

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, 28 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 past and present.

The SPEAKER read prayers.

Bills

NATIONAL ENERGY RETAIL LAW (RETAILER OF LAST RESORT) AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 18 September 2025.)

Mr PATTERSON (Morphett) (11:03): I take the opportunity to speak about the National Energy Retail Law (Retailer of Last Resort) Amendment Bill and indicate that I am the lead speaker for the opposition. As has been the case with other energy laws, these amendments have come through from energy ministers' meetings. In this case, the bill is amending the National Electricity (South Australia) Act 1996 and also the National Energy Retail Law (South Australia) Act 2011.

As has been said previously, South Australia is the lead legislator within Australia for the national energy laws. After they have been through their processes they end up arriving here in this parliament, so we are seeing these changes to the retailer of last resort being introduced here in the South Australian parliament. The convention, of course, with changes to the national energy laws is that amendments are supported by the opposition, so I indicate that the opposition will be supporting this bill today.

The bill is part of a national process. The intent of this particular amendment bill is to make sure that Australian households and businesses are protected when energy retailers fail, which, while rare, can have an impact on customers and cause uncertainty. The aim is to ensure that they can continue to have their energy needs met. It should be said that the bill is strengthening the already existing retailer of last resort scheme, which is there to guarantee that customers continue to receive either their electricity or gas if their retailer collapses.

A lot of the energy laws that come into this parliament actually take a very long time from starting to seeing them in here. In this case, the genesis of this started back in October 2020: five years ago. Then the COAG Energy Council initiated a review of the retailer of last resort scheme. The review itself was undertaken by the Australian Energy Market Commission to try to improve outcomes for customers and it also looked at the financial resilience in the national energy market.

If you cast your mind back to October 2020, when the COVID pandemic was underway, there were a lot of restrictions on people in terms of their ability to earn income and there were concerns around what would happen to retailers, what the impact would be on the retailers, should a lot of their customers not be able to pay their bills or have to defer payment on their bills. The review was undertaken back then and was completed in 2021.

To start with, it is worth looking at what the commission went through and recommended and then at what has actually arrived in this bill here in parliament. We are looking to remove the requirement for small customers of a failed retailer to be transferred onto a standard retail contract; again, trying to get customers onto lower priced deals. We are also looking to have cost-recovery arrangements for a retailer of last resort to provide greater certainty because it was quite prescriptive

as to what they could recover in terms of costs for the sake of taking on a failed retailer's customer base and whether they were able to cope with that.

We are also looking at giving time for the Australian Energy Regulator to designate who they want to select as the retailer of last resort, therefore giving them more time to do that rather than having to do it straight away. Also, amending the National Electricity Rules to give better understanding of credit support as well for these retailers, which we can touch on later. Then also to try to give flexibility in terms of communication. That was what was looked at back in 2020 and still today they seem quite sensible on balance.

Fast-forward to June 2022, and of course that is when we had the east coast gas crisis, when a lot of coal-fired power stations were in maintenance and others were flooded, and to replace that we had to use a high amount of gas and there was a shortfall in the ability to provide that gas. At the same time, you had international prices spiking because of Ukraine and the war there. The energy ministers again were faced with the fact that this could put more pressure on retailers. Rather than acting on those recommendations, they thought, 'Let's have a bit more time to look at this.' So they initiated another review of the retailer of last resort scheme to try to work out what to do.

The genesis of the bill now goes through that. I was able to get a briefing from the Department for Energy and Mining. I thank the staff for providing that. They gave a fulsome briefing. They were able to say that over the journey, since the retailer of last resort provisions have been in place, 16 retailers of last resort have occurred, with a lot of them happening since 2022. They also briefed me that in South Australia the default electricity provider would be AGL and the default in the case of a gas retailer of last resort would be Origin.

So there was a lot of time taken. The briefing went through the second bout of investigation into what needs to be done. That kicked off back in August 2022, and again they looked into, I suppose, the Energy Market Commission's report from 2021 and then started consulting. That started back, as I said, in October 2022 and went through to May 2022. Out of that, draft reports came through in 2024, the final report in June 2024. You can see that it was a long time coming.

The energy ministers took time to then look through what these recommendations were and approve reforms back in December 2024, which has this bill now appear before us in parliament. As I said before, the convention with these national energy laws is that South Australia is the parliament to introduce them. That is where we find ourselves here, with the bill being introduced back in September. It has been a long time coming. Nonetheless, as I said before, the opposition will be, as per convention, supporting this bill.

It is worth noting that the time factor is not rare in terms of these bills. In fact, there have been quite a few reforms come through in this session of parliament. If I go through them, they include the east coast gas system amendments, consumer data right protection, gas pipelines, market transparency, ministerial powers, wholesale market monitoring, and data access. There have been lots of amendments coming through into here.

