who wants to get product to market, and that comes at the expense of businesses and whoever underwrites those businesses. It is exceptionally inefficient and unproductive for the state when we do not see product that is ready to get to market being unable to do so simply because GFG hasn't been in a position to pay its contractors appropriately.

At least one group that I met with personally actually pre-pays for those services to Whyalla Ports Pty Ltd only for that money to then not be expended on the contractors on the ground to do the work, and that is unacceptable. It again demonstrates the severity of the situation at GFG that has the government so concerned. To GFG's credit, as I said, an impasse there has got a temporary solution. That is to their credit and we are grateful to hear that news, and we will monitor it very closely over the days and weeks ahead.

#### **CAPE JAFFA JETTY LIGHTS**

**Mr McBRIDE (MacKillop) (14:52):** My question is to the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport. Can the minister advise when broken lights along the Cape Jaffa Jetty will be fixed? With your leave, Mr Speaker, and the leave of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

**Mr McBRIDE:** Despite calls to the department from constituents, numerous lights on the jetty have been not working for more than 12 months. This has made it dangerous for fishers, tourists and those who use the jetty. And just recently I have heard about a boat rescue right now off Cape Jaffa as we speak.

**The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS (West Torrens—Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Minister for Energy and Mining) (14:52):** Yes, there is a search and rescue, I understand, occurring just off the shore near Cape Jaffa, and we wish police all the very best.

Jetties are very important to regional communities. They are a destination, they are important for people to teach their children how to fish, they are a great way to maintain social connections and they are a great tourist attraction. There is nothing better than visiting a regional town and taking your kids for a walk along the jetty and then getting an ice cream and some chips afterwards. It really is a great way to enjoy regional South Australia. I have to say they are the lifeblood of a lot of regional communities.

In terms of this jetty, I am aware that there are intermittent light outages, because the member has made me aware of it. An electrical contractor was engaged to investigate the fault in February. They have reported that out of the nine solar lights on the jetty two are working as designed, with issues encountered with the remaining seven. Based on these investigations, the department is liaising with the manufacturer to determine if repair is viable or if replacement is required. Given the lights are only five years old—so they are relatively new—the department is also investigating the potential for them being covered by warranty. We do get a lot of faults on jetties, and I would encourage members of the public and parliamentarians to let us know when there are faults. We do actually have a 1800 number: that's 1800 018 313.



**An honourable member:** Operators are standing by to take your call.

**The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS:** Operators are standing by to take your call. In the most recent state budget—

*Mr Telfer interjecting:*

**The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS:** 1800 018 313. In the 2023-24 state budget, the Malinauskas government stepped up, where others would not, providing \$20 million through the SA Jetties Renewal Program, to partner with local councils, to fast track improvements and to make sure that sustaining infrastructure was looked after.

Funding is there designed to address immediate and critical concerns regarding the condition and sustainability of jetties: where they are closed to get them open and where they need repairs to repair them. In the 2024-25 state budget, the Treasurer announced that the Jetties Renewal Program will be extended indefinitely, which I think shows a long-term commitment for us, in partnership with local councils, to have a guaranteed revenue stream each year, which councils can bid against, and we can have matched dollars to work on the upgrade and maintenance of our regional jetties. Yes, there are some councils who wanted us to pay for everything, especially one council, Tumby Bay, who received a very large cash advance to fix its jetty and then moved that money for another jetty and then told us that we had to fix the Tumby jetty.

**Mr Telfer:** Be truthful.

**The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS:** I am being truthful. If you think I'm not being truthful, get up, move a motion, and see how you go. I am being truthful. Mr Speaker, I ask that the shadow treasurer withdraw that remark and apologise to the house.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Flinders will withdraw and apologise.

*Mr Telfer interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** If a member takes offence at something that's been said and asks for it to be withdrawn, an apology.

**Mr Telfer:** Sorry? You've taken offence?

**The SPEAKER:** He's made it quite clear he's been offended by your comments.

**Mr TELFER:** Sir, I will withdraw the comment 'Be truthful.'

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Okay, let's move on. An historic moment in the chamber: we have a question, the very first question, from the member for Black. Here we go.

#### **BRIGHTON ROAD/OCEAN BOULEVARD/SCHOLEFIELD ROAD INTERSECTION**

**Mr DIGHTON (Black) (14:57):** My question is to the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport. Can the minister update the house on works to be undertaken at the intersection of Brighton Road, Ocean Boulevard and Scholefield Road?

**The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS (West Torrens—Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Minister for Energy and Mining) (14:57):** During the Black by-election campaign, the member for Black, who was then the Labor candidate, wanted to organise a streetcorner meeting. He rings me up and he says, 'Look, there's an issue bubbling along about a development near Scholefield Road, where a lot of residents are agitated about the lack of action on getting access onto Brighton Road from the interior of the suburb because of a development that was coming and what they're suffering right now.'

He wanted to hold it at 7 o'clock at night, I think it was. Was it 7 or 6—I can't remember what time it was, but it was late in the afternoon. I thought to myself, 'On a weeknight who's going to come?' Well, Mr Speaker, I've got to say, the member for Black, the then candidate, had nearly 100 people turn up.

*An honourable member interjecting:*

**The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS:** That could be, that could be because it was me. They had burning torches but, you know. I've got to say, Mr Speaker, it was pretty overwhelming what those residents were talking about. They were talking about the difficulty of getting onto Brighton Road, the queuing that occurred to get onto Brighton Road, the concern about the development that had been approved by the previous government that would have seen a lot of infill and a lot of activity in the area, and that rat-running that was occurring by people trying to avoid the intersection at Scholefield Drive and Ocean Boulevard to get onto Brighton Road, who were using other streets, like Pine Avenue and the like, to get out.

What the member for Black insisted on is that we conduct a traffic study, so we did one urgently, and it showed that there was a dramatic level of congestion. We then spoke to the member for Boothby, Louise Miller-Frost, and we approached the commonwealth government, who then agreed to help us fund a \$30 million intersection upgrade to allow local residents to be able to facilitate getting themselves out of their suburbs without creating a rat run that goes in and around local suburbs. This is a big win for local residents.

This \$30 million forms part of a two-intersection upgrade along Brighton Road. It was to be delivered on Brighton Road and Edwards Street. I have to say that the original works on Brighton Road and Edwards Street were subjected to a lot of criticism by some people in the recent by-election. I have to say that one of the people who criticised that intersection upgrade was the unsuccessful candidate for the Liberal Party, the Mayor of Glenelg, Ms Wilson. She claimed that people would be shocked if we spent that type of money on an intersection, shocked—not having known that there was actually a Liberal Party commitment to spend that money on an intersection.

Nevertheless, what we see now is a good outcome. With that money being used here, we are seeing a good outcome for the people of Black. They have a local member of parliament who is listening and fighting for them. The cooperation between Louise Miller-Frost's office and the member for Black's office has been exceptional—it is a hardworking, dedicated team to make sure. I also want to thank Catherine King. Catherine King is the federal infrastructure minister who has done an exceptional job of being in tune with the concerns and cares of local residents here in South Australia.

So I commend the member for Black for his advocacy in this matter, for the swift way in which he attended to the needs of his constituents, for the swift way in which he organised a public meeting and for the swift way in which he distributed the news of the outcome of the traffic study and the results of that. We will begin construction as soon as we possibly can.

Despite all the work that these members have done, there is always someone to take credit for someone else's homework. Guess who that was? Nicolle Flint. She turns up and says that it was all her idea.

**The SPEAKER:** Minister, your time has expired.

#### **WHYALLA STEELWORKS BLAST FURNACE**

**Mr PATTERSON (Morphett) (15:02):** My question is to the Premier. Will the government guarantee that the blast furnace at the Whyalla Steelworks won't be turned off?

**The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS (West Torrens—Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Minister for Energy and Mining) (15:02):** There is an indenture agreement in place that requires the holders of the mining licence in the Middleback Range to produce steel. We would expect that to be honoured. Ultimately, we would like to see a direct iron reduction facility electric arc furnace replace the blast furnace. The blast furnace is technology that is going out of fashion fast. It is carbon intensive, energy intensive and inefficient. It is expensive, and when you make unfinished products they are a loss-making exercise for Whyalla. However, direct iron reduction is a decarbonised process that allows hot briquetted iron to be produced and exported or used in an electric arc furnace. This maintains the connection between the mines and the steelworks, which is what the indenture is all about.

There are a number of people in this country who would like to see a separation between the steelworks and the iron ore resources, because the iron ore resources do incredibly well on their own. But we will always keep them linked. This government would never allow the decoupling of the iron ore mines and the steelworks. That indenture, set up by previous governments, was an

exceptional piece of legislation. That legislation ensures that the people of Whyalla know that they don't just have mining jobs but they have steelmaking jobs as well, and steelmaking jobs are vitally important.

So, as far as we are concerned, in the absence of a direct iron reduction facility electric arc furnace, the blast furnace is essential to maintain the appropriate legal ownership or mining licences over the Middleback Range. Anyone attempting to shut the blast furnace would instantly probably forfeit those mining licences, as that would be in breach of the indenture. The indenture, which has granted a great deal of benefit to the people who own and operate the mines and the steelworks, needs to know that the mines and the steelworks are linked.

That ore will be processed. Excess ore can be exported, but that ore will be processed in Whyalla, turned into iron and steel and we will make rail line and structural steel. That is the agreement we have in place for this wonderful resource of haematite that has seen Whyalla through thick and thin and now magnetite which is sought after by European, Asian and North American countries for its potential for decarbonisation and green iron and green steel.

The member might be aware—and I am sure he is—of the panic amongst haematite miners about the move towards green iron and green steel—

*An honourable member interjecting:*

**The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS:** Sorry?

*An honourable member interjecting:*

**The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS:** That's a deep, thoughtful question. What we have is what the world needs and because we have what the world needs we have a responsibility not just to mine it but to add value to it here in South Australia. The member for Giles is committed to this and this government stands behind him and his community. We are not going to let the people of Whyalla down.

#### **GFG ALLIANCE**

**Mr PATTERSON (Morphett) (15:05):** My question is again to the Premier. Does the government intend to force GFG Alliance into administration?

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier) (15:06):** GFG owns the steelworks and they are a legal entity and they've got laws that they need to abide by. The obligation first and foremost is on the directors of GFG. The Corporations Act outlines very clearly, in a way that is not open to interpretation, the obligations on directors of companies in this country and the obligations on those directors include ensuring that they are trading in a way that is solvent; that is to say that debts are being paid as and when they fall due. We would simply submit to GFG—along with any other company that operates within the state of South Australia—that they should honour their directors' duties under the Corporations Act and the law of the land.

#### **GFG ALLIANCE**

**Mr PATTERSON (Morphett) (15:06):** My question is again to the Premier. Has the government sought advice on the possibility of any other creditors taking action to force GFG Alliance into administration?

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier) (15:07):** Again, the Corporations Act outlines courses of action that are available to creditors—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Members on my right will be quiet.

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS:** As I'm sure the shadow minister is aware, the Corporations Act makes clear the duties that exist on directors, as I answered previously. The Corporations Act also foreshadows circumstances under which individual creditors can exercise their own rights as creditors with moneys owed to those businesses. What we would advise individual businesses to do, is that they should be able to make decisions that are in the best interests of their business, as they are afforded the right to do under the law.

**GFG ALLIANCE**

**Mr McBRIDE (MacKillop) (15:08):** I am going to continue down the lines and ask the same sort of question of the government and the government can decide on who wishes to answer. My question is to the Premier. As a taxpayer, as a part of the business sector of South Australia we are all watching with bewilderment around what Whyalla is looking like. With your leave, Mr Speaker, and the leave of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

**Mr McBRIDE:** Without trying to find politics and decide—

*Members interjecting:*

**Mr McBRIDE:** It's just coming from a neutral position as a taxpayer of this state as to where this money is going and who is looking after the state coffers. We are not taking sides, because we know this side was involved with Sanjeev Gupta and GFG when they were in government and now we have a new government in the same boat on the other side of the chamber.

What I really would say to everyone in this chamber is you are dealing with hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayers' funds, you are dealing with a company that is not paying its bills, you are dealing with a company that's looking after an asset that the government may wish to use—doesn't have to use—for its green steel agenda; and maybe it is an absolutely wonderful idea into the future. So the real question to the government is do you have to belong to GFG, do you have to belong to the old 1960s steelmaking business of Whyalla, and is there another way of getting to where you need to be for all the right reasons you got into parliament, into government, in 2022 to actually sell your agenda? All I can see right now is nearly like another State Bank debacle.

