

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Thursday, 16 October 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.

Parliamentary Committees

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE: INQUIRY INTO COMMERCIAL SEAWEED PRODUCTION IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Ms WORTLEY (Torrens) (11:01): I move:

That the seventh report of the committee, entitled Inquiry into Commercial Seaweed Production in South Australia, be noted.

Globally, seaweed is used for human consumption and aquaculture feed or substances that form gel with water, also known as hydrocolloids. Research shows seaweed's potential for carbon sequestration, its ability to sustain marine biodiversity and its capacity to generate employment and drive value-chain growth, indicate untapped opportunities. In South Australia, and Australia in general, seaweed farming is still a new industry that lags behind established industries in Asia, Europe and the Americas.

Australia's recent interest in seaweed farming was sparked by the discovery of *Asparagopsis*, a native Australian seaweed that can reduce methane emissions from cattle by 99 per cent when added to their feed. South Australia has two key *Asparagopsis* species growing in different water temperatures. Hence, on 16 May 2024, the Natural Resources Committee initiated a brief inquiry into commercial seaweed production in South Australia to examine the state's unique resources and the advantages and disadvantages of upscaling seaweed farming.

The committee held six hearings from 29 August 2024 to 6 February 2025, and it received evidence from South Australian government representatives, a national seaweed association and relevant businesses. The committee visited the South Australian Research and Development Institute's (SARDI) Aquatic Sciences Centre at West Beach on 10 October 2024, and the committee's research officer attended Seagiculture, the Second International Seaweed Conference in Asia Pacific at the Adelaide Convention Centre from 18 to 20 March 2025.

The evidence submitted to the committee indicates that South Australia's seaweed industry includes wild harvest and aquaculture, with 57 approved licences for seaweed cultivation. Most of the seaweed farming in the state is on trial levels, with recent large-scale operations by CH4 Global and offshore seaweed farms with finfish farming. Finfish farming is a set-up that exemplifies industrial symbiosis, which is a collaborative model with the circular economy, where businesses exchange resources like energy, water, materials and by-products to create mutual economic and environmental benefits.

The evidence gathered by the committee showed that South Australia's location makes it an ideal place for seaweed cultivation and production. The high seaweed diversity in the state, comparatively industry-friendly regulatory requirements, and government funding and support serve as South Australia's main points of difference from those of other states.

Relative to *Asparagopsis*, the seaweed known for reducing methane from cows when added to their feed, South Australia's waters naturally grow both species of the seaweed. *Asparagopsis armata* grows in the cold waters of South Australia, while *Asparagopsis taxiformis* grows in the state's

warmer waters. Furthermore, the evidence presented to the committee indicated First Nations peoples' interest and engagement in the state's seaweed industry.

South Australia's seaweed industry is experiencing growth in several areas, including the development of two new aquaculture zone policies and progress in commercialising seaweed products. Apart from *Asparagopsis* as a feed additive, other promising commercial applications include liquid biostimulants and seaweed as an alternative protein and a source of future carbon credit markets. Given its nascent phase, however, the South Australian seaweed industry faces challenges in scaling cultivation systems, reducing initial high production costs and navigating regulatory hurdles despite the state's industry-friendly regulatory requirements.

The industry also needs to consider facility set-up, biodiversity markets and increasing First Nations involvement and stakeholder education. While it is really too early to determine the profitability of seaweed farming in South Australia, the evidence provided to the committee highlighted that the key drivers for the industry's development are to reduce capital barriers, minimise risk to biodiversity and increase volume.

The committee recommends that the South Australian government engages stakeholders to reduce barriers to seaweed cultivation and product uptake. The committee considers it necessary to monitor and assess the impact of seaweed aquaculture on the land, water and communities. It is also essential to encourage First Nations participation in the industry by using their knowledge of the land's resources and their inclusion in the industry's development. In addition, the committee recommends that more consumer education and information about seaweed products and commercialisation be provided to the public.

I would like to take the opportunity to sincerely thank all the witnesses who gave their time to assist the committee with this inquiry. I commend the committee members—the member for Finnis, the member for Gibson, the member for Waite, the Hon. Tammy Franks MLC, the Hon. Ben Hood MLC and the Hon. Russell Wortley MLC—for their contributions to this inquiry and the report. I would like to acknowledge also the fact that this was brought to us by the member for Waite through her interest, which sparked interest from the committee. I would also like to thank the committee secretariat for their assistance: Shane Hilton and Dr Jennefer Bagaporo. I commend the report to the house.

Ms HUTCHESSON (Waite) (11:08): I will just make a few comments on this inquiry that we undertook. I was really proud to be able to bring the idea to the committee. I attended a German Week event a couple of years back and was very happy to meet a gentleman named Adam Main, who was working for CH4 Global. He led a very brief discussion around seaweed and some of the opportunities that it presents to our state, the country and across the world with some of the amazing things that it could be capable of doing. I brought back a very basic video that is on their website, and it really sparked the interest of the committee, so I was really proud that we were able to get this inquiry off the ground.

We managed to have a look at seaweed in all sorts of different places and different ways in which it is working. Some of the more interesting ways it is being used include not only feeding it to animals to reduce their carbon footprint but also using it in make-up and all sorts of incredible supplements to make us as humans feel better. I feel like there is a really huge opportunity for the seaweed industry.

We were fortunate to go to the PIRSA site at West Beach to look at some of the work they are doing there and look at some of the seaweed that they can grow from just the smallest amount. It was really fascinating to see how passionate they were about seaweed. We picked that up from all the submissions that we received that those who are involved in the industry are really excited about what this could actually provide for our state.

I want to thank the committee for taking on the inquiry and to our Chair for taking us through it. Watch this space: I think that seaweed is going to really take off in our state. I thank all the people who provided a submission to us and all our committee members. I support the motion.

Motion carried.

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE: NORTHERN ADELAIDE RENAL HAEMODIALYSIS SERVICES

Ms SAVVAS (Newland) (11:11): I move:

That the 154th report of the committee, entitled Renal Haemodialysis Services Project, be noted.

I ask for your indulgence today, Mr Speaker. It is my first day on the Public Works Committee. Although I have not been around for this project I am well and truly looking forward to being on this committee and watching other very important projects progress as we move through. I am very familiar, of course, with the Northern Adelaide Local Health Network, where Modbury Hospital, my local hospital, is located.

NALHN does have the second fastest growing population in South Australia, with a projected population of approximately 460,000 people by 2032. Further compounding the associated increase in health service demand, the health network also has the highest percentage of the most vulnerable population, including things such as chronic disease and substance misuse, compared with the rest of the state. We anticipate that the expected growth will be most significant in older demographics. Presently, NALHN is approximately 54 per cent self-sufficient, indicating 46 per cent of its treatment population must travel outside the local health network to access healthcare services.

Project modelling by the Department for Health and Wellbeing (SA Health), indicates that the northern Adelaide region will experience a significant increase in the demand for renal dialysis in coming years. The current haemodialysis unit at Lyell McEwin Hospital provides services for the local health network catchment area, but the inpatient dialysis model has been limited. Subsequently, NALHN's Closer to Home initiative has identified the need to expand renal patient services within its catchment area.

The current model of care provides haemodialysis to 89 maintenance patients across two units, as well as a limited inpatient dialysis program that includes both inpatient and rehabilitation patients. The proposed project will support an additional 84 patients, almost double the current capacity, as well as provide additional dialysis capacity within the system to address increasing demands. The proposed Northern Adelaide Renal Haemodialysis Services Project will provide 21 new inpatient renal haemodialysis chairs, as well as the relocation of an additional nine from a temporary pop-up service that has been operating within the hospital.

A review of the hospital site revealed a lack of space to efficiently deliver the haemodialysis service, as well as likely interruptions to the existing services. Providing the new 30-chair service will instead involve fitting out a 1,300 square metre lease tenancy located across the road from the hospital at somewhere else I am quite familiar with, the Playford Health Hub. The fit-out will deliver:

- 26 open bays;
- two enclosed treatment rooms;
- two enclosed bariatric-sized treatment rooms with a shared ensuite;
- clinical support spaces;
- storerooms;
- dirty and clean utility spaces;
- three staff spaces providing line of sight to consumer treatment spaces;
- a reception and clerical zone for pre-treatment activities;
- dementia-friendly design principles;
- offices and open-plan workstations; and
- a shared lunch room providing both indoor and outdoor accommodation.

The existing building provides sufficient mechanical, electrical, fire protection and hydraulic service infrastructure systems and is serviced by an adjacent multideck car park, which is another thing we know is very important in our growing community in the northern and north-eastern suburbs. The

building forecourt hosts additional short-term parking that supports consumer drop-off and pick-up needs as well as waste and delivery services and an undercover ambulance hardstand.

The project is expected to cost approximately \$12 million, which was allocated in the 2024-25 budget. Construction is anticipated to commence this November, with the expectation that it will be complete and operational hopefully by July next year. The project management process will follow best practice principles for procurement and management, as advocated by the state government as well as construction industry authorities.

Processes have included: extensive consultation; evaluation and review of solutions; development of formal communication channels between end users and stakeholders; establishment and management of a cost plan; regular reviews of design, documentation and construction; appointment of contractors; and identification and management of potential risks. The professional services and construction contractors have been engaged by DIT under general conditions of contracts and consultants.

The professional services contractor team will engage secondary contractors as required. DIT is managing the engagement of the construction contractor using established procurement evaluation and contracting processes, and the project proposes to engage incumbent contractors from the previous 48-bed hospital expansion—which is excellent, I must say—due to their existing knowledge of the site. In order to qualify for invitation to tender, both the professional services contractors and construction contractors are to maintain current DIT prequalification levels for the design and delivery of state government infrastructure projects.

To manage the project throughout planning and implementation as well as managing risk, the project has established a two-tier governance structure comprising an integrated management team responsible for day-to-day operations as well as an executive leadership team responsible for strategic oversight. The project team has established formal processes to ensure that ecologically sustainable development strategies are comprehensively and systematically incorporated into the project during all phases of its life cycle.

Strategies will be informed by the architect and building services engineers, who are highly experienced at implementing environmentally sensitive design. Initiatives include: implementation of an environmental management plan to manage construction waste, air, water and noise pollution; use of efficient luminaries for lighting; water-efficient sanitary and tapware fixtures; high-efficiency plumbing; use of materials sourced from certified environmentally responsible sources; and, of course, the preference of durable and recycled materials wherever possible.

SA Health have also stated that a search of the central archive identified there are no Aboriginal sites in the proposed work location, and that the state Heritage Register has no record of state heritage within the project site. The project is engaged in ongoing consultation with relevant stakeholders, including clinical and non-clinical medical staff and appropriate industrial bodies. The project has also undertaken specialised expert reviews with various units and agencies within SA Health and the local health network, and documentation has been circulated within relevant government departments. NALHN and the SA Health media and communications unit will manage required external communications throughout the life of the project.

The committee did examine written and oral evidence in relation to the Northern Adelaide Renal Haemodialysis Services Project. Witnesses who appeared before the committee were: Melissa Nozza, Director, Capital Projects, from the Department for Health and Wellbeing; Peter Mullen, Executive Director, Corporate Services, at NALHN; John Jenner, Portfolio Manager at DIT; and Scott Suter, Project Director, from Cheesman Architects. I thank the witnesses for their time. Based upon the evidence considered and pursuant to section 12C of the Parliamentary Committees Act 1991, the Public Works Committee reports to the parliament that it recommends the proposed public work.

Motion carried.

*Motions***AUKUS**

Adjourned debate on motion of Hon. D.J. Speirs:

1. That in the opinion of this house, a joint committee be established to inquire into and report on matters relating to South Australia's contribution to the AUKUS agreement, and particularly to consider—
 - (a) how to ensure that all submarines are delivered on schedule;
 - (b) education and training initiatives to build the future workforce;
 - (c) the role of the South Australian industry;
 - (d) opportunities from emerging technologies;
 - (e) the progress of task forces and working groups;
 - (f) interstate and international partnerships; and
 - (g) any other relevant matters.
2. That in the event of a joint committee being appointed, the House of Assembly shall be represented thereon by three members, of whom two shall form a quorum of assembly members necessary to be present at all sittings of the committee.
3. That a message be sent to the Legislative Council transmitting the foregoing resolution and requesting its concurrence thereto.

(Continued from 15 June 2023.)

Mr ODENWALDER (Elizabeth) (11:20): I move:

That Order of the Day No. 9 be postponed and taken into consideration on 30 October.

The house divided on the motion:

Ayes21
 Noes.....11
 Majority10

AYES

Andrews, S.E.	Brown, M.E.	Champion, N.D.
Clancy, N.P.	Close, S.E.	Cook, N.F.
Dighton, A.E.	Hildyard, K.A.	Hutchesson, C.L.
Koutsantonis, A.	Mullighan, S.C.	Odenwalder, L.K. (teller)
O'Hanlon, C.C.	Pearce, R.K.	Piccolo, A.
Picton, C.J.	Savvas, O.M.	Stinson, J.M.
Szakacs, J.K.	Thompson, E.L.	Wortley, D.J.

NOES

Basham, D.K.B. (teller)	Batty, J.A.	Brock, G.G.
Cowdrey, M.J.	Cregan, D.R.	Hurn, A.M.
Patterson, S.J.R.	Pederick, A.S.	Pratt, P.K.
Teague, J.B.	Telfer, S.J.	

PAIRS

Hughes, E.J.	Tarzia, V.A.
Fulbrook, J.P.	Gardner, J.A.W.
Boyer, B.I.	Whetstone, T.J.
Malinauskas, P.B.	Pisoni, D.G.

Motion thus carried.

Bills

STATUTES AMENDMENT (LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS REVIEW) BILL

Committee Stage

In committee.

(Continued from 15 October 2025.)

Clause 3.

The CHAIR: Member for Flinders, I understand we were on clause 3.

Mr TELFER: Yes, sir, and we were a minute into an answer to my first question when the minister was rudely interrupted. The question was about the aspect in particular of the 'state elector' and the question around the definition—which clause 3 is changing within the Local Government (Elections) Act—of a qualified elector and that designated person taking out the aspects around the body corporate definition of application of their right to vote and instead replacing it with a state elector. Could you continue your answer which you were eloquently putting?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: Specifically to the member's question regarding the framing of this clause, it is to give effect to the new policy setting the government will be taking through, and that is that, to exercise a vote in a South Australian election, be it a state election or a local government election, you must be eligible to vote on the House of Assembly roll. That is the mechanism by which the government worked very closely with parliamentary counsel to frame. The most important part of ensuring that this section can work is to ensure it does not create an additional onus or more administration or red-tape burden for the councils in respect of managing their role.

One single point for truth in roll, being the House of Assembly, was the frame which parliamentary counsel and the government were able to execute for this policy setting. If I take it back to the principal approach to this, that is that the most important right and obligation conferred upon a citizen of our country is to be able to participate in an election, that those elections must be free, fair, and command and enjoy public confidence.

Thirdly, which is specifically to the member's question regarding property franchise, it is not the intention nor is there any change in this bill that would remove property franchise which we think is a really important part of the local government election framework. We do not think or believe, and frankly nor does the public, that a property franchise vote should be exercised by anybody other than an Australian citizen, and that is what this clause seeks to effect.

Mr TELFER: I appreciate some clarification. You speak about a citizen of our country's right to vote and fair elections. In a scenario—and this is very much a live one, especially within border communities—where you have a landowner who owns a significant portion of land or a business or a building in South Australia but lives in Victoria, New South Wales or elsewhere interstate, they have had the right to be able to be active in their local government elections and vote for the people who they see as best representing what they believe is the best future for their local government area.

My reading of this change in the legislation is that if you are not a South Australian citizen then you are not eligible to vote in local government elections. Under the current arrangements, Australian citizens from interstate have been able to vote if they qualify by owning property within a council area. Can you clarify for me that my understanding of what this change will mean is that interstate citizens who own property or business within South Australia will not be able to vote in a South Australian local government election?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: I can confirm that is correct. The eligibility to vote in a local government election will be streamlined to ensure that you must be eligible to vote in a House of Assembly election. That is, as the member has rightfully put, that you must be a resident with certain criteria of South Australia. The reason that a resident of Victoria, Tasmania or Far North Queensland will not, under these changes, be able to exercise a vote is that we believe that South Australians, and South Australians alone, should determine the future of our state, in the same way that this

change will now not allow someone from a foreign country who has resided in South Australia for as little as four weeks to be able to exercise that vote.

So there needs to be an administrative balance, and that is what this proposes. Whilst the member makes a not unreasonable point regarding cross-border communities, I would give him the confidence that there is still a mechanism by which those property owners with the property franchise can have that vote exercised, and that is by nominating a natural person who is on the House of Assembly roll in South Australia.

At a policy setting, it is the view of the government that, whether you are a foreign national, whether you are residing in a foreign country but own property in South Australia or you are a resident of Victoria or Tasmania, the most precious obligation and precious right is for South Australians, and South Australians alone, to exercise their right to determine the future of their community.

Mr TELFER: Thank you, minister, for that clarification. Did the government consider a mechanism to allow there to be a different definition of qualification to allow for interstate voters who own property? Did the government consider a different mechanism to include those potentially disenfranchised property owners under the proposed changes, to allow them to be qualified to vote? Is there a mechanism that was considered too onerous, or was the decision purely that, as a policy setting, the government believes it is only South Australians who should be eligible to vote in local government elections?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: The impact of the considerations which the government undertook and the consultation it undertook has resulted in a policy setting in which, as I said and the member has rightfully recounted, only individuals who are on the House of Assembly roll can exercise the privilege of voting in South Australia.

To answer the member's question, we did consider a suite of matters. As you would expect on any drafting of a bill, we have considered a series of options, including alternative propositions that have been put by other individuals, including one of the member's colleagues, that did seek on face value to limit the exercising of a vote to Australian citizens but then failed to limit foreign owners of land from exercising their vote.

So we considered a whole series of matters, we worked closely—as the government and opposition do on the drafting of any bill—with parliamentary counsel and we took advice, and this is the final decision that is before the house at which we arrived.

Mr TELFER: There is another clause about this later on that I will be asking subsequent questions on. I am getting an understanding of that judgement around the policy setting. Are there information-sharing arrangements within Australia across jurisdictions that could streamline the citizenship test, for want of a better word—the citizenship status, potentially—of a person making an application if the parameters were expanded to include interstate voters to be allowed to vote? I covered it within my second reading contribution.

I think this is an area that could potentially undermine the process democratically, and I am trying to work out if there is a way for us to be able to get a more appropriate solution. Are there arrangements for that information sharing between state jurisdictions, or would a federal electoral roll be one that would be more ably referred to when considering the Australian citizenship aspect in particular?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: I am advised that there is no capacity for us to compel the AEC to give or share their roll with councils. What we do have before us is a capacity to compel and have the checks and balances provided through the House of Assembly roll for eligibility and enrolment. That would be the threshold test.

As the member has been engaging, we would respectfully vehemently disagree that this undermines democratic processes. In fact, it is the very strong view of the government and the very strong view of the public that limiting the exercising of a vote in our state to South Australians actually protects democracy and maintains that really strong faith in the democratic processes.

Mr TELFER: For clarification on the answers in the explanation, can a foreign national who owns property or business in South Australia under these changes nominate a South Australian

citizen as their representative to vote in the election? So it is not an Australian citizen/franchise that owns the property, it is a foreign citizen or foreign business owner. Can they nominate a South Australian natural person on the state electoral roll to vote on behalf of that foreign business owner, as an example?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: No, they cannot. I refer the member to the wording in the clause, which defines that it is in respect to a body corporate or group that makes that nomination.

Clause passed.

Clause 4.

Mr TELFER: Minister, can you give an explanation as to the necessity for this change in particular? Looking at the existing legislation with the quite prescriptive description of the timing, can you give an explanation as to the reasons why this change is necessary?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: I can. The underlying principle behind this change was at the request of the Electoral Commissioner, who recommended and sought for more time to be provided between the close of voting and the scrutiny of the count to assist electoral staff to make preparations without undue risks to their health and safety. That gives the cause for the underlying request. What is before the house is an increase in time between the close of polls, voting, and the counting.

A very important aspect and point—I do not mean to speak for the member, but he has been involved in many elections for both state and local government—is that the Saturday starting of the count is really important for scrutineers, and it is very important for candidates. The state government wants to ensure that the counting, the scrutiny, still begins on the Saturday. It is very important, particularly in regional communities—frankly, all communities—where the vast majority of candidates are working or preoccupied during the week, that the accessibility of scrutiny is available to all. As I said, this gives the Electoral Commission and particularly its staff just that bit more time to better get its house in order for the scrutiny to start.

Mr TELFER: Does this change mean there is one day less for electors to have their ballots returned?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: It does. There is one less day for those ballots to be returned, but I also give the context that, given the voting period was extended from two weeks to two weeks and four days for the 2022 periodic election, we still have a net gain for the ability for people to exercise and return their ballots.

Mr TELFER: This is probably a comment as much as anything. Representing regional communities, the reliability of Australia Post—their business model is probably becoming more and more challenging, especially for regional communities. This is why I know that the changes that were previously made extended that out a bit further in a reflection of the additional lag time that seems to be experienced by regional communities in particular to get their ballots in.

Was there consideration of an extension to that timeframe at the front end as opposed to the back end? I understand the explanation from the minister about the time between the close and the necessity to have the capacity for scrutineers to be there for the Saturday count, but at the front end of the process, was there consideration of extending it out longer?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: It was not considered, only in the context that it was not advised, nor were there submissions on the basis that we should do that. But I certainly agree with the member's reflections on our friends at Australia Post and particularly their service delivery in regional communities. I think that is certainly before a future government, in the usual periodic updates to this, to be adaptive in the future should it be necessary.

Clause passed.

Clauses 5 to 7 passed.

Clause 8.

Mr TELFER: Minister, on this aspect in particular, in a briefing I received, you gave an explanation. I would appreciate you reflecting on that information for the sake of the house about the

reasons behind this change in particular. As I understand it, the Electoral Commissioner sometimes authorises an employee of a council to act as a deputy returning officer. Will this sort of arrangement be able to be put in place?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: I thank the member for his question and appreciate the context to put on the record that this will not, and nor is there any intention to, limit the capacity for ECSA to appoint council employees to the DRO role. This is, in large, a technical amendment which has been sought by the Electoral Commissioner. Certainly from the drafting, it does not in any extent limit the capacity for DROs to be appointed from councils. In fact, as I am sure the member feels, it is good practice for there to be that engagement from local councils into ECSA for the ability to appoint council staff and locals to the DRO position.

Mr TELFER: Based on that explanation, minister, what actual practical difference will this clause change make?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: What it does do is elevate the responsibility for the appointments to ECSA, which means that the appointments, the quality and potential and also, importantly, the management of any potential or any real or perceived conflicts of interests as they may arise, are limited and are the responsibility of ECSA to both identify and manage.