If you look at them, as has been pointed out by a number of stakeholders in both the gas and electricity markets, a lot of these reforms are geared more towards giving powers, changing the powers of the regulator or AEMO and the Energy Market Commission, to try to address energy issues, with no real corresponding effort to reform these rules to actually look at how the energy market could be made more competitive, how more supply could be introduced into the markets to try to get more gas out of the ground and to get more base load electricity into the system. So there are, again, just more powers and more bureaucracy coming in. Nonetheless, the opposition will be supporting it again.

I talked through a lot of the findings and reports back in 2021. It is quite interesting that a lot of the reforms in this amendment bill are quite similar to what was recommended back in 2021, so we see a lot of time, maybe, where instead it could have been introduced a lot earlier. There are cost-recovery reforms for retailers about how they can recover their costs, looking at how retailers of last resort are appointed, giving the Australian Energy Regulator more flexibility. Credit support arrangements are something I mentioned previously, making sure that credit can be more flexible for these providers so that they can have a ramped-up bit of time between taking on customers from a failed retailer to actually getting their full credit requirements in place, going over a number of weeks.

It is looking at also improving what the plan might be for the retailer of last resort in terms of what can actually be provided by those, through designated contracts and customer protections. A newer one that maybe was not looked at by the AEMC is whether there is any gas direction clarification, making sure that the gas supply of the previous retailer can be taken on by the new one. There is more clarity on that.

You can see that this bill has been a long time coming, and these amendments have merit. Anything that strengthens the safety net for households and small businesses when retailers fail should be looked at—so the reason for the support here.

If you go back to the original genesis of why was the AEMC commission made in the first place, they were worried about looking at the increase in numbers of customers who were deferring their bills or were unable to pay their bills. If you look at what the situation is on the ground here in South Australia, as the retailer of last resort provision comes in you find that that concern is very real: there is a significant number of electricity customers who are struggling with what are record high power prices. They are struggling, and so they are facing energy hardship.

If you look at those facts you see that since Labor came into office power bills are skyrocketing. This has the flow-on effect that you have more and more South Australian households struggling to pay their bills, resulting in not only energy debt but also hardship.

Look at the Australian Energy Regulator: they put in their annual retail market report, and it shows this case laid bare and happening in South Australia here. It showed, again, that South Australia has the highest residential electricity median market and standing offer prices per kilowatt hour in the National Electricity Market.

The report found that the residential energy debt has hit \$1,522 per customer, which is the highest in the country. It also says that the proportion of customers on hardship programs has risen to 2.4 per cent, a record high. In fact, South Australia has the highest proportion of electricity customers on hardship payments in the nation. It reveals a concerning rise in customers—South Australian households—who are being forced onto electricity and gas hardship plans. Families are struggling to keep the lights on here in South Australia.

I talked about the AER giving the median electricity price per kilowatt, but then also in South Australia we have ESCOSA as well, which, again, reports on the average residential power price. They do that yearly. Again, ESCOSA shows that the prices in South Australia have increased under this Labor government by 43 per cent. They have gone up over that time, and it is really causing hardship for households.

At the same time we have the default market offer also showing similar trends as well. I think in July the most recent default market offer came out, and it showed that the default market offer had gone up by up to \$71 from last year to this year, so, again, we are getting prices going up. The default market offer shows prices going up this year again as well. There are real issues here in terms of the prices that households are having to pay. We can talk about the statistics, but those hardship payments represent real people facing hardship and struggling along as well.

Recently I have spoken here in parliament about widowed pensioner Antonetta. She is a grandmother who shared with the opposition her struggle to keep the lights on in winter. It came at a time when she had just lost her husband, so this compounded her grief. She has had to reach out to her family, and her daughter is helping to pay her electricity bill.

Of course, being a proud person, Antonetta does not want to see that. She had been married for 60 years to her husband, and then having to struggle to pay on the one income has really affected her. As she said, it is not fair that her daughter has to pay these bills, but she has no choice. She feels guilty about this, but she just could not afford to pay. She had to use the electricity because she was having issues with her health. She was recovering from heart surgery and needed to have the heater on.

Antonetta's electricity bill was \$430 for one month. She just could not afford to pay it of her own accord but she needed to have that. As she said, she is very careful with money but she is really struggling to keep up. That is a personal—taking it beyond the statistics and the summaries and making us understand it is real people behind this.

We talked about small businesses and what they are up for as well. We have seen, under this Malinauskas Labor government, small business power bills have on average gone up by 39 per cent so the cost of doing business here in South Australia has been going up. One of the big drivers is the skyrocketing power bills. Again, speaking with businesses in my electorate, I have a business owner who is really struggling. He said, while the averages might say 39 per cent, his bill increased by 300 per cent. It went from around a thousand dollars a month to over about \$3,500 a month. These are big jumps. They have factored into their business plans their rentals, what their expense lines are and it is very hard for these businesses in South Australia to be able to cope with jumps like that.