**The SPEAKER:** That was a lot. There were many, many questions in there and the Premier has about a minute to answer them. There are moments in time called grievance debates where some of those things may want to be articulated, member for MacKillop.

**The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier) (15:10):** The government, to the extent that we control the agenda within this house, is more than willing to show a lot of latitude in terms of the way questions are formulated for Independents. It's an option that's available to other members of the opposition as well. Should you want to take that up, you are more than welcome to do so.

The tenet of the question from the member for MacKillop has merit because I think there is a degree of misinformation, at least amongst the public, about the relationship between this government or even the former government and GFG. There have been essentially no moneys expended or any substantial resources of the taxpayer that have been made available to GFG that have been expended.

The height of the commitments from this government and the federal government has been a \$63 million commitment from the federal government and a \$50 million commitment from the state government, as we have discussed earlier, and the most recent credible plan was for an investment in an electric arc furnace which then, of course, did not eventuate because GFG wasn't able to pay for the electric arc furnace—or they made a decision not to. So the money was never expended, and that sort of prudent decision-making by this government, and to be fair the former government too, to not invest huge sums of taxpayers' money has in effect ensured the state's position, the taxpayers' position.

So there is no State Bank-type disaster here, because the South Australian taxpayer is not exposed except to the extent that the South Australian taxpayer or the commonwealth taxpayer chooses to play a role in the event that GFG were to go into administration, which may or may not happen. So I don't think we are in a position to make that comparison.

In regard to the policy that is future orientated, the people of Whyalla and South Australia more broadly need to appreciate this undeniable reality: the Middleback Range is home to one of the best high-quality economic magnetite resources that we are aware of anywhere in the world. One of the bankable economic projects that is available to GFG, and has been for some time, is to invest in a range of different pieces of capital and infrastructure at the mine to transfer from mining

haematite—which it has done in great volumes with an extraordinary amount of profitability—to magnetite. That option is there. It is bankable and it is economic, and we call on the custodian of that resource, which is currently SIMEC or GFG's mining operation, to get on with it.

That resource below the surface is of extraordinary value, and it needs to get out from under the ground to generate new wealth and opportunities for the people of Whyalla and the state more broadly. We are impatient for that, because magnetite is a critical ingredient to the decarbonisation of steel, which is essential globally. It is also true that that magnetite resource, through the initiative and the vision, frankly, of Playford, enabled that resource to be associated with a fully integrated steelworks, which is adjacent to a port city. It was a vision that had value then and it is a vision that has value now. What it requires is a degree of considered policy effort from government and a private operator that has the capital to invest.

We are ready to go. We have that policy endeavour, we have that vision. What we don't have is a private owner with the capital to invest. Now is the time for GFG to make the decisions and make the investments that are required. That's our call on GFG, that always has been our call on GFG, and we wait with a degree of impatience to make sure that GFG make the decisions that they are obligated to make to realise that opportunity for the rest of the state.

#### *Grievance Debate*

#### **GFG ALLIANCE**

**Mr PATTERSON (Morphett) (15:14):** I travelled to Whyalla last week with the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow treasurer to meet with some of the many contractors who are impacted by the crisis in Whyalla and are owed money by GFG. It was clear from those meetings that the people of Whyalla are over the promises, they are over the grand visions, and they just simply want to get on with work and create steel. They have lost faith in GFG and there is a major trust deficit which can only be overcome by GFG paying their debts.

It was also clear that they have been misled by the Premier and this Labor state government that has been totally distracted by a green hydrogen promise over the last four years. In 2021, the Premier promised a green hydrogen power station and since then we have seen that hydrogen plan delayed and downgraded, with the Premier making changes on the go. Worse, we have seen global energy companies walk away from their hydrogen plans while the Premier arrogantly pushes on regardless of the cost to South Australian taxpayers.

Twiggy Forrest announced Fortescue will pull back on their hydrogen plans because of how expensive hydrogen is. Woodside Energy has backed away from their plans for hydrogen. Origin Energy abandoned their hydrogen venture, with Chief Executive Frank Calabria saying, 'There remain risks and both input costs and technology advancements to overcome.'

A major element of the input costs for hydrogen projects is the electrolyser equipment that produces the hydrogen. Credible organisations such as the US Department of Energy, S&P Global, and Bloomberg have each released reports showing that the cost of electrolysers has surged since 2021. Of course, in 2021, next to a big picture of the now Premier, Labor's hydrogen policy document promised Labor will build 250-megawatts capacity of hydrogen electrolysers. It will be operational by 2025 and it will cost \$220 million. That is \$880,000 per megawatt.

Recently, Australia's CSIRO released their draft 2024-25 GenCost report which showed that electrolyser costs have surged by over 41 per cent in the last year alone and now have a unit cost of \$2.7 million per megawatt. That is three times more per megawatt than what Labor promised. If we use the CSIRO's costings for hydrogen electrolysers, a 250-megawatt alkaline electrolyser would cost \$676 million—not the \$220 million that Labor claimed.

That cost, of course, exceeds the entire \$593 million budget that Labor is still clinging to three years later. This massive \$456 million blowout sends the project surging past \$1 billion for a hydrogen power plant that will not bring down household energy bills for struggling South Australians.

The Malinauskas Labor government has repeatedly withheld the costs over the last three years, citing the process is in procurement, but they know about these massive cost increases for electrolysers and they are lying to South Australians about the true costs. But their actions reveal

this lie. They certainly do not have any intention of powering the turbines on hydrogen to start with because in September last year they went out to tender to run the turbines on gas. That gas was going to be delivered by road trains of diesel-powered B-double trucks. That was never part of the plan and again Premier Malinauskas is making it up as he goes. No wonder we have record electricity prices in South Australia.

It should also be noted that this tender went out for the B-double trucks before the issues at Whyalla started to escalate. Now we have the government using a very major crisis in Whyalla to back away from their hydrogen promise. Let's be clear: the government's hydrogen plan was a government initiative to generate electricity using hydrogen. There was no mention of GFG in their policy document and there was only one mention of green steel in the 20-page document.

We now have a state government desperately trying to create a scapegoat to blame for their own pre-election promise. They know that this green hydrogen dream is now a green nightmare. The nail in the coffin was the Queensland government pulling away from their hydrogen venture, again because of surging input costs. The Premier's hydrogen promise is in disarray and he now needs to come clean with the people of South Australia about the true cost of his hydrogen hoax.

### **STUART ELECTORATE AUSTRALIA DAY AWARD RECIPIENTS**

**The Hon. G.G. BROCK (Stuart) (15:19):** I would like to continue my grievance on the Australia Day award winners from the last session of parliament. The Northern Areas Council Young Citizen of the Year was Jake Slade. Jake arrived in Jamestown in 2021 to begin his teaching career and he quickly became involved in the local community. Jake is passionate about physical activity and wellness through sport and recreation and he devotes many hours promoting this, as well as volunteering his time for a range of outdoor activities.

The Active Citizen of the Year was Roger Hunt. Roger's tireless efforts have long been recognised and appreciated by the community of Stone Hut. He was instrumental in bringing the food and wine festival to fruition and has been a longstanding volunteer for the local development committee. Roger has been part of the Mount Remarkable National Park group for 27 years and has done a lot of work with the trail and local attraction maintenance.

The Event of the Year was the Caltowie Chilled Out 'n' Fired Up Music Festival. The festival has been running since 2019 and is a unique and growing event located in the small regional township of Caltowie. The festival has garnered acclaim and was a finalist in the 2023 SA Music Awards for Best Major Festival or Event. It is a permanent fixture on the music festival calendar and brings people together from far and wide.

The District Council of Orroroo Carrieton Citizen of the Year was John Mannion. John has contributed to the community for many years and is a well-known historian. He is dedicated to preserving and sharing local history and has created a priceless legacy for future generations. John campaigned tirelessly to safeguard historic sites and buildings. He collaborated on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary book of Carrieton and co-authored *No Place Like Pekina*. His work ensures that local heritage will endure.

The Community Event of the Year was the 54 31 Collective Rural Women's Day. This event was the largest Rural Women's Day celebration in Australia. The vision and effort of 54 31 Collective created a vibrant celebration that not only brought the community together but also showcased the resilience and achievements of rural women.

The District Council of Peterborough Citizen of the Year was Colleen Grove-Jones. Colleen works tirelessly to support members of the community who need help and also does community work further afield. Colleen is a long-serving member of the Rotary Club of Peterborough and is an active member of the Peterborough Community Enterprises group. Colleen brings warmth to many via a winter blanket appeal. She feeds people in need with her Christmas hampers and plays Secret Santa to deliver the hampers within the community.

The Active Citizen of the Year was Janet Fielding. Janet was the pool supervisor and lifeguard on a 40° day at a packed swimming pool when she was alerted to a drowning child. Janet pulled the nine-year-old boy from the pool and provided life-saving intervention. She kept this up until

the child was taken to the Peterborough hospital and then evacuated by helicopter to Adelaide. The child is now back in the community with his family, none the worse for his experience.

The Community Event of the Year was the Peterborough Basketball Association Tri-Series. The Peterborough Basketball Association has worked extremely hard to put Peterborough on the basketball map by creating and organising a tri-series of basketball matches between Burra, Clare and Peterborough over the last two seasons. The team has sought sponsorship, canvassed the neighbouring towns, created interest and put together a very successful series.

The Port Germein Community Australia Day Award went to Graham Pole. Graham has dedicated 43 years of service as an office bearer on the Port Germein District Hall Committee and 50 years of service with the CFS brigade, including part-time as lieutenant. Graham's commitment to keeping the community safe and supporting local projects has been nothing short of extraordinary.

Mark Syrus was awarded an Australian Police Medal. Mark is the superintendent of the Yorke and Mid North Local Service Area and was awarded with an Australian Police Medal as part of the Australia Day 2025 awards. He is deeply committed to his staff, fostering a people-first culture that has earned him a stellar reputation over the course of his remarkable 43-year operational career. The award is on top of receiving a South Australia Police Officer of the Year in 2022 for his 28-year involvement with Operation Flinders. Mark represents SAPOL extremely well across all of his areas of command.

I want to say in closing that there are hundreds of people across all of my region and regional South Australia who do great things for their regions and their communities. They do not look for any accolades, as I have mentioned before; they just want to do the job for their communities. In the Australia Day awards, it was great to see Neale Daniher named Australian of the Year for his great achievement for MND.

### **BOWHILL ENGINEERING**

**Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (15:25):** I rise today to celebrate the opening of Bowhill Engineering's new fabrication hall, known as B5, an investment in regional South Australia that strengthens our economy, fosters innovation and creates new skilled employment opportunities.

The B5 building was originally designed as part of the French diesel submarine project. One of Bowhill Engineering's clients from Osborne mentioned they had an extra building, and it just so happened to be within one metre of the design they had in mind for their fabrication hall. After 18 months of negotiations, Bowhill Engineering was able to purchase the building, which even came equipped with 100-tonne crane with a hook height of 16 metres. The facility stands at an imposing 70 metres long, 20 metres wide and 23 metres high. Two additional 30-tonne cranes will soon join the team, significantly enhancing the company's heavy lifting capabilities.

The expansion is more than infrastructure: it is a testament to resilience, growth and regional potential. It is also a crucial step towards increasing their workforce from 60 to 75 employees and boosting productivity by 20 per cent. I congratulate Bowhill Engineering on their vision and dedication.

Bowhill Engineering started out as a small rural machinery maintenance repair and modification workshop run by Brendon and Averil Hawkes in the early 1970s. Their sons, Jeremy and Simon Hawkes, helped the business evolve into steel fabrication and construction in the 1990s and eventually into the impressive modern facility it is today. Bowhill Engineering plays a key role in a number of major projects across our state, including the Kangaroo Island ferry access and Light River rail bridge, along with construction jobs interstate such as the Beveridge to Albury inland rail project in Victoria.

The opening of B5 also provided Bowhill Engineering with the perfect opportunity to share the exciting news that they had secured the \$32 million contract to deliver the cross-passage tunnel segments for the Torrens to Darlington tunnel project. This contract is a game changer and by far the biggest the company has won, requiring over 6,000 tonnes of structural steel components. This strengthens their position as a leader in tunnel segment fabrication in the Southern Hemisphere.