Mr TELFER: Just on reflection of that real or perceived conflict of interest and the obligation on ECSA to ascertain or otherwise, what is going to be the process for that? Especially in regional communities, small regional communities indeed, what is the technical legal definition of conflict of interest? I know even in this place, there is often uncertainty about the thresholds between a real or a perceived conflict of interest. In a small regional community we have council areas with fewer than 1,000 electors. A council staff member could theoretically have a relationship or a friendship with people who are nominating as far as the local government elections go. In reflecting on your previous answer, can you give me a definition of the process that the Electoral Commissioner will pursue to consider a real or perceived conflict of interest in each of the 68—or 66 probably at this point—different council elections that they are going to have to appoint the DROs for?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: What I will not do is seek to do ECSA's job for them or, for the purposes of time, iterate the entire conflict frameworks which ECSA and councils work within. It is very well established. ECSA are experts in identifying risk and managing conflicts, and we trust them and local governments to do the same. Certainly, at a high level, it is always my intention to see a sensible and pragmatic approach to the management of conflict.

The member raised matters of this in this place. I think what has been clear is that often the management of a conflict is easily dealt with when it is identified, when it is established and when it is managed, as opposed to eliminating all conflict. I trust that ECSA and local government individuals will manage this within existing frameworks. It is my strong sense and wish that it will be done pragmatically and sensibly, taking into account local nuances.

Mr TELFER: Do you envision the necessity for, prior to the DRO being appointed by the commission, a stat dec from the DRO? Although you point to the similarities, it is a pretty nuanced situation when it comes to the management of the election process itself. As soon as you provide that level of uncertainty, you have to have the checks and balances in place to be able to manage with them. This is why I am trying to provide some clarity for the house and for local government, who I am sure will be enthralled watching this debate and then reflecting on the *Hansard* what sort of arrangements you believe will be necessary and who the obligation for that process will rest on.

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: I will answer the question back to front. The changes will ensure that, as the appointer of the DRO, the Electoral Commission is responsible for the management of these processes, the management of the risk and management of the outcomes. As an independent statutory officer, I would not predispose the undertakings the Electoral Commissioner makes. As the member questioned, it may be the case that there are declarations or otherwise that are sought before the appointment. Again, that does not strike me as either unreasonable or onerous.

As I remarked in my previous answer, conflicts are able to be managed, and often, if not exclusively, the Electoral Commission is expert at managing these throughout state elections. As it is, they manage them through local government elections, but at a fundamental level this does not

limit the appointment of council staff to the position of DRO and, in fact, for the record, it is good and reasonable for those DROs to be leaning on local expertise in councils where they can.

Clause passed.

Clause 9.

Mr TELFER: Fleshing out a little bit more the qualification for an elector and the obvious change that this is going to make, does the state government have a plan to inform people who have had a right to vote in council elections—and potentially have participated in council elections for decades—but who now with this change will no longer be able to vote? Does the government have a plan to inform those people of the removal of their right to participate in local government elections?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: In respect of councils other than the City of Adelaide, those non-residents, non-citizens, who would otherwise in the usual course of the four-year cycle be applying to be enrolled on the supplementary roll, will not be enrolled. I would expect that for the very small number of those individuals in the non-City of Adelaide part it may be for councils—in fact, I would encourage councils to pick up the phone and let them know why.

As an example, very recently in the course of some media that I did I had cause to see the Town of Gawler and the number of people, and it was under 20 people who were enrolled in the last election who are not citizens. It is a very modest number, a very small number, and any opportunity for councils to be more closely engaged with their local communities would be a good thing.

For the City of Adelaide, those non-citizen electors would simply not be receiving ballot papers. Again, that would be for the City of Adelaide—who I do commend for their proactive approach and their support for this measure, particularly having been in the thick of the matters that have been before the court in the last two years—to manage that.

I should also say that particularly for the City of Adelaide, with international students, as I said before, residents who may have only been there for four years, there is a very transient nature to those who come in and out of residence of the City of Adelaide, perhaps more than any other council in this state. So I think that would be managed, particularly because there would not be a strong underlying expectation from many of the new residents who find their way in there.

Mr TELFER: I once again reiterate that the opposition certainly do support that foreign citizen voting aspect unequivocally, and you pointed out that a colleague in the other place has introduced legislation previously to try to make that change. You point to one example of a council with a small number, but there are examples of council areas that have a significant non-South Australian resident proportion of their council area.

I remember a conversation with the District Council of Robe. From my memory, my understanding was that up to 40 per cent of their ratepayers did not live in the District Council of Robe. I know that a significant proportion of them come from interstate. Even in my electorate, there is a proportion of people from the Northern Territory or elsewhere interstate who own property in Coffin Bay or Port Neill or Streaky Bay and who spend six months of the year in one place, perhaps three months of the year on the road and the other three months of the year in their home, but they are not enrolled in South Australia. Technically, they are still from interstate, but they have been involved for potentially decades voting for their representatives to make sure that the people they put in place are making the best decisions about the infrastructure and services that local government provide.

What does the minister say to those people who pay their council rates, pay thousands of dollars in council rates and have done for potentially decades, or those who employ local people who contribute to the state's economic output who have a significant longstanding stake in the community and have been active in the democratic process to appoint their representatives? What does the minister say to those people who now will not have that opportunity to vote for the representatives who are going to be spending the rates they have been contributing to for potentially decades?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: Just with respect to Robe, not to second-guess the member's advice, but the—

Mr TELFER: I was reflecting back on my memory.

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: Okay. I will not then correct the member's memory, but what I would say to that very small cohort is the same advice I give many non-citizen residents in my electorate of Cheltenham and that is that the state government hears them, that we are here to represent their interests, that whether you are a voter or whether you are a 40-year resident who has not become a citizen, your voice matters. That is my message to council as well. It is not my message because I see anything wrong. Councils do an extraordinary job with providing support and services to all residents in their area.

I would give the member a high degree of assurance that the very small number of individuals here who are in question who will be impacted by our streamlining and codification of citizenship franchise, a House of Assembly roll franchise, is the balance that is and must be found to ensure and to continue to give confidence to the integrity of elections.

As I have mentioned in my previous answer, and I can reiterate now, South Australians are well placed to have a say in the future of their state and their councils. The very small number of individuals the member refers to, even smaller, because again I reiterate the changes in the previous clause that body corporates and groups still have that exercising of the vote, but simply that that body corporate and that group must have that vote exercised by someone on the House of Assembly roll. Perhaps just through the phrasing of the member's question, I will just be very careful that that is an even smaller group who will be impacted by this franchise change.

Progress reported; committee to sit again.

Motions

ILLINOIS LEGISLATIVE FRIENDSHIP

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS (Cheltenham—Minister for Trade and Investment, Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science, Minister for Local Government, Minister for Veterans' Affairs) (12:00): I move:

That this house—

- (a) recognise and celebrate the establishment of a legislative friendship with the House of Representatives of the State of Illinois;
- (b) commit to ongoing collaboration, mutual support and shared advocacy for the cause of representative government as a fundamental human right;
- (c) express the house's hope that this relationship serves as a model for other legislative bodies around the world to form bonds rooted in democracy, peace and mutual respect; and
- (d) present a copy of this resolution to the Speaker of the House of Representatives of the State of Illinois as a symbol of the house's shared commitment to democracy and enduring partnership.

We understand that this legislative friendship is the first of its kind between an Australian state legislature and a US state legislature. The legislative friendship is a result of a visit to Illinois by you, Mr Speaker, where you worked with the Hon. Emanuel 'Chris' Welch, Speaker of the Illinois House of Representatives and other Illinois state representatives to establish this partnership.

An equivalent resolution was passed in the Illinois House of Representatives on Tuesday 14 October local time. A copy of this motion will be presented to the Speaker of the House of Representatives of the State of Illinois as a symbol of this partnership. Sir, I take this opportunity to thank you for your leadership on this matter, and I understand that the Leader of the Opposition will also be strongly supporting this initiative.

Our cultural, people-to-people and economic relationship with the United States has never been more important, and I am pleased to advise the house that it has never been stronger. Here in South Australia we are responsible for and charged with building the most important and most strategic industrial undertaking that our country has ever undertaken with the AUKUS submarine build.

I can advise, notwithstanding the complex geopolitical challenges and economic headwinds that many Western democracies around the world are facing, that our exports from South Australia to the United States are at a record high. Just in the last 12 months we have hit an all-time record high, fed in large part due to the great understanding and great respect that the United States has

for the premium primary production of our state, be it from meat, be it from other commodities or be it from our great wine, particularly I am sure from the McLaren Vale region.

However, what underpins this motion is the value that the people-to-people links have in underpinning that economic opportunity. I had the great privilege as an early 20 year old for a couple of years of living in the United States. I attended the University of Missouri as a division 1 athlete/swimmer in the NCAA program. As I reflect now as the Minister for Trade and Investment and having the privilege of engaging with the United States on behalf of our state, there are probably few things in my life that have had such a profoundly formative impact than my time in the Midwest of the US.

I note that Illinois is a great Midwestern state. My college team, Mizzou, had a great rivalry with the Fighting Illini from Illinois. I think more often than not it would be the Mizzou Tigers who would get over the line. But whether it be sport, whether it be our great love for the company that sport brings, or whether it be the South Australian and Illinoisan unshakable dedication to democracy, equity and fairness, we are in a good place to capitalise on this. I say on behalf of the government, South Australia fully supports this initiative and for the house this is a progressive and important initiative to further the opportunities that we have with our most important ally, the United States.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA (Hartley—Leader of the Opposition) (12:05): Mr Speaker, I also rise to support the motion:

That this house—

- (a) recognise and celebrate the establishment of a legislative friendship with the House of Representatives of the State of Illinois;
- (b) commit to ongoing collaboration, mutual support and shared advocacy for the cause of representative government as a fundamental human right;
- (c) express the house's hope that this relationship serves as a model for other legislative bodies around the world to form bonds rooted in democracy, peace and mutual respect; and
- (d) present a copy of this resolution to the Speaker of the House of Representatives of the State of Illinois as a symbol of the house's shared commitment to democracy and enduring partnership.

Sir, I thank you for instigating this initiative. I also have had the great fortune of visiting the United States on a number of occasions, and when I heard about this, in terms of Illinois—otherwise known as the Land of Lincoln—I saw a lot of similarities between that place and us, especially given the agricultural powerhouse that it is.

Today I rise with great enthusiasm to support this as a proud member, like yourself, sir, of the South Australian United States Parliamentary Friendship Group and to lend my full support to this motion which recognises and celebrates the establishment of a legislative friendship between the House of Assembly here in South Australia and the House of Representatives of the State of Illinois. For me it is not just a ceremonial gesture. I think it is a deliberate reaffirmation of our shared democratic values, a celebration of our enduring alliance with the United States and our belief in the power of representative government to uplift and protect the rights of all people.

I understand, sir, that you had the honour of visiting Speaker Welch in July to share policy ideas and also leadership lessons, and I think there are a number of things that we can learn from each other. I had the great pleasure of attending the NCSL—the National Congress of State Legislatures. What you often find when you undertake these exchanges is that there are similar problems that have been resolved in other parts of the world, and I welcome this collaborative approach.

I am glad that, out of that, has come a resolution that has been adopted by the Illinois House of Representatives that recognises and celebrates the establishment of a legislative friendship with the House of Assembly of South Australia. The resolution adopted in Illinois also expressed a commitment to ongoing collaboration, mutual support and also shared advocacy for the cause of representative government as a fundamental human right. Of course, it is a right that is not enjoyed in all parts of the world.

The resolution passed by the Illinois house, led by Speaker Emanuel Chris Welch, rightly notes the importance of democracies standing together in solidarity, especially in a time when

democratic norms are under pressure, and they are under pressure globally, as we know. We see around the world the rise of threats to some of our civil liberties. Against this backdrop is a more critical than ever notion that institutions like ours should declare loudly and clearly that democracy is not only alive but thriving, where it is defended and where it is immensely valued.

South Australia and Illinois, while geographically distant, share a deep connection through our democratic traditions, our innovative economies and our commitment to the common good. Both legislatures are the voice of the people, elected to deliberate, to challenge and to build consensus in the service of a just and fair society.

In my capacity as a delegate, as the Treasurer was, to the Australian American Leadership Dialogue, I was fortunate to visit the United States, with other leaders, only as recently as January this year. This was with other dignitaries from government, enterprise, defence, technology, space, education and the community, and I can attest to the valuable experience and the strength and the depth that our two nations share in terms of our relationship.

But this friendship goes beyond parliamentary resolutions and symbolic gestures. It is about creating real and tangible opportunities for collaboration, and I am sure that we will see them down the track, whether it is in economic development, education, environment resilience or public health, just to name a few. Our shared experiences can offer valuable lessons from one another.

On a lighter note, we extend our thoughts to the people of Chicago on the recent defeat of the Cubs at the hands of the Brewers. Perhaps next year, on the 10th anniversary of their 2016 World Series win, they can go all the way. But I digress.

This motion before the house today serves as a model for how subnational diplomacy—state to state, legislature to legislature—can promote peace, prosperity and mutual respect in a world that is too often divided.

I commend this motion and congratulate you, Mr Speaker, on your role in it being brought forward. I know these are not easy things to do. I also thank Speaker Welch and the Illinois House of Reps for their leadership and their partnership and may this be the beginning of a long-lasting relationship, one that inspires others and strengthens the global democratic community. I commend the motion to the house.

The SPEAKER (12:10): I would like to take this opportunity to thank the government and the opposition for coming together in a unanimous vote of support for this initiative. As has been mentioned, I was in Chicago in July this year where I met up with Speaker Welch and some other representatives. The welcome you get from the Midwest is very similar to the welcome you get from South Australia. People there are very, very friendly, very open and progressive. They do not necessarily want to get stuck in the past but look at how we can learn from each other and how we can work together to improve democracy, not just in our own states but around the world.

If we look at democracies on a global basis, fewer people around the world live in a democracy than they did 10 years ago or 20 years ago. When you have democracy it is easy to take it for granted. This relationship, amongst many things it will do, will remind us of how important it is.

When I met Speaker Welch at his constituency office, he gave me this badge from the House of Representatives 104th general assembly. It is the badge that all representatives in the Illinois house wear. I gave the Speaker a bottle of Hickinbotham cab sav, made in McLaren Vale by a winemaker who is from Napa Valley. Chris Carpenter is one of the best winemakers in Napa Valley and works for Kendall-Jackson, the second biggest privately owned liquor business in North America. Chris Carpenter is a very good friend of mine. He was born in Chicago. So to be able to give the Speaker a bottle of wine made from grapes from my region, made by a native of Chicago, was a terrific thing.

I do not know whether Speaker Welch read the briefing notes but he gave me a bottle of his Speaker's Reserve bourbon made from corn from Illinois. It still has the seal on it. It is not normal practice for me to have that little bottle of bourbon tucked away in the Speaker's chair. It is one of those things that symbolises—the very first time that we meet, we do an exchange of gifts. A shout-out too to all those people in Illinois who are watching. It is 8.30 at night there which is much better than the four o'clock start I had the other morning to watch the same resolution, or motion, pass through the Illinois House of Representatives.

It was terrific. From there we went to a steakhouse, we had the Chicago cut and then that night we went to see Speaker Welch's favourite team, the Chicago Cubs, up against the Red Sox from Boston. Chicago had a good win. I was there with Speaker Welch's mum, his wife, his kids and a few of his friends. It was over that night that we worked out that we would probably be stronger if we worked together on a lot of things.

I also went to visit Kam Buckner, who is the assistant speaker and also the state representative of the 26th district, and Sonya Harper, who is the state representative for the 6th district. To go into their constituency offices, as they call them—we call them electorate offices—was an eye-opener as well. It was a month after the assassination of the Speaker in Minnesota. I walked into these offices; one had no security at all. Representative Harper was just sitting in her office on her own, and I was thinking, 'How does that work?' when you look at our electorate offices and the funding that goes into those. Simple things like that are important, that people can go about their jobs in a safe way, that their staff can go about their jobs in a safe way.

We are swapping some ideas about how we do things here on that level. We are swapping ideas on our voting systems, how our houses work. Importantly, we are going to do an exchange where our part of the deal will be that we will send three members of parliament to the US each year. They will go to Illinois and catch up with our friends there. Then they will go to two other states. Illinois is what they call a blue state, and then we will go to a red state and then a purple state, where you have shared leadership between the Democratic Party and the Republican Party, so that we can learn from all sides of politics.

I want to thank the Australian Consul-General in Chicago, Chris Elstoff. He represents about 11 states on behalf of Australia. He is very keen on the idea and happy to help us in any way. I also want to thank Ambassador Rudd. I had a good 90 minutes with him at his residence in Washington DC. We cannot think of another state that has done this in the US or in South Australia.

If we look at our history, we in Australia are modelled on the Westminster system but also on the federal system of the US, where we have a federal parliament and a state parliament. We tend to look at what happens in the commonwealth a lot, but maybe we do not work as closely with our friends in the political sphere in the US, so that is something that we hope this relationship will help forge.

The Leader of the Opposition mentioned the National Conference of State Legislatures. I went to that as well. It was in Boston this year. It was incredible. It was actually on the recommendation of several of your colleagues in the Liberal Party who had been there—9,000 representatives from 50 states, plus their staff, were all there. It was the most amazing learning experience that I have ever been involved in in that political sphere. As part of that trip to the US each year, we will go to Illinois, we will go to those other two states. We will go to DC and learn a bit about their federal government, but we will make sure the timing is around this National Conference of State Legislatures, which coincidentally next year is on 27, 28 and 29 July in Chicago, so it makes it an even better trip.

I would like to thank a few people who helped make this trip possible. Firstly, Bridget Black in my office, who spent time in the US as part of her Flinders University studies in politics, made invaluable contacts and insights into the political system of the US, so thank you, Bridget, for that. I also thank her equivalent in the Speaker's house in Illinois, Mika Baugher, who is the Executive Assistant to the Speaker of the House, as well as Clayton Harris, the Chief of Staff to Chris Welch, the Speaker in Illinois, and Dan Johnson, who quickly became a good mate of mine. He works in politics in Illinois and he helped draft this resolution, which was obviously passed this week by the Illinois House of Representatives and now House of Assembly here in South Australia.

We are really proud of this initiative, and we are hoping that we can get backwards and forwards between our two countries on United Airlines, formed and based in Chicago. On 15 December it will be the first time in aviation history that we have direct flights linking the US and Adelaide. Those flights will be direct out of San Francisco into Adelaide. The first one takes off, I think, on 11 December and lands on 13 December this year. Again, congratulations to the trade minister, the Premier and everyone who was involved in getting those flights into Adelaide. It is an absolute game changer for the visitor economy, for tourism and for trade to have direct flights to the

US and to North America. Again, thank you, everyone, for the hasty, unanimous passing of this motion. I commend everyone for their work.

Motion carried.

Bills

STATUTES AMENDMENT (LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS REVIEW) BILL

Committee Stage

In committee (resumed on motion).

Clause 9.

Mr TELFER: Some clarification would be appreciated, I am sure, by local government, minister, as to who will actually be responsible for checking off the supplementary roll with the House of Assembly roll, to ensure they are consistent and that those who have professed to be eligible to vote and to be included on the supplementary roll are, indeed, on the House of Assembly roll. Is that the job of the Electoral Commissioner or the local council?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: I am advised that, in line with current practices, the chief executive officer of the council is charged with those checks and with that work.

Mr TELFER: This is a supplementary, sir. If you would allow the flexibility, I would appreciate it.

The CHAIR: Alright.

Mr TELFER: Thank you. Can you explain that process, because there is obviously a change? The chief executive officer of the council I believe would not have, naturally, access to the House of Assembly roll across the state, so how does that check get made? What penalties do you envision if there is a mistake, if they get it wrong, if those who are included or otherwise on the supplementary roll are not eligible or vice versa?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: I can advise the member that there will be no penalties, and there are no penalties attached to the current checks that are required by the chief executive. We are certainly not intending to make criminals of administrative matters through this.

I can advise that the new section—that will provide that the Electoral Commissioner must provide the chief executive with any information in the Electoral Commissioner's possession about whether a person is a state elector, being the House of Assembly—is a third check that now must be undertaken by the chief executive. The two current checks look at whether an individual is on the assessment roll and not enrolled as a resident, and the third check will look at whether that voter is on the House of Assembly roll, and that will be provided, by statute, by the Electoral Commissioner to the chief executive of a council.

Clause passed.

Clause 10.

Mr TELFER: Will candidates be entitled to obtain an electronic version of the voter roll?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: I can advise that there is no change in this section to the information that is provided to a candidate, but rather it changes that the information is provided from the returning officer rather than the council. The status quo remains. The access to that information is unchanged, but it is simply who provides that information under the act that is changing.

Mr TELFER: What is that status quo at the moment? Can candidates obtain an electronic version of the voter roll?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: We are clarifying that. If I can have that information during the committee stage I will provide it, otherwise it will be between the houses.

Mr TELFER: Thank you. I reflect that it was a hard copy back in the old days when I went through the process. It is not a gotcha: I am just trying to find out. Minister, are you aware, or have you been made aware by the Electoral Commissioner, of any circumstances where a voter roll has

been provided to a candidate and that version has subsequently been used for a non-election related purpose: to advertise a business, tout for donations or other nefarious purposes? Are you aware of any examples of that?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: Not that I am advised. From recollection, I cannot recall any previous periodic reports undertaken by the Electoral Commissioner where it has been identified, either.

Clause passed.

Clause 11.

Mr TELFER: Is it the intention of the government to prohibit from eligibility any candidates who have had an adverse finding made about them by integrity agencies such as the Ombudsman, local government Behavioural Standards Panel or ICAC?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: No.

Mr TELFER: I also note that the bill does not remove an entitlement to stand for election if the person has had an order made against them by SACAT pursuant to part 4 of the Guardianship and Administration Act 1993. Can you take the house through the thinking in relation to that issue as to why not?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: No, it does not and, frankly, nor should it. It is totally improper for an act to limit candidates based upon whether there are guardianship orders.

Clause passed.

Clause 12.

Mr TELFER: Minister, the bill proposes that the returning officer publishes the number of people running in each local government election but not the names. Reflecting back—and I covered this in my second reading speech—this was a change that was brought in under the previous local government minister in their wisdom as a legislator. At the time, I encouraged them to reconsider the change because I saw the advantage in there continuing to be transparency and understanding for communities going through the nominations process of not just the number of nominees but also the names of those nominees.

As I reflected on in my second reading speech, I think it is especially pertinent and front and centre for regional communities. This is why throughout the process I have been interested in receiving feedback from councils on their perspective on this particular clause. I am sure you, through your consultation process, received a number of different pieces of feedback. This is one that I have heard loud and clear since the tabling of the legislation, that a significant proportion of local government—I am not going to say all of it, but a significant proportion—is pretty keen to have both the number and the names of the candidates who are running for election be published.

It is especially pertinent in regional communities, if they reflect on the names as they come in, whether there is, in the eyes of other potential candidates, someone who is suited or otherwise unsuited to be a candidate, as opposed to just the number. I will not speak specifically about them, but there are a couple of examples around the state where it is probably fair to say communities dodged a bullet with the one individual who missed out, but if they were the ones who automatically got elected because there was not a contest as there was only the pure number of candidates who nominated for the positions, then you could have potentially risky and perverse outcomes. This is why I think the smaller the community the more awareness there is around that.