The issue for businesses is that paying those bills is really challenging but so is being able to employ staff, not only being able to grow and take on staff but having to make the challenging decisions of how to pay for these big increases in the cost of doing business to go with it. It is really hard on these businesses, especially family-owned businesses because people put their heart and soul into the business. We want to see small businesses, family-owned businesses be the heart of the economy in South Australia, because when they are thriving South Australia is thriving as well. It creates jobs. It creates prosperity. It makes every suburb vibrant, so we need to back these businesses and take this into account.

At the bigger scale, you have family businesses struggling but we have also seen big industrials—

The SPEAKER: The energy minister with a point of order?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I have been listening to the member go off topic about this bill. I think it would be important to bring it back to the retailer of last resort and the national reforms, rather than his election pitch.

The SPEAKER: If the member for Morphett can bring it back to the substance, if that is okay?

Mr PATTERSON: Bringing it back to the substance, it is about what we were talking about: why were provisions needed to strengthen the retailer of last resort? One of the drivers, the reasons for looking into this in the first place, was because of the worry and fear of customers not being able to pay their energy bills, and the flow-on effect that the retailer then suffers and becomes unfinancial and fails.

I feel it is very relevant to what we are talking about here in terms of the retailer of last resort because we are talking about the hardship of the people paying. We are also talking about what this government has been doing, talking about these bills coming through. At the same time as these bills are coming through, the electricity price is going up. We have seen the government spending three years on their hydrogen power plant which the Auditor-General—

The SPEAKER: Point of order from the Minister for Energy?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: The bill before us is about a national reform of the retailer of last resort and their appointment. The member is talking about matters that do not relate to it.

The SPEAKER: Member for Morphett, if you can, please just stick to what the bill is about, and that would be good. Thank you.

Mr PATTERSON: I am working my way through it. In my explanation before I was trying to explain why that is important. So let's go through, back into this bill then. Let's try to relate it to what I was saying so at least we can understand it. If I go back, what you will see is the genesis of this. As I said before, looking at, 'Okay, why were they looking into this?' Because they were worried. They were worried about concerns relating to the failure of a retailer, all retailers where there were a large number of customers, due to a significant increase in the number of customers who were deferring or unable to pay their bills.

It is relevant to what is going on in South Australia. Are there fears that this is going to have ramifications here in South Australia where retailers go out of business and then provisions have to be applied? My contention is that it is salient to talk about the emphasis this government have put on

an energy policy that is based on their hydrogen power station, which the Auditor-General has just shown has cost \$500 million and wasted three years.

The SPEAKER: The member, I have asked you to stick to what the bill is all about, and I am not sure the hydrogen power station or the Auditor-General stuff is relevant. In the interest of getting through this bill, if you could just stick to what the subject matter is, that would be great. Thank you.

Mr PATTERSON: As I said, the provisions there are certainly relevant when you look at what is being brought in here when retailers of last resort are appointed. The bill gives the Australian Energy Regulator more flexibility in appointing a replacement retailer after failure. The idea is that instead of relying solely on a predesignated default retailer, the Australian Energy Regulator can look at having a bit of time, so you can appoint different companies, a number of companies, rather than one.

In the case of, as I said, this pensioner who was struggling to pay her bill, maybe if she cannot pay her bill and then others—I have been advised in the briefing that the biggest retailer to fail had 67,000 customers. There could be thousands of customers similar to Antonetta, the pensioner who has struggled under skyrocketing power bills. It may be similar to the business who had their power bill go up by 300 per cent. What happens to those customers who have energy bills when that retailer fails? Maybe they have gone on hardship payments and have debts that come through, and it causes real issues for the retailer.

Then you look at the bigger companies, the industrial ones. I was talking before about the average small business. Let's say one of those customers of the 67,000 was maybe a large industrial who was having trouble. We have previously talked about the big increases that some of those, I suppose, industrials have had to face as well in terms of their big bills that they have had to deal with on a monthly basis. Previously we have had Nippy's—I have talked about them—and how their bill went from \$51,000 in one month up to \$109,000 in a month 12 months later, the same equivalent month. If they were part of the 67,000 customers, that might tip the retailer over, because imagine if they cannot pay? They are going, 'Okay, we are trying not to pass costs on to our customers.' Then they might ask, 'How can this be looked at?'

The Hon. A. Koutsantonis: You're rambling.

Mr PATTERSON: No, I am going through the reasons for the retailer of last resort. It is perfectly acceptable. While these customers' bills are going up—and this is the salient point—the government have brought this in to try to put customers onto a retailer of last resort but, at the same time, have been spending \$500 million on their hydrogen power plant. They have been spending that much money. That is where the investment of this government has been. They have spent three years on an industrial policy and an energy policy that is not looking to protect customers who might end up having to make use of this retailer of last resort. We have seen how, with this \$500 million spend—the Auditor-General lays quite bare all the money that has been spent that cannot be recovered—

The Hon. A. Koutsantonis: That is not true.

Mr PATTERSON: It says it right there. It says \$285 million has been spent.