It will be a busy few years for the company, but I know it is something they are more than willing and capable of delivering. To support these initiatives, Bowhill Engineering is investing \$5 million in automation, including robotic welding stations and advanced machining equipment. These innovations will enhance productivity while providing new skill development opportunities for their workforce, ensuring a sustainable future for regional employment.

Bowhill Engineering's commitment to sustainability is exemplary. Since 2020, they have reduced energy intensity by 15 per cent and emissions by 50 per cent. Through solar energy, underground power infrastructure and proactive social and governance initiatives, they set a benchmark for responsible manufacturing. I understand they even have plans to trial a carbon neutral biofuel developed from used cooking oil on some of their equipment. If successful, it is hoped their backup generator will be able to run carbon neutral.

Workforce development remains a priority with nearly half of their employees in formal training plans. Bowhill Engineering actively collaborates with local schools to inspire the next generation of engineers and tradespeople with their apprenticeship program leading to more than 35 successful completions over the years. This year alone has seen four apprentice startups, with 10 others part way through an apprenticeship.

The company also creates employment pathways for diverse workforce participation by building relationships with companies that help source and recruit people who are often overlooked by employers. This includes those who have been long-term unemployed, have a disability or are in the over-45 age bracket.

Bowhill Engineering is nationally recognised, earning the Australian Business Awards Employer of Choice in 2024 along with an array of community and other business awards over the past 15 years. This comes as no surprise for a company that values job security, work-life balance and community reinvestment. Their focus on workplace culture, leadership and wellbeing ensures employees feel valued and supported.

I would like to finish by congratulating Bowhill Engineering on their vision and dedication. It was a privilege to be invited to celebrate this fantastic achievement and I look forward to seeing this business continue to thrive into the future. I also look forward to the continued success of Jeremy and Jodie Hawkes and Bowhill Engineering as they drive into that future.

### **MOUNT GAMBIER AIR TRAVEL**

**Mr BELL (Mount Gambier) (15:30):** Many residents from Mount Gambier need to travel to Adelaide for various reasons, whether medical, business, sport or visiting family. With a distance of 444 kilometres, it is not always practical to drive the 10-hour round trip. Yesterday I had the opportunity to see the first landing of the Qantas Q400 aircraft, which is replacing the Q300 aircraft for all flights to and from our region. The new aircraft is 30 per cent faster and has a larger capacity, seating 74 passengers compared with the previous 50 for the Q300.

Following its arrival, I had the opportunity to travel to Adelaide on this new aircraft ready for today's parliament. Qantas began as a regional airline over 100 years ago, so it is pleasing to see this investment into modern aircraft for our regional route. However, I can only hope that this leads to an increase in services.

Many people, particularly those travelling for business or medical appointments, need to be in Adelaide by 9 o'clock, and to save accommodation costs many return the same day. Currently, Mount Gambier is serviced by Rex Airlines, which operates two or three flights a day to both Adelaide and Melbourne, and Qantas, which offers three flights a week to Adelaide. This level of service is not enough for South Australia's second-largest city. We need two airlines operating daily flights to Adelaide and Melbourne to create competition, drive down costs and ensure high-quality service.

It is also crucial to hold airlines accountable for providing affordable and reliable travel options for regional residents. Earlier today I checked the flights from Adelaide to Melbourne. I had three to choose from, all offering morning departures and evening returns, ranging from \$300 to \$350 as a return flight. In contrast, the only available flight from Mount Gambier to Adelaide was around \$600 return, almost double the cost. It is just not viable for many residents to pay these prices, which



leads to a decrease in passenger numbers and then a decrease in service, and so the spiral continues down.

Rex's financial struggles are well known, and I commend the federal government for stepping in and providing a backstop for regional communities with a reassurance that these services will continue. Now we need to take the next step. We must remove excessive barriers for airlines and airports and explore incentives that encourage increased services.

This is even more timely with the additional security requirements looming for Mount Gambier that would see an airport additional cost of \$50 per departing passenger on top of the ticket price for baggage and personnel scanning. It is a strange situation where you will have two aircraft coming down, a Rex airline where there is no baggage and no scanning requirements and Qantas where there will be an additional \$50. Both aircraft leave and head to Adelaide, or Rex in this case to Melbourne, yet the price will be a disincentive for Qantas.

In terms of driving the 10-hour round trip, many South Australians will take airline travel in essence to avoid a night's accommodation. The current flight schedules and pricing are simply not sustainable. Without competition and better service frequency, we risk isolating regional communities and limiting economic growth. With this new aircraft being introduced, now is the perfect opportunity for airlines, government and stakeholders to come together and commit to real long-term improvements.

On that, I would like to acknowledge the previous airport manager, Ian Fritsch. Ten or 11 years ago when we were talking about terminal upgrades, Ian really pushed the case for an extended runway and strengthening of the parking area, called the apron, to enable Q400s to eventually come to Mount Gambier. Ian is now retired, but as is often the case, those who initiate these great ideas never get thanked. We are the real beneficiary of his foresight, so thank you, Ian Fritsch.

## WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

**Ms PRATT (Frome) (15:35):** I rise to talk about water infrastructure in the electorate of Frome. On the weekend, I was doorknocking the fantastic peri-urban town of Two Wells that is the southern frontier of my electorate. Four hours later, doorknocking in Two Wells, it was clear to me that everyone who was home wanted to have a conversation about water infrastructure. I think that bodes well for what is going to take place next week in Two Wells, and that is the government's country cabinet coming to visit the Adelaide Plains.

While I, on behalf of my community, welcome the government's attention on a flourishing and growing area, I have not yet been invited, but I am sure that it is in the mail. I am really looking forward to the public forum that is going to be held at Two Wells Primary School because that is going to be an opportunity for the community to come along and present to the government some of the infrastructure issues that we are facing. In particular, the member for Taylor, our Minister for Planning, is going to hear a long shopping list, I think, of what my community is asking for.

What is the government going to hear from the communities across the Adelaide Plains? When they raise with me issues around water, it is pricing, it is the quality of water, it is access, equity of access, water pressure and water flow. Really, what seems to be looming as a crisis in infrastructure for our housing sector is the fact that we are just running out. I think it is way too easy for the state to blame any of this on the drought that we experienced last year. These are problems that have been looming for a little while. It is certainly true that my communities are drawing down—I think we all are drawing down—more water from the system as a result of dry gardens and hot weather.

It was noticeable on social media. Chat groups were being flooded with complaints, queries and confusion from Templers, Roseworthy, Freeling, Wasleys, Munno Para, Jamestown, Marrabel and Saddleworth. It is statewide. My community were asking of each other: who can turn on the tap? Who has water pressure? The answer was no-one. So where is all this water that we need, and why are so many people complaining? I am going to go back to a case study I came across in 2021 that was in Freeling. It was at the Schuster Estate, a fantastic estate of three stages. I drove past recently, and I am happy to see that stage 1 is fully completed and people are in their homes.

But I note a single mum who was living in Gawler, renting a house, living as a single mum of a young person living with a disability. She had saved up her money and had put down a deposit on a slab, only to find that SA Water would not be connecting water to that property for the next revenue-capped period of 2024 to 2028. The short version of that story is that she had to get her deposit back. We have heard time and time again of how people optimistic about entering the housing market for the first time have found their hopes and dreams crushed because there is no water.

The Freeling issues do not just stop there. We are mindful of a number of construction projects that are at risk of being compromised due to a lack of water infrastructure, and there are reasons for that: the pressure is weak and the community knows that, the pipes are old and the community knows that. What we are looking for are signals from government that these towns are not going to be abandoned to solve these problems on their own or go without infrastructure, go without services because the government does not have a plan.

The Freeling CFS station is an important case to note as well because this is a critical piece of infrastructure solely manned by volunteers, operating out of a three-sided hay shed and waiting on commitments already made by the government that a four-bay station is coming. But here is a community that can see, through its CFS station, the loss of a police station and housing construction stalling, that water is at the heart of some of the decisions that the government is making. On the door in Two Wells—it is time? Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. There is lots to say.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Brown):** For the benefit of the house, members do have an ability to go over time for grieves.

#### **TRIMPER AM, MR K.**

**Mrs PEARCE (King) (15:40):** I would like to take a moment to reflect on the extraordinary influence that one man, Kelvin Trimper, has had on my local community. In fact, influence does not go far enough to explain it. Mr Trimper is the reason why Golden Grove is as we know it today. His work in developing our community has won high accolades left, right and centre.

For example, take the provision of our education services which he was instrumental in establishing through Delfin Lend Lease's leadership. For those who have not been in my community, a lot of my school sections have been developed in such a way that we have our public facilities shared with private facilities so that students across the board can get the absolute best from their education services. It was so special in fact that in the eighties the then minister Greg Crafter described his work as the most modern, innovative and exciting community education complex being developed in Australia.

Even today we continue to have experts from all over the country visiting our community to learn more about the planning that went into our education system, to learn how they too can replicate it to enhance their local communities. There is something uniquely beautiful about my local community and, as we recently passed a 40-year milestone of what was at the time identified as the benchmark of Australian urban development, I believe it is important to reflect on the man behind it and honour his memory.

In addition to the implementation of the schools strategy, Kelvin was also responsible for the landscape strategy as well as overall responsibility for product development and delivery, community and education planning, and inventory management, and that is literally just the tip of the iceberg. He also played a significant role in the development of Mawson Lakes, developments within the City of Tea Tree Gully, as well as projects within the Housing Trust.

He has provided advice to government and non-government sectors throughout Australia and also the United Kingdom and has been a keynote speaker at AECD education conferences all over the world. He has had countless appointments to boards and committees covering fields such as development and planning, the environment, economics and horticulture.

If that was not enough, Kelvin was also a world-acclaimed rosarian. Growing up in Renmark with world famous rose experts David Ruston OAM and his father, Kelvin soon developed a deep and true passion for roses so much so that he became president of the World Federation of Rose Societies. Kelvin's achievements include his election as president, then receiving a gold medal at the end of his three-year term. He also served as president of both the National Rose Society of Australia

and the Rose Society of South Australia, and he received numerous awards over the years. These included the Australian Rose Award and the T.A. Stewart Memorial Award, the highest honours for service to the rose in Australia. It is fitting that Kelvin received an Order of Australia AM for both his leadership qualities and his contribution to property development and horticulture as well.

Kelvin lived and worked in northern Adelaide for 35 years and there are numerous examples of where he assisted the community using his skills and experience while volunteering his time, for which we are incredibly grateful. It is something about a country upbringing, I believe, as a country lad who developed an ethos for volunteering one's time for the good of community. This was something that Kelvin absolutely lived by and imparted to others he met along his way on his journey.

Kelvin was an innovator, an educator, who believed in every individual, irrespective of culture, ability and status, to realise their full potential. He was a devoted husband and an adoring father. He was a lover of nature and the environment and a man who appreciated good food, good wine, his roses, fruit trees and his vegetables as well. Most importantly, Kelvin loved sharing the knowledge and ideas to be able to help make the world a better place, starting right in our local community of Golden Grove. For all he has done, my community is the richer for it. As we pass 40 years, we reflect upon and thank this great man. Vale Kelvin Trimper.

*Private Members' Statements*

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

**Mr WHETSTONE (Chaffey) (15:45):** Two weeks ago, four farmers from the Riverland and Mallee region were finalists, with three winning awards at the Adelaide Oval at the inaugural SA Grain Industry Awards. Jock McNeil, a farmer from Paruna received the Young Grain Producer of the Year Award. I have witnessed his innovative farming techniques and strategic soil improvement. Tim Paschke from Lowbank was awarded the Sustainability Award for his proactive methods in addressing issues relating to low rainfall—he grew a crop, which is 65 millimetres, last season—dealing with dryland salinity and enhancing environmental resilience.

Lou Flohr, a Mallee grain grower, was awarded the Women in Grain Award for her advocacy and leadership in advancing sustainable farming practices. Mallee farmer Andrew Thomas from Wynarka was also recognised as a finalist, with Andrew competing in the Grain Producer of the Year category. With the significant challenges our local farmers have faced, it was wonderful to see them acknowledged for their contributions to improving farming techniques and practices.