Was there consideration of including the aspect of the names of the candidates, not just the numbers, when the government was considering the feedback from local government in particular?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: If I can just perhaps console the member on his reflections that he was unable to persuade Vickie Chapman on something: he is no orphan there. She was a fierce advocate. If I may both agree and reflect on the member's remarks, these changes were implemented by the former government and resoundingly the sector has put to the former minister and myself that there was a strong appetite to fix a problem, if I may put it that way, that these changes brought out.

The member has adequately articulated those matters that this clause seeks to address—and, for the purpose of time, I will not reiterate them—including, most importantly, that there is full representation, that there are good nominations and also, importantly, that no ward and no constituency or community goes without representation.

Were all matters considered? They were considered through the participation review and subsequent matters which were considered by myself and cabinet and in the drafting. But I am not persuaded, nor have I been persuaded, that the problem that was created by the former changes are not resolved by identification of numbers. The issue here is that there are zero nominations in certain wards. Knowing whether Mr J or Mrs Y have nominated is immaterial to ensuring that there is a full suite of nominations for each ward or area.

Mr TELFER: Obviously, I have put my position and I will be considering it between the houses and in discussions as well. Also, within this proposed section 21(1), minister, the words 'as far as is reasonably practicable' are used. What does that mean in practice? Is it the government's expectation that nominations will be published within the hour, on the same day, or within a few working days? Does this expectation around timing of publication change, depending on how close to the end of nominations those nominations are lodged? Can you give an explanation, minister, as to what 'as far as is reasonably practicable' means, the length of time you expect?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: The member's question gives me the opportunity to note my expectations. Yes, I think 'as far as is reasonably practicable' is not a relative function; it is whether you are three days or two weeks out from the close of nominations it should be published. The record should be up to date. 'As far as is reasonably practicable' just gives, through the drafting, as is the case with many of these prescriptive clauses in all pieces of statute, effectively, most importantly, best reasonable endeavours by the responsible bodies to do this.

It is my expectation as minister, and I take it that it will be the expectation of the house, that these are undertaken as a high order of priority and, certainly, specific to the member's question, that there is not a relativity to the priority which is given, depending upon how far out from the close of nominations.

Mr TELFER: Can you give an insight into what discussions you may have had with the commissioner as to how this is going to be enforced in practice? Especially now, with the electronic nominations that go through to the Electoral Commissioner, what advice have you got about that process? Will someone at ECSA be monitoring nominations as they come in in real time, or perhaps will a nominated officer at the council receive an automated alert? What do you envision? What advice have you got about what steps the Electoral Commissioner will put in place to ensure that this proposed clause is complied with?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: The steps the Electoral Commissioner puts in place to execute the effect of this clause is entirely a matter for the Electoral Commissioner. However, I have noted, through the work that we have done with the Electoral Commissioner, that he is fully supportive of this clause and has expressed absolutely no concerns or reservations about the commission's capacity to affect parliament's will.

Clause passed.

Clause 13 passed.

Clause 14.

Mr TELFER: On this one in particular, is the requirement of the returning officer contemplated in proposed section 29(3)(a) one that can be carried out by a deputy returning officer?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: What I can advise is that the draft, or the changes of the section or the amendment to this section, does not amend the obligation upon the returning officer to be undertaking this work. It simply changes the timing that is before the commissioner and ROs to undertake usual delegations or to execute usual delegations. I am not advised on whether that currently occurs by DROs or only by ROs, but I can advise the member that the drafting of this clause does not change the status quo.

Mr TELFER: The nuance of it—I understand you cannot necessarily give a fulsome explanation on the spot, but I would be interested. If this was a power that could be then delegated to a deputy returning officer—and in the previous explanation you speak about the nuances of the appointment of those DROs—could the requirements under this proposed section be carried out by an employee of a council?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: I am advised and can advise the member that the relationship between the RO and DRO, as provided in the section, is unchanged by this clause. Notwithstanding that, I will endeavour to take the specific nature of the member's question on notice and either return to him directly or between the houses.

Clause passed.

Clause 15 passed.

Clause 16.

Mr TELFER: I would certainly appreciate for the house, and for those tuning in who are interested in this, some explanation as to what the minister is envisioning with the trial of in-person voting. I was reflecting on the member for Davenport's contribution, where she reflected that we are not quite yet at the point of electronic voting. I encouraged her to contemplate herself an amendment to this act that may consider it, even as a trial.

I do understand that the leadership of some of Australia's biggest companies—banks and not-for-profits, like SACA—have recently gone through their processes being conducted by means of electronic voting. Apart from the legislation, what are the obstacles to a trial of online electronic voting in local government elections?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: I am not in a position to respond, simply because it is not a matter before us by way of the clause amendment.

Mr TELFER: Is the trial of an in-person voting process, as envisioned within this clause, primarily aimed at saving money, or does the government have some other objectives in mind, obviously given the current and ever-increasing costs of the individually addressed letters to each eligible voter and also the potential convenience of other voting mechanisms? What is the aim of this trial in particular? What are the objectives in mind from the government?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: The primary objective is to seek to provide a degree of access and additional encouragement for participation in local government elections. Just for the member's benefit—I know that he had a concern around the cost saving or otherwise—I can indicate that whilst the legislation will provide for a future trial, that future trial will need to be executed through future regulations. The future government will consider those. There will be a high degree of consultation, obviously, with the sector, the Electoral Commission and others, but it would not be replacing any method of voting. Therefore, there is no undertaking by the government by way of cost replication, cost replacement or cost saving.

Mr TELFER: What then is the objective or the motivation behind this particular change? Is it something that the Electoral Commissioner was specifically seeking? It is one which is just a bit out of the blue from my perspective.

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: No, the Electoral Commissioner did not make a recommendation.

Mr TELFER: Where did it come from? That is all I was trying to find out.

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: It is before the government to undertake its own initiatives.

Clause passed.

Clause 17 passed.

Clause 18.

Mr TELFER: On this one, this is a fairly fulsome change and I would encourage the minister to furnish the house with some explanation as to why. This is obviously looking at the designated place for there to be an electoral count. Local government elections are a little bit more nuanced,

obviously, than state government ones, and issues with obstruction or misbehaviour of scrutineers or the like have been very minimal. You could certainly count on one hand, probably, the number of times. Can you give an explanation as to the reasoning behind putting in such a fulsome clause as this when it comes to the maintenance of order at or near certain places?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: I agree with the member on his observations that, largely, local government elections have particular nuance, but what I would state and reiterate unequivocally is that there is no nuance or relativity when it comes to protecting the interests of working people and of Electoral Commission staff or volunteers in polling places. Their wellbeing and their safety is paramount.

This is a new clause that was first ideated by the Electoral Commissioner, in fact, before his recommendations were made public. It was, if not the first, one of the first matters that he raised with me when I met with him, and that was the concerns that he had around some of the pretty disgraceful and appalling behaviour by individuals—not by a cohort or otherwise, but individuals—and this clause is sending a very clear message from the government that there is no relativity and there is no room for cutting corners when it comes to the wellbeing and safety of those who participate in supporting the fair and free conduct of our elections.

Mr TELFER: In reflecting on the previous clauses that we have been talking about with the trial of in-person voting, is this clause especially pertinent if there was to be a trial or a continuation of in-person voting? The postal voting process that local government currently uses obviously means there is less face-to-face interaction between candidates, voters and the like.

Are you envisioning that this would be especially pertinent if you are introducing into the local government election process the potential for face-to-face interactions getting to the point that we see with some of the processes at state government elections and the rat-race of how-to-votes and the level of enforced decorum that is required? Reflecting on the trial of in-person voting, do you think this is something that is especially pertinent in that situation?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: Largely, no. In fact, having been involved in more elections than I care to remember—and no doubt the member as well—polling day, or in-person polling, largely in our state and in our country is an exemplar of civil and responsible behaviours by electors and individuals. Most people at a state election or a federal election just want to get in, exercise their privilege and get a sausage on the way out. So, no, this is not crafted with that in mind. This is certainly, as I mentioned in my previous answer, per the discussions I had with the Electoral Commissioner largely around scrutineering.

No doubt this will have application for any place the Electoral Commissioner is controlling, but so does the work health and safety legislation that sits above all of this. So, no, this is a clear statement that when it comes to the counts, scrutineers, individuals, supporters, candidates or otherwise, just be responsible and grow up. This is not sheep stations. This is not *War and Peace*. I think it was reflected in the motion before the house just a little while ago that democracy is important. We have the privilege of living in it and enjoying it, but it needs to be continually worked on. This sends a clear message that there is no equivocating when it comes to protecting that.

Clause passed.

Clause 19.

Mr TELFER: Just reflecting on how this is not *War and Peace*, democracy can indeed be, if it gets to that point. Clause 19 introduces the prohibition of advocacy of forms of voting inconsistent with the act. Is it expected or envisioned that the Electoral Commissioner will enforce this new requirement proactively, or upon complaint?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: I hope both, and that is generally the approach of the Electoral Commission and Commissioner to exercise their prerogative with respect to enforcement of all their legislative functions, state and local government.

This was a recommendation from the Electoral Commissioner, and these provisions, as drafted, are substantially similar to the equivalent provisions in the Electoral Act 1985. In saying that, I then expect and presume that the Electoral Commissioner will undertake or exercise their

prerogative in a similar manner as they exercise their prerogative under the state act, the state Electoral Act 1985.

At its core, this amendment will prohibit people and groups from misleading or deceiving electors in relation to how they should mark their ballot papers and/or exercise their vote in an environment where we—and when I say 'we' I think the whole community here and all policy leaders—are collaboratively and with best endeavours seeking to encourage more and more people to participate in elections, particularly local government elections.

What we do not want to see is individuals either deliberately or inadvertently encouraging the incorrect exercise of that vote. It is a wasted vote. We do not want to see that, and we will leave it to the Electoral Commissioner to enforce.

Mr TELFER: The High Court has often held that Australians have wide latitude to express their political perspectives, their opinions in relation to political matters. Has the government obtained advice on whether this proposed clause may breach citizens' implied rights to freedom of speech?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: I will consider that between the houses. However, as I said, because this clause is substantially similar to the existing wording of the Electoral Act 1985, I presume that, as is the case in all matters, the existing statute book is constitutional, and I would be both well informed and have good reason to believe that this would not be falling foul of the implied right to political communication of the commonwealth.

Mr TELFER: For further clarification, the maximum penalty, as set out within this clause, is \$2,500. Is it within the scope of the Electoral Commissioner to decide a penalty up to that amount, and is it per offence, or do you reflect—like you have on other aspects—that you envision it will be instigated and managed the same way as the existing state legislation?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: I have received no advice from the Electoral Commissioner that he or the organisation would be exercising their prerogative under section 126 of the Electoral Act, or that the way they enforce it would be any different. In the absence of any advice that they will be undertaking this enforcement differently, it is right for us to consider, given the similar nature between section 126 of the Electoral Act and this clause, that it will be exercised and enforced in a similar if not identical manner.

Clause passed.

Clause 20 passed.

Clause 21.

Mr TELFER: On this one in particular, and talking about gifts, given that sitting elected members have obligations to make ongoing disclosures about their financial affairs during the entirety of their four-year terms, is it the case that there are greater levels of disclosure required for sitting elected members than there are for as yet unelected candidates?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: Yes, there is a difference of reporting and that is just because of the nature of the fact that a councillor must undertake those obligations and those responsibilities from the day that they are elected, sworn, and the only way that we would be able to find an equivalency with a potential candidate would be if we implemented a scheme from three years 11 months out from the election and we think that is onerous. The period that this bill contemplates we think is the balance to not provide an absolute equivalency but to ensure that the potential candidates do not game the system.

Mr TELFER: I think that we could probably agree that transparency is inherently a good thing. Could the extra level of reporting that is required by a current sitting elected member put them at a disadvantage compared with a candidate? I will give you an example.

The Hon. J.K. Szakacs interjecting:

Mr TELFER: No, not at all. I am running scenarios that I envision probably most likely get faced not in communities where I have experience of local governments but probably more in the metropolitan area. For instance, the elected member could be criticised for their modest shareholding in a controversial company, reflecting back, whilst the candidate making the accusations is not

required to disclose that they hold comparative or an even more number of shares in a comparable controversial company. Because of the difference in the level of transparency, is there a potential for an inherent disadvantage between sitting elected members opposed to a candidate coming in?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: This clause does not contemplate or seek to implement a register of interest scheme for candidates. That was the example that the member used about a shareholding. That is a matter of the register of interests, which is not around candidate disclosures. Again, this is around gift returns—nor are we seeking to implement a scheme of a register of interests as such for candidates, because that does not exist in the state election either.

Clause passed.

Clause 22 passed.

Clause 23.

Mr TELFER: Minister, what is the reason given for the five-day number given to the returning officer in the proposed section 87(2)? Why five days? Should this not be as soon as practicable?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: This is a matter of 'within five days', as opposed to mandating a minimum time or maximum time. Sorry, this is imposing a maximum time not a reasonable time.

Mr TELFER: What then is the reason for the eight weeks given to the returning officer in the proposed section 87(2)(b)? Is it not possible that during this extraordinarily long period of time, a candidate could be elected, they could take their oath, and then they could sit at a council meeting all without the electorate or other candidates having this disclosure information available to them?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: I can advise that the eight weeks for return is the existing eight weeks, as I am advised. With respect to my previous answer around the five days and the member's question, I can advise that the existing provision is for seven days and we have reduced that to five days—or we are proposing to reduce that to five days.

Mr TELFER: You had not received any advice through the process that the eight-week period, which is referred to in the proposed section (87)(2)(b) was overly sufficient for the expectation? Were there any recommendations around changing that number? If you have changed the seven to five, were there any recommendations about changing the eight to a different number?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: I am advised that it was certainly the nature of discussions between officers at an officer level by my departmental advisers on the eight weeks, but it was arrived at the eight weeks as a maximum. We would obviously encourage and seek all best endeavours from the commission to be working well within those timeframes.

Clause passed.

Progress reported; committee to sit again.

Sitting suspended from 13:00 to 14:00.

Parliamentary Procedure

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I would like to welcome to parliament today students from Saint Ignatius College, who are guests of the member for Morialta. It is great to have you in here and I hope you enjoy question time. We also have students from Tyndale Christian School in Salisbury East, who are guests of the member for King, who is the newly minted Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing. Robert Bria is also here, the Mayor of the City of Norwood Payneham and St Peters, with his family, who are guests of the member for Dunstan. Welcome to all of you to question time today.

PAPERS

The following papers were laid on the table:

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

Premier and Cabinet, Department of the—South Australian Government Boards and Committees Information Report 30 June 2025

By the Treasurer (Hon. A. Koutsantonis)—

Essential Services Commission of South Australia—Review of SA Rail Access Regime and Guidelines Report July 2025

Public Sector Act 2009—

Overseas and Interstate Travel—Attorney-General Report 14 to 15 August 2025

Overseas and Interstate Travel—Minister for Energy and Mining Report 6 to 7 August 2025

Overseas and Interstate Travel—Minister for Trade and Investment Report 12 to 13 August 2025

Overseas and Interstate Travel—Minister for Trade and Investment Report 28 to 29 August 2025

Overseas and Interstate Travel—Treasurer Report 20 May 2025

Overseas and Interstate Travel—Treasurer Report 31 July—1 August 2025

Overseas and Interstate Travel—Minister for Defence and Space Industries Report 16 June 2025

Overseas and Interstate Travel—Minister for Women and the Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Report 15 August 2025

Overseas and Interstate Travel—Minister for Small and Family Business Report 1 August 2025

Overseas and Interstate Travel—Minister for Arts Report 13 to 15 August 2025

Overseas and Interstate Travel—Minister for Housing and Urban Development Report 31 July—1 August 2025

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

Chief Psychiatrist, Office of the South Australian—Review of the Operation of the Suicide Prevention Act 2021—4 September 2025

By the Minister for Police (Hon. B.I. Boyer)—

Witness Protection Act 1996—Annual Report 2024-25

By the Minister for Housing and Urban Development (Hon. N.D. Champion)—

Housing Trust, South Australian—Triennial Review Report 2021-22 to 2023-24

Question Time

HOUSING SUPPLY

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA (Hartley—Leader of the Opposition) (14:06): My question is to the Premier. Is the Premier concerned new homes will need to be built in South Australia at record levels to meet targets of the National Housing Accord? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Data released yesterday shows just over 12½ thousand dwellings were completed across South Australia over the past 12 months, nearly 3,500 short of the approximate 16,000 homes per year needed.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier, Minister for Defence and Space Industries) (14:06): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. It provides an opportunity to reflect on those statistics that the Leader of the Opposition refers to and the work that the South Australian government has been doing at extraordinary pace to get more homes built for more South Australians, particularly young ones. Let's start with the stats. The Leader of the Opposition is right. The ABS released data yesterday and it was decisive in that it showed that total dwelling approvals

are up by 28 per cent—a 28 per cent increase on the 2024 year. That is a rate of growth that is almost unprecedented for the state of South Australia. More than that, according—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The member for Morphett and the member for Flinders, you are on your final warnings because it has been a big week for you two.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: According to the ABS, South Australia is well above the national average. Overall, total construction work done is 12 per cent higher than the year earlier. Nationally, that figure is 4.2 per cent. We are outpacing the rest of the country not by a few marginal basis points but by three times, and that speaks to a housing market that is on the go in this state. That speaks to the Minister for Housing and Urban Development following the thorough piece of policy work done in the Housing Roadmap. It's making a difference on the ground.

When you travel through the northern suburbs of Adelaide, which I am sure occasionally—occasionally—members opposite might do, maybe, every now and then, and you encounter road construction work, what you will consistently see are roads being torn up. That is a civil construction exercise that's all about one single objective: getting more water pipes in the ground, getting more water to the suburbs that is needed to allow the growth to occur.

We know those opposite, during the course of the regulatory period for which they were responsible, delivered a \$150 million investment into new water infrastructure—\$150 million for the whole of the state. We have turned that into over 10 times that—10 times that. That's a real investment in water infrastructure that unlocks the housing blocks and gets the development happening to build new homes. The ABS shows we are winning; we are winning the national race.

It's not only the ABS that those opposite might want to pay attention to. Let's look at other independent organisations that assess performance of governments around the country. The Housing Industry Association rank every state around Australia. Where does South Australia fare in terms of this government policy? Number one. Number one in the country they have ranked us. How about the Business Council of Australia, the BCA?

The Hon. A. Koutsantonis interjecting:

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: That's right. It's hardly an organisation that sits around and says, 'Well how do we favour this Labor government over here?' They have ranked every state around the country as well and said that we are the number one jurisdiction in the federation when it comes to housing policy and making the decisions that unlock the growth that is required. Do you know why that growth is required? The housing growth is required because we also happen to live in the fastest growing economy on the mainland of this nation. We have the fastest growing economy, the most housing demand and, in turn, the fastest growing housing supply because this is a government that's working with industry to make the policy decisions that are courageous in nature to get things done.

The SPEAKER: Before I call the leader, the noise coming from my left is unacceptable, so people will be watching on from their offices if the tone doesn't quieten down a little bit. The Leader of the Opposition.

ALGAL BLOOM

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA (Hartley—Leader of the Opposition) (14:11): My question is to the Premier. Will the Premier and the government be amending the algal bloom in South Australia signs installed at beaches, ramps and jetties to include official SA Health advice warning that bivalve shellfish may not be safe and should not be harvested?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier, Minister for Defence and Space Industries) (14:11): He moved on from housing pretty quick. That's okay.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: You changed the subject. That's my point. So, given the change of tack, in respect of the harmful algal bloom, the state government this week released what was a thoroughly exhaustive exercise that led up to the release of our summer plan. It is a serious

policy effort. It's a policy effort that has been underpinned by public health advice, it has been underpinned by science, including the rapidly accelerating investment in science and research that we've got around harmful algal blooms. I am happy to report to the house that South Australia is going to have a strong representation by a really important scientific forum that's happening overseas in the not too distant future, because some of the work that we are now doing is up there with internationally leading scientific efforts.

The Hon. V.A. Tarzia interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The leader, if you ask a question it is probably a good idea to sit in silence and listen to the answer.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: The Leader of the Opposition interjects and says, 'You had to get an international scientist here.' Yes, that's right, because Australia hasn't had a harmful algal bloom of this nature before and we make no apologies for engaging with international science. We get the international science—

The Hon. V.A. Tarzia interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The leader is on his final warning.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: —you get Frank Pangallo to do your homework, and we all know how that ended up. We had a lengthy taskforce meeting this morning for the harmful algal bloom response team. Present at that taskforce meeting were public health officials, including the Chief Public Health Officer, Nicola Spurrier. We are constantly examining and reviewing, on the basis of the information that we receive, ways we can better communicate with the South Australian community on how the bloom is evolving—and it is evolving.

We have seen, thankfully, some improvements in terms of the algal bloom, in terms of where it is, where it's leaving. We have even seen in Gulf St Vincent some positive results in terms of what's happening with the chlorophyll-a results, which are a proxy for the presence of the *Karenia*. In the event that the government receives any advice from the public health team that communication efforts need to change, we will do that. What I would submit to the opposition, as I know they are aware, is that this thing is changing all the time. It is dynamic.

You could have a test here in one moment, a test a few hundred metres up the road in another moment and you could get very different results. It moves, it is dynamic, it pulsates relative to the weather conditions, including the sunlight, which makes it an insidious challenge because you have to make sure your communications, the information that you put out to the public, you want to make sure it withstands the test of time.

We want to keep that information as updated as we can but we do not want people making decisions on the basis of information issued at 9 o'clock in the morning only for that information to be different at 10 o'clock in the morning, and someone's decision would have been different had they known that.

So that represents some of the challenges that we are dealing with in the way that this is communicated in terms of real time, but we will seek to rise above that challenge as best as we can and put on the public record the information the South Australian community genuinely wants.

OPTUS EMERGENCY OUTAGE

Mr WHETSTONE (Chaffey) (14:15): My question is to the Minister for Emergency Services. Has the government received assurances from Optus and other telco providers that the 000 backup systems are in place to protect emergency access for all South Australians?

The Hon. R.K. PEARCE (King—Minister for Emergency Services and Correctional Services, Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing) (14:16): I would like to thank the member for his question on that matter. It gives me an opportunity to add to the Premier's comments about what happened just a little while ago with the Optus outage. It is absolutely unacceptable. We want people to be able to call 000 and feel reassured they will get the help and the advice they need. As the Premier has stated, we have made every possible inquiry to determine what had happened at this point in time and what supports needed to be provided with that. We have made every

engagement through communications with the federal government to ensure this is thoroughly investigated to make sure this does not happen again.

OPTUS EMERGENCY OUTAGE

Mrs HURN (Schubert) (14:16): My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. When was the minister himself or his team first alerted to any problems with 000 calls on 18 September and, importantly, what actions were initiated as a result?