The Hon. A. Koutsantonis: You said \$500 million cannot be recovered.

Mr PATTERSON: That is right: \$285 million has been spent.

The SPEAKER: Minister, can you stop with the interjections, and the member for Morphet, in the interest of us getting through this legislation, can we just stop going around in circles. There are other forums for examination of the Auditor-General's Report, which are coming up later. It is important, with nine more sitting days, that we get through the legislative agenda, and so I would ask you to be as concise as you possibly can while not detracting from the important arguments that you want to put on the record. Thank you, member for Morphet.

Mr PATTERSON: Certainly. What I would say to keep it succinct so we can get through this is, as I think has been well pointed out, the hydrogen power plant was a massive waste of money.

The SPEAKER: Member for Morphet—

Mr PATTERSON: I am closing now.

The SPEAKER: I will sit you down if you keep going on about the hydrogen power plant. This is repetitive. You just keep going around and around in circles mentioning the same thing. We need to get to the point. Thank you.

Mr PATTERSON: I defer to your ruling. Trying to be expedient about this, I think I have made the point around why we are having to consider this legislation around the power bills. We have talked through what is going on here. I have given examples of a number of customers who are facing high power bills that would potentially cause energy debt or potentially cause energy hardship. In a cascading effect, that could then cause problems for retailers. As these are national energy laws, you could say they have to consider all jurisdictions, but this is the Parliament of South Australia, so we want to consider South Australian households, South Australian businesses, the circumstances they are operating under with skyrocketing power bills and what that impact could be.

To finish, what we would say of these provisions that are being put on the retailer of last resort is we do not want to see them happen because, of course, that causes issues; nonetheless, we need to have these provisions. The retailer of last resort already exists, and these amendments seek to add to those that are already there.

As I said, taking all this time, starting back in October 2020, it really has been a long time coming. Again, it is trying to give more powers to regulators, whether in this case it is the Australian Energy Regulator, AEMO or AEMC, instead of actually seeing another way to do it such as looking to try to protect households from energy debt and hardship. As I close my remarks, I say again that the opposition will be supporting this legislation.

Ms CLANCY (Elder) (11:32): I rise today in support of the National Energy Retail Law (Retailer of Last Resort) Amendment Bill 2025, which seeks to amend the National Energy Retail Law (South Australia) Act 2011 and the National Electricity (South Australia) Act 1996. I am proud to stand again to speak in support of further reform to our energy laws to protect consumers and ensure South Australians get the best bang for their buck every time they switch on the lights, boil the kettle or turn on the telly. While we cannot go back in time and stop those opposite from shamefully selling off ETSA and the operation of state-owned generators, we will continue to do what we can to regulate a now private market in the interests of South Australians, who at the end of the day just want clean energy for a fair price.

The bill before us today seeks to strengthen the retailer of last resort scheme to improve resilience in the system and manage financial risk and contagion. This reform seeks to improve the operation of the scheme overall and lower barriers to participation by retailers. It includes a range of benefits and improvements on the existing scheme, such as:

- allowing more time for allowed retailers of last resort to be appointed following a retailer of last resort event;
- allowing more time for a designated retailer of last resort to meet AEMO's credit support requirements;
- providing clarity and certainty over cost recovery;
- expanding the pool of potential retailers of last resort and providing more retailers for a particular retailer of last resort event;
- ensuring customers transferred to a retailer of last resort are no worse off than they would be under that retailer's standing offer; and
- providing greater flexibility to the regulator when developing and implementing retailer of last resort plans.

The bill before us today provides a safety net designed to protect South Australian customers if their energy retailer fails and ensures they continue to receive a constant supply of energy. These amendments to our national energy laws are sensible, in the best interests of the consumer and have

been agreed to by energy ministers from the commonwealth and each state and territory to now be introduced in this place, with South Australia as the lead legislator.

What better place to introduce this reform, given our proud history of leading the nation in renewable energy and climate change mitigation? The Malinauskas Labor government is delivering an energy network that benefits South Australians specifically by improving renewable energy uptake and decarbonising our economy. Thanks to our state's embracing of rooftop solar, South Australia's energy system flipped the traditional supply-demand balance on its head.

In 2018, we built the South Australian VPP, Australia's largest virtual power plant. Today, our virtual power plant benefits more than 7,000 public housing tenants by providing reduced power prices and firming up the grid. Like the network of batteries, this virtual power plant has played a role in maintaining energy continuity for South Australia during a time when the Eastern States have seen major interruptions on the National Electricity Market.

In partnership with local government, AGL Energy and funding from ARENA, we are also rolling out community batteries right across our state, with another 16 to be installed to deliver direct benefits to more than 10,000 South Australian households. The member for Badcoe and I are incredibly proud that one of the two community batteries already installed is in our shared community of Edwardstown.