Congratulations to Jock, Tim, Lou and Andrew on encouraging growth in our farming industry and leading the way in innovative and resilient farming methods. Also, Andrew Polkinghorne from Eyre Peninsula was awarded Grain Producer of the Year—a great outcome. Our local winners and finalists are all developing cutting-edge technology, excelling in agricultural practices and contributing to a vibrant farming spirit. I also want to pay tribute to Mark Allison, CEO of Elders, as the major sponsor in what is a great event and will be a great event in the years to come.

**The Hon. A. PICCOLO (Light) (15:47):** Like a number of members here in this chamber, I had the honour of attending the inaugural South Australian Grain Industry Awards at Adelaide Oval a fortnight ago. This event united 300 industry leaders, grain producers, researchers and agribusiness professionals to celebrate innovation, sustainability and leadership in the grain sector. In a recent *Stock Journal* article by Grain Producers SA Chair, John Gladigau, he emphasised how exceptional farmers are. They tackle problems head on, create long-term solutions, help without hesitation and voice concerns where necessary.

We all know farmers, researchers, advisers and advocates who tirelessly build on past legacies for a better future. These awards recognise those who have never sought recognition but have long deserved it. I commend Grain Producers SA, the sponsors and all those who organised this event. Congratulations to all the winners and Hall of Fame inductees. Special mention to Mid North honourees: Hall of Famer and former Adelaide Plains councillor John Lush; Grain Producer of the Year finalists Damien Sommerville and Kelvin Tiller; Young Grain Producer of the Year finalist Tim Cawrse; and Women in Grain Award finalist Kelly Turci. Your contributions advance our industry and provide hope for future generations.

Despite the current drought, these events are crucial for supporting each other, sharing knowledge and celebrating an industry that brings billions of dollars into our state and inspires us daily.

Time expired.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER (Morialta) (15:48):** Jennifer Cashmore's extraordinary service to our state and to this parliament was recognised at some length last year after her unfortunate passing. I want, however, to add a very small addendum to that. Last night, the Burnside Historical Society—and I commend their president, Roger Bills, and the committee for doing so—hosted an event presented by Dr Jenny Tilby-Stock, the historian who talked about Jennifer Cashmore, her courageous career and her achievements. Dr Tilby-Stock's presentation was excellent and filled in some aspects of her life that I had not been aware of and which I think many of the significant number of people who were in attendance learned about.

There was one particular story, which came after the presentation, from a senior health officer who served when Jennifer Cashmore was Minister for Health in South Australia. I will relay it now because nobody else did during the condolence motion; it was not something that we were aware of. He relayed that, upon attending her first meeting of the national Health Ministers' Council, not only was she the only woman in attendance at this health ministerial national council but she was also the only person, the only minister for health from this commonwealth, who was not smoking at the time.

Jennifer was the sort of person who would be appalled at something and would immediately speak up. She moved a motion, the first thing on the agenda at that Health Ministers' Council, that it become a no-smoking event. Everyone was shamed into passing it, and since then (I assume in 1979) the Health Ministers' Council has been nonsmoking. Of course, other nonsmoking causes that Jennifer Cashmore championed have also come to be normalised. I am sure that members of parliament can take pride in, and inspiration from, Jennifer Cashmore's example once again.

**Ms SAVVAS (Newland) (15:50):** I thought I would just take a moment today to congratulate the incredible winners of the Tea Tree Gully awards held on Australia Day this year at Sferas Park Suites and Convention Centre, which of course is soon to be acquired by Tea Tree Gully council. This is another really exciting moment for our community, to see what the council decides to do with that wonderful building.

I would like to acknowledge, first of all, the Tea Tree Gully Citizen of the Year. His name is Simon Nappa, and he is such an incredibly deserving recipient. I have come to know Simon over the last few years and have watched him as he has grown the Inclusive League at the Tea Tree Gully District Football Club. It has gone from strength to strength. Simon is just one of those down-to-earth, wonderful people who genuinely cares about inclusion and access, and of course all the relationships that he builds are a real and genuine testament to himself and his service in our local community. I would like to congratulate Simon on a well-deserved accolade.

I would also like to congratulate the Tea Tree Gully Lions Club, who received the community group of the year award. Just in December, we celebrated 60 years of the Tea Tree Gully Lions, and a number of those members have been members for about 40-odd years, if not longer. I would particularly like to congratulate the president, Lance Hoare, as well as his wife, Marilyn, who is also a Lions lady. I would like to also acknowledge Les, Stan, Bill, Geoff and Brian, as well as their Lions ladies, for their service to Tea Tree Gully Lions and our community over that 60-year period.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** May they roar forever. Sorry, it's a dad joke!

*Parliamentary Committees*

#### LEGISLATIVE REVIEW COMMITTEE

**The Hon. N.F. COOK (Hurtle Vale—Minister for Human Services, Minister for Seniors and Ageing Well) (15:52):** By leave, I move:

That the Hon. J.A.W. Gardner be appointed to the committee in place of Mr Basham (resigned).

Motion carried.

*Bills***PASSENGER TRANSPORT (POINT TO POINT TRANSPORT SERVICES) AMENDMENT BILL***Second Reading*

Adjourned debate on second reading (resumed on motion).

**The Hon. D.G. PISONI (Unley) (15:53):** I am resuming the remarks about the bill that I began making prior to the lunch break. I am getting to my closing remarks. There are some issues of confidentiality that have been raised by stakeholders and those who are engaged in the industry about where the bill contains provisions that could allow government agencies to withhold certain industry information. Of course, they are concerned that it would limit transparency, and I think it is important that we all understand that information is key when you are running a business and want to have an understanding of what data is available about your industry to help you improve your own business. It is very important, and it certainly would be disappointing if those in the industry were denied access to data or other industry information that the government may be using in making its decisions.

The Taxi Council has raised concerns that these confidentiality measures could be used to restrict access to key registry data, making it harder for industry stakeholders to advocate for changes as well—so not only information to support you to run your business as robustly and profitably as possible but also about advocacy opportunities as well.

Without safeguards this provision could allow future regulatory decisions to be made with limited public scrutiny. I would imagine there would be very few people who at some stage in their lives have not used point-to-point transport, whether it be taxis or whether it be ridesharing services. I think that will grow with the success of this bill where we see it expanded into the regions.

We no longer have to wait for an organised tour, or book a driver all day for a visit to a region. I would imagine that what the effect of this bill will be is there will be locally-based drivers. You would take a driver from your hotel, where you might be staying in Adelaide as a tourist, out to a specific region in South Australia and when it's time to come home again there would be somebody living locally who would take you back to Adelaide. So there would be no need for a driver to be sitting idle for the several hours that you might be at lunch or visiting various interesting tourist sites.

In conclusion, the Passenger Transport (Point to Point Transport Services) Amendment Bill 2025 introduces sweeping changes to South Australia's transport industry, with some stakeholders feeling that they have had insufficient time to consider the proposed legislation. You can understand that. There is always hesitation when change is coming through and it is important when change comes through that people are comfortable with that, they understand it and they can move comfortably into that changed situation.

The minister has been given significant discretionary power over licensing accreditation and fare controls without mandatory industry consultation or independent oversight. I think that is a concern. We on this side of the chamber certainly think that is a concern, because we all know that government does not know best and that you get a better outcome when you consult those involved in the industry. You would not make significant changes for a community without consulting that community; why would you not consult the industry if you were making changes to that industry? The doubling of the transport levy will directly increase passenger costs, and future increases can be made without parliamentary approval. We have seen that happen on previous occasions where increases have come out of the blue without any warning. And, of course, there is no provision for a review or a sunset clause.

There are questions that the buyback scheme may not provide adequate compensation for longstanding taxi operators, leaving many at risk of financial hardship. I think this is the most difficult one for the taxi owners that own the perpetual plates, because they are not being recognised as making that investment. I think you always expect to lose money when you sell a luxury item that you have enjoyed for a number of years, but this is an investment that was made for a business and then all of a sudden that business becomes worthless, and through no fault of the person who made that investment, whether it was 10, 20 or 30 years ago. Not only have they forgone any capital growth in

that investment that they have made, in some instances they are not even getting the money back that they paid. When you factor in inflation on top of that, they are a long way behind.

Just imagine how it would have looked: it simply would not have happened if the compulsory acquisitions for the north-south corridor were based on a fraction of the value of those properties; it just would not happen. As a matter of fact, it cannot happen because there are laws to protect people from that. So I do not understand why an asset, such as a taxi licence, is treated differently to any other property that is being acquired for the public good. I think there is no doubt this is legislation that is for the public good in the longer term but there seems to be an unfair advantage, particularly for those who may have second or third licences, only receiving \$10,000 for those licences.

Of course, the lack of transparency in vehicle camera requirements and confidential provisions raise serious concerns about privacy and regulatory fairness. I touched on that earlier in remarks I was making about what the safeguards are about vision being used inappropriately and breaching of people's privacy. So we principally support this legislation, but we do reserve our right to consider amendments to deal with some of these issues that have been highlighted in the speech when the bill is debated in the Legislative Council.

**Mr BROWN (Florey) (16:01):** I rise in support of the Passenger Transport (Point to Point Transport Services) Amendment Bill 2025. The bill proposes to amend the Passenger Transport Act 1994 in order to implement key recommendations arising out of last year's review of the act. The Malinauskas government made a commitment before being elected to undertake this review and work with industry, stakeholders and consumers towards undertaking important reforms across the point-to-point passenger transport sector. The bill before us represents the fulfilment of that commitment. The bill also seeks to implement elements of the taxi industry support package approved as part of the state budget in 2024-25.

Members may be aware that the category of point-to-point transport includes any service that is provided in a vehicle with 12 seats or fewer, including the driver, that can take customers on a route that they choose at a time that suits them in exchange for the payment of a fare. This includes taxis, chauffeurs and ride-sourcing or rideshare services.

As part of the review of the act last year, the Department for Infrastructure and Transport consulted with key industry and private consumer stakeholders through a YourSAy survey, one-on-one industry meetings and written submissions. The consultation phase yielded a total of 116 YourSAy survey responses, with 41 respondents (35 per cent) identifying themselves as a point-to-point driver, owner or operator, and 75 respondents (65 per cent) identifying themselves as point-to-point customers. Sixty written submissions were received from industry members and eight submissions were received from consumers.

On 30 August 2024, the government released the review, which put forward 29 recommendations informed by the feedback that was received from industry, customers and key stakeholders. The reason that the Malinauskas government came to office with a commitment to undertake a review of the current point-to-point passenger transport regime is because it was widely recognised, especially within the sector, that change was greatly needed. There is no question as to whether this sector is experiencing significant challenges.

In particular, we have heard from taxi stakeholders, including through the review process, about the profound impact of the introduction of rideshare and the changes to the industry that this introduction has brought about. The bill seeks to deliver important taxi industry support, including proposing to remove the limit on the number of taxis that can operate, thereby reducing a barrier to entry to the sector; removing the requirement for a perpetual licence to operate a taxi; and introducing an uncapped annual licence regime.

The bill also provides for the state government to deliver compensation to the taxi industry, with eligible licence holders to receive \$200,000 for the first metropolitan taxi licence held and \$10,000 for each subsequent licence, up to a total of six licences. In addition, the bill proposes that anyone who is not eligible, and has their perpetual licence cancelled, will receive \$10,000 compensation.

Access taxi licence holders will receive \$100,000 for their first licence and \$10,000 for each subsequent licence. These measures will be funded in part by an increase in the point-to-point transport service transaction levy, which was put in place after the introduction of rideshare in 2017. Its purpose is to help fund assistance packages to metropolitan taxi licence holders and lessees to help them transition to a new regulatory model.

The levy further supports reduced or waived annual fees for passenger transport services, along with other industry initiatives such as additional compliance officers and a lifting fee for people with disability who use a wheelchair or large mobility device and as a result require travel in an accessible taxi. The bill enables the levy to be set by regulation to enable indexation increases to occur as required. The bill also seeks to strengthen the collection arrangements for the levy.

The bill further proposes to introduce a simpler accreditation model which aims to reduce unnecessary complexity and to enable more effective regulation of current and emerging business models. It proposes three accreditation types: firstly, booking service providers; secondly, general passenger transport service providers; and finally, passenger transport drivers.