The Hon. C.J. PICTON (Kurna—Minister for Health and Wellbeing) (14:17): I reiterate what the Minister for Emergency Services has said and what the Premier said in terms of what the situation was with Optus both here and in Western Australia and the Northern Territory being completely unacceptable. There is a lot of national action that is now underway to make sure that such an event doesn't happen again.

As both the Premier and I have said in the media previously, and I believe Rob Elliott has said to a parliamentary committee already as well, we were notified at, I believe, just after 1pm on the day, that there were some issues that were being looked into in terms of the 000 response from Optus. We were certainly not aware of those at that stage, of the extent of this issue nor the time of this issue. SAAS were then advised at about 2pm that those issues had been resolved.

It wasn't until the next day, at the press conference, that we found out the extent of these issues, how long it had been going on for, how many calls were affected and the really distressing impact in terms of a number of people whose lives were lost where 000 was not able to be connected. In fact, the next day, my office in the morning received updates from SAAS that we believed at that stage that there was very small impact and a very small number of calls affected at that stage.

So, as the Premier has outlined, we believe that the lack of communication with the South Australian government was completely unacceptable, and that's one of the issues that we have raised very strongly and will be raising very strongly as part of the federal review that will be taking place into this matter.

PATIENT ASSISTANCE TRANSPORT SCHEME

Mr McBRIDE (MacKillop) (14:18): My question is to the Minister for Health. Will the government consider an increased travel and accommodation subsidy for people using the Patient Assistance Transport Scheme. With your leave, Mr Speaker, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

Mr McBRIDE: Constituents on the Limestone Coast are regular users of the scheme but the subsidies, currently 32¢ per kilometre for travel and up to \$40 a night for accommodation, aren't keeping up with the rising costs of living and expenses.

The Hon. C.J. PICTON (Kurna—Minister for Health and Wellbeing) (14:19): I thank the member for MacKillop for his question and his passionate advocacy on behalf of his constituents when it comes to health care. I know PATS is a very important scheme for everybody in country Australia in terms of being able to access health care and being able to address the cost of meeting travel expenses when accessing health care where people need to travel to do so.

This is something where, when we came to government, we took some very quick action to try to address. In fact, PATS hadn't had changes in a major way made to the rates provided in the past decade until we made the decision to double the fuel subsidy from 16¢ to 32¢. In fact, that's now also subject to indexation for the first time ever as well, so that's now up to 33.6¢. This is the biggest change in a decade that has happened to PATS. It has meant that we have significantly increased the payments that are being made to the community.

In fact, the advice that I have is that we have now effectively doubled the amount of payments that we are making through PATS compared to when we came to government. In 2021-22, there was \$7.47 million worth of payments made through PATS. Right now, in the 2024-25 financial year, it was \$14.7 million, so it's almost a complete doubling of the amount of payments that we are making through PATS.

A large amount of that is due to the increase that we have made to the fuel subsidy, but the other effect that we believe is due to the fact that those fuel subsidies are now larger is that more people who are eligible for PATS, who didn't even bother putting in applications beforehand, are now putting in applications. We have seen those application numbers increase from 33,000 claims up to over 50,000 claims that are now being made, so that is obviously helping more people across country South Australia meet those travel requirements, and they were very long overdue.

In terms of other initiatives that we can take, of course this is a scheme that we always have under review and we are always considering other improvements that could be made to PATS. I know, Mr Speaker, you have been particularly advocating in terms of Kangaroo Island, and we have made some changes in terms of Kangaroo Island's eligibility to make it even easier for people from the island to be able to access PATS and support for the ferry costs. I understand we have also made some changes in terms of prostheses eligibility as well, but we will continue to keep this under review. We will continue to listen to member advocates such as the member for MacKillop on what changes could be made into the future.

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Ms SAVVAS (Newland) (14:22): My question is to the Premier. Can the Premier inform the house how construction is supporting South Australia's economy and delivering benefits to local workers and businesses?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier, Minister for Defence and Space Industries) (14:22): I thank the member for Newland for her question. The member for Newland, of course, better than anyone understands that in her electorate there is a high value placed on a healthy economy providing opportunities for future generations. Of course, that's a story we see not just throughout metropolitan Adelaide but throughout the state more broadly. I think there wouldn't be a parent around the country, frankly, who doesn't want to have a sense of confidence that in their home community there is going to be a healthy economy that provides opportunities not so much for themselves but for the people they are responsible for bringing into the world.

To that end, there is a lot of good news in our state at the moment. I mentioned the housing numbers earlier, but it is also true that in terms of construction work that is getting done more generally, the numbers are exceptionally pleasing. Obviously, there is a lot of activity happening in construction work in a government sense, in a civil construction sense, but what we are most heartened by are some of the numbers we see in regard to the engineering work that has been undertaken, including within the non-government sector.

Today, for instance, we were at the sod-turning ceremony of a \$400 million build on North Terrace.

The Hon. V.A. Tarzia interjecting:

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: The Leader of the Opposition interjects again. The very point that I am making is that the \$400 million investment being made by Pelligra, in conjunction with the Freemasons, is all from private capital. The reason they are building the tallest building we have ever seen in the history of our state, including having 300 keys for a brand-new hotel, is because they see the demand in the South Australian economy, not just now but the demand that can be reasonably relied upon as we see future and new industries continuing to choose to call South Australia home.

You wouldn't be building a 300-room hotel in South Australia if you didn't think there were going to be people choosing to travel here to stay in it. That is an investment not in the now, it's an investment in what tomorrow looks like for our state, the tomorrow that we want to seek to realise so that future generations can participate in the sort of strengthened labour market we see the ABS release today.

Today, the ABS numbers, I think it's worthy of mention, reflect not just on the number of people employed, which is a record for South Australia—and it doesn't sound very newsworthy anymore, because it seems that we have to have a few—but the number I thought I would focus on, which doesn't get talked about nearly enough, is the participation rate. We saw today from the ABS that we have the highest participation rate numbers we have seen ever recorded in South Australia.

Why does that matter? Well, traditionally the participation rate within the labour market in South Australia has been below the national average. We have always been structurally below the national average, but we are now creeping up closer to it, to the extent that we are at a record high for the state. South Australians—

Mr Telfer interjecting:

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: Well mate, you are underemployed if you don't participate in the labour market. We want people to choose to participate in the labour market. The sorts of people who choose not to participate are people who are socially disenfranchised or the young, and we want them to know that there are jobs for them too.

When more people put their hand up and say, 'You know what? I'm going to go from being unemployed or potentially structurally unemployed by not even looking to participate in the labour market, to choosing to put my hand up to engage,' you know that things are starting to improve and that investments such as the ones I know the Minister for Education and Skills—he's not here—is leading are actually making a difference, to include people in our economy rather than exclude them. That's important for the sort of society that we choose to live in.

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN VIRTUAL EMERGENCY SERVICE

Mrs HURN (Schubert) (14:26): My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. Will the South Australian Virtual Emergency Service be rolled out at communities across regional South Australia, including in my own community and, if so, at which sites and when?

The Hon. C.J. PICTON (Karna—Minister for Health and Wellbeing) (14:26): The South Australian Virtual Emergency Service, otherwise known as SAVES, is in operation at a lot of sites already across the state. I don't have the full list in front of me, but I am happy to take that on notice. What we were able to announce this morning was that Barossa Hills Fleurieu will soon be installing that at Angaston hospital, which is the hospital where there's clearly a need for it in terms of pressure on the GPs who have had to reduce the number of days on which they are covering that very small emergency department, from seven down to four, and this will hopefully provide some additional support for them particularly in the overnight hours.

EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT CLOSURES

Mrs HURN (Schubert) (14:27): My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. How many emergency departments across South Australia have experienced unplanned closures over the last 12 months and, if so, does the minister find that acceptable?

The Hon. C.J. PICTON (Karna—Minister for Health and Wellbeing) (14:27): I am very happy to provide information in terms of some unplanned closures that happened to hospitals such as Gumeracha, that happened to hospitals such as Strathalbyn, that closed under the former Marshall Liberal government. These were hospitals where the emergency departments were closed by the previous Liberal government—

Members interjecting:

The Hon. C.J. PICTON: Yes, only the South Australian Liberal government would think, when you are facing an international pandemic, that that's a good time to be closing emergency departments.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. C.J. PICTON: 'Now is the time. We don't need those emergency departments anymore.'

Members interjecting:

Mr TEAGUE: Point of order, sir.

The SPEAKER: Members on my right will come to order! I can't hear the point of order.

Mr TEAGUE: The question is very clear as to time period. The minister has departed entirely from that and chosen to debate another matter entirely different. The question was about the last 12 months, and the minister needs to answer the question.

The SPEAKER: The minister only just started answering. They have four minutes to answer the question. The minister can answer the question in the way he sees fit. He's got four minutes and, if he wants to give a bit of background, he's entitled to do that. The minister.

The Hon. C.J. PICTON: I think it is important to look at these emergency departments, where we have seen some permanent closures take place. That is in stark contrast to Angaston, where we are committed to keeping that emergency department open, and we have been staffing that emergency department. What we have seen today is the shadow minister politicising this issue.

There was a doctor scheduled to work at the emergency department yesterday—a very small emergency department, 10 patients a day—who had a heart attack, had to go to hospital and is still in hospital right now. We send our best wishes and regards to that doctor, who unfortunately has had to be admitted to the Lyell McEwin Hospital. We hope that they have a speedy recovery. It is unfortunate that the local member, the shadow minister, rather than trying to proactively work to try to address this issue, is making political points out of this issue when we saw the closure of the Gumeracha hospital when she was the chief spin doctor for former Premier Steven Marshall.

Mr TEAGUE: Point of order.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The member for Morphett can leave—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The member for Morphett can leave until the end of question time. I was calling you to order, and you were still yelling out. You can leave until the end of question time. Member for Flinders, you are very close to leaving as well.

The honourable member for Morphett having withdrawn from the chamber:

The SPEAKER: The deputy leader on a point of order.

Mr TEAGUE: I raise a point of order on standing order 98(a). The minister is now clearly directing comments about a role that the—

The SPEAKER: The deputy leader can sit down. You can't take a point of order when the person that you are talking about, sitting next to you, is breaching the standing orders by interjecting. It is against the standing orders to interject. If the minister was responding to an interjection, which I believe he was—he would have nothing to do if the interjection had not happened in the first place. Back to the Minister for Health.

The Hon. C.J. PICTON: I hope that the shadow minister is able to go to the Gumeracha community and advise what she was doing in the former Liberal government at the time that emergency department was closed.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. C.J. PICTON: That's right. What was her role? I hope she is able to explain that to the community, because those emergency departments have closed. The Liberal Party were the ones who did it. We have a very different view. We certainly will not be closing the Angaston emergency department: we are working to make sure that service can be retained for the community.

SA AMBULANCE SERVICE WORKFORCE

Ms PRATT (Frome) (14:32): My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. How many regional communities are currently vulnerable due to workforce shortages for ambulance stations? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

Ms PRATT: The Ambulance Employees Association has raised concerns that entire communities will be left without coverage due to 136 vacant shifts for the next week.

The Hon. C.J. PICTON (Kurna—Minister for Health and Wellbeing) (14:32): It is quite incredible to get this sort of question from the opposition when they starved the Ambulance Service of resources for their four years in government to the point where they actually cut the funding to the Ambulance Service. We have made a very clear commitment as part of our operational improvement plans for the SA Ambulance Service. It is not just about the city, it is about country regions as well, and 150 of our 350 extra ambos are going into regional South Australia. Already, 108 of those have been recruited—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The member for Flinders can leave until the end of question time.

The honourable member for Flinders having withdrawn from the chamber:

The Hon. C.J. PICTON: Already, we have seen places like Wallaroo now having emergency cover for the first time ever. We have seen expansions in the South-East at places like Mount Gambier. We have seen expansions in the Upper Spencer Gulf in places like Whyalla and Port Augusta, not to mention the expansions that are happening in our peri-urban areas as well: Victor Harbor, Goolwa, Mount Barker, Strathalbyn and Two Wells. All of these expansions are going into our regional Ambulance Service, which was deprived of resources previously. We are investing in extra staff to go in there. We have also, thankfully, seen an increase in volunteering in the past year as well, which is very welcome, but we are making sure that we are putting in the resources to support our regional ambos in the incredible work that they do.

SERVICE SA MOUNT BARKER

The Hon. D.R. CREGAN (Kavel) (14:34): My question is to the minister representing the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport. Can the minister provide an update on service volumes at the Mount Barker Service SA centre? I recognise he may wish to take this question on notice.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS (West Torrens—Treasurer, Minister for Energy and Mining) (14:34): I am now liberated from the member's constant complaints about everything going on in Kavel, especially when it comes to road transport infrastructure. I've got to say he is a relentless letter writer and emailer when it comes to his local constituency, and given we are heading to the end of his time here I want to pay tribute to him and the work he has done in Kavel. As a local MP he has been tireless in his advocacy for his local community, whether it's arguing for commonwealth money, state money, local council money, more money—money anywhere he can get it from for his local community. He has been relentless.

He knows what regional communities go through when we in this place, on both sides of parliament, make requirements for people to go to Service SA to do their day-to-day business. It is an imposition on people and often we make it very difficult for people to get to Service SA centres. Indeed, there were some alternative plans to close Service SA centres, which is probably one of the big reasons why my learned friend now sits on the crossbench rather than with his former colleagues. He is a man of integrity.

I will get those answers for him sine die—a bit of Latin on his way out—and I will make sure that he gets a fulsome answer from the very capable Minister for Infrastructure and Transport in another place.

EMPLOYMENT FIGURES

Ms CLANCY (Elder) (14:35): My question is to the Treasurer. Can the Treasurer please update the state on the South Australian employment market and how this supports small and family businesses?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS (West Torrens—Treasurer, Minister for Energy and Mining) (14:36): Family and small businesses are the heart and soul of the South Australian economy. When they do well, the state does well. When they grow, the state grows. I want to thank the member for her question. She is a big supporter of local business. She does a thing in her

electorate where she chooses local bakeries or coffee shops and advertises to get people to that particular store. It's a really great way of supporting local small businesses, and I know many members in the house on both sides do what they can to support family and small businesses.

The ABS stats out today are very encouraging. They are a great example of what South Australians have built here in South Australia: a thriving economy. Small businesses are out there taking risks. They are employing people. They are doing great work. The total number of people employed in this state is now at a record level. As the Premier said, these records keep on getting broken, and it's a great testament to the South Australian economy and the resilience of South Australian businesses.

Nearly 85,900 jobs have been created since we took office. It's a testament to the outgoing Treasurer, who is retiring at the next election. He did an exceptional job of running a very tight set of books and he will be missed. He has done an exceptional job. I know that small businesses and businesses in South Australia were very passionate about the way he worked with them and I am very keen to continue that work. The participation rate is up as well, which is usually a difficult sign for the unemployment rate—but, interestingly, in these statistics even though the participation rate has edged up, unemployment still fell. So that is a good indication of the strength of the South Australian economy.

But there is one group of businesses that I am very, very worried about, and that is our coastal community businesses. They are doing it tough. They are doing it tough because they are suffering through a number of issues. One is a perception that it is unsafe to go to our coastal communities, being spread by misinformation and conspiracy theories. That has to stop. I am also very concerned about Glenelg. I drove to Glenelg last weekend. As I said yesterday, my parents had a family business on Jetty Road. It is very special to me because it's a great piece of beachside retail and a unique offering in South Australia, and it was an amazing formative part of my education for me when I was there.

But we are seeing those businesses struggle now, facing this perfect storm. You've got a Liberal MP saying it's unsafe to go to the coast. The government is throwing money at people to go down and try to redeem vouchers to eat at retail businesses and support coastal communities. Then the Liberal mayor and Liberal deputy mayor have now decided, at the beginning of summer, to basically shut Jetty Road and dig up the footpath in a vanity project, destroying foot traffic—but so outraged are members by this that they preselected not just the mayor but the deputy mayor to run for parliament.

Small business owners on Jetty Road, who have probably voted Liberal their entire life because they are small business owners, are looking at not only the Liberal mayor but the Liberal deputy mayor and the local member playing the fiddle while Rome burns. How are those businesses going to recover from this? How are they going to recover? How are those businesses going to survive this vanity project the Liberal Party has imposed on them on Jetty Road?

It's all great for us to celebrate these really good unemployment numbers, but what about those small businesses? Who cares for them? Where is the Liberal Party? Why are they silent? If their silence is about their pre-selection, why have they chosen the two people who have inflicted this on the businesses of Jetty Road to run for parliament? To inflict that damage on the rest of South Australia? I've got to say the Liberal Party in South Australia are lost.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms PRATT (Frome) (14:40): My question is to the Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention. Has the Assistant Minister met with the state peak body, the Mental Health Coalition, to discuss future funding for the Unmet Needs Report and, if not, why not?

Ms CLANCY (Elder) (14:40): Yes I have.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms PRATT (Frome) (14:40): My question is to the Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention. What steps, if any, will the Assistant Minister take to provide more mental health support for coastal communities impacted by the harmful algal bloom?

The Hon. C.J. PICTON (Kaurua—Minister for Health and Wellbeing) (14:40): I am happy to inform the shadow minister that part of the summer plan, which has been committed to by the government and announced in the past couple of days, is funding for mental health. We recognise that this was an important element that needed to be provided. In fact, there already had been mental health funding in the first package specifically designed for affected industries and particularly people in the seafood industry, but in this updated package there is additional mental health funding that will make sure that we are delivering in a way that is going to have the most possible impact.

We know this is a time that is going to affect a lot of people. Not only has it affected industries but, as the Treasurer has just outlined, there are a lot of people who are impacted by a lot of the misinformation and ChatGPT sources that are being spread around at the moment on this issue. There are also a lot of people who are just generally also distraught in terms of what the impact on the environment is, the impact on our marine life, particularly the many people who live near the coast. I certainly know that from my local community as well and that is why that was a part of the package that we announced.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms PRATT (Frome) (14:42): My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. How does the government respond to comments by the Royal Australian New Zealand College of Psychiatrists that they are gravely concerned about the state of private hospital psychiatry and the mental health units in Australia? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

Ms PRATT: Hundreds of mental health beds have been lost across Australia due to a string of closures in the private psychiatric sector, and the Mental Health Australia chief executive said, and I quote:

Government must, in particular, urgently improve funding models and pursue workforce reforms to attract, retain and support the mental health workforce.

The Hon. C.J. PICTON (Kaurua—Minister for Health and Wellbeing) (14:42): I am happy to address the issue in terms of private psychiatric hospitals across Australia. Of course, I think the government that the member is referring to in that quote, that that organisation is referring to, is the federal government in terms of the funding models.

We know that there are issues in terms of private hospitals and their funding across the country. This is something where the Federal Minister for Health, Ageing and Disability, the Hon. Mark Butler, has established a task force working with industry to try to address. One of the most acute areas of those funding issues that private hospitals are facing is in terms of psychiatric hospitals, mental health hospitals across the country. Clearly, there are a number of elements to that. One of the elements is in terms of psychiatrists and their desire to be providing those services to psychiatric hospitals in the same way that they have done historically, which is a key barrier right across the country.

In South Australia, the member may know that actually we have a different model for the one private psychiatric hospital in Adelaide, which is the Adelaide Clinic, which is owned by Ramsay Health Care. They operate a different financial model to every other private psychiatric hospital in the country, as I understand it. My understanding from them is that has meant that they are on a slightly more sustainable footing compared with many other of those private psychiatric hospitals.

I think the most recent one that has hit trouble has been a hospital in Hobart, but there have been others across the country that have expressed their concerns at the moment. We will continue to work with the federal government as they are progressing these reforms to address the viability of private hospitals. A lot of this comes down to the interaction between private hospitals, Medicare and private health insurance and the payouts and the funding sources through each.

Clearly, there are some areas where there are very good returns for particular types of procedures where some procedures are very profitable. My understanding is that is particularly in terms of orthopaedics and ophthalmologists, where private hospitals are able to receive significant return on those services, but there are other areas, including mental health, where those returns are a lot lower.

So what is being worked through at the federal level at the moment is trying to recalibrate those payments to make sure that they are on a more even footing and to make sure that all of those services are going to be sustainable into the future.

ALGAL BLOOM

Mr McBRIDE (MacKillop) (14:45): My question is to the Minister for Tourism. What is the government doing to easily advise tourist travellers of areas that aren't affected by the algal bloom? Mr Speaker, with your leave and that of the house I will explain.

Leave granted.

Mr McBRIDE: The Robe district council says visitors are confused about where the algal bloom is active and this is putting them off from visiting even though the bloom isn't in the Robe vicinity.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON (Ramsay—Minister for Tourism, Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (14:45): I thank the member for MacKillop for this question. As you know, we have been very clear about information that the algal bloom is affecting about 30 per cent of our coast, so we know that the vast majority is not being impacted right now. We have been very clear about that messaging. We now have our Beachsafe app so people can check at any point, if they are wanting to go down to the beach, what is happening down there. Of course, the hotline and the algalbloom.sa.gov.au website are there for the information as well.

But I have to say that, given that we have launched our dining cash back and our travel vouchers, we have been very consistent about the coastal post codes that that covers. We cover from Coffin Bay in the west to Kingston in the South-East. I haven't heard that Robe has been impacted by concerns about the algal bloom. In fact, it was shared with me most recently by the commission that at the most recent algal bloom forum they were actually concerned with overtourism this year, so I feel like you are getting some mixed messages here. I do hope, for any information that the member needs, that I can work with him too.

I have held quite regular round tables and have met with regional tourism operators in the seat of MacKillop and of course throughout the South-East. One of the challenges we always have is that summer is incredibly popular, and you have a really unique selling point or attraction because you are so close to the Victorian border. So you do see people who own lots of holiday homes in Robe who do not live there and are not South Australians but are participating in that area. It is a great attraction.

One of the things we have been working on with the Robe council and yourself, of course, is what can we do throughout the year? This is something I am still keen to do but, as far as I am concerned, I think the issue might be that Robe might be incredibly popular, as it is every summer, and that will continue to be the norm this year as well.

COMMUNITY PHARMACY

Ms O'HANLON (Dunstan) (14:48): My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. How is the government increasing access to care for South Australians through community pharmacies?

The Hon. C.J. PICTON (Kaurana—Minister for Health and Wellbeing) (14:48): I thank the member for Dunstan for her question and her very significant interest in terms of pharmacy and the role that it can provide in our healthcare services, and particularly in the very important 24-hour pharmacy that we have established on The Parade at Norwood through National Pharmacies, which has been incredibly well received and incredibly popular with the community. This is one of four 24-hour pharmacies that we have established across the state, with the others, of course, being Salisbury Plain, Clovelly Park and now the new one at Hallett Cove, which is great news for the member for Black.