Collectively these community batteries build on the success of South Australia's virtual power plant by delivering cheaper electricity to more households while firming up the grid. Participating households have access to a retail electricity rate at a whopping 25 per cent less than the default market offer. On current figures a typical household benefiting from this scheme could save as much as \$575 off their annual electricity bill.

Beyond this particular scheme, South Australians are continuing to embrace all the benefits of rooftop solar, which is now on around half of all dwellings. On top of this, we are working with the Albanese Labor government to provide energy bill relief in the form of a \$300 rebate for all households on their electricity bills and thanks to our most recent state budget we have extended the scheme to the end of December taking the total rebate to \$450.

The Malinauskas Labor government is also providing targeted relief payments to the most vulnerable consumers in South Australia. This year's state budget provided a cost-of-living concession payment of \$262, alongside energy bill and other household concessions, to help eligible home owner/occupiers save up to \$1,215 throughout this financial year.

South Australia is a world leader in energy transition. The leadership of Labor governments has seen our state achieve 75 per cent renewable wind and solar energy generation in our electricity mix. In 2017, South Australia built the world's biggest original battery, the Hornsdale Power Reserve, drawing the eyes of the world and proving that this technology—

The SPEAKER: Member for Elder, there is a point of order from the member for Morphett.

Mr PATTERSON: It is just as to consideration of relevance.

Ms CLANCY: I am five minutes in—you took 30 minutes to get to a point.

The SPEAKER: I will continue to listen to the member for Elder. Thank you for bringing that to my attention, member for Morphett.

Ms CLANCY: Today and every day, member for Morphett, I am proud to be part of a government that is not resting on its laurels and is doing everything it can to achieve net 100 per cent renewable electricity by 2027.

This is important for every South Australian, particularly those in my community who want to see renewable energy harnessed to its full potential and see real action on climate change. On this side of the house we recognise that climate change is real and that the generational and systemic release of carbon into the atmosphere by human endeavour is heating the planet to devastating effect.

Mr Patterson interjecting:

Ms CLANCY: I have three more paragraphs, mate. I am six minutes in.

The SPEAKER: If everyone can just continue as they were. Member for Morphett, if it is only three more paragraphs it is going to take longer with the constant backwards and forwards.

Ms CLANCY: Yes, I would be finished.

Mr Patterson: I only had three paragraphs—

The SPEAKER: I would like to put the whistle away and call 'play on' in this instance, if that is alright.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Member for Elder, please stop with the responses. There are only three paragraphs to go, member for Morphett, but thank you for your point of order.

Ms CLANCY: Primary school students get it, yet the Liberal Party does not. Economies across the globe desperately need to decarbonise, and our government is leading the way. We are investing in infrastructure and developing the policy work to support our energy transition. Those opposite can ask ChatGPT for help or get on board. In closing—

Mr TEAGUE: Point of order: standing order 128. It has been raised a number of times by the minister responsible for the bill, in the course of this debate, and the Speaker has already admonished one of the contributors on this side, for the time taken to address the bill. They do not want to talk about hydrogen when we are talking about it; on the other hand, they want to have freewheeling capacity to just address anything that—

The SPEAKER: You can sit down now, deputy leader.

Mr TEAGUE: But it is a point of—

The SPEAKER: You can sit down, deputy leader. I have already said that there are three paragraphs to go. Let's get them out of the way. I am interested in having an efficient discussion around this bill and moving on to the next bill. Member for Elder, finish off. Thanks.

Ms CLANCY: In closing, I thank our Minister for Energy and Mining for his steadfast commitment to decarbonisation, and his team for their work in bringing this bill before us today. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr FEDERICK (Hammond) (11:40): I rise to speak to the National Energy Retail Law (Retailer of Last Resort) Amendment Bill 2025. I note that, back in June of 2022, energy ministers tasked the Australian Energy Market Commission with undertaking a review into the retailer of last resort scheme. The Australian Energy Market Commission initiated a review into the arrangements for a failed retailer's electricity and gas contracts on 13 October 2022, providing both a terms of reference and a consultation paper.

Along the way, a directions paper was then released on 11 May 2023, and there was a draft report that was published on 22 February 2024. The final report of that inquiry was published on 20 June 2024. Following this process, energy ministers approved the amendments that are set out in the National Energy Retail Law (Retailer of Last Resort) Amendment Bill 2025 on 6 December 2024.

As the shadow minister indicated earlier, and as with previous changes to the national energy laws, we are the lead jurisdiction in South Australia and so the convention is that, as the legislation has been approved by the Energy and Climate Change Ministerial Council prior to it being introduced into the Parliament of South Australia, it does receive bipartisan support. The minister introduced the bill into this house on 18 September 2025. What this bill seeks to do is to amend the National Energy Retail Law (South Australia) Act 2011 and to make related amendments to the National Electricity (South Australia) Act 1996.