A booking service is a point-to-point transport service to which requests are made by members of the public and those requests are assigned to a driver or to a vehicle. General passenger transport service providers will apply to services that require accreditation but should not be required to meet the same obligations as booking service providers, including being subject to the responsibility for payment of the levy. Driver accreditation will broadly continue as it currently operates. Vehicles will need to be authorised under the new framework to provide a passenger transport service. To hold authorisation, vehicles will need to meet prescribed standards, including identification and safety requirements.

The bill seeks to strengthen compliance and enforcement arrangements by introducing new offences and automatic suspension and cancellation of accreditation in prescribed circumstances. A driver will automatically have their passenger transport driver accreditation suspended, for example, in the event they do not hold a current driver's licence. The bill also provides that a person's accreditation will be cancelled in the event that they have committed a prescribed offence, that they have breached the general safety duty or that they no longer meet the requirements to hold the relevant type of accreditation.

The bill seeks to enhance safety for drivers and for passengers by introducing a general safety duty with similar principles as those reflected in the Work Health and Safety Act 2012 and the Heavy Vehicle National Law (South Australia) Act. This introduces a legal requirement to eliminate or minimise the risk of incidents involving death, injury or damage and to encourage the development, maintenance and continuous improvement of work safety practices. This duty will apply to those who fall within the chain of responsibility for providing a passenger transport service other than public transport, including the service provider, the driver and the holder of the vehicle authorisation.

The bill further includes provisions to enable the minister to prescribe passenger transport vehicle standards and fleet standards, provisions to enable two separate metropolitan boundaries for point-to-point and public transport services to ensure they can be individually adjusted to respond to community needs over time and provisions to establish a stronger compliance and audit framework with authorised officers having clearer compliance and investigation powers enabling swift action to be taken for expiable offences such as non-taxi point-to-point vehicles running a meter or stopping in a taxi rank. The bill will also allow for audits to assess compliance with obligations under the act, including correct payment of the levy.

The bill further proposes to provide greater customer protection from practices that amount to price gouging by prohibiting surge pricing or a queue-jumping fee in certain prescribed circumstances. Currently, rideshare operators have the ability to charge surge price fares according to supply and demand. The bill seeks to prohibit price gouging in the event of a declared emergency. The introduction of this prohibition aligns with arrangements in place in a number of other jurisdictions.

The bill proposes to insert new data and information exchange provisions to assist compliance, with the minister to determine arrangements for sharing prescribed information. Consumer protection will be strengthened through addressing fraudulent and noncompliant

behaviours. It is intended to increase penalties for unscrupulous practices such as the refusal to turn on meters and the use of illegal EFTPOS machines. Cracking down on these behaviours by dodgy vehicle operators will benefit users of point-to-point transport services and reflect positively on those operators who do the right thing, increasing confidence in the industry.

These reforms are aimed at making meaningful improvements in the regulation of services within the point-to-point transport industry with fundamental changes that seek to address current circumstances for taxi licence holders, as well as to improve service availability for users. These reforms also seek to strengthen safety across the industry, with the recognition that many of the safety issues addressed are common to both taxis and rideshare vehicles.

As promised, and in response to the clear need for change, the Passenger Transport Act 1994—having been subject to thorough review—will, with the passage of this bill, be subject to meaningful amendment. The Department for Infrastructure and Transport has worked with industry, consumers and stakeholders to progress changes in line with key recommendations arising from the review. I am pleased to commend this bill to the house.

**Mrs HURN (Schubert) (16:10):** I, too, rise to speak on the Passenger Transport (Point to Point Transport Services) Amendment Bill 2025 and I thank the member for Unley for his very comprehensive contribution as lead speaker for the opposition. This bill, as has been outlined by a number of speakers, has been created in response to recommendations of a review into the Passenger Transport Act by the government and I am pleased to have an opportunity to speak on it.

It was just last Friday that I wrote to the Premier to alert him of the fact that this bill does include something really significant for my local community because it does relate to the geographical boundaries of rideshare, allowing it to operate in regional communities like the Barossa, and that it was really essential for my community that it was dealt with ahead of Gather Round, which is coming to the Barossa Valley in April. I am pleased to see that today it has been lifted higher on the government's priority list in response to my letter, but I still do have concerns about how little time there is left for it to pass and, importantly for rideshare companies, to really act upon the changes before Gather Round and other major events in the Barossa—but I will elaborate on that a little bit further in a moment.

Access to transport in my electorate is a really key issue because we do have a real lack of connectivity between our towns, not just for local people wanting to go about their business but, importantly for a world-class region like the Barossa, we want tourists to be able to get out and explore all of what makes our region so fantastic. It seemed to me that when rideshare companies like Uber are already able to operate in regions like the Adelaide Hills, McLaren Vale, Mount Barker and Gawler, and in the city, it would be a natural extension to allow these services to operate within the Barossa as well, just to help alleviate some of those pressures.

In addition to expanding the transport offering in the Barossa, this change is also going to boost employment opportunities. I have spoken with so many people in my electorate who are either interested in becoming a rideshare driver themselves, or they have people in their life who are excited at the prospect of being able to pick up a little bit of work over the weekend or in those peak periods. Speaking of locals, you would know this all too well, Mr Deputy Speaker, but with the Concordia development on the horizon we have an influx of 25,000 people coming to our region over the next decade and, naturally, these residents too would expect to get around in a way that is smart, efficient, quick and safe.

Transport, as I have mentioned, is a big issue in the Barossa and we do need to have more ways to connect people, both locals and visitors alike. We want locals to be able to get from A to B safely and efficiently. We want visitors to be able to get out and enjoy all of what makes our region so fantastic. Importantly, these changes bring the Barossa in line with all those other places I have mentioned in South Australia.

You only need to look right across the world and there are countless examples of where rideshare companies operate side by side with our taxis—who do a remarkable job—and they do, I think, provide a complementary service to one another. I think this would be a big win for local businesses and locals alike. I have been inundated with positive feedback from local businesses in



particular, as we are heading into Gather Round, that there will be more transport options for people to explore our region.

My electorate did show support for this proposed change when just two years ago I launched a survey asking people a very simple question: would you like to see rideshare companies like Uber able to operate in the Barossa? Members in this house would appreciate that sometimes when you throw out a survey to your local community you might get a handful of responses back. Sometimes you might get a couple of hundred. For me, on this issue I had nearly 3,000 people respond to my survey, and it was so overwhelming.

More than 95 per cent of those respondents said they wanted to see rideshare options in the Barossa. That meant only 5 per cent of people did not support the move. I can appreciate that many of those people opposed to the suggestion were in the taxi industry. I appreciate that this is a difficult change, as has been very well articulated by the member for Unley in his earlier remarks, but it was such an overwhelming result for my community. As I say, it is really not that surprising for a wine region like the Barossa that people are looking for more options and an increase in service to get them from A to B.

Receiving this feedback was really the catalyst for me proactively pursuing this with the government. I went to the Minister for Transport on multiple occasions, outlining to him what my community were saying on the ground. I outlined these survey results to him, and I pushed with the Premier that this was so critical ahead of Gather Round, and here we are today.

Some of the main themes that came through my survey response were that it would be a boost to the local economy; businesses would benefit and there would be increased visitation on the ground; better transport options, which I have mentioned; better transport availability; and of course reducing the risk of drink driving on our roads.

When you come to a place like the Barossa, you are expecting to try some of our world-class wines—and there are a number. We do a fantastic bold Barossa shiraz. After you have had a few schlucks, as the Barossa Deutsche would say, you need safe transport options to get around. This is about not just having an increase in services and options but ensuring that people can enjoy all of what makes our region fantastic, safely. There are also the employment opportunities, which I have already mentioned.

In the course of providing my remarks, I wanted to share with the house some of the responses that I received from locals. Alex from Nuriootpa said:

Allowing rideshare would open up a significant source of transport in the area, as well as create a number of jobs for those looking to be drivers.

Alice from Tanunda said:

It would be great to be able to travel between our small towns not serviced by public transport.

David from Lyndoch said:

It would allow our youth and elderly more options of getting to appointments, work, functions rather than trying to rely on a non-existent public transport system. And when available...

Ally from Angaston said:

Better and safer transportation opportunities. Brings employment opportunities to the region. Easier for tourists to get around.

Alyssa from Wynn Vale, outside of the electorate, in the member for Wright's electorate, a tourist who responded to my survey—I had a few of those—said:

More likely to visit the Barossa region as will have access to transport options.

That could have been the member for Wright himself, who participated in my survey. Courtney from Nuriootpa said:

Would allow for better transport options, can give people employment opportunities, whether that's becoming the driver or the accessing of the rideshare to get to their place of employment.

Laura from Angaston said:

Ease of transportation between venues/accommodation for tourists. My son could get an Uber to Gawler for the train to the city. Safer roads with less possible drink driving.

Sarah from Williamstown said:

Staff should not have to transport patrons, and elderly people are always relying on the kindness of neighbours at times...which is difficult.

Jo from Stockwell said:

More tourists and locals eating/staying in our community instead of going to Adelaide.

Bobby from Light Pass said:

Rideshare would make the whole Barossa accessible for locals and tourists alike, it increases the appeal of regional living and introduces more employment options for our children.

Kim from Mount Pleasant said:

Encourage people to more unexplored areas, such as Keyneton/Eden Valley.

Lisa from Springton said:

Better transport options and more affordable transport. I have one bus service to an interchange in the morning and one in the afternoon. There is no transport flexibility.

Giles from Eden Valley said:

The existing public transport infrastructure in the Barossa doesn't meet the needs of a region that prides itself on food and beverage experiences. This contributes to a lack of accessibility for tourists, a lack of transport for young hospitality workers and sadly too much drink driving.

Courtney from Bethany said:

Making our towns accessible. Being 25 and wanting to go out to other local towns and events that the Barossa holds, limits the opportunities to purchase and support businesses as we cannot get around. Not having affordable or accessible transport in the Barossa, means we do not go out of our local town limits.

Emitty from Angaston said:

I know I would go out more within the Barossa if there was an easier option like Uber.

Those are just a handful of the 3,000 comments that I had speaking in support of Uber. I could read them all out; they were all of that similar ilk.

Having pursued this for two years, I was naturally really delighted when the minister announced that he agreed with me and made these changes and announced that the government would expand the metropolitan boundary to allow these services in the Barossa Valley, particularly ahead of the Gather Round event, which I have already mentioned, and of course another Vintage Festival which we have on this year.

However, as the months rolled on and there was really no practical action to see this implemented, I did start to get really worried. It has now been seven months since the government first announced their intention to allow these rideshare services like Uber in the Barossa Valley, and since then my office has been inundated with phone calls asking, 'When is it going to be rolled out?' and 'What should I tell people who are calling me ahead of Gather Round about how they can get around?' I have had some accommodation business owners call me saying that they are wanting to pre-book taxis and that has not necessarily been an option. Businesses are just wanting that certainty that rideshare will be available. Every time I have an event, without fail someone asks me about it.

I have said previously in this house, and I articulated it to the Premier in my correspondence on Friday, that this really could be a small regulatory change to make it happen now. The reason I say this is because I had a Zoom meeting with Uber representatives last week. They talked me through the process and what is required to onboard local drivers, and it is quite a significant one as you would expect. It is not some magic genie in a bottle that you can rub and all of a sudden these local drivers come out and can help get people from A to B. It takes time to onboard local drivers.

In other states where rideshare companies have launched in specific regions, they have said that it takes months to get drivers. I am really worried about what the Gather Round could look like

and I am urging the Premier to consider moving this out of the legislation, or at least looking within the existing legislation, and at a stroke of a pen allowing Uber to operate right now.

We are on the brink of Gather Round. I think one of the reasons I am so concerned about this is because I want our local businesses to make the most of the opportunity that Gather Round presents. We have 10,000 people coming to Lyndoch on two days over a weekend. One game on Saturday, one game on Sunday—10,000 people. We have 12 or thereabouts taxis that are able to operate in the Barossa. If you do the maths with that, that is going to make things pretty challenging.

I appreciate that there are things that are being spruiked, like shuttle buses, but I do not want the Gather Round just to be a case of fantastic tourists coming to Gawler via the train, hopping on a bus to Lyndoch and then heading back to the city. I want them to make the most of what this opportunity presents, businesses want this for themselves as well, and I think that the least we can do is make sure that there is enough time to ensure that rolling out this significant change is successful.