I am very excited to inform the house that, as of this month, we will now crack 400,000 services that these four community pharmacies have seen in times when otherwise they would have been closed. That is 400,000 times that South Australians have been to these four pharmacies, received advice from a pharmacist, had their script dispensed, been able to get

baby Panadol and other essential items at times when otherwise they would not have been able to. I am also able to advise the house that we are in the process of extending the contracts for those pharmacies for another year. We want to make sure that this is a program which continues long into the future. These are becoming well-known locations, and we want to continue that for at least another year at those locations.

This is just one element of our big expansion that's happening in terms of the role that community pharmacists can play across our state. Already, we've done some excellent work, and it's been ably supported by the work of the member for Badcoe and the committee that she established looking at urinary tract infections and the work that pharmacists can do there. We have extended the scope of practice for pharmacists to be able to help women across the state. We can see the material benefit now in the reduction of the number of women who are presenting to our emergency departments in those age cohorts.

We now see a 27 per cent reduction of UTI presentations at our emergency departments since we brought in those requirements. This shows very clearly that pharmacists can provide that role safely, they can provide it with care, and it can reduce pressure on the rest of the healthcare system. So thank you to the member for Badcoe for her advocacy on that. Of course, this is just one element of what we believe is a broader scope of what pharmacists can do.

I was very excited to be able to announce this week that, starting from next year, the new Adelaide University will be starting a new course for a graduate diploma for pharmacists to undertake an even broader scope of practice to be able to care for more minor conditions at local pharmacies. In terms of this one-year course, which they have developed, part of the benefit of the merger has been the bringing together of the pharmacy school and the University of Adelaide Medical School. Through a combination of that they have been able to develop this course, and it's going to enable a whole range of different diseases and conditions to be treated through training of our pharmacists.

The state government will be supporting this. We will be providing a \$7,000 grant for metro pharmacists to undertake training and an \$8,500 grant for regional pharmacists to undertake this training. We have gone through the process of confirming the conditions that will be available now, and this will be starting from next year. Already, there are some pharmacists who have undertaken this training interstate, and so they will be able to do this from next year. These conditions include things such as nausea, vomiting, wound care, muscular care, reflux and rhinitis, which will be able to be treated at community pharmacies. Thank you to all of our community pharmacists for the work that they do. We are backing you, and we want to see a broader range of help that you can get through your pharmacy.

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA, MAGILL CAMPUS

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA (Hartley—Leader of the Opposition) (14:52): Speaking of the merger, my question is to the Minister for Planning. Has the government completed the master plan on the UniSA Magill site and, if so, when will those details be released to the public?

The Hon. N.D. CHAMPION (Taylor—Minister for Housing and Urban Development, Minister for Housing Infrastructure, Minister for Planning) (14:52): No, we have not completed the master plan. What we have done is undertaken fairly significant community consultation. It's important to do that, to hear from the community. We know that this is an issue that the community has a lot of passion about. Only this week, the Premier and I met with Magill Matters and had a really good and sophisticated conversation about that site.

The important thing is that the university is in place and has a long-term lease on the Magill university site. Of course, we will take the time to look at the public submissions, to allow the master planner to do their work, and then once that's done, we will complete the master plan and release it to the community.

ADELAIDE BEACH MANAGEMENT

Mr COWDREY (Colton) (14:53): My question is to the Minister for Environment. When will the government release the results of the dredging trial undertaken as part of the Adelaide Beach Management Review? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

Mr COWDREY: The trial was completed in November 2024, and my community has been waiting for the results to be released ever since.

The Hon. L.P. HOOD (Adelaide—Minister for Climate, Environment and Water) (14:53): I thank the member for his question. Whilst I have received an initial briefing, the issue is currently delegated to the Attorney-General, with the expectation that will be handed over to our office soon. I am more than happy to take that on notice and come back to the house with a response.

VINEYARD RESTING REBATE

Mr WHETSTONE (Chaffey) (14:54): My question is to the Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science. Will the state government reopen the vineyard resting rebate scheme in time for the next vintage and, if not, why not? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

Mr WHETSTONE: The scheme allows subsidised access to ethephon for red wine grapegrowers to put their vines on a production hold, opting out of the current vintage while maintaining optimal vine health during times of oversupply. Given that many South Australian growers continue to face oversupply challenges, wine industry experts expect high grower uptake of the scheme this year, in particular, if it were available.

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS (Cheltenham—Minister for Trade and Investment, Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science, Minister for Local Government, Minister for Veterans' Affairs) (14:54): I am happy to take that question on notice and seek inquiries from the appropriate minister who administers the scheme and come back to the shadow minister.

The SPEAKER: The member for Bragg, a birthday question, four days late.

Mr BATTY: Thank you, sir, yes, belated.

ILLEGAL TOBACCO STORES

Mr BATTY (Bragg) (14:55): My question is to the Minister for Consumer and Business Affairs. How many illegal tobacco shops that have been issued a short-term closure order have now reopened? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

Mr BATTY: Last month the government celebrated shutting down 50 illegal tobacco stores, despite many of those stores having already simply reopened after a few weeks causing great frustration to local communities.

The Hon. A. MICHAELS (Enfield—Minister for Small and Family Business, Minister for Consumer and Business Affairs, Minister for Arts) (14:55): I thank the member for the question. We are actually now up to 78 short-term closure orders since that legislation came into effect in the first week of June. CBS has been doing a lot of work—in fact, nation-leading work. We have been really on the frontline of this, right around the country with eyes on us.

We have had an A-plus ranking from the Australian Council for Smoking and Health. We have had federal visitors here looking at what we have been doing, trying to get some national harmonisation in terms of compliance and enforcement, looking at the models, including our closure orders. We obviously had the 72-hour closure orders which were nation-leading back then in December. We since went to 28-day closure orders, and CBS has been really active, working really closely with SAPOL and Operation Eclipse on those closure orders. Like I said, we are up to 78 at the moment. I think I might have issued one just before question time began.

We have also had our first prosecution going through the courts. There was an early guilty plea in that matter and the court obviously appropriately penalised that person. We have got a second one through the courts at the moment. We have two long-term closure orders of 12 months that have gone through the Magistrates Court and we have a number in the courts at the moment.

Where we see that sort of activity, we very much encourage people to report that through to CBS. They are very active. The team on the Illicit Tobacco Taskforce are very active in not only metropolitan Adelaide but right around the regions as well, so please keep reporting those through and the good work of CBS and SAPOL will continue on the illicit tobacco.

Mr BATTY: I have a supplementary.

The SPEAKER: We will see if it's a supplementary.

ILLEGAL TOBACCO STORES

Mr BATTY (Bragg) (14:57): Of the 78 short-term closure orders the minister mentioned in her answer, how many of those have since reopened?

The Hon. A. MICHAELS (Enfield—Minister for Small and Family Business, Minister for Consumer and Business Affairs, Minister for Arts) (14:57): The compliance and enforcement team obviously closely monitor those during the closure order period and thereafter. So what we do see and what we hope to see is those stores reopen and not sell illicit tobacco. A lot of those are convenience stores. We are certainly hoping they do the right thing.

We also have additional powers in relation to landlords, so when I issue a short-term closure order I actually write to the landlords as well and make them aware that they are hosting a tenant who is selling illicit tobacco and that gives them powers to terminate their lease. So we certainly are attacking it on every front. CBS does monitor the stores that have had short-term closure orders and will continue to do that into the future.

REGIONAL ROAD MAINTENANCE

The Hon. G.G. BROCK (Stuart) (14:58): My question is to the minister representing the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport in the other place. You might have to take this on notice, I think, minister. Can the minister update my outback communities on the programmed road maintenance construction contractual requirements to rectify the road system in the outback? With your leave, Mr Speaker, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Just having completed my third or fourth outback trip and witnessing the condition of quite a few of the roads there, the information from the community was that the contractor, contracted under the previous government, has reduced their road gangs from five down to two.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS (West Torrens—Treasurer, Minister for Energy and Mining) (14:59): The member for Stuart is a one-person iPAVe monitor. He's out there. He's out there having a look. He cares passionately about our regional roads. He asks more questions, writes more letters about this: he cares passionately about regional South Australia. He really is worried about the condition of regional roads, and he is right to be. There are a large number of maintenance issues that we have in our regional communities, especially on roads. The road maintenance contracts that we have been left with are appalling. They are not fit for purpose. The former Treasurer did his bit by increasing money each and every year we were in office, more money for road maintenance, and there is a lot more to do. I will take that question on notice.

I want to thank the member for Stuart for his eternal vigilance on those regional roads. There is many a time he has been out there and given me a call and said, 'I just went over a pothole.' He wants to send me a pin on his phone so that I know where he is and I can go out and get it fixed. He is a champion for regional roads and regional communities, and I will make sure that I get a follow-up for him and get back to him as fast as I can.

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN TOURISM

The Hon. A. PICCOLO (Light) (15:00): My question is to the Minister for Tourism. Can the minister update the house on South Australian events?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON (Ramsay—Minister for Tourism, Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (15:00): I thank the Minister for Light for his advocacy in regard to tourism. I was absolutely

delighted to be back in my hometown of Kapunda just the other week for our national main street conference. I was reminded what a beautiful main street Kapunda has and some great ideas came from that conference.

I have to tell you South Australia has once again proven we are the best event state in Australia. Last night our state was awarded Best Event State at the 2025 Australian Event Awards and Symposium ceremony. Although it is no surprise to us that South Australia has earned such fantastic national recognition, this win shows the strength of our events and festivals all year round. The criteria for the award was around those who are Australian events professionals, who take their industry very seriously, and the award was about having the largest number of high-quality events that have occurred in the last year.

From world-class festivals and major sporting events to community celebrations and our multicultural showcases through to iconic regional activation, our state knows how to put on a great event, and people are noticing. We know how important these celebrations are to the state's visitor economy, which is why we have continued to fill the calendar and support the growth of events in our regions.

Generous hospitality and simple pleasures are true South Australian signatures, and events provide a powerful way to share these qualities. Horse trail rides, rodeos, cultural performances, wine festivals and more events have been supported across the state from the \$400,000 Drought Relief Regional Event Fund. These events will trigger visitation to South Australia's drought-affected communities from this weekend. Beloved events are supported by the fund such as the Streaky Sounds Music Festival, a family-friendly open-air music festival held each year in Eyre Peninsula's Streaky Bay. It also supports the 71st Carrieton Rodeo New Year's Eve Bash in the Flinders Ranges and Outback. These are only two of these regional events that are given additional support, a call to action to say to people, 'Come and support our communities.'

As well as the drought event fund, the annual Regional Event Fund supports events across the state that reflect the unique qualities of our tourism regions. We know that events are a catalyst. They are a call to book and a deadline to book for people to come to our state. They also encourage travellers to stay longer in our tourism regions, putting dollars into the pockets of local business.

We know the impact of these events will also be felt in our tourism regions impacted by the algal bloom, with festivals and events not just attracting visitors but providing much-needed community spirit. That is why you saw in our summer plan that coastal events are being supported with grants of up to \$20,000 available to assist with the promotion of these events over summer.

I know how important events are. We on this side of the house know that events matter, but I have to say there are people across the other side and in another place who are giving incredibly mixed messages about the value of events. In fact, it is like they don't even want us to invest in the regions—this negativity we get when we come out with things like the Economic Recovery Fund, the Experience Nature Tourism Fund, the vouchers, the dining cashback and, of course, supporting new accommodation. We know it matters, and we know it goes to the growth of tourism in South Australia.

ADELAIDE REMAND CENTRE

Mr BATTY (Bragg) (15:04): My question is to the Minister for Correctional Services. Is any new infrastructure being built at the Adelaide Remand Centre and, if so, what infrastructure? With leave, I will explain.

The Hon. A. Koutsantonis interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The Treasurer will come to order.

Leave granted.

Mr BATTY: It has been announced that 50 new beds will be added to the Adelaide Remand Centre, but it is unclear if this involves additional infrastructure.

Ms Savvas interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The member for Newland will come to order.

The Hon. R.K. PEARCE (King—Minister for Emergency Services and Correctional Services, Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing) (15:05): I would also like to thank the member for his question on this matter. I am really proud to be on this side of government, where we are investing extensively in our correctional services. We are building more beds, we are improving our security and we are working in myriad ways to improve on the rehabilitation programs that we are putting through our systems to ensure that our communities end up safer as a result of the work that we are putting in. In terms of the specifics, I am more than happy to take that on notice and get back to the member.

ADELAIDE REMAND CENTRE

Mr BATTY (Bragg) (15:06): My question again is to the Minister for Correctional Services. When will the first of the 50 new beds at the Adelaide Remand Centre come online?

The Hon. R.K. PEARCE (King—Minister for Emergency Services and Correctional Services, Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing) (15:06): As I have mentioned, we are investing extensively in beds, and we will keep the member up to date as that progresses.

Grievance Debate

MALINAUSKAS LABOR GOVERNMENT

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA (Hartley—Leader of the Opposition) (15:06): I want to start today by acknowledging the many carers who are in the gallery today in respect of, I believe, carers month—Carers Week. Well, it should be a month, because carers do a fantastic job out there in the community, so I want to acknowledge the many carers who are here with us today. I think my colleague the deputy leader is going to make a more extensive contribution on that, but I thought I would acknowledge them while they are in the chamber today.

Moving on, what a scandalous week it has been for the government this week—an absolutely scandalous week. Whether it is on the algal bloom where they have let down the people of South Australia, whether it is on hydrogen where they have let down the people of South Australia, or whether it is on the damning housing figures that we have seen reported yesterday, this government continues to lurch from crisis to crisis.

Talk about a government not able to read the room—for months South Australians have been waiting for this lacklustre government to release the full details of its summer plan. As we saw, it was around \$100 million. Unfortunately, it trickled out way too little and way too late. What did it choose to do instead? Treat South Australians with absolute contempt, preferring instead to drip-feed specific information.

We know that their algal bloom presser on Saturday got cancelled because the optics were not good enough because of the foam at Glenelg, so they moved it to the next day. Then they chose to drip-feed specific elements of the plan over a number of days, reinforcing the fact that this government cares more about PR than people.

We then discovered a centrepiece of its plan, which was the app. It contains information but even today members of the public are sending me messages about the confusion, about the inadequacy, about whether the information that has been provided is actually absolutely accurate at a number of beaches.

We know that this government is economically devoid—absolutely economically devoid. They have had to face the scrutiny of what was a damning Auditor-General's finding this week. This is one of the worst findings, by the way, I have ever seen. Basically, this government has wasted, they have literally poured down the drain, nearly \$300 million on this hydrogen vanity project, despite going to the election saying this would reduce energy prices by some 8 per cent. They have wasted not \$100 million, not \$200 million but nearly \$300 million of taxpayer dollars, poured down the drain.

The sum of \$285.2 million—that is the staggering amount of money that the hapless Office of Hydrogen Power spent in just three years on a project that effectively is now on the scrap heap. Just let that sink in. That is actually more than the amount of money that they spent on the entire drought and the entire algal bloom. Think of what you could have done with nearly \$300 million. We see state debt—

Mr Whetstone interjecting:

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I am sure the carers would appreciate some of that \$300 million. But do you know what? This government has poured it right down the drain. State debt is nearing \$50 billion in what will become almost a daily interest bill of around \$7 million a day just to service that debt. The state simply cannot afford a government that is throwing these millions and millions of dollars down the drain.

Add to that the fact that South Australians are paying some of the highest power prices in the state's history during a cost-of-living crisis where we have seen that South Australia is the sixth least affordable city in the world. One can only wonder where that shameful waste of money could have been better directed helping South Australians. But wait—there is more. Despite government assertions, most of that money will never be recovered.

We also know that \$85.7 million of that money has been effectively written off the government books. What is more alarming is that the bill paying is not over for taxpayers who still could be on the hook for another \$212 million of remaining contracted commitments and liabilities. You just could not make this stuff up. If this was a private company, people would be in jail—it is as simple as that. Little wonder why South Australians are rightfully outraged—absolutely outraged—at such a vulgar and outrageous waste of taxpayer money.

You saw some people on the steps of parliament yesterday—not traditionally friends of the Liberal Party—but even they are now taking to the streets and protesting because they are sick and tired of the waste of this government and their warped priorities.

What disturbing reading it was for this government and this hapless Premier and housing minister, let alone the tens of thousands of South Australians trying to live the great Australian dream of owning their own home. We saw the figures that were released yesterday of 12,500 or so homes. They need to build around 16,000 and they are behind by thousands and thousands of homes each and every year. Still to this day, in this term of government, on the sites where there has been some movement, not one slab has been laid—not one slab laid.

This is a hopeless Labor government and they will not take the opportunity to rebuild the great Australian dream of home ownership. It is going to be up to the Liberal Party to do just that.

Parliamentary Procedure

VISITORS

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Before I call the member for Dunstan, I would like to acknowledge in the gallery some people who are guests of the member for Adelaide in her role as co-convenor of the Parliamentary Friends of Carers. I would like to acknowledge guests today from Carers SA and other organisations, including Siblings Australia, CentaCare, Carers and Disability Link, Carer Council, Child and Family Focus SA, Connecting Foster and Kinship Carers, Grandcarers SA—I know they are here, because I recognise Michael from a distance—EllieB's and many other organisations and individuals who provide an important service in supporting carers in SA. Thank you for your work. The member for Dunstan.

Grievance Debate

BRIA, MR R.

Ms O'HANLON (Dunstan) (15:12): I, too, would like to acknowledge the carers in the public gallery. Thank you for the work that you do, and the people that you represent do, that covers the full gamut of every community that is represented in this chamber today. The state would not run without you.

This year marks a remarkable milestone for a man who has become synonymous with the City of Norwood Payneham & St Peters: Robert Bria's 20th anniversary as mayor. It is a privilege to rise in this place to honour his extraordinary service and his profound contribution to our community. I first met Robert back in 2019 when I was the Labor candidate for Sturt.

At that time, I was very new to politics and not everyone took me seriously. Robert did. He met me, gave me his time and his respect and treated me as someone with ideas worth listening to.

That simple act of generosity told me a lot about his character. It has been the foundation of what has grown into not just a strong working relationship but a genuine friendship.

Over the years, I have had the privilege of meeting many mayors, both city and country, and I can say hand on heart that Robert stands out. It is extraordinary that someone who has held the mayoralty for two decades continues to approach the role with such energy and enthusiasm, and continues to brim with new ideas to enrich our community. What I value most is that Robert listens carefully, engages thoughtfully and treats collaboration with a variety of stakeholders as a genuine partnership. That openness speaks volumes about the kind of leader he is.

Robert's story begins long before he took on the mayoral robes. In November 1997, at just 28 years old, he was elected as a councillor for the newly created City of Norwood Payneham & St Peters. He had just completed a Bachelor of Arts after having returned to Marden Senior College in 1994 to complete year 12, determined not to be defined by initially not having passed the first time round. He was re-elected in 2000 and again in 2003.

Following the passing of Mayor Laurie Fioravanti in 2005, Robert, then deputy mayor, stepped up as acting mayor. Four months later, he won the mayoralty by-election with an impressive 64 per cent of the vote. It was the beginning of a mayoralty that has spanned two decades, countless meetings, thousands of conversations and transformative change for our local area. Robert's electoral success since then has been extraordinary. He has been re-elected again and again, often unopposed, and in 2018 secured 74 per cent of the vote.

He attributes this to three simple rules: work hard, stay true to yourself, and always respect your opponents. Those principles have guided him through the highs and the inevitable challenges of public life, and they have earned him respect from across the political spectrum. What makes this all the more remarkable is that Robert has served the entire mayoralty while working full time, mostly in multicultural affairs. He somehow found the time to complete a postgraduate management degree, serve on the St Joseph's Memorial School board for six years, coach his son's football team and take part in almost every Norwood Christmas pageant during his 28 years on council.

Robert's professional background as an Australian Certified Economic Developer, his role as Deputy Chair of Mainstreet SA and his membership of Economic Development Australia have all fed back into his leadership of council. Under his stewardship, NPSP has championed main street revitalisation, heritage protection and vibrant public spaces, while maintaining the strong community character that makes places like Norwood, St Peters, Marden and Kensington so loved.

Behind all of this is a family that has walked every step of the way with him. His wife, Pina, and their three children—Isabella, Christian and Charlotte—have shared in the triumphs and the long nights. In fact, Robert told me the story of when Pina was heavily pregnant, holding a ladder while he put up corflutes late at night during that first mayoral campaign.

Like so many of our wonderful multicultural community, Robert's values have been deeply shaped by his parents—his father, Rocco, and his late mother, Rosina—who migrated from Italy in the early 1960s. He says that his public service is a way of giving back to the country that gave his parents the chance to step out of poverty into the warm sunshine of prosperity. He believes in never refusing a meeting request, believing that if people take the time to come to him, he will take the time to meet with them.

When Robert was first elected 28 years ago, he was referred to by somebody as 'that kid'. Nearly three decades later, 'that kid' is one of South Australia's longest serving mayors and has proven himself time and again as a leader of substance, humility and vision. Robert Bria's leadership has been defined by deep community connection, respect and steady stewardship. He has presided over a city that has embraced both its rich heritage and its modern vibrancy. He supports festivals and the arts, advocates fiercely for local businesses and nurtured a council culture that values both tradition and innovation. Congratulations, Robert, on this extraordinary milestone.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Congratulations, Your Worship. I am sure the house would agree that you have served our state well.

NATIONAL CARERS WEEK

Mr TEAGUE (Heysen—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (15:18): I rise to recognise the week that we are in the midst of. National Carers Week runs from 12 to 18 October, and there have already been a number of significant state occasions to recognise significant parts of the carer community. I am so delighted to see so many familiar faces here in the chamber on this occasion. I will say a few words about what might almost by definition be regarded as unheralded work by those who are looking out for those often close to them within a variety of recognised categories in need of care. As a parliament, as a government, we ought to be always taking the steps we can more fully to support those in the carer community.

I just want to record that there are several categories of care that are recognised and they include caring for someone living with a disability; living with mental illness, in particular; dementia; and, importantly to understand, two categories of long-lasting disability, chronic illness and terminal illness, as well as drug and alcohol dependency and otherwise frailty that comes with age.

Bearing in mind that wide variety of formally recognised care, I want to highlight in particular two categories of care that have really had a particular bright light shone on them in the last several days. The first is those children who find themselves caring for a parent who is living with a disability. I was so proud to be along just last week at the Young Carers Voices and Hearts gathering, where those of us who were present will not forget too soon the powerful words of the keynote speaker, Tara Stark, who shared in the most down-to-earth, straightforward way the extraordinary time that she had growing up looking out for her mum living with a persistent mental illness.

Tara Stark's life and achievement, now going on to professional practice to being a mother of four children and continuing to travel the country to engage with young carers and to send the message to them that the work you do is completely irreplaceable in so many ways, was a truly powerful thing to witness. I might also say she really made it clear that the experience and life of a carer can drive benefits in terms of resilience and a richness of life, and it is well we remember that.

Her Excellency the Hon. Frances Adamson AC and Rod Bunten were present on that occasion, and just as they have taken proactive steps to shine a light, including by being patrons of Grandcarers SA, I was also pleased to be along just earlier this week on an occasion hosted at Government House to recognise those engaged in leading ways in palliative care in South Australia. The Minister for Human Services was present on that occasion, as was the Minister for Health, and that special occasion celebrating 40 years of Palliative Care South Australia was truly special as well.