In regard to the cost-recovery reforms initiated in this bill, the bill makes it clearer how retailers of last resort can recover the costs they face when another retailer collapses. When a retailer of last resort takes on extra customers, it often has to quickly buy more electricity or gas and arrange new financial cover, which can be expensive. The new rules spell out exactly which costs can be

claimed back, including energy purchases, administration and financing, and allow claims to be processed faster, within three months. This gives retailers more confidence that they will be repaid for doing the right thing, which should encourage more of them to volunteer to step in if another retailer fails.

In regard to the appointment of retailers of last resort, the Australian Energy Regulator will now have up to 72 hours after a retailer fails to decide which company or companies will take over its customers. Previously, this had to be decided in advance through a default retailer of last resort. This change allows the Australian Energy Regulator to share the load between multiple willing retailers rather than relying on one. The default retailer of last resort still acts as a backup so customers will not lose supply. This greater flexibility makes the system more stable and reduces the risk that a single retailer is overwhelmed by too many new customers at once.

Regarding credit support arrangements, the bill changes the rules around how quickly a retailer of last resort must provide extra financial backing, known as credit support, to the market operator. Instead of having to do this straightaway, a new retailer of last resort will get a one-week grace period, then four weeks to gradually build up to the full amount. This more flexible approach will help retailers manage their cash flow during what can be a stressful time, while still ensuring the energy market remains secure.

In regard to the plan flexibility in regard to the retailer of last resort, the Australian Energy Regulator will have more flexibility in how it prepares and maintains the official retailer of last resort plan, which outlines what happens when a retailer fails. At this moment, the law is very prescriptive about what must be included and when. The bill in front of us today relaxes these requirements so that the Australian Energy Regulator can update or test the plan when it makes sense, rather than on a fixed schedule. This will make the process more efficient and responsive.

In regard to designated contracts and customer protections, a major new feature of the bill is the ability for a retailer of last resort to offer customers a designated contract—a fair market-based plan, instead of the higher price default contract. These contracts must have the same basic terms as a normal market contract, keep prices at or below the standing offer, freeze prices for the first three months, and not charge any exit fees if the customer switches retailers during that period.

Customers do not have to give explicit consent, so the supply continues without interruption, but the retailer of last resort must publish the contract online and meet all consumer protection standards. The idea is to give consumers a better deal while making it more attractive for retailers to take part in the retailer of last resort scheme.

Finally, in relation to clarification around gas directions, the bill sets a clear rule for how quickly gas companies must respond when directed by the Australian Energy Regulator during a retailer of last resort event instead of having to act immediately. They now have 24 hours to comply and this provides a realistic, enforceable timeframe without putting supply at risk and aligns the gas rules with the new retailer of last resort appointment process.

We have had some discussion in this house today about the impact of electricity prices on private citizens and businesses. They have gone up many hundreds of dollars for citizens and thousands of dollars for businesses in this state. Part of that issue was the failure of hydrogen projects, not just here in South Australia but right across the nation. We have seen more than \$600 million wasted on a hydrogen bomb scheme here in South Australia.

We have seen a \$14 billion project in Queensland completely scrapped. We have seen a \$600 million project in West Australia scrapped. We have seen projects scrapped in Tasmania and New South Wales. Woodside in Western Australia have also pulled out of a hydrogen project, and also 'Twiggy' Forrest has pulled out of a project. In this hydrogen dream, even if you get hydrogen operating, you lose 80 per cent of the hydrogen to get only 20 per cent of the energy at the end of it, and this is part of the reason why these projects, including the one here in South Australia, have completely failed.

I want to make a final couple of points around Project EnergyConnect, which we instigated as the Marshall Liberal government to get a powerline from Robertstown through to New South Wales and to have another interconnector to get the grid right on the east coast of Australia. Obviously, that

connects South Australia, New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and Tasmania. That grid connection has got as far as Buronga in New South Wales, and there is 150 megawatts of transferable energy able to be transferred along that line. Yes, it has got some time to go, but I want to let the house know what the minister said about this project when the South Australian section was finished. I quote from Minister Koutsantonis:

A well deserved congratulations to ElectraNet for completing the South Australian side of Project EnergyConnect.

This project will facilitate that connection that is vitally needed through to the east coast so that we can export renewable energy from here, which we have in abundance, and import energy that at times needs to come from Tasmanian hydro, New South Wales coal or other dispatchable power that we can utilise here in South Australia. This is a bipartisan bill and we are the first jurisdiction in the country to discuss this legislation. We support the bill.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS (West Torrens—Treasurer, Minister for Energy and Mining) (11:51): I want to thank members for their contributions and their support for this legislation. This legislation is the result of a great deal of effort and research by the Australian Energy Regulator, the market bodies, the former Energy Security Board and, more importantly, the energy ministers' council.

What we are attempting to do is to try to contemplate worst-case scenarios where a retailer has a series of customers and, when the unforeseen occurs that that retailer can no longer adequately survive as a listed company or cannot financially withstand the pressures of the National Electricity Market, the customer notices no real difference in terms of continuity of supply. The question then is: what happens next? That has always been a difficult part of RoLR events, as they are characterised within the industry.