Time is a ticking. I appreciate the wheels of change can sometimes be challenging, but in this case I believe they are moving far too slowly. It is time to really get this show on the road and make sure that we have rideshare rolled out in a really successful way that can complement what our local taxi companies are already providing to the people of the Barossa Valley.

We are already seeing it in Mount Barker, the Adelaide Hills, Gawler, the city and McLaren Vale. Why not speed this process up and get it into the Barossa as soon as possible? I do not want our region to be left red-faced. I do not want the government to be left red-faced when businesses are saying that they were unable to make the most of the anticipated economic benefit that could be flowing from Gather Round.

I know that there are a few other elements of this bill, but our lead speaker, the member for Unley, has articulated our position on those and gone through them in quite some depth, so I will leave my remarks there. I am looking forward to continuing to work with the Premier on ensuring that we have transport options not just for the Gather Round but for local people in my community all year round over the years ahead.

**Ms O'HANLON (Dunstan) (16:25):** I rise today to support the Passenger Transport (Point to Point Transport Services) Amendment Bill 2025. This bill represents a significant step forward in reflecting the new modern passenger transport industry and addressing longstanding challenges that have affected both service providers and customers.

The Department for Infrastructure and Transport conducted an extensive review of our point-to-point transport sector, consulting widely with industry stakeholders, private consumers and relevant government agencies. The review aimed to look at how we transition the taxi industry into a fit-for-purpose service for the modern times. It focused on safety of drivers and passengers, and many of us have heard terrible experiences had by both drivers and passengers up until now.

Their findings, released in August 2024, paint a clear picture of an industry in need of reform and are reflected in the bill before us. To be direct about what we are facing, we have a taxi industry operating under outdated regulations that no longer serve our community's needs. There are over 5,500 rideshare vehicles operating alongside 1,035 general taxis and 102 access taxis, each service under different rules and requirements.

This regulatory disparity on taxi licences and the expense of providing one service as opposed to another has created an uneven playing field that benefits neither drivers nor passengers, for example, taxis not being available when we need them—I dare say most of us have experience coming out of an event and there not being taxis available at the taxi rank—or rideshare showing one wait time before it is booked then immediately turning into a much longer wait time as soon as you click to book the ride.

Most concerning, though, are the persistent issues affecting our most vulnerable citizens. Each month, more than 500 people with disabilities are forced to wait over 30 minutes for an access taxi. This is simply unacceptable. These are not just statistics: these are real people trying to go about their daily lives, attend medical appointments or participate in community activities.

This bill proposes several crucial reforms identified by the review. First, we will transition to an annual licensing regime for taxis, removing the artificial cap on metropolitan taxi numbers. This is a significant change, but this government is not leaving the industry to fend for itself. The bill implements a comprehensive taxi industry reform package that includes a buyback scheme offering, as has been said, \$200,000 for first licence holders and \$10,000 for subsequent licences up to six licences. To support this transition, we will increase the point-to-point transport service transaction levy by \$1 and utilise a portion of the Adelaide Airport service fee. This ensures the reforms are funded sustainably.

The bill also addresses the critical issue of accessible transport. We are implementing a market sounding process to identify new service delivery models for wheelchair-accessible transport. The status quo, where hundreds of vulnerable citizens face extended waiting times, cannot continue. Furthermore, we are removing the metropolitan boundary restrictions. As has been so well articulated by the member for Schubert, they have limited service availability in regional areas. This change will allow point-to-point operators to serve communities beyond Adelaide, improving transport options across our state and indeed benefiting the regional economy.

I acknowledge these reforms will bring significant change to an industry that has operated under the same model for decades, but change is necessary. The current system, with its stark regulatory differences between taxis and rideshare services, its artificial supply constraints and its failing accessible transport model, is no longer serving our community effectively. This bill strikes a careful balance between industry transition and consumer protection. It maintains essential requirements while creating a level playing field. It preserves the taxi industry's exclusive rights to rank and hail services while opening up new opportunities for innovation and improved service delivery.

The reforms before us today are not just about updating regulations, they are about ensuring every South Australian has access to reliable, safe and efficient transport services. They are about supporting an industry through necessary change while protecting the interests of vulnerable consumers. I commend this bill to the house.

**Mr WHETSTONE (Chaffey) (16:29):** I rise to support in principle the Passenger Transport (Point to Point Transport Services) Amendment Bill. As a regional MP, I have significant interest in the limited access to public transport services currently, and how rideshare could diversify to service what I would consider an ailing need for the people in Chaffey.

Chaffey is about three hours from Adelaide and it has enormous deficiencies when it comes to public transport. We have a skeleton bus service within working hours up in the Riverland. What it does is really disadvantage people from accessing public transport. The taxi industry has been of service with the limited number of taxis, as the member for Schubert has rightfully said. The taxi numbers are finite to service a rural setting that is quite spread out. I know myself, over a long period of time, if I want to access a cab from where I live into one of the towns it can be anywhere from \$50 to \$100 each way.

That is quite prohibitive for many who are looking to access health services, social activities, any day-to-day need to get around. In some instances, there are people who do not have a form of transport: they do not have a licence, they do not have a vehicle, they are somewhat socially disadvantaged, and the only way that they can get from point A to point B is by using a public amenity, and that could be a rideshare service.

Just on the front of that, the bill was introduced in the first sitting week of this year, and even though it is just a sitting week ago, it feels like they are rushing through this legislation without proper industry and stakeholder consultation on the bill itself. Given the very short time in which the bill was introduced and brought to debate, I am of the belief that there are a number of stakeholders who have expressed their disappointment, not only to the shadow minister but in general conversations that I have had in the last couple of weeks.

When rideshare was introduced into South Australia it came with a number of issues. The issues have been very well explained, the taxi industry has seen a significant level of adjustment and it is now going to cost the taxpayers of South Australia a significant amount of money for that compensation. I know back then the former transport minister, the Hon. Mr Mullighan, introduced

rideshare and now the transport minister, the member for West Torrens, is going to compensate those taxi businesses, those plate holders, for the impact that Uber has had on them.

There has been concern regarding the bill's removal of independent oversight, as well as the increase in ministerial authority. The bill significantly expands ministerial discretion over accreditation and licensing and, effectively, that is centralising decision-making power into the hands of the minister without a clear industry oversight or an independent review mechanism. The bill removes independent processes and places nearly all accreditation decisions under direct ministerial control, affecting booking service providers, general passenger transport services, and individual drivers. I have been in this place long enough; you have to be wary of any bill that is put into place at pace and potentially places any minister as his own policeman. That is a concern I have.

The bill proposes to open up all of South Australia to rideshare operations. The current metropolitan boundary restricts where point-to-point services can operate, limiting passenger transport options for customers outside of the Adelaide metropolitan area. The bill will also allow for rideshare to operate across South Australia in both metro and regional areas. I want to talk a little bit about the regional setting. I understand there are some vagaries at the moment about the implementation of a rideshare service. I do not need to use names, but there are a number, I think three or four rideshare services, operating here in South Australia.

Will we be able to service a sparse electorate or a sparse part of South Australia? Will there be drivers? Will there be a level of interest that will service the sector without tarnishing a brand? I think that is fair to assume. I am regularly asked when rideshare will be coming to the Riverland. Just two years ago, I ran a survey and it had overwhelming support. People see this as not only an opportunity to access transport services but also an opportunity to test the viability of the market. I expect it will be welcomed by many. Regional communities and councils seem broadly supportive of the change, but in particular one brand, Uber, has flagged that it will take time to onboard drivers and ensure capacity before being rolled out in the regions.

When Uber, rideshare, was launched and announced in South Australia, I was of the view that I would support a taxi service over rideshare, but I soon became very tired of the same old, tired taxis that I hopped into. The most notable signature of an ailing taxi was that it had a whining diff, it had seats that were torn or it was dirty and smelly; it was an unreliable service at that point in time. However, competition has come into the marketplace and it has certainly smartened up the taxi industry. It has put some competition into the place.

When I am travelling overseas, particularly when I am visiting my son and his family in the US, I regularly catch Ubers from San Francisco airport out to Modesto. Modesto is about, let's say, two hours east of San Francisco. I hop into rideshares. The theme over there is that not every rideshare driver is a full-time driver. On their way to work, they potentially pick up a fare. If it is a short fare they might do a couple before work, and then go to work, and vice versa. A lot of people work out of regional California into the city, and that is exactly what I have found: a number of drivers that do. They pick up a driver on their way to work in the morning, and that might be from Modesto or close by—Stockton is an example, and Fresno. They will pick up someone from, for example, my son's place at Modesto and do a two-hour drive to work, which is something they do on a day-to-day basis.

They will also do the same thing coming back. They will pick up someone from the airport and take them out to a regional centre, and that is putting diversity into their income. Sitting in a vehicle for four hours a day is usually non-productive unless you are on the phone doing your work, conversing with a customer base. But if you are not doing that, why should you not be able to look at that type of model? As I said, it really does put a little bit of diversity into an income stream.

The current cost of a cab, particularly in the Riverland, is prohibitive. As I have said, it is \$50 or \$100 one way for a cab fare, which makes it prohibitive. With a limited bus service it is also very hard to get around an area or around the Riverland communities, which are quite spread out. If you live in a town like Renmark and you want to travel to Loxton, it is going to cost you \$100 to get to the doctor, let alone paying \$100 or over \$100 for the doctor's fee. So I think we need to be able to demonstrate flexibility with this legislation and to understand how it will benefit a regional community or someone in a regional setting who is looking to get from point A to point B.

As I said, I think the point-to-point passenger service is progress. It is something that metropolitan Adelaide has enjoyed for a number of years now. It must be approaching 10 years that we have seen this service providing, I think, a really good service. It really did show the way for people getting out and about on public amenity or public transport, providing good service, clean vehicles and reliability. I think the pay-before-you-use concept is quite valuable. It saves cash transactions, and it saves some of those who are proponents of doing the wrong thing, who see cash money and the opportunity of committing crime, from interfering with people's public safety. I think that is something that Uber has really extinguished in many quarters.

I think this amendment bill will be an opportunity for many regional MPs to explore the opportunities that rideshare will present to their regional setting and to their communities to be able to access a transport service that they do not currently have. For many of us who do not have bus service, train service or tram service and only have a very limited taxi service, I think it really does go a very long way in evening up the ledger when it comes to getting about, visiting health professionals, making social outings and in terms of responsible driving. It really does open up great opportunities, and it opens up a better lifestyle when living in a regional setting.

It gives more opportunity for people to act responsibly. We do not like to hear of people drink driving, and we do not like to see road trauma, which we are seeing a lot of, particularly in a regional setting. That is where the majority of our road traumas are, in a regional setting. All regional roads, at some point, are at 110 km/h. We are not just a 40, 50 or 60 km/h zone, although in town sometimes it is.

We have to look at the bigger picture, and we have to, as I said, even up the ledger. Whether you live in the regions or whether you live in metro South Australia, I think point-to-point services, should they be implemented carefully and in a considered way, will be a coming of age for many of our regional settings.

**Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (16:43):** Today I rise to discuss the Passenger Transport (Point to Point Transport Services) Amendment Bill 2025, which was introduced by the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport on 5 February 2025.

The government had an election commitment as part of their 2022 campaign, which was to initiate a review of the Passenger Transport Act. In August 2024, the government released 29 recommendations detailing proposed changes to the legislative framework that regulates taxis, rideshare and chauffeur vehicles.

The speech the minister made focused on safety, compliance and vehicle authorisation standards and these are certainly very important considerations. The bill also includes the removal of independent oversight and significantly expanded ministerial authority and discretion. The bill certainly does propose significant reforms to South Australia's point-to-point transport industry, impacting taxis, rideshare and chauffeur services. The government claims the bill is necessary to modernise the industry and implement elements of the taxi industry support package from the 2024-25 state budget.

There are significant concerns regarding the bill's removal of independent oversight and the significant increase in ministerial authority. This bill also proposes to open up all of South Australia to rideshare operators, which I truly welcome. The current metropolitan boundary, which has expanded over time, has now reached the southern edge of Mount Barker, but it has been very restrictive. It restricts where point-to-point services can operate, limiting passenger transport options for customers outside the Adelaide metropolitan area. The bill will allow for rideshare to operate across South Australia in both metropolitan and regional areas.