I particularly shout out to the Ambulance Wish initiative that Palliative Care South Australia is sponsoring in a way to provide a special opportunity for someone in palliative care to experience something that they would not be able to do without that assistance of an ambulance, and every strength to them.

Having mentioned Grandcarers SA, I want to also highlight that I am very proud that the member for Morialta has just recently joined the board, led by Chair Kathryn House—and Mike is present, of course, as has been recognised, together with so many other carers. I look forward to him making a strong contribution to that organisation. Happy Carers Week.

NATIONAL CARERS WEEK

The Hon. L.P. HOOD (Adelaide—Minister for Climate, Environment and Water) (15:23): I, too, want to take the opportunity to congratulate Robert Bria on his 20 years as mayor. It is an amazing milestone. Thank you for your service.

I want to mark that 12 to 18 October is this year's National Carers Week. National Carers Week is not just an opportunity to recognise and show appreciation to Australia's three million carers, it is a chance to listen, learn and raise awareness about the experiences of carers and the challenges they can face. This year's theme is 'You are, know, or will be one', highlighting the widespread nature of caring. It will affect virtually every person at some point in their lives.

In South Australia, we have 245,000 unpaid carers and up to 31,400 of them are under the age of 25. The odds show that if you look around at the people in your life, it will not take you long to find a carer. They could be parents, grandparents, partners, siblings, children, friends or neighbours.

Importantly, no caring journey is alike. Some people become a carer slowly, bit by bit. Others become a carer suddenly and unexpectedly. Many people do not even realise they are carers. Regardless, the exceptional role that they play in the lives of the people they care for is the same. Balancing caring responsibilities with everything else life can throw at you can be incredibly challenging, whether that is work, study, or your own physical and mental health.

That is why I want to take the time today to say thank you to our carers, the ones we see and the ones we do not. Thank you for the tireless work you do out of selfless love and care. I want you to know that you are not alone. Caring is a responsibility not just of one person but of a community. We see you, we hear you, and we want to keep advocating for you. If you know a carer, please take the time to check in with them. Offer them a break or assistance and appreciate what they do. It is important that our carers are cared for too.

I, too, would like to acknowledge the special guests in the gallery today. We have in the room people from Carers SA and other caring organisations, including Siblings Australia, Centacare, Carers and Disability Link, Carer Council, Child and Family Focus SA, Connecting Foster and Kinship Carers, Grandcarers SA, EllieB's and many other organisations and individual carers. We thank them again for the valuable work they do to support their loved ones in South Australia and also the organisations for how they support carers in our state. Many of the organisations here today provide invaluable services for carers around our state and make sure that our carers have access to their own support when they need it.

On behalf of the Parliamentary Friends of Carers group, which was co-founded by me and the Hon. Heidi Girolamo MLC in the other place, we welcome you and thank you for all the work that you do. The Parliamentary Friends of Carers was effectively born from the Hon. Heidi Girolamo and me seeing both our mums care for our dads. We wanted to provide a space in which we could be allies for our carer community.

I also want to give a particularly special shout-out to all our young carers and Young Carers SA, many of whom balance school alongside their responsibilities and also their friends. They really truly are unsung heroes. Last week, it was wonderful for the Hon. Heidi Girolamo and me to hold a special parliament tour for some young carers in this place. They have small shoulders but very big hearts. Thank you again to all our carers across South Australia. Happy National Carers Week and remember: 'You are, know, or will be one.'

ANGASTON DISTRICT HOSPITAL EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT

Mrs HURN (Schubert) (15:27): I, too, would like to take a brief moment to wish everyone a very happy National Carers Week. I sincerely thank you for your dedication and the quiet strength that you show to all of those who you care for. Thank you so much for being here in the parliament today and thank you to the member for Adelaide and our colleague in the other place, the Hon. Heidi Girolamo for pulling together the parliamentary group to recognise the impact that you have. The selflessness that you show is really so valuable. Keep it up.

I have a local issue that I would like to address in the house and it is in relation to the Angaston emergency department, which has been closed, it was revealed today, on 23 occasions across the last two years. Not only is that a huge inconvenience to people in my local community but you can imagine the serious angst and uncertainty that is creating. It was really great to see one of our local hardworking doctors, Dr Jennifer Glaetzer, speak about this issue today and in *The Advertiser* and the impact this is having on the local workforce and on our community more broadly.

This is an issue I have had families come to me and sit in my local electorate office and cry about, not being able to access services at their local hospital. I spoke to a mum who spoke about the near miss that she had with her son who suffers from epilepsy. When you hear stories from these families, it really does remind you of the importance of having local health care as close to home as possible, particularly in our regional communities. You can imagine how shocked I was when I heard the health minister's response to these 23 closures in my local community. On FIVEaa this morning, he said:

So, no doubt the opposition's always going to try to catastrophise what's going on, but I don't think that this is quite as significant as what's being made out.

That is the response that came from the state's health minister about a regional emergency department that has been closed on 23 occasions over the last two years. I have got to say, there is not much that leaves me gobsmacked—I am sure we have all seen lots of things in politics—but I was genuinely floored by that comment when I heard it live on radio, and so were many people in my local community.

I have not been surprised by the amount of people who have contacted my electorate office saying, 'How is it that this minister could make those comments about a service that we rely on in our local community?' I think that shows the passion and the dedication that people of the Barossa Valley and of Angaston have for their local health service. That was a shameful response from the health minister, and people in my community and in regional South Australia deserve much better. The minister also said:

...this is a very small emergency department, only 10 people come to it on average per day...

He went on to say that Tanunda is only 15 minutes away as well, which was an interesting comment, because all of the formal advice that has gone up on the Barossa Hills Fleurieu LHN Facebook page, which is the vehicle by which my local community is advised of these closures, actually encourages people to go to Gawler, which is some 30 minutes away, so not the 15 minutes down the road that the minister has been referring to.

One area that I have really been pushing for over the last couple of years has been the rollout of a program called SAVES, which is the SA Virtual Emergency Service. It is a really fantastic program that I appreciate is at several regional hospitals in South Australia, and that is great. It is not in my local patch, but I first wrote to the health minister about this two years ago, almost to the date, urging for this to be considered. It also has the backing from local doctors in my patch, so I will keep pushing for that to be rolled out. I genuinely think it will make a really big difference in my local community.

The minister also made reference to a doctor who unfortunately fell ill yesterday, and the minister advised that that illness was really responsible for the closure of the Angaston emergency department yesterday. We wish that doctor all the very best. If that does not underscore the fragility and the vulnerability of the health system in South Australia, I do not know what will. How can it be that the illness of one doctor can close an entire emergency department in my local community? We must do more. This government must do more, not only in rolling out SAVES but also having better and stronger workforce incentives on the table so that my hospital can stay open and, importantly, grow into the future.

BYNER, MR L.

Ms WORTLEY (Torrens) (15:33): I rise today to pay tribute to a local member of the Torrens community, a distinguished South Australian voice who is unwell and I understand is listening from his hospital bed today. It is fitting to take a moment to acknowledge the contributions he has made to the media and to the lives of many South Australians over a remarkable career spanning more than six decades. There are DJs, shock jocks and talkback hosts, and then there is Leon Byner, the consummate broadcaster, one of the few presenters to host programs on stations in every Australian capital city.

Leon's journey in broadcasting began at just 14 years of age when he was an announcer at the Alfred hospital fete in St Kilda, Melbourne. It was there that John Bell, who later went on to found the Bell Shakespeare company, remarked that Leon had a voice for radio. That early spark ignited a lifelong vocation. Leon honed his craft in the demanding world of country radio starting at age 17 in Shepparton, Victoria. The do-everything ethos of the 1960s regional broadcasting taught him the skills that would define his career. He really did the hard yards.

By the late 1960s, Leon had arrived in Adelaide, working the midnight to dawn shift, known as the graveyard shift, at 5AD before being snapped up by 5KA. His talent soon took him to Sydney in the early 1970s, where he stepped in to fill in for John Laws on 2UW's number one show, an early sign of his national standing.

Leon returned to Adelaide in 1975, where he became a mainstay of local radio. There are some in this chamber who grew up listening to him spin the discs, introducing us to the best pop and

rock music of the day. Later, for over two decades, he hosted the top-rating morning talkback program on FIVEaa and its regional affiliates across South Australia, becoming a trusted companion in homes, cars and workplaces across the state. Leon Byner loaned his deep, smooth voice to many causes, and he often directed callers to MPs he thought would pick the issue up and assist the caller. My staff would prepare for the incoming calls on the day he would direct the caller with a particular issue to my office, and I know others did as well.

His commitment to public service through media earned him 13 nominations at the Australian Commercial Radio Awards in Best Talk and Current Affairs. He also received three nominations for Australian of the Year. Leon's program became more than a radio show. It was a public forum where citizens could seek help, share ideas, and demand action. Countless individuals and families have benefited from his willingness to investigate injustices, amplify forgotten stories and persist where others might look away, whether it was a small business battling bureaucracy, a family seeking justice, or a community rallying to support local produce and save an icon like Spring Gully. Leon did not just report the news; he listened, acted, and he cared.

Politicians were regularly on his program, sometimes with trepidation, knowing that you would go to air to speak about one topic but could be vigorously questioned on another, with surprise talent being thrown into the mix. I know the Wallis cinema family, Deanne and Michelle, who are with us in the gallery today, greatly appreciated his support over the years. When there was a story to be told in supporting South Australia, Leon often stepped up to the plate.

Like many who live boldly in the public eye, Leon's career was not without complexity. His ability to endure, adapt and remain connected to his audience speaks to his authenticity and the deep trust he cultivated over decades. In 2022, after more than 20 years as a morning voice of FIVEaa, Leon stepped down, the last of the old guard of Adelaide talkback radio. The following year, his lifetime of service was recognised with the Medal of the Order of Australia for service to radio broadcast.

Leon Byner may never have sought public office, but in many ways he fulfilled one of its callings: to stand with the people, to speak for the voiceless and to be dedicated to making South Australia a better place. To Leon, our best wishes and may you be surrounded by love, comfort and friendship.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Stinson): Before we note grievances, I would just like to add my thoughts to the group of carers that we had in and those representing carers. They do remarkable work. I have been very lucky in my time in this place to work with many of them, including foster and kinship carers and also Grandcarers SA, as they are now known. I hope they enjoyed their stay here, and I thank those who took the opportunity to speak about them and commend their work.

Parliamentary Procedure

SITTINGS AND BUSINESS

The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD (Reynell—Minister for Child Protection, Minister for Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence, Minister for Women) (15:38): Madam Acting Speaker, I also concur with your very thoughtful comments and the comments of others about the incredibly generous role that carers play. They strengthen the lives of children, young people, families and our whole community and I am deeply, deeply grateful to them. I move:

That the house at its rising adjourn until Tuesday 28 October 2025 at 11am.

Motion carried.

Bills

STATUTES AMENDMENT (LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS REVIEW) BILL

Committee Stage

In committee (resumed on motion).

Mr ODENWALDER: Mr Chair, I draw your attention to the state of the committee.

A quorum having been formed:

Clause 24 passed.

Clause 25.

Mr TELFER: This clause in particular sets up the obligation, unless opted out, for councils to:

...during the period commencing after the close of nominations and before polling day for a general election, hold at least 1 meeting involving any candidates who wish to participate and members of the public...

This is basically obligating a council to hold one of these meetings and, in doing so, sets up a framework for probably what some councils have done informally—but certainly not all of the 68 councils around the state. There are a few aspects of this which I am cautious about—and I have reflected on this in my second reading contribution—knowing the nuances of different communities and different councils, obligating councils to hold public meetings.

Obviously, given the inherently controversial nature of election debates, I worry and ask you: is it not likely that there will be disagreements about the debate format, speaking time (time allowed for each candidate to speak or answer questions) and the powers of the presiding officer, whoever that might be? Is it not inevitable, if they cannot get a third-party facilitator—and I will touch on that shortly—especially in regional councils, that it will be the council's CEO or staff who have to facilitate the legislated meeting? Then there is that natural controversy around the arrangement and the obligation for those arrangements to fall on the CEO or delegated staff member of a council.

Is there a risk that the electorate's confidence in the process would be undermined with that aspect of council staff being involved? I spoke about it in my second reading speech, knowing that candidates for a local government election who are putting their hand up to be elected members in the end are going to be the employers of a CEO, who will be responsible either themselves or delegate that power to someone within their council. I worry that it is putting that extra responsibility and obligation when it is not necessary, when those councils that already have a willingness to hold a public meeting and have the capacity to be able to do so if they wish, that this is putting an obligation onto a council to have to hold a public meeting, right across the state.

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: I do not share the member's sense of inevitability of a problem. I think that is probably underselling regional communities and is quite an unfortunate downpayment on lack of faith in regional communities to resolve problems. I do not believe there is a sense of undermining. In fact, even the preface to the question was around these things being inevitably problematic, and I do not agree. I do not agree with any of that. We seem to be able to do it here, so I am not sure why we would try to overlay a different standard of civility when it comes to local government. There is a capacity here for these forums to be held in different capacities, different fora and online, which this drafting has picked up. There can be a need or a nuance around the way that local councils successfully roll these out in different areas, as is already done, as the minister said.

In the unfortunate case, in my view, that the councils determined for there not to be a reason to proceed with these, there would be an articulation by that council to their community why it should not occur. But if the opposition to this would be framed in a view—and I say this respectfully, I do not think the member is coming at it from this angle. If the opposition to this more broadly would be that we cannot get these things right because there is inevitably going to be an issue, that is a really unfortunate state of affairs and I think that we can do better. Certainly, the community expects better.

This was consulted in a previous participations review, and 84 per cent of participants and contributors to that survey indicated that efforts should be made to provide platforms such as online meetings to meet their candidates. So I think the community is up for it. I have probably shared this with the member, I think most if not all candidates are up for it. I just do not think we should be discounting innovative ways to engage with the community because of, as the member put it, some sense of local nuance and parlance around the way that people will civilly interact with each other.

Mr TELFER: That survey which the minister referenced, is that the most recent survey, the consultation process around the most recent local government election? If not, can you furnish me with that result?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: It is. There are no iterations. There is only one.

Mr TELFER: I get the big picture perspective the minister is relying on and I look at the nuance of obligating. Sure, within a state electorate, these sorts of things can be put on and facilitated, often by a third party, but there are not always interested third parties in a local government election with a thousand electors to put on a public meeting. Indeed, in the end it is going to be a requirement, most likely, that is going to have to be picked up by council resources if they are obligated to do so.

Thinking about the public meeting section of the Summary Offences Act, section 18A, if the person being disorderly or abusive at a public meeting is a candidate for the election and that candidate has not yet had their formal opportunity to speak, is the person presiding over the public meeting empowered to have that candidate removed? What are we going to be using for the basis of the structure of the public meeting, as envisioned by this section?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: It will be, as it is the case in much of the engagement in this manner in which the council is currently engaged, for them to determine this themselves. As I mentioned before, the new section 91B (2) provides that, explicitly:

- (2) A meeting held by a council under this section may be held remotely using audio visual technology or any other means of communication determined appropriate by the council—

and I say this specifically and particularly in respect of some of the member's questions—

(and nothing in this section is to be taken to require candidates and members of the public to be physically present at the meeting).

Within that constraint but also the latitude in which these meetings under this section could proceed, it is a matter for councils to resolve the intricacies and, a word the member has used a bit today, the nuances. That is appropriate. I do not think that it is before this chamber necessarily to be running page upon page of telling councils how to suck eggs.

But I come to the final clause in the proposed new section. That is that councils do have the capacity, in a well thought through, articulated position, as the member put, in the event that a council either simply does not have capacity, or for a series of well thought through reasons that are then articulated in the caretaker policy for these meeting not to occur. While it would be before the chamber to be mandating without any exceptions, it is my view that with a clause like this we should provide, albeit one that I would hope to be exercised in a rare occurrence, a capacity for a council to determine on its accord, with articulation, why this should not occur.

The ACTING CHAIR (Ms Stinson): Member, if you ask a question on this clause, it will be your fourth question. Do you have another one on this clause?

Mr TELFER: This will be my third.

The ACTING CHAIR (Ms Stinson): No, I have been counting very carefully. The minister seems in a tolerant mood, though, and your second question was quite brief. I am going to let you go one more.

Mr TELFER: I must be miscounting. Thank you, Acting Chair, I appreciate it. Minister, you reference the caretaker policy, which will provide a framework for the councils to opt out. Do you envision that that caretaker policy will be necessary to prescribe the arrangements for a public meeting—as you speak about, the potential for remotely using audiovisual, or the structure of who the presiding member over the meeting is going to be, if they are going to prescribe that a third party will be involved in it?

Will the caretaker policy have to provide that level of prescription? If so, is there a risk that the arrangements which are being put in place via, as you spoke about, an existing council body may have an impact on an incoming group of candidates who may be a completely different group of individuals to the existing council body? If the necessity is there for there to be a decision around a public meeting and you are leaving that responsibility to the previous council term, does that undermine the nature of accountability of putting in place a legislated obligation for a public meeting for candidates at a local government election?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: I am advised the caretaker policy is a vehicle, to the member's question, that could be used to articulate the administrative arrangements around the holding and

running of a public meeting, but it need not only be the caretaker policy: it could be an ordinary policy of the council which would prescribe that.

Clause passed.

Clauses 26 and 27 passed.

Clause 28.

Mr TELFER: Minister, can I first indicate that this section sets out the frameworks for the suspension of a member for failure to submit certain returns. I think this is a sensible change and one I certainly support as I have spoken about in my second reading contribution. Former Minister Brock described it as 'a dog's breakfast' after the last council term when we had dozens of elected members fail to submit certain returns and thus automatically lost their positions. This was obviously the subject at the time of rectifying legislation that was necessary for us to pass to try to fix up that 'dog's breakfast', as described by the former minister.

Pursuant to the new section 55B(4), a suspended member of council can be returned to council if the Electoral Commission is satisfied that the member is compliant with part 14 of the Local Government Elections Act. However, part of section 14 relates to lodging returns on time, which the suspended member breached. That being the case, how will a candidate be able to convince the commissioner that they are compliant with all provisions of section 14?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: I am advised that the process prescribed in subsection (4) would provide that in the event of a failure to furnish, the individual would then be required to satisfy the requirements to resubmit the completed form to the commissioner, and then the commissioner would avail themselves at the time of section 14, which is the content and the form of the returns.

Mr TELFER: Indeed, and I appreciate the constructive nature in which the chamber as a whole is going about this very important legislative process. Minister, I refer to the prescribed period that is referenced in new section 55B(5). That subsection provides:

- (5) If a member of a council is suspended under subsection (1) for a continuous period of more than the prescribed period, the council must apply to SACAT for an order disqualifying the member of the council from the office of member under this Act.

Can the minister provide an indication on what is envisaged to be the proposed prescribed period? That is, how long will the council and the community need to wait before they can fill the suspended position on their council with another person? If someone decides that they are not going to go through the process to rectify their mistake, how long do you envision the prescribed period being before council is obligated to apply to SACAT for an order disqualifying the member of the council from the office of member under the act?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: I am advised 12 months.

Mr TELFER: For clarification, when there is a member of a council who does not appropriately conform to the requirements of the reporting under this legislation, there will be a period of 12 months when the council will have a suspended member until the council is then required to apply to SACAT for an order disqualifying? Twelve months is a quarter of the council term, plus the process of whatever SACAT is envisioning. For that period of time, they will basically be a member down on the council if they are refusing to comply with the reporting obligations under the act.

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: Again, I respond in the frame that if a member were to effectively go on strike and refuse to comply with their statutory obligations, then there are a series of remedies that may be available to the council. In specific reference to the length of time available utilising this section, yes, it is 12 months.

Clause passed.

Progress reported; committee to sit again.

*Parliamentary Procedure***VISITORS**

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Stinson): Before I call the Premier, on behalf of the house can I acknowledge Mr Ahmed Zreika, the President of the Islamic Society of South Australia, and members of South Australia's Muslim community. We are very pleased to have you here today, and we thank you for joining us.

*Motions***ISLAMIC SOCIETY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA 70TH ANNIVERSARY**

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier, Minister for Defence and Space Industries) (16:03): I move:

That this house—

- (a) recognises the 70th anniversary of the Islamic Society of South Australia and its contribution to the state, as the oldest registered Islamic organisation in Australia;
- (b) notes the extensive history of the Muslim community in this state, with the earliest Muslims thought to have migrated to South Australia in the mid to late 1800s;
- (c) notes the substantial economic contribution of the Muslim business community towards the development of the state, as well as the Muslim community's representation across various essential services and professions, including the medical and other healthcare professions and the education sector, to name a few;
- (d) recognises that while the South Australian Muslim community has thrived in our state, the community has, at times, faced hardships and challenges over the years, including racial and religious discrimination, vilification, and prejudice; and
- (e) recognises the important role Muslims have played within South Australia's vibrant and culturally diverse society, having helped shape our identity and our proud multicultural state.

Today we mark a very significant milestone for our state: the 70th anniversary of the Islamic Society of South Australia, which first opened its doors in 1955, making it the first and indeed the longest-standing registered Islamic association in our country. I wish to acknowledge and welcome Ahmed Zreika, President of the Islamic Society of South Australia, who joins us in the house to witness this motion, along with committee members and staff of the Islamic Society and the many members of South Australia's Muslim community who are also in attendance today.

For seven decades, the Islamic Society has been resolute in its mission to serve and preserve the ideals and precepts laid in the Holy Koran and the Sunnah, to promote brotherhood amongst South Australian Muslims and to service the community through its social, educational and spiritual services. It has been a bridge between communities, a force for social cohesion and a welcome friend to new migrants and refugees as they build new lives here in South Australia. At every stage of life's journey, the Islamic Society has offered service to the faithful: from marriages to funerals, from mentoring to education and Koran study. It is a haven of peace, wisdom, kindness and community.

The Islamic Society of South Australia has built a legacy of which our state is rightly proud. Of course, the history of the Muslim faith in South Australia goes back much further than the 70 years we celebrate today. It is unlikely that any of the Makassar traders who settled in the Top End in the 16th century ever made the long trek south, but we can be certain that the first so-called Afghan cameleers were a public sensation in 1865 when they disembarked in Port Augusta with 124 camels in tow.

These intrepid men and the hundreds who followed them opened South Australian trade and exploration all over the continent and its Red Centre, and proved essential to the construction of the Overland Telegraph, a service immortalised in the name and route of the greatest of all Australian rail journeys, The Ghan. It was to serve that community that Marree became home to the very first mosque ever built in Australia in around 1861. Our state is also home to an absolutely cherished piece of history, the oldest surviving mosque in Australia in the form of the Adelaide Mosque on Little

Gilbert Street that can trace its history right back to the 1880s—we think, to the best of our knowledge, it was opened somewhere between 1886 and 1887.