I thank the shadow minister for his bipartisan support of this bill and what it is we are attempting to do. I also point out that every single piece of legislation in this parliament regarding energy has been bipartisan and has been supported by both sides of the house. I cannot think of a piece of legislation regarding the energy sector that has not been bipartisan. In fact, I cannot think of a single bill on the energy system that the Liberal Party have voted against that the Labor government have introduced, and vice versa.

That is a fascinating statistic when you hear the rhetoric coming from members opposite, which I think is a telltale sign of a looming election rather than any real policy difference. The truth is that we are overseeing the biggest transition in human history of a sector that is undergoing dramatic and rapid change. The National Electricity Market is being stretched and there are some within the market who say that the market no longer exists and that it is simply a series of interventions.

Whether it is government underwriting of infrastructure, like Project EnergyConnect, or whether it is a subsidisation of thermal capacity or renewable capacity, there is intervention after intervention after intervention. That is creating uncertainty. Within that uncertainty the people who need the most protection are the vulnerable in our community and, of course, just ordinary people going about their business: so if a large retailer goes belly up, what happens next?

What this legislation attempts to do is try to foresee every possible permutation of what could occur and put in transparent protections for those customers to make sure they are looked after, to make sure they are given an adequate opportunity to maintain their continuity of supply and to make sure they are not automatically put on a regressive bill or rate, and they can then obviously take their future into their own hands and potentially seek other retailers or other offers.

I think transparency is the most important part of this legislation. It gives people more transparency about what is occurring and how it is occurring. Hopefully we will not have any RoLR events but if we do, more importantly, let's hope no-one really notices, because the most important part about these reforms is that we have a seamless system that operates.

The shadow minister made a series of remarks about gas which I find fascinating, given he voted to ban gas exploration and extraction in parts of South Australia. To now bemoan the lack of gas and interventions in that area I think sums up exactly where some people are on this matter. The truth is, that commodity is setting the price of electricity in this country. When there is a shortfall it

firms; when it firms it sets the price; when it sets the price we are paying extraordinarily large amounts of money for its production per megawatt hour. That is a shame.

If we look at South Australia and at the eastern seaboard, we have lots of gas reserves. We have two very large basins in South Australia: one is the Cooper Basin and one is the Otway Basin. The Otway Basin is Australia's first basin. It is where we first found gas in this country. For the Liberal Party to ban fracture stimulation in that basin they have really tightened the screws on gas availability in the state, but to then bemoan the availability of gas I think really shows a level of hypocrisy that needs to be called out.

Only one person on the other side of the parliament can stand with some pride on this matter and that is the member for Hammond. The member for Hammond is the only person on that side of parliament to vote against the fracture stimulation ban. Quite defiantly, he voted no on that piece of legislation, and to his eternal credit he deserves to be thanked by energy consumers for his foresight. It was probably because he worked in the industry and he understands the real-life implications of it. No doubt he was a lone voice in the party room, but nevertheless he spoke with the power and the courage of his convictions. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for the shadow minister for energy who simply toed the party line on that matter.

I also want to point out that Project EnergyConnect is a project that the opposition did not oppose. I look for comments that members can propose that show that I at any stage opposed the construction of Project EnergyConnect. What I simply highlighted to the public was that the government's regulatory investment test proposed a swap from gas to coal. It is there in black and white. They proposed a closure of Torrens Island power station in exchange for Project EnergyConnect. It is a project that they underwrote and, like all projects, the construction project was delayed.

We do not have full energy transfer across from New South Wales to South Australia, which is a shift from gas to coal, but the displacement of the gas-fired turbines was on time. So the South Australian government had to intervene to keep Torrens Island open because members opposite underwrote an infrastructure project that sought to close it, linking our economic sovereignty to generation in New South Wales rather than having our own thermal capacity here in this state looking after our own needs.

That is the very antithesis of what Sir Thomas Playford—standing behind me—set out to achieve with the Electricity Trust of South Australia. As we all know, when he held a royal commission into power generation, what occurred was that the eastern seaboard was extracting vast amounts of rent for their power and coal, and South Australians were becoming extremely reliant and were paying large amounts of money that were unfinancial and unfair, so he nationalised the assets in South Australia. It is a sort of back to the future type of scenario for the Liberal Party.

This piece of legislation seeks to give as much autonomy as possible to consumers so they know that, when they are actually a client of a retailer who is unfortunately put into administration or unable to provide services, it transfers—as I said in my second reading contribution—impacted customers to designated retailers of last resort where there is insolvency, or there is a market suspension or when a retailer stops operating. Historically, it has operated well, with only four activations between 2012 and 2022, with no major interruptions to service.