Just on that point, it is interesting to note we have been the only state in Australia to have a metropolitan boundary in place. All the rest of the states operate under one licence that can be operated across the whole state. For instance, you could have Sydney Uber drivers working in Sydney most of the time and they might go up the north coast of New South Wales during the summer and they do not need another licence; they just use the licence that they already have to operate during the summertime to capitalise on their licence. That only seems like common sense and it seems quite an oddity to say the least that there was this boundary disruption here in South Australia,

because obviously operators did not want to have to go through the pain of having two licences, which just seemed ridiculous from day one, so hopefully this will iron all of that out.

Myself, the member for Schubert and other members on this side have advocated for this across our electorates. Regional communities and councils are very supportive of this change and Uber have flagged that setting up in the regions will take time to onboard drivers and ensure capacity before rolling out.

Regional taxi operators have flagged concern with this change, highlighting issues around busy summertimes being attractive to rideshare operators and vacating the regions during slower months. I have a different view. As it does in the city, I think across regional South Australia there are plenty of options where taxi services can work directly alongside Uber. With towns like Strathalbyn and Murray Bridge there is so much opportunity for these services to expand, because quite frankly there are next to no other services. There is a local dial-a-ride service in Murray Bridge, but there is no real public transport service in either town that is regular and connects to other towns. There is certainly no Metroticket, which would be most welcome in both areas to connect to the urban network.

For several years now I have been advocating on behalf of those local communities, especially with regard to the opportunities we have in the Murraylands and the Langhorne Creek wine district and areas surrounding these areas. As people have seen, we have that much opportunity with the wineries of Langhorne Creek. Some of these are hosting wedding events and other major events—we have Woodburn Homestead, outside of Langhorne Creek, which is a fantastic setting for weddings and other events—and there are so many other things that happen in the Langhorne Creek and Strathalbyn area. There are car runs and motorbike runs, but people just come out to enjoy the area, and the whole group want to enjoy the area, so something like Uber opening up will be more than welcome.

In the Murray Bridge/Murraylands region there are so many things happening. We see the Monarto Safari Park going from strength to strength with the new motel getting a new operator signed up—Journey Beyond, the train operators—who are going to take over the management of the safari park built by Gerry Ryan from Jayco. We really appreciate his investment into the safari park. There will be 78 rooms there and also 20 glamping tents where you can stay amongst the lions. I am sure there will be at least a little bit of fencing between you and the lions and all the other animals that are in the park. Elaine Bensted knows my passion for elephants, and we have finally got a couple of elephants at Monarto Safari Park, and we have three more coming. So I applaud all the activities at Monarto Safari Park. That is one place in my area that is really booming and where rideshare services could be utilised for access.

We have a lot of racing events in our local community. We have the speedway, we have go-karts and then further down the road, at Tailem Bend obviously, we have the Motorsport Park which is being well utilised every weekend for various events. Now, with the onset of the drags opening up there, after a long time—decades—without the opportunity for drag racing in Tailem Bend, it is so good to see that opportunity being taken up.

Right across the board, people could be visiting to utilise water sports, water activities on the river—which many do, obviously—so I think there is so much opportunity. Some people say, especially in the taxi industry, 'With Uber coming along it will cause too much disruption and put us out of work.' Well, I think there is lots of opportunity, especially on weekends, and this is where perhaps part-time drivers who have a full-time job or a nearly full-time job could operate on Friday and Saturday nights, because it is certainly needed, to pick up people from venues like the local hotels or wineries and get them home.

I know one of the cab services is looking at doubling their cabs into Murray Bridge and surrounding areas, so I think there will be a great uplift as Uber comes in and, yes, it will take time. I think there are thoughts that this could be activated for Gather Round, and hopefully it can be. Gather Round is not that far down the track; less than two months away. As Uber have stated, they need to onboard drivers, get people to go through all the compliance protocols that they need to do to get onboard to open up this opportunity throughout the regions. I think it will be exciting, and I think it is

a real opportunity so long as it is managed appropriately, gets off the ground appropriately, and just works hopefully seamlessly.

That might be asking for too much because there are times when things do not happen seamlessly, depending on what the issue is. But there is a real opportunity to open up regions right across this state, especially for those who are not that far from Adelaide, and I think there is a real bonus that we could be looking at here in tourism across the regions and right across the state.

At the moment, there is the Passenger Transport Standards Committee, which is the body responsible for overseeing passenger transport standards, compliance and regulations. This committee ensures industry consultation, provides oversight on regulatory matters and acts as an independent advisory group to balance industry needs with government policy. This section of the current act will be repealed and the minister will not have a committee. Instead, all references to the committee will be transferred to ministerial authority. This means that all the regulatory oversight, industry consultation and standard-setting functions that were previously undertaken by the committee will now solely fall to the minister's discretion. In regard to internal review mechanisms, instead of going to the District Court these appeals will go to SACAT and that will come in with the new ministerial powers.

There have been some concerns raised about transparency and accountability with this change and some are suggesting that without the independent body to review and guide the regulations, industry participants, including people from right across the board, whether they are taxi operators, rideshare services or chauffeur companies, will have no formal mechanism to challenge or contribute to regulatory decisions. The Taxi Council are concerned that it will effectively make the minister, or his delegate, the judge, jury and executioner. As I have said, this does centralise the power in the minister's hands. We just need to make sure that, moving forward, this is used effectively to manage the industry in a positive way.

In regard to concerns about total ministerial control, there was broad agreement between both the Department for Infrastructure and Transport and the Taxi Council that the committee, which will become obsolete if this legislation is passed, has been relatively ineffective, dealing with rather trivial administrative issues and hands out insignificant fines for breaches. It is acknowledged that they believe the operations are opaque and that it is a time-consuming process for the department to prepare briefs for the committee to take action, even when CCTV footage of wrongdoing exists.

Certainly, in regard to the bill, the minister gets discretion over accreditation and licensing. Also, it places all the accreditation decisions under direct ministerial control, affecting booking service providers, general passenger transport services and individual drivers. That is taken over in various sections throughout the bill.

There is also part of the bill that has regard to the buyback scheme for taxi licences, which has obviously been an ongoing issue over many years, which offers \$200,000 for the first metropolitan taxi licence and \$10,000 for additional licences up to a total of six. This is obviously well below, in some places, what many operators originally paid for those licences. We are thinking that the proposed eight-year timeframe for buybacks is too long, leaving some licence holders still paying for loans when taxi licences were in excess of \$300,000. Hopefully, there may be a restriction in that timeline to get these licences paid back.

In saying all that, the Taxi Council certainly do not want any delay. They have operators who, for a range of reasons, want to get out of the industry and they want the timeline reduced down to four years, if possible. There is a whole range of timelines around that, and then this bill takes out the requirement for perpetual taxi licences and replaces them with an uncapped annual licensing system. The legislation itself does not specify the exact cost of an annual taxi licence; this is something else that is under the discretion of the minister.

There has been consultation with Uber Australia and the Taxi Council of South Australia. Generally, apart from some in the taxi industry feeling they are over a barrel, they are keen for the legislation to get going and to just get on with it. Uber are keen to get on with the job. I have had different meetings with Uber; some have been on Teams. It will be a great thing to see extra options coming to communities from across the board, but it certainly will need a lot of time to onboard this



new program. Obviously, you will need people to be involved and Uber drivers to be involved. They will need to be accredited and registered to offer those opportunities.

As I said, with the weekend opportunities in regional areas from Friday through to Sunday night and over long weekends as well, I think there is a huge opportunity with the number of entertainment options and functions that happen in the regions—such as across mine in the Murraylands and the beautiful wine region of Langhorne Creek—for point-to-point transport to prosper alongside the taxi industry so that people have a lot more options and a lot more flexibility when they are going out for entertainment and for work purposes as well. I know there will be some questions asked later on, but with those words I support the bill.

**Mrs PEARCE (King) (17:01):** My community has reflected a strong desire to see the playing field levelled when it comes to point-to-point transportation services. Whether it be from plate holders, commuters or residents who rely on access cabs, I have heard countless examples of how much the industry has changed over the years and the implications that have arisen as a result. We agree: change is much needed. There is no doubt that this sector is experiencing significant challenges ranging from safety concerns, fraudulent behaviour, price gouging and industry participants who are subject to differing requirements, particularly when it comes to safety measures.

We have given the concerns raised serious consideration, and it is why we made a commitment to review the act to be able to reform the point-to-point passenger transport industry—taxi, chauffeur and rideshare—and we have delivered on that. Released on 30 August 2024, the review made 29 recommendations to help bring about broad and enduring changes designed to make services safer and more reliable while also supporting a more sustainable industry. Feedback received was informed by industry, customers and key stakeholders, and I thank everyone who participated in this process, including those from my local community.

I have heard from taxi licence owners in my community who have tirelessly campaigned for additional support and stronger protections for their industry, especially in light of the introduction of ridesharing services in South Australia like Uber and DiDi. These dedicated workers invested significantly into the taxi industry, setting themselves and their families up for what they thought was years to come, yet these same taxi licence holders have seen their industry shrink under the impact of ridesharing services. Plate holders have continuously called for a level playing field and I am proud that the Malinauskas government is on its way to delivering just that.

I have also listened to countless stories in my community regarding difficulties accessing these vital services. Many from a local retirement village have told me of cancelled medical appointments, missed catch-ups and delayed shopping trips, all due to late taxi arrivals, some by more than an hour. This is an infringement on their independence and their ability to live healthily and well.

One Golden Grove resident told me of her heartbreak when she lost her licence due to vision loss. She is homebound but for two options: a family member who does not live nearby and works full-time hours, or cabs. On several occasions, she has been left frustrated with unreliable access cab services, especially when those services have failed to arrive on time. Arrival delays have meant that this resident has missed multiple medical appointments and has at times been stranded and forced to wait in extreme weather conditions at local shopping centres, where she had ventured to obtain her essential items and services.

These stories demonstrate why it is so important that adequate, safe and on-time services are available. Proper and reliable services are vital for seniors in particular and those requiring assistance so that they continue to live independent lives longer. My community will soon experience significant growth, and it is so important that we ensure that we have the right support services and accessible infrastructure, which does include reliable and on-time point-to-point services.

The bill before us today starts this process and aims to build a framework to overcome many of the concerns that have been raised. It has taken on board much of the feedback received through the review and those reflected from local communities like mine, and it sets out to level the playing field across a plethora of measures.

Firstly, it will remove the limit on the number of taxis that can operate, as well as deliver taxi industry support. As I touched on earlier, we have heard from taxi stakeholders about the devastating impact changes to the industry have had since the introduction of rideshare. This bill removes the requirement for a perpetual licence to operate a taxi, removing the barrier to entry, and introduces an uncapped annual licence regime.

The bill will also allow the state government to deliver compensation to the taxi industry, with eligible licence holders to receive \$200,000 for the first metropolitan taxi licence held and \$10,000 for each subsequent licence, up to a total of six licences. In addition, anyone who is not eligible and has had the perpetual licence cancelled will receive \$10,000 compensation. Access taxi licence holders will receive \$100,000 for their first licence and \$10,000 for each subsequent licence.

For those not invested in this field and wondering how the cost will be covered, it will be in part funded by an increase in the point-to-point transport service transaction levy. The levy helps fund assistance packages to metropolitan taxi licence holders and lessees to help them transition to a new regulatory model following the introduction of rideshare. It will now be increased to \$2.

Under the new framework, vehicles will need to be authorised to provide a passenger transport service. Through doing this, the bill will help ensure vehicles meet prescribed standards, including vehicle identification and safety requirements. The bill will also strengthen compliance and enforcement regimes by introducing new offences and automatic suspension and cancellation of accreditation in prescribed circumstances. Those include circumstances where a driver will automatically have their passenger transport driver accreditation suspended if they do not have a current driver's licence. Additionally, a person's accreditation will be cancelled if they have committed a prescribed offence, have breached the general safety duty or no longer meet the requirements to hold that type of accreditation.

Safety was an absolute paramount concern raised by both passengers and drivers alike. I am pleased that this bill enhances safety for drivers and passengers by introducing a general safety duty with similar principles to the Work Health and Safety Act 2012 and the Heavy Vehicle National Law (South Australia) Act. This introduces a legal requirement to eliminate or minimise the risk of incidents involving death, injury or damage and to encourage the development, maintenance and continuous improvement of work safety practices. This duty will apply to those within the chain of responsibility for providing a passenger transport service other than public transport, including the service provider, the driver and holder of vehicle authorisation.