We honour that history today because respect for faith and the principle of religious freedom is part of the very DNA of our state and all its people. Adelaide is known as the City of Churches, but our city's religious institutions are not unusual in their number but in their variety. Founders Robert Gouger, George Fife Angas and Edward Gibbon Wakefield were outspoken in the belief that South Australia should not adopt an official religion nor assign any favoured status, but allow all to freely practice their faith.

From playing a foundational role in the state's early prosperity to today's countless leaders in business, academia, medicine and more, the South Australian Muslim community is active, visible and resilient. When this community has faced the cruel tides of bigotry or intolerance—and even tragically, on occasion, violence—the Islamic Society of South Australia has been a lighthouse standing tall through every storm and keeping the light of faith and community shining bright. That represents something truly precious, not simply for our state but also for the world.

We live in a time of increased polarisation, with cynics, nationalists and political opportunists actively promoting messages of division and fear, while ignoring what we all share as human beings. We have a duty to vigilantly resist the insidious poison we see being spread amongst some members of even our own community.

Here in South Australia, with over 200 nationalities and over 125 faiths, we have built a society characterised by an unprecedented level of freedom, peace and prosperity. This is no coincidence. Here we see the power and possibility that comes with community, seeing beyond trivial differences to what unites us as people going about our lives as best as we can, driven by the same joys and sorrows and the same responsibilities and aspirations as human beings.

We all want the best for our children and strive to provide them with a better life and a better standard of living. We honour the journeys that brought us here and we want to feel able to look to the future with unbridled hope. We take comfort in our friends and communities and in the beliefs that shape our view of the world, whether that is deep and abiding spiritual faith, sheer wonder at the beauty and the mystery of the cosmos, or both. This has been the work of millions of hands for almost two centuries. We have done that together, all of us, from the oldest continuous culture on the planet to all those who have come across the seas.

On behalf of the people of our state, I want to thank all who have been part of the Islamic Society of South Australia's seven decades of service, and for all that you have done and continue to do for the Muslim community of our state in the spirit of fellowship, family and faith. Be under no misapprehension: the people of South Australia welcome all people of Islamic faith of the Muslim tradition. South Australians embrace everything that multiculturalism has to offer.

I was flicking through a bit of social media last night, which normally is a source of discontent, and something appeared on my feed that I had not seen before. It was videos from artist Peter Drew, who was responsible for those magnificent Aussie posters that we see dotted around not just Adelaide or our state but around the country. I started going through the story. He tells stories on his Instagram or Facebook. It was not TikTok. I am not allowed to have that on my phone. Anyway, he tells stories about the people behind his posters and they are absolutely magnificent.

One of the stories behind one of the posters was of a young man who called South Australia home and who was part of those extraordinary expeditions that opened up our heart of the country to the rest of the world. I was listening to that story and I reflected on it afterwards and it was not lost on me that there is a beauty to the fact that it was a young Afghan man, whose name would not necessarily be celebrated or put up in lights around our country, who traversed with his camels through the centre of our nation from Port Augusta, who ultimately provided a link to the rest of the world in the form of what was then modern telecommunications in the form of the telegraph. It was someone from another part of the world who helped open us up to the rest of the world.

For as long as we have the confidence in one another to see the beauty and wisdom of sharing experiences, understanding the world from other people's perspectives, faiths and points of view, we are always richer for it and we are always better for it. Our state has a history of celebrating

that in conjunction with people of Islamic faith. Now more than ever, we have to have the courage to not be forced to exclusively look in but have the hope to look out. If we choose to do that and do it well, I have every confidence that people of the Islamic community and other faiths throughout our state will continue to find comfort and hope in the state of South Australia for them and future generations. The society has helped contribute to that effort. We welcome it, we thank you for it and we hope you will do that for another 70 years to come.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA (Hartley—Leader of the Opposition) (16:14): I rise to support the motion:

That this house—

- (a) recognises the 70th anniversary of the Islamic Society of South Australia and its contribution to the state, as the oldest registered Islamic organisation in Australia;
- (b) notes the extensive history of the Muslim community in this state, with the earliest Muslims thought to have migrated to South Australia in the mid to late 1800s;
- (c) notes the substantial economic contribution of the Muslim business community towards the development of the state, as well as the Muslim community's representation across various essential services and professions, including the medical and other healthcare professions and the education sector, to name a few;
- (d) recognises that while the South Australian Muslim community has thrived in our state, the community has, at times, faced hardships and challenges over the years, including racial and religious discrimination, vilification, and prejudice; and
- (e) recognises the important role Muslims have played within South Australia's vibrant and culturally diverse society, having helped shape our identity and our proud multicultural state.

I, too, acknowledge Ahmed as president and his executive committee, who are in the gallery today. I rise to support the motion recognising this very powerful 70th anniversary of the Islamic Society of South Australia, which was incorporated on 21 April 1955, as we have heard. Seventy years ago, a small but very determined group of South Australians established what would become the oldest registered Islamic organisation in Australia, which is a real credit to that organisation.

The society has since grown into a cornerstone of our multicultural identity, providing not only a place of worship and community connection but also that bridge and that foundation for dialogue, education and compassion across faiths and generations. The organisation's reach extends right across South Australia and it provides a range of services to South Australia's Muslim community. It manages the Marion, Wandana, Elizabeth, Mount Gambier, Murray Bridge and Whyalla mosques, which I have been able to visit as a member of parliament over my nearly 12 years in this place. I believe 2025 also represents the 50th anniversary of the Whyalla Mosque.

Muslims in South Australia have had a journey that at times has been challenging. It has been difficult, and at various times we know, unfortunately, that many members of this community have faced their own challenges. These experiences, whether overt or subtle, sometimes have been painful, and we need to acknowledge that, but they stand in contrast to the inclusive ideals that we hold as South Australians.

We must continue to confront intolerance whenever it appears and ensure that every person in this state can peacefully practice their faith, express their identity and live free from fear or discrimination. Despite the challenges that have been faced, the South Australian Muslim community has thrived and Islam is now the sixth most observed religion, growing by over 41 per cent between 2016 and 2021.

I recently looked at a short film that noted the remarkable history of the Muslims of South Australia. Records indicate that their earliest presence may date as far back, as we have heard, as the early 1800s. This would soon lead to the building of South Australia's first mosque in 1861, a sanctuary of prayer in the heart of the outback.

Turning to the achievements of the Muslim community, how they assisted in those early days in South Australia is remarkable. I was really interested and intrigued in the history of the Muslim community, particularly in the outback with the construction of the overland telegraph system, using

camels to carry poles, wires and water across the desert in some of the most rugged terrain that you will ever see.

The Muslim community in South Australia has continued to build strong families, foster community organisations and participate in the establishment of a more productive state since their arrival all those years ago. I thank the society for always being inclusive and hosting me at various celebrations over the years. I also acknowledge the work of the Islamic Society of South Australia and their commitment to building an inclusive and welcoming community through their social, educational and spiritual services. The work they have done over seven decades deserves recognition, as they have helped to shape the multiculturalism that as South Australians we are proud to celebrate, that we uniquely celebrate here in the state.

I congratulate the organisation on an incredible milestone and also for your ongoing contribution to serving our community and promoting inclusivity. I trust that the next 70 years will be as fruitful as the last. I am happy to commend the motion to the house.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON (Ramsay—Minister for Tourism, Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (16:20): I rise to support this motion. I also want to acknowledge members of the Islamic Society present in the gallery today, in particular the society's President, Mr Ahmed Zreika. It is incredible to think about the contribution of our Muslim community to the state of South Australia for more than a century. South Australia has a unique bond with those who follow the Islamic faith, which stemmed from the camel drivers who opened up the state with trading routes.

A mosque was built in the town of Marree to allow these camel drivers to practise their faith and gather as a community. In those harsh, arid conditions, they created a sanctuary to nourish their faith. This led to the Central Adelaide Mosque being built in 1888, which is the oldest-standing mosque in Australia. Our history and connection with our Islamic community runs deep. As much as your faith can nourish you, we know our religious communities are pillars of support in so many other ways. That is why, in 1955, the Islamic Society of South Australia created an incorporated association to be a voice in our community. This incorporated association was the very first in Australia for Muslim people. Recently, I found an article from *The Advertiser* in 1951, which states:

For 62 years Muslims have been praying [at the Central Adelaide Mosque]. In the early days they were rich Afghan camel drivers.

Today, the Islamic Society has a membership of about 30, and with each new influx of migrants, their numbers grow.

Adherents come from Yugoslavia, Albania and Romania. There are also university students from Indonesia.

From those early days, it was a symbol of many different cultures coming together for one common purpose. What that small community has been able to build has stood the test of time. The entire Islamic faith represents more than 40,000 South Australians today, with the Islamic Society of South Australia being their most prominent voice. What has been vital is the support this community has provided for its members. I look to the gallery and see many leaders who have sought to not only provide a service to the community but also build it up.

The programs that have been supported have ranged over time from spiritual support to settlement services. We also recognise the vital support in areas such as strengthening families, grief and loss, homelessness and financial hardship. Some of the more profound work has looked into youth engagement and intercultural harmony.

I want to highlight some of the programs and cultural aspects that the Islamic Society has successfully led. I particularly want to highlight the Al-Salam Festival, which is the annual peace festival. This event has always been a celebration promoting social understanding through celebration, food and entertainment. On 29 November, the festival is back after being impacted by COVID.

Another program that this government supported is the youth social development project. This project aimed to provide a safe, supportive and inclusive environment where young people can connect with the community, develop their identity and create opportunities to deepen their engagement with it. We all need a sense of belonging and sometimes we need help to find that within ourselves and within our community. The Islamic Society has also partnered with the government

through the Building Resilience in Diverse Groups and Ethnicities (BRIDGE) Strengthening Families initiative, the Ramadan Carnival, and infrastructure grants to support the community's growth.

As your Minister for Multicultural Affairs, I want to say that this support is critical because we want to make sure people feel included, to feel that they have a place in our community. As a proud multicultural state, we have always sought to bridge the gap to show that we have far more in common with each other than what divides us. The Islamic Society of South Australia has been a key partner in this. Without their support it would be far harder to bridge cultural understanding.

Since the year 2000, we have seen significant increases in our Islamic population in our community. This growth has stemmed from humanitarian and skilled migrants from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Pakistan and Syria, and South Australia has always had representation from India, Iran, Syria, Indonesia, Malaysia, Bosnia, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, East Turkestan and parts of Africa. This is an incredible level of diversity that the Islamic Society of South Australia represents.

This significant growth has also increased the community's need for mosques. The Islamic Society has built its community around the mosques in Park Holme, Gilles Plains and Elizabeth, as well as the regional centres Murray Bridge, Whyalla and Mount Gambier. Another essential element is the language schools which now have five locations teaching Arabic to the next generation. These achievements may not have been thought possible 70 years ago.

It would be remiss of me to stand here and not speak about one of your most dedicated leaders, your president. Since 2015, Ahmed has worked closely with the government, not only as the President of the Islamic Society but also as a former board member of the South Australian Multicultural Commission, Ahmed has been a leading voice for the community and for intercultural understanding and harmony. We have had many a conversation about something that drives both of us and that is our young people. I am delighted today to see so many of your young leaders are here with us in parliament to celebrate this motion.

This is your 10th year as president. I also want to thank your wife for her support of you in this situation because it does take you away from the family home and gives great ability for you to continue to develop what is needed. I wish you continued success in your role here.

Finally, I want to thank the entire community. Every time I have been to an event—and I was deeply honoured to come to your 70th dinner to celebrate the anniversary—I am reminded of the dedication of your volunteers and also those sponsors who have established their own businesses and continue to give back to society. It was a great opportunity to reflect on those 70 years and look forward to the next 70 years to come.

The Hon. A. PICCOLO (Light) (16:27): I rise in support of this motion. I would like to acknowledge and also thank the previous speakers. I will try not to repeat what the previous speakers talked about, but I can hopefully add some things to it.

I would like to firstly acknowledge the 70th anniversary of the Islamic Society of South Australia. I was fortunate, like the minister and some other MPs, to be able to attend the 70th anniversary celebrations. That was an event attended by a diverse group of people, both culturally and politically, and just shows the respect the association has in our community and also the way that Muslim people are acknowledged in our community.

The second part of the motion talks about how the earliest Muslims came to South Australia in the mid to late 1800s. It is interesting to note that, in fact, Muslim people had been trading with the First Nations people long before British people came or other European nations came to this place. It is interesting that you hear some debates in public life about how recent they are, because in fact they are actually the very first people who peacefully traded and lived amongst the First Nations people, so we have perhaps something to learn from that experience.

I would like to acknowledge Ahmed and his other committee members. I would also like to acknowledge the pioneer members of the association, the ones who 70 years ago had the courage and the ability to establish that association, and all the presidents and committee members since then. As the minister said, I would also like to acknowledge the volunteers.

A clause I would like to add to, because I think the other clauses have been well covered by other speakers already, is representation of Muslim people in some of the media because I think this goes to the heart of paragraph (d) of this motion in terms of prejudice, hardship, etc., and the discrimination bias that Muslim people have experienced. I would say that when you look at some of the recent reporting and presentation of Muslim people in Australia, it has been unsatisfactory, in my view. In a way, it has been quite a negative influence on the discourse and the political life we have in Australia.

Discrimination, bias and prejudice can come in two forms. It can be quite overt: we can see what is said, we can see what is done, etc., and that is also very painful and something that we need to be mindful about. At another level though, discrimination, prejudice and bias that is covert can be more dangerous in some ways because it happens where we cannot deal with it. It happens in a way that you cannot deal with or respond to. It is not what is said and done but rather what is not said or done that diminishes our shared humanity, as the Premier said.

Not only does it diminish our shared humanity, particularly of the Muslim community, but it diminishes all of us. The reality is when we diminish any group in our society—it does not matter what they are or who they are—we diminish ourselves. A healthy community can deal with differences and change in quite an open fashion. Differences do occur, criticism occurs and there is nothing wrong with that.

I will give you some examples of what I mean by the covert form of bias. It is when points of view are silenced or do not appear in the media. It is when people lobby the ABC to sack people. That is a form of discrimination—the Federal Court has said that—and it diminishes the Muslim community. It is also when the Muslim perspective or experience is not reported. It diminishes those people when you do not read about or see photos of the 20,000-plus children in Palestine who have died. You do not see those. It diminishes that community, it diminishes all of us, and I think it diminishes humanity worldwide. All life is precious irrespective, full stop.

When we do not see those stories told, do not see those photographs, we are saying they are lesser people. That form of discrimination is not seen because it is not saying something, but its omission says a lot more. Its omission influences other people's opinions, and that is why it is important. People do not get the full story. I am not trying to suggest that in any politics or conflict one side are saints and the other sinners. What I am saying is, if you take a view that on one side are all the saints and the other side all the sinners, that is wrong and certainly not part of my faith as a Catholic which I believe in.

When you cancel public forums because you want to prevent another perspective being told—and that has happened in Australia; it has happened recently interstate—we should be worried. The media quite rightly reports on marches on our streets right across the nation. Some of the language I do not endorse, some of the language I do, but when we do not see what happens behind the scenes to stop the other view being put forward, I think we should be worried about that. It is a message to say that there is one perspective and the Muslim perspective is not worthy of reporting, or that we can get away with that, we can reinforce the prejudices, and I think that is wrong.

I can understand people's concerns about migration. I am a migrant myself. I came out in the 1960s with my family. I often have discussions with people in my community, because when I make comments about migration I ask them, 'Are you suggesting that people like me should not be in Australia?' 'Oh, no, you're different,' they say. I say, 'What do you mean I am different?' In the fifties and sixties, people of Italian background, people of Greek background and other European nations, were subject to similar stereotypes, and our perspective and our experience was not told. The reality is it takes time. It takes time for people to build change.

Muslim people of more recent times but even the cameleers showed courage to leave their homeland to work in a nation they knew very little about. It takes courage. Whether it is cameleers or other migrants who have come since, it takes enormous courage to leave your homeland to go a place where you do not understand the culture, language, etc.

Over time, as a nation we have shown, whether its post-World War I or post-World War II, that we have integrated. Italians and Greeks are now part of the furniture. Nobody would even look at us migrants. We are just part of the Australian furniture now.

I think it is important that we need to be patient, we need to be compassionate and we need to work with new communities to make sure we give them time and space to integrate. It will happen. It may take a generation. I have no doubt in my mind that the children of adult Muslims who come to this country will be a little different about their views because they will have had different experiences, and the views of their grandchildren will be a bit different, as will those of their great-grandchildren. That has happened through all groups of migrations.

Change and difference is challenging. It does not matter if it is in the workplace, in our community, in society, it is difficult. But I would like to give an example of change in my own community, in my local church, St Peter and Paul Catholic Church. For a while I did not go to my church. The Catholic Church is not perfect. It is a bit like political parties: they are not perfect and from time to time you get bit upset with them. I had not been for a while, but the parish priest was leaving, so I thought it is important to say, 'Thank you for your service,' and I went to church. I had not been for a while. In that time I had not been, a whole range of new communities had come to my church—people from Africa, India, Asia, the Philippines, etc.

What I can tell you is that it has changed my church for the better. It has revitalised, reinvigorated a church that was declining, like a lot of churches. Even though we are all of the same faith, they bring new cultural perspectives. They bring a new sense of enthusiasm about life, and they do integrate through their church in the same way the Muslim community will integrate through business, the professions—you name it, there will be integration over time. At a superficial level, when we have singing in our church now, it is heaven on earth. Some of the voices I hear now are just magnificent. The fact we are actually bound by faith is almost incidental; it is community coming together.

We have shown, over time, we can learn from more recent migrants, in the same way during the seventies we understood—and I say the seventies because I was a young adult then—the Asian migration. Initially, they were less welcome. Now they are part of the furniture—they are our doctors, our pharmacists, our engineers, our nurses, our carers, etc. We have done this before and I have no doubt we can actually do it again and enrich our multicultural society. Again, I would like to thank the Muslim community for being part of it.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Stinson): Before I recognise the member for Elder, hopefully the house will indulge me for a moment from the chair to express my support for the sentiments that have been spoken about today. I am incredibly lucky that the Marion mosque is right on the edge of my electorate, and that has given me the great privilege of getting to know Mr Zreika, and also quite a few members of the Muslim community who I am lucky enough to have in my electorate of Badcoe.

Of course, like other members here, I have been well aware of the difficulties in recent times and the challenges that you have experienced and will continue to experience as we come out of difficult times in the Middle East. So I just want to express my thoughts to you and thank you again for gracing us with your presence here today. I think we have a visit locked in soon so that I can bring my little baby along to the mosque and introduce him to so many people who have been so welcoming towards me, and I look forward to that.

I also want to note the contribution of the member for Light—Light by name and light by nature. The member has advocated the cause not only in the last year or two while things have been tense but certainly for decades, particularly within our party and also throughout our community. He deserves great thanks and praise for sometimes being a voice among few, advocating for what sometimes might have been considered controversial views in the past. But it is nice to be in a place now where I think there is incredibly broad support in our community for the Muslim community, and I hope you are feeling that today. My neighbouring MP, the member for Elder, I look forward to hearing what you have to say as well.

Ms CLANCY (Elder) (16:41): I do just want to stand and make a contribution as well. Happy 70th birthday and As-salamu alaykum. It is really lovely to see so many of you in the gallery today. There has been a lot spoken about the contribution of the society to the Muslim community, and the South Australian community more broadly, and I am so conscious of how much of an impact the society and Ahmed have made on me over the last few years, so I cannot even begin to imagine the

incredibly positive contribution you have made to so many other people's lives, particularly directly in your community.

One of the first events that I went to at the mosque was in 2019, and it was to mark the horrific attacks in Christchurch. Seeing the society and seeing many of you who are here today choosing to come together at a time of incredible grief and welcome so many other people from the community as well so that we could all stand together against that hateful and horrific act was really powerful to me and I want to thank you for having done that. I know that you do these things under really difficult circumstances again and again, so thank you for your perseverance.

Thank you for what you have done, particularly over the last couple of years with the horrific acts happening in Gaza. I appreciate you welcoming me to speak at the commemoration last year as well. Thank you for always not just welcoming members of your community but always making me feel really included and really welcome in your conversations. I have always felt really comfortable asking questions. You welcome my inquisitiveness; you have never made me feel like any of my questions are stupid—and they probably have been—so thank you.

Thank you for making me feel really welcome and making me feel like your society is a place where I am not just tolerated but well and truly welcomed. I thank you so much for everything you do for your community and beyond. I just want to say that the contribution you have made just to my life in the last six years has been immense, so thank you for what your society has done over the last 70 and will continue to do.

The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD (Reynell—Minister for Child Protection, Minister for Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence, Minister for Women) (16:44): As-salamu alaykum. It is wonderful to see you all here together. Thank you so very much for spending time with us to mark this really important occasion. Thank you also for ensuring that the Islamic Society of South Australia continues to stand as an enduring cornerstone and place of connection for the Muslim and broader community in South Australia.

As we have heard from a number of speakers, this year your outstanding organisation marks its 70th anniversary. That is a remarkable milestone, a milestone that speaks to the courage, the strength, the foresight of those who have initiated, grown and sustained this society over the past seven decades. As you know very well, it was established in 1955 as a not-for-profit welfare organisation. I understand it is recognised as the oldest Islamic society in Australia, with its history tracing back long before that date in 1955.

Your organisation has, I understand, evolved from a small community group into now a multilayered organisation that is absolutely there for people and communities: managing infrastructure, managing mosques, providing essential services and support, always advocating and living the values of inclusion and social justice, all while always fostering intercultural harmony and kindness. I strongly believe that our state's greatest strength is our cultural diversity. The Islamic Society of South Australia is an exemplary contributor to that rich and strong tapestry and fabric of our culturally diverse state, with your mission deeply connected to building a more inclusive Australia.

Your society strongly believes in nurturing intercultural relationships, as Minister Bettison spoke about, mentoring young Muslims to become leaders and offering a broad spectrum of social, educational and spiritual services. This vision is reflected in all that you do: in the society's commitment to welfare, education and engagement and its commitment to ensuring that Muslims can thrive here as connected and active participants in every aspect of life in our state. I think that the society exemplifies the principles of charity and community support, making the centre such a vital place for both local and newly arrived Muslims.

As a member of parliament and also as a former shadow minister for multicultural affairs, I feel really blessed to have had the honour of engaging with a number of society representatives, including many here, in different ways and at a number of different events. I am deeply grateful to have always been welcomed and to have been generously given multiple opportunities to learn through deep conversation and reflection.

One of your core functions is, as I said, managing infrastructure and overseeing several mosques. These facilities, of course, serve as places of worship but also as places of connection

and learning for Muslims and our wider community. Beyond worship, the society facilitates visits and tours for schools, diverse faith groups and individuals. You provide such insight into rituals, prayer and the faith more broadly. These tours are often really generously followed by Q&A sessions, sessions that always promote understanding, reduce misconceptions and always bring us together.