Finally, the bill implements a number of additional review recommendations, with others that will be able to be implemented via future regulation changes to help bring about further improvements to the industry. We want to make sure that we get this right and that we are tackling all concerns that have been raised with us. I thank the community, which has worked with us to achieve these changes to date, and those who will continue working with us to help improve point-to-point services in communities all across our state. With that, I commend this bill to the house.

**Ms PRATT (Frome) (17:09):** What better audience could I ask for to talk to on the topic of regional tourism than the current minister and former Minister for Tourism? It is clear from the contributions that we have seen in the house this afternoon that tourism is front and centre as the winner of reform coming to the rideshare industry. Rising to speak in support of the Passenger Transport (Point to Point Transport Services) Amendment Bill 2025, it is clear, certainly from this side of the house, that country members of parliament see an opportunity—a rare opportunity—for our country constituents to share in something that our city cousins have been enjoying for quite a while.

I want to thank my colleagues for the speeches that I have heard. The member for Hammond reflected on the significant tourism experience of Monarto, with the Monarto Safari Park, and the investment that we have seen in that area, not just around experiences at Monarto but in accommodation and what opportunities there are for local residents to access this form of transport, not just those who are perhaps coming from the city on a tour bus. The member for Chaffey reflected on opportunities in the Riverland and how point-to-point rideshare services would enhance those experiences.

Many of us represent communities that are connected one to the other. If you do not have a vehicle and you do not have the means to leave your town, which may be on a smaller scale, to get

to that event that is 10 minutes down the road if only you had a vehicle, we see great opportunities that would open up—not just the visitor economy coming to our regions but for those people who live locally and would like to access those events more often, whether it is the Food and Wine Festival in the Riverland or whether it is the Port Lincoln Cup Carnival that takes place over on the West Coast. I perhaps pre-empt what my colleague, the member for Flinders, might talk about.

In particular, I want to recognise the great effort that has been undertaken by my colleague, the member for Schubert, who has led a very strong community campaign calling for these services to finally arrive in the regions. Do not tell her I said this, but of course the Barossa really is one of our pre-eminent destinations in South Australia as far as a regional tourism experience goes, and the government knows this.

We are seeing significant investment being made in infrastructure in Lyndoch to support the Gather Round. We want our guests who are coming in to South Australia to have the best possible experience, which is not just getting to the football but enjoying everything that that region has to offer. This bill gives us all an opportunity to reflect on exactly what we want our communities and our guests to experience when they come to visit.

It is no small feat for 3,000 constituents of Schubert to participate in a survey, an engagement activity, demonstrating I think up to 95 per cent support. In my own electorate of Frome, in the heart of this electorate and the centre of this electorate is the Clare Valley. While the opportunities for tourism throughout Frome—from the Light region up to Goyder and Burra—are limitless, really, particularly in national parks and ecotourism, the Clare Valley offers something that on a smaller scale echoes our wine grapegrowing communities around the state. I see people who live locally denied the opportunity to perhaps fully enjoy events like the Gourmet Weekend, which is now the Gourmet Week, again for the want of a vehicle or the means to perhaps move freely.

If I can paint you a picture, Mr Speaker, I know that you are very familiar with this region, but in those beautiful valley towns from Clare through Penwortham to Watervale, Leasingham, Auburn and all of the districts that are part of that catchment, imagine a day out where you can leave your accommodation—it might be the Mill Street apartments, it might be the new and stylish Clare Hillside Apartments—and you are in a rideshare travelling down the valley to Taylors' fantastic newly opened cellar door in Auburn.

It enables you to meander back through some of our gin distilleries, like Sawmill Gin or the soon to be formally opened Clare Valley Distillery. That is a stunning location, Mr Speaker; you will have to come and visit. We have fantastic dining opportunities. To be able to safely travel to the Watervale Hotel, the Sevenhill pub, Slate Restaurant at Pikes winery and all the pubs in the district, from the Rising Sun to the Magpie and Stump—perhaps not all in one day, but there is that freedom and autonomy to move around and enjoy everything that our region has to offer in that wining, dining, accommodation, hospitality experience.

At the southern end of the electorate, of course, is Two Wells. While I focused on tourism, there is an opportunity, for the first time, to deliver what would be publicly accessible transport options for a community that is on the cusp, on the edge, of the city. It still defines itself as country, and it really has no public transport to speak of. This amendment bill has come about in part as a result of the state government initiating a review of the Passenger Transport Act, and what that delivered to this house were 29 recommendations that really started to look at the legislative framework that governs taxis, rideshare and chauffeur vehicles.

In conversation as the opposition, we were concerned that briefings were not readily forthcoming or in some part rushed. There is certainly a sense of pace about the government's approach to this legislation, but neither is the legislation unwelcome. I think we all have appreciated a chance to reflect on what it means for our communities today. As one example of a rideshare service that is operating in the city, Uber has flagged that setting up in the regions will take time to onboard drivers, and that is quite an understatement. We have workforce shortages across all industries, and rideshare would be no different.

So there are some questions, concerns or hesitations, perhaps, about a speedy rollout if the infrastructure and the personnel are not there. I know in the Clare Valley I have attended a number of sessions run by community groups and employment organisations where we are trying to invest

in our younger generation just getting their licence. Just getting their licence is a challenge in country SA, yet a young person getting their licence and getting access to a vehicle is the mechanism by which they can find work for themselves that might take them out of the town they are living in.

That has been dependent on volunteers who would be prepared to donate their time to train a young person or to support them collecting their hours in the logbook. I know that young people would be looking at this as an opportunity for work, casual, part time or perhaps something that they turn into more full-time work because they really enjoy moving people around. We need to better understand what is the capacity of regions or the state to provide that driving workforce that would deliver a reliable and consistent rideshare service.

That brings me to reflect very seriously on the taxi industry. I want to give a big shout-out to a friend of mine, Veer Atwal, who is a critical business operator in the Clare Valley because if not for him we would not have a taxi service at all. It is valued and it is highly patronised. I see taxis on the road all the time, and I am sure that there is probably feedback from the community that they would like even more access, but here we are relying on private operators, private investors, owner-operators to do this work.

It is very important that we pay close attention to what the taxi industry's feedback or response to this legislation has been. That is where we need to find a balance within the market of catering for consumers, catering for passengers and providing choice. That is certainly possible in the city but less so in the country. We are lucky in those towns where there is a taxi service that it is highly regarded, and I would be loath to do anything to see that industry disrupted.

The feedback we have had is that regional taxi operators are flagging concerns about any change to the legislation that governs their industry, highlighting issues that around busy summertimes, where there might be a peak, it might be attractive to rideshare operators, but it might result in vacating those regions during slower months. That either puts pressure back onto the taxis or in fact what would be devastating to the Clare community is that the taxi business packs up and goes home.

My final reflections are on the buyback scheme. The scheme seems to be offering \$200,000 for that first plate, although that is probably for metropolitan taxi licences. In my own family living interstate, who have relied on taxi licences as the family business, the arrival of Uber on our Australian shores has certainly been a big disrupter to the market. In some ways that is old news but it has certainly been cause for consternation in a community that has only ever had access to taxis, and of course the market has encouraged us to find that autonomy, to download the apps, to enjoy Uber Eats and to negotiate our fares.

For women and perhaps men—I cannot speak for them—certainly for those later night journeys where someone is looking for a safe ride home, the app and rideshare services give you a lot more information than we have ever had before around the registration you are looking for, the driver's name, photo image, and crosschecking them to make sure they are picking up the right passenger.

With the buyback scheme of \$200,000 per plate, I respect the feedback from the industry that the proposal of an eight-year timeframe for those buybacks is really too long, yet it seems that we are at an impasse where there are mum-and-dad taxi owner-operators who are probably just needing to get out of the market, and in that way they need to get some assurance from the government that there will be a resolution to the buyback scheme.

The other concern that has been raised by the opposition in seeking briefings is to better understand the levy, where the bill doubles the existing point-to-point transport levy from \$1 to \$2 per trip. That not just increases costs for passengers but these funds raised will finance the taxi licence buyback scheme. But there is a risk of that burden ultimately falling back onto passengers. The opposition has asked questions and will continue to ask questions about how the levy is collected, what revenue is coming back to government and how that is being spent.

Is it returning in some way to the Department for Infrastructure and Transport or the public passenger services, or is it going into general revenue in a way that it really just gets absorbed? There does not seem to be a clear track of how this revenue is collected, how it is invested. For the

government to expect or demand that that levy will be doubled, we do not have any transparency on how that return back to the government will assist South Australians. It is a question that needs to be answered.

We support the bill in principle. I am pleased to note that in feedback to the opposition we know several regional councils have also demonstrated their support. They have been consulted about opening up rideshare in regional South Australia, and that support is broadly there. The support comes from me as well. Within my own electorate of Frome there are six councils that I think would all agree that reform and the delivery of this legislation would be welcome. With those remarks, I conclude my contribution and support the bill.

**The Hon. A. PICCOLO (Light) (17:26):** I rise to speak in support of the bill. I note that the Passenger Transport (Point to Point Transport Services) Amendment Bill amends the Passenger Transport Act 1994 to implement recommendations arising out of the government's commitments to review the act and reform the point-to-point passenger transport industry, which includes taxi, chauffeur and rideshare. The bill also seeks to implement elements of the taxi industry support package, approved as part of the state budget during the 2024-25 financial year.

On 30 August 2024, the government released the review, which made 29 recommendations informed by feedback from industry, customers and other key stakeholders. The review has provided a framework for broad and enduring change designed to make services safer and more reliable while supporting a more sustainable industry. It is certainly a truism that change in this industry is required. There is no doubt this sector has experienced significant challenges, and those challenges are from the various disrupter-type industries and services provided. From safety concerns, fraudulent behaviour and industry participants subject to different requirements, this review and the bill before us aim to build a framework to overcome some of these concerns.

As I said, I do support the bill. While I believe the bill is well intentioned and has some sound objectives, I am not yet 100 per cent convinced that this bill will address some of the issues raised in my electorate. I think it is important to raise those concerns. Having said that, I am not sure what can be done, but this bill will certainly provide a foundation for those concerns to be looked at in the future. The greatest concern I have is that the Gawler area was, for better or worse, put into the metropolitan point-to-point area some time ago by the previous government. The previous government also allowed one operator a licence for that area.

That certainly theoretically increased the number of taxis available to the town of Gawler. The problem was that because Gawler was previously under a country model and had local services, they now have to compete with the Adelaide-based taxi services. That competition in itself is not a bad thing. However, what has resulted is that all the profitable part of the business was taken up by the Adelaide-based company and, if you like, the less profitable trips were left to local services, which in the end meant they could not make enough money to keep it sustainable.

One of my concerns is that while we can open all this up to rideshare and other things, they are the ones who actually like to pick and choose the trips they take. In the end, you will have a certain number of trips in a place like Gawler and other nearby towns where people actually want to take a short trip. It might be from their home to the main street, which may only be a kilometre or two, which is not a big trip for any taxidriver. However, for that person it means whether they can actually leave their home and do what they need to do—go to the doctor, go shopping or whatever the case may be.

The Adelaide-based services will not come out there to pick people up. They will be there, though, on Friday and Saturday nights, all over the place, when the demand is high. Unless in this industry you allow some people to have a bit of both, some of those players will just fall out of the market and some people will be worse off. That is one of the concerns.

The other concern is a very vexed question, because on the one hand I hear numerous complaints from my electorate regarding access to access cabs, and on the other hand I understand the government hears from the providers that they do not have enough business, etc. Certainly in my area there is a huge demand for access cabs, and I have heard a number of people complain about the access cabs being either late, by hours and hours, or not turning up. Again, that sort of fits into the model where we can open this industry up but it does not mean, in some markets, that they

will turn up. There is a real risk of market failure, and there will be pockets of people who actually might be worse off under this new model than they are at the moment.

I hope I am wrong. I hope that by introducing this latest proposal it will actually provide for greater opportunities for people to be in the marketplace. I hope that some of the provisions in this bill will make entry into the marketplace equal for all players. I seek leave to continue my remarks.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

At 17:32 the house adjourned until Wednesday 19 February 2025 at 10:30.