In recent years, as the member for Elder and the member for Light have just spoken about, you have been so active—beautifully active—in advocacy, particularly amid global and local issues. The last 25 years or so, or even longer, have seen many Muslims across the planet sometimes subjected to really unfair and unjust characterisations and criticisms. Your society has courageously stood as a beacon of faith, hope, inclusiveness and support for Muslims and non-Muslims alike, and always for peace.

As South Australia's Muslim population grows, the society's role in fostering unity remains so utterly crucial, embodying the spirit of service that has defined it for seven decades. I really thank everybody who has been involved in the society for that service, for being there for people, for always focusing on unity, understanding, love and humanity, and for strengthening the very fabric of our broad human family and our state in ways that make a difference in people's lives. Alf Mabrouk.

Motion carried.

Auditor-General's Report

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON (Ramsay—Minister for Tourism, Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (16:51): On behalf of the Treasurer, I move:

That the Report of the Auditor-General for the year ended 30 June 2025, as tabled in this house on 14 October, and the Agency Statements for the year ending 2024-25, as published on the Auditor-General's website, be referred to a Committee of the Whole House and for ministers to be examined on matters contained in the report and statements in accordance with the timetable as distributed.

Motion carried.

Bills

STATUTES AMENDMENT (LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS REVIEW) BILL

Committee Stage

In committee (resumed on motion).

Clauses 29 and 30 passed.

Clause 31.

Mr TELFER: Minister, clause 31 amends section 77 of the Local Government (Elections) Act 1999 to put in an aspect in particular about reimbursement of expenses, and provides that a reimbursement amount will be prescribed within the regulations for:

- (c) reimbursement of expenses...incurred by the member in producing printed material...necessary for engaging with the community in relation to local government matters.

It is an interesting one to include, and I would welcome the explanation and/or justification as to why this is included. There are some aspects of reimbursement for local government for different aspects of their duties. Regarding expenses 'necessary for engaging with the community in relation to local government matters', can you give an explanation as to what you envision an expense that is a legitimate one pursuant to this section would entail? Will it be the responsibility of the CEO of a council to decide whether it is printed material that is necessary for engaging with the community, because I think there is a level of ambiguity there which I worry will once again lead to there being a conflict of opinion between those who are making the decisions and those who are trying to put forward the application for reimbursement?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: I thank the member for his question and agree particularly that the avoidance of ambiguity in this clause is particularly important. In saying that, I flag to the chamber that the government is working through some potential technical amendments to clarify this, whether it be by way of drafting note or whether it be through definitions that I can flag. In saying that, I would

not be in a better position to be able to put that in this committee stage but I certainly would in time for the consideration of this by the other place.

In terms of the high-end policy position, this is, in our view, an important piece. As the member has rightly said, there is a series of matters that can be reimbursed to members. We in the government and the community, by way of their participation in the participation review that was undertaken by the former minister, have a view that the way that councillors engage with their community is very different from community to community, place to place, council to council. I am sure the member has this across his broad constituency, as I do across mine in the western suburbs.

There are some councillors who do a really good job of engaging with their community. There are others who could do better. This is a targeted and prescribed reimbursement that is deliberately targeted towards encouraging members to better engage with communities, with some particularly important guardrails. Those guardrails, with our really constructive engagement with the Local Government Association, are clear but could be and should be better defined, and we will undertake to do that between the houses. Again, I commit that it will either be done through substantive amendment to the clause or it may be by adding drafting notes to the clause, but either way there is likely to be a government amendment.

Mr TELFER: This is probably around the timing of materials rather than the substance of the materials themselves. If I were an elected member of a local government—and I can envision it now; I can somehow go back in my memory—and I make an application pursuant to this clause for there to be a reimbursement of an amount where I say it is necessary for engaging with the community, at some point there is a line in the timeline where that becomes communication and where it becomes electioneering.

If I were a very astute elected member who liked to try to game the system, I might front end that expense and say to the CEO, 'Here's a legitimate communication point, which I am trying to do with my constituents,' and then put in place material that then could be utilised for electioneering. You could be in a scenario where a council is required to reimburse an elected member for materials that then could be used for the direct future electioneering of that elected member in a subsequent local government election. Can you give me some confidence and clarity, or is it perhaps something that you are considering as part of that other aspect?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: Yes, that is precisely the nature of the technical amendments that we are considering, so time based as well as definitions. That has been really constructive engagement that, at an officer level, the acting chief executive of the Local Government Association has had with the Office of Local Government. So we are committed, as the member has put as well, to ensure this is really clear and really tight and does not lose the substance of what the policy initiative is but also does not inadvertently allow very smart and astute politicians like the member to work the system.

Mr TELFER: This is very prescriptive about printed material. There is printed material and there is the mechanisms for getting printed material to community, which is postage. It is either that or, as we do, going up and down and sticking them in letterboxes. So this is purely prescriptive on the production of printed material. More and more, the communication points between elected members, whether it is at a state, federal or local level, is through social media.

By being prescriptive with the reimbursement obligated for councils to be paying back to elected members for printed material, if the justification is for the encouragement of there to be active and clear communication with community members, there is a whole significant potential communication point that could be justified by an elected member saying, 'To boost this message on my social media to be able to go to a larger cohort, this is something that I think council should be supporting me in.'

By it being one little aspect of communication, is it at the expense of others and is this something that was considered? Because as soon as you start introducing obligation for reimbursement for one aspect then you open up the potential for the rest of it. With this aspect in particular, if this was part of a tranche of review of reimbursement for local government, I would be less reticent because I think that way you get to look at the whole big picture. Because this is just a small little aspect, that is why I am asking these nuanced questions.

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: It is by deliberate design that it is tight. The member raises social media, postage and so on. There is nothing quite like using traditional methods to get materials out. Social media largely, if not exclusively, can be free. I acknowledge that there are ways to boost, but within the drafting it was determined to be constrained and not open.

The member is right that once you have an open reimbursement it brings into question a whole series of things and unique ways that a member may utilise reimbursement to 'communicate', and that may not always pass the pub test or may not always be reasonable, so we have kept it tight for printed materials. As I have said, I will foreshadow that we are actively engaging now to bring some technical amendments to ensure that this remains tight and, most importantly, easy and accessible.

Clause passed.

Clauses 32 and 33 passed.

Clause 34.

Mr TELFER: In this aspect in particular, minister, I am trying to understand how this provision impacts the council by-laws, which every council has to have, around movable signs and conceivably could continue in operation for up to seven years with the way that the rotation of policy renewal goes. Will the passage of this provision override these council by-laws, or will each of the 68 councils, which theoretically can each have a slightly different movable signs by-law, need to procure legal advice as to how it impacts its own movable signs by-law?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: If I understand that member's question correctly—please forgive me if I have not—is the question: will individual councils still, through their by-laws, be able to permit corflutes, movable signs?

Mr TELFER: No. It is: how does this provision interact with existing council by-laws around movable signs? Each are a bit different. I have had my stint on the Legislative Review Committee, considering all the different council by-laws that roll their way through. Does this override each of the 68 council by-laws regardless of the nuances of the prescription of movable signs, corflutes?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: Outside of the general legislative principle that state legislation will, to the extent of any inconsistency, prevail over subordinate legislation, I can also say that I am advised that, without seeing each and every by-law, it is difficult to provide that specific advice. At a high level, for example, current by-laws will reflect the existing law, and the existing law provides a framework for which there is the capacity for movable signs to be used. Those by-laws would reflect existing legislation, but those existing by-laws would and do provide the capacity for authorised council officers to remove those movable signs if and where they are not positioned correctly per state legislation.

This will prevail over existing state legislation. It will amend that to ban movable signs, but for the prescribed circumstances. What I can say again, by way of technical amendment on engagement with the acting chief executive of the LGA, is to consider a technical amendment that would allow, without needing to implement specific new by-laws, authorised council officers across each council to remove signs that are not complying with this new section. On the representations of the LGA acting chief executive that has been on the basis of ease of compliance across all councils.

The ACTING CHAIR (Ms Stinson): Third question, or are you going for a supplementary there? You look very pensive.

Mr TELFER: That was only my first, because it was clarification from the minister.

The ACTING CHAIR (Ms Stinson): Fair enough. Keep going.

Mr TELFER: Minister, at this point you envisage that existing council by-laws and this provision within this legislation will both stand side by side?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: To the extent that I can add anything further to my previous answer, again there are many by-laws and they interact with different pieces of legislation in different ways, so I could not hypothesise around how each and every one of these unique by-laws, as you have mentioned, as being a member of the Legislative Review Committee, are drafted slightly

differently, other than to say there are prevailing constitutional provisions around state legislation and the way that that proceeds and interacts with other subordinate pieces of legislation. I also flag that a technical amendment that will provide for the ease of this may be achieved through a technical amendment just to provide general application for all councils.

Alternatively, in the engagement that my office, the Office of Local Government, is having with parliamentary counsel, there may be a capacity to deal with this through a technical amendment to the transitional provisions.

Mr TELFER: Looking at section 226(5), speaking about designated events, does a designated event or activity include a pre-polling place and/or does it also include an election candidate public meeting, which under this legislation is going to be obligated to be held by each council? Do you envision those two events being included as a designated event or activity?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: I am advised that, should a public meeting be in person, for example, it would be considered an organised gathering, meeting, function or event relating to an election under paragraph (b).

With respect to your question regarding pre-poll, that would be the precise matter that would be contemplated through future consultation and regulation. But again, with respect to the pre-polling answer I gave previously, there is a fair bit of work that would need to be done. The act provides for a framework under which that would occur but it would be a matter for the government, the minister and regulation to determine how that would intersect.

Clause passed.

Clause 35.

Mr TELFER: Minister, this clause is one we had a bit of discussion about, and I would invite you to furnish the house with some further explanation as to the reasoning for broadening this out to include declared emergencies rather than just public health emergencies.

On reading this legislation—and envisioning that you may not be the local government minister for the extent of this legislation, for as long as it may stand, and making provision for a potential future local government minister who may not be as zealous as you in the way that they put forward the powers that this legislation does envisage—there are quite broad powers that the minister does have on the occasion of the declaration of an emergency within the local government area. To what extent must the exercising of these powers be related directly to addressing the emergency situation? They are quite broad powers but is it envisaged that those broad powers would only be used in response to, or the addressing of, the emergency and the impacts of it in and of itself?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: Can I just confirm again for clarity at this committee stage that there are no new powers conferred to the minister. These are simply extending the powers that are currently under the act that are exercised under considerable constraint from the Public Health Act to include now the Emergency Management Act. The member asks why. Well, we want councils to be able to continue to operate during a flood. We want councils to continue to operate during floods.

As the former emergency services minister, I have seen firsthand the constraints and, frankly, some of the problems when councils are unable to do so because of the practical implications of the impact of these emergencies on their community. I can clarify for the member and for the house there are no new powers conferred to the minister but we are allowing councils to continue to operate under declared emergencies, under the EM act, as is reasonable and the expectation from the community.

Mr TELFER: For clarity and for future ministers who may be reflecting on what powers they may have under this legislation: if, for example, there was a flood event along the River Murray, could the minister direct council staff to do certain actions? Could they use these powers to amalgamate River Murray councils together? Could they use these powers to achieve some other state government policy objective under the umbrella of a declared emergency, because the powers under the public health emergency were, as you say, very prescribed especially in a public health emergency situation. A declared emergency may come about more often and what that declared

emergency might be will vary. Can you provide some clarification and confidence to the house on that?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: Perhaps, rather than second-guessing parliament's intention when this passed in the first place, again considering the exercise of this discretionary capacity under 302B is not a new amendment. I would draw the member's attention to the second reading speech in the committee stage as undertaken by Minister Knoll at the time. These were provisions that were passed by a former parliament and the hypothetical approach in which a future minister may apply that discretion would have been contemplated by a previous parliament.

Mr TELFER: Indeed, and the point that I was making was that a public health emergency is not as regular perhaps as a declared emergency, which could be a flood, a fire or a landslide, whatever it might be, so they could be more regular. The other aspect that I would appreciate some clarification on is around the proposed deletion of subsection (8) which removes the minister's requirement to report by a certain date on a review of the operation of the existing clause. This was specifically related to the COVID emergency but you have not included a similar reporting requirement with respect to the exercise of ministerial powers in regard to a future emergency.

Within the existing legislation, there was a prescription by a certain date, because it was a very narrow public health emergency situation that it was referring to, a reporting mechanism, a required reporting mechanism, but with the broadening out of the declared emergency there is no reporting mechanism in place to assure that the minister is accountable to parliament when it comes to the exercising of these significant ministerial powers.

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: The best I can advise the member is that that was a decision taken by the parliament at the time it had a sunset date: 2021. That was a point-in-time review and that was the will of parliament at the time.

Mr TELFER: I have a supplementary question to that, with your indulgence. The question was: why did you not see fit in the drafting of this aspect to put in our requirement for the minister of the day to report to parliament on their exercising of their powers under the declared emergency situation?

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS: Because there are no new powers that this amendment is conferring to the minister.

Clause passed.

Remaining clauses (36 to 41) and title passed.

Bill reported without amendment.

Third Reading

The Hon. J.K. SZAKACS (Cheltenham—Minister for Trade and Investment, Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science, Minister for Local Government, Minister for Veterans' Affairs) (17:20): I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

In doing so, can I thank all of the members who contributed to the second reading debate and particularly the member for Flinders for the very constructive way that he engaged in committee. I commend the bill to the house.

Bill read a third time and passed.

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES (ENROLMENT AND ATTENDANCE) AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 3 September 2025.)

Mr DIGHTON (Black) (17:21): The Education and Children's Services (Enrolment and Attendance) Amendment Bill makes modest but important changes to the act to strengthen the

effectiveness of the current scheme for the enforcement of compulsory enrolment, attendance and participation of South Australian children at schools and approved learning programs.

Before I get into the detail of this bill, it is important to reflect on some of the challenges to the attendance of children and young people in our schools. Attendance at schools nationwide fell in the wake of the global COVID pandemic and have been slow to return to pre-2020 levels. According to ACARA, in Australia in 2024 the attendance rate for students in years 1 to 10 was 88.3 per cent, down slightly from 88.6 per cent in 2023. The student attendance level, which is the percentage of students at or above 90 per cent, was 59.8 per cent, down from 61.6 per cent. Student attendance rates and attendance levels have not returned to pre-COVID levels. In 2019, the national attendance rates were 91.4 per cent and the attendance levels were 73.1 per cent.

The COVID pandemic created significant disruption to teaching and learning and to student attendance, some forced due to the pandemic responses and some long term because of the disruption to teaching and learning and, arguably, home life processes. As a school leader during the pandemic, I saw firsthand this disruption. Online learning, as an example, was a significant challenge for our teachers and for our students. I remember the early days during the pandemic response of trying to train up our teachers in using Google Meet and Zoom. Some of them thought using PowerPoint was high technology, so you can imagine the challenges of them navigating those online meeting platforms. I do want to pay tribute to the many teachers who did a fantastic job in changing their pedagogies to suit online learning that took place during COVID.

Another example of the disruption to the school environment because of COVID was at one stage we were told we had to restrict the numbers on site. I remember us coming up with a plan that year 7s, 9s and 11s would be on site on certain days, and year 8s and 10s on other days. Those particular restrictions were quite extraordinary. Other restrictions that had an impact included the requirement for students to wear masks. I remember, in particular, a situation of teaching a particularly challenging year 11 class. I was teaching them RE (religious education). They were students who had chosen a particular pathway, which was not going to lead to academia, and so they were highly disengaged.

I remember the challenge of trying to get them to wear masks at that time. Certainly, it contributed again to attendance issues, but I think the other impact was that disconnection—not coming to school, not having that routine and not seeing their fellow students again created disruption which has led to issues throughout Australia in terms of school attendance. It is clear, therefore, that we need a response to support student attendance to return to those pre-COVID levels.

I am pleased to say that this government is doing that. Along with legislation in 2023, the state government established a specialist attendance team to tackle student absenteeism as a response to the trend of student disengagement. The state government has also invested heavily in anti-bullying initiatives—\$50 million into mental health and allied health supports on site—and has banned mobile phones from schools to tackle social media harassment and violence in order to make our schools safer.

I actually led the change within my school to ban mobile phones—it happened before the state government did so—and the challenge of COVID was that all of a sudden students needed their phones, their devices, for online learning, which made it very difficult to then implement the ban again afterwards. But it is pleasing to say that our schools—particularly our public schools—are doing a great job of banning mobile phones, and the strategy of the government is having an impact.

As the Minister for Education announced earlier this week, attendance data released shows a third consecutive improvement in student attendance in public schools in 2025. This data shows an attendance rate at the end of term 2 of 87.6 per cent compared with last year's term 2 attendance rate of 85.9 per cent—a positive indication that the wellbeing investment in schools, and more opportunities to study VET in schools, is keeping students engaged, which is having an impact. These results come on top of South Australia's attendance rate in 2024 being higher than the national average for the first time since the COVID pandemic.

But more is needed to continue to improve attendance, hence this legislation. The Education and Children's Services (Enrolment and Attendance) Amendment Bill seeks to make changes:

- requiring a written notice to be sent to a person responsible for a child before any proceedings are commenced for a failure to ensure their child is enrolled in or attending a school or an approved learning program—this will ensure that parents are afforded appropriate procedural fairness in any decision or potential prosecution;
- clarifying the information that the chief executive can require from parents about their child including, for example, medical information or referrals for health services;
- removing from the list of valid reasons a child can miss school that there is a risk of infectious or contagious disease—children who are medically compromised are already protected under provisions in the act, and the department will continue to promote and comply with SA Health guidance on the management of infectious diseases at schools;
- reducing the time parents will have to explain why their child did not attend or participate from five days down to three days, which will bring the act in line with timelines to follow up a child's non-attendance in the procedure for government schools;
- empowering authorised officers visiting homes to require information from parents, creating consistency as currently an authorised officer can only request such information when attending at residential premises but can require it when a child is in a public space at a time that they should be attending school; and
- clarifying that authorised officers must take all reasonably practical steps to ensure a child's attendance—adding the word 'reasonably' helps make it clear that authorised officers are expected to do what is practical to make sure a child attends while retaining the focus on ensuring attendance.

The changes aim to address various issues that have been identified through efforts to enforce the current arrangements regarding student attendance and ensure procedural fairness for those parents who may be considered for prosecution. Ultimately, the aim of this bill, along with the act, is to support the increased attendance of children and young people in our schools.

In my experience as a former educator, I have seen firsthand the impact of student absence on students' academic, social and overall wellbeing. First, the academic impact is undeniable. Frequent absences lead to lower literacy and numeracy outcomes, reduced assessment achievement and persistent learning gaps. Even short periods of absence can disrupt the cumulative process of education, leaving students struggling to catch up. Over time, this can translate into, of course, lower graduation levels and diminished opportunities in the workforce. The data is clear that students who do not achieve their SACE have limitations in terms of their socio-economic outcomes.

I have also seen how absenteeism compounds behavioural issues and reduces classroom engagement. Missing school means missing academic work and falling behind, which leads to less engagement and greater levels of behavioural issues, which then leads to missing school and a continued spiral down.

It is not only academic achievement; there are also social and emotional concerns. Absenteeism can weaken the bonds between students and their peers, eroding the sense of belonging that is essential for healthy development. It isolates young people, undermines their confidence and often signals that there are underlying mental health challenges. Unfortunately, in my previous career, I have seen circumstances where consistent absenteeism led to complete disengagement from the school community altogether.

Of course, it is important to note that there are legitimate reasons why some children and young people are unable to attend mainstream educational facilities. There are a variety of reasons. This can include disability, behaviour, geographical isolation, mental health concerns, long-term illness, incarceration, attendance and other complexities. Non-mainstream education is a large part of ensuring students can remain engaged in education and finish their schooling, even if not in the traditional sense. Of the 174,000 students enrolled in South Australian public schools across a year, about 10,000 are engaged in non-mainstream programs, with more than 4,000 of those attending Open Access College.

I note that the Department for Education will undertake a review of non-mainstream schools, including an in-depth look at a range of alternative education options. The department has determined that there are a large number of children and young people with disabilities who are enrolling in home schooling and Better Behaviour Centres, so the review will consider whether or not there are common barriers that exist for young people with a disability to determine ways that mainstream education can support them.

I recently attended a Welcome All Families session in my electorate at the Trott Park Community Centre. They are a group run by Paula Kirk, who is a local resident. They are for students who are not attending the mainstream. Many of them are going to Open Access. The Welcome All Families session helps to support that socialisation that the students are missing out on. The review will be completed by the end of the year and is intended to ensure that the sites, services and programs outside mainstream education are delivering on the promise of quality public education for every child and young person.

Back to this legislation, I want to note that this bill was the subject of extensive public consultation, including through the YourSAy website, and there were strong levels of engagement. While the legislation has made some important but modest changes, the government will consider whether further changes are required, and that could include greater punitive approaches such as fines for parents who fail to enrol their child in school, fail to ensure they attend or fail to respond to reasonable requests for information.

Before I finish, I want to talk about the importance of schools working in partnership with parents. Certainly, my experience is that when that happens it leads to the greatest level of outcome for students. Like many educators, I have engaged with the academic researcher John Hattie through his Visible Learning research. His research found that the effect size of parental engagement on student achievement was 0.49, which demonstrates that parental engagement is a significant factor that leads to academic achievement.

When parents are actively involved in their child's learning through support, communication and encouragement, students tend to have a noticeably better academic outcome. In particular, the types of engagement are important, such as discussing learning strategies and progress, not just asking, 'Have you got any homework?' or 'What did you do today?' In fact, I remember John Hattie discussing that even asking, 'What did you learn today?' instead of 'What did you do today?' had a significant impact. That emphasis from a parent on learning was really important.

Not surprisingly, in terms of effect size in relation to student absence, the effect size for absence was minus 0.25, which represents that student absence—as we can all appreciate; we probably do not need research to understand this—has a significant negative impact on student achievement because, as we have articulated, it disrupts the continuity of learning and leads to gaps in knowledge and skills, and this compounds over time, especially in subjects that build sequentially, e.g. maths and literacy.

I commend this bill to the house because when we keep students in school we are not just improving grades, we are building futures, strengthening communities and safeguarding the wellbeing of the next generation.

Debate adjourned on motion of Ms Hutchesson.

PREVENTIVE HEALTH SA (COUNCIL GOVERNANCE) AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction and First Reading

Received from the Legislative Council and read a first time.

UNCLAIMED GOODS (MISCELLANEOUS) AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction and First Reading

Received from the Legislative Council with a message drawing the attention of the House of Assembly to clause 8 printed in erased type, which clause being a money clause cannot originate in the Legislative Council but which is deemed necessary to the bill. Read a first time.

**LEGAL PRACTITIONERS (DISCIPLINARY MATTERS AND FIDELITY FUND) AMENDMENT
BILL**

Introduction and First Reading

Received from the Legislative Council with a message drawing the attention of the House of Assembly to clause 10 printed in erased type, which clause being a money clause cannot originate in the Legislative Council but which is deemed necessary to the bill. Read a first time.

At 17:41 the house adjourned until Tuesday 28 October 2025 at 11:00.