Obviously, international events have put a large strain on gas reserves in this country, as have some government policies, which has led to shortages in gas availability. Gas is a firmer of renewable energy, and it is important that we protect against retailing failures and give the AER gas direction powers. Those gas direction powers are vital. That was in response to the energy ministers in June 2022, who tasked the market commission to re-examine its earlier review of the scheme. As I said in my second reading contribution in August 2022, energy ministers agreed with the AEMC's recommendations, and we have now implemented reforms to the retailer of last resort framework as part of a wider initiative to bolster retail market powers.

We held public consultation, which is why this bill has taken a while to get to the parliament, but that consultation I think holds us in good stead. The bill puts those reforms into statute, which is important. As the shadow minister quite clearly pointed out, other jurisdictions are waiting for this legislation to be enacted so that it can be operational in their states, because this is very important

work. The AER, importantly, will maintain oversight, including ongoing maintenance and monitoring, and wait for the market commission's guidance on those roles. But, importantly, this legislation gives greater assurance to participants, as I said in my second reading contribution, of the lowest financial risk. It actually encourages competition while placing the concerns of consumers at the very beginning.

It gives us greater clarity over cost recovery. It extends the AER's window for designating retailers of last resort to up to 72 hours following an event, which is important, and moving away from the reliance on a preset default retailer of last resort. There are a number of reasons for that but, most importantly, it is to distribute customers more effectively and efficiently and to maintain an uninterrupted supply.

The bill amends AEMO's credit support demands by establishing a one-week grace period for these retailers who are a last resort measure, followed by a gradual increase over four weeks to account fully for the added customer load. That is a very important reform to allow retailers who are all of a sudden given much larger customer loads for which they may not have hedged in the market for their customer demand the ability to maintain those customers.

We also have further terms and conditions within retail contracts. Prices cannot exceed these retailers standing off prices, and there can be no price increases for the first three months of a customer being transferred to a retailer of last resort. Importantly, as the member for Hammond said in his remarks, there will be no exit fees for anyone wishing to move away from one of these retailers if they are assigned to them in case of one of these events—that is a very important reform.

The Australian Energy Regulator evaluates and oversees requirements through guidelines. We mandate that records be kept, and that is important for the transparency aspect that I was talking about earlier. That transparency aspect is vitally important, and I would argue that the transparency measures within this bill are probably some of the most important we have. One of the concerns I had at the energy ministers' conference when we were discussing these reforms was the transparency of customers and how they are notified of their moves, what standing offers they were being put on and whether or not there could be better market outcomes.

I thank the members for this and I hope it gets a speedy passage through the upper house. I also understand that there will be no need to go into committee, and I thank the shadow minister for that forbearance. I also thank him for continuing the fine tradition of this parliament. Being the lead legislator in the state, it is often difficult to, in effect, pass legislation decided by an energy ministers' conference, often by a party of a different political persuasion—that takes policy courage and for that I thank him and commend the bill to the house.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS (West Torrens—Treasurer, Minister for Energy and Mining) (12:07): I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Bill read a third time and passed.

STATUTES AMENDMENT (PLANNING, INFRASTRUCTURE AND OTHER MATTERS) BILL

Second Reading

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 15 October 2025.)

Mr TEAGUE (Heysen—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (12:09): I rise to indicate that I am the opposition's lead speaker on the bill, and I will indicate that the opposition is not opposing the bill in this place and wants to see the bill move to the council in an orderly way—that is, in circumstances where we hear it.

This is No. 13 in Government Business on the *Notice Paper*. We are at the end of 2025. The minister, in introducing the bill, rightly indicated that last year the Malinauskas Labor government had

laid out a road map towards its stab at addressing the ongoing housing crisis in this state, and the government tells us that this omnibus bill contains a variety of the ingredients that are necessary to do so.

The question that South Australians would be well entitled to ask is, 'Well, that was mapped out sometime last year'—I am not sure exactly when, but around the early or middle part of the year; and we have had this housing crisis ongoing now for a long period of time—and yet here we are bringing forward a lately introduced omnibus bill with a variety of ingredients that the government tells us are necessary to address the crisis.'

The reason why the opposition is going to make sure that this bill can proceed with maximum efficiency, the opportunity having arisen just now, is that we are right now in circumstances where not only has it taken a while to arrive but, so far as I am aware and understand, we have leading industry participants who, like the opposition, are wanting to be supportive of these measures. But in the diligent, thoroughgoing way that they are engaged in consideration of reform, they are left having to continue to work through their views about what is a range of reforms—and there are 85 clauses or so—affecting several acts, and we are not yet receiving from industry a concluded view.

There are several flagged areas of interest/concern. Sufficiently, we have the example of the UDIA indicating that it has advised the government that it wants some further time before indicating a concluded view. As I understand it, the HIA and the MBA of SA are in a similar boat. So here we are in this place, the minister has identified the government's objectives by this, and the opposition is in a similar situation to industry and has certainly flagged the likelihood at one level of the key concerns, such as they are, being aired at the appropriate time in the council and, to the extent that it may be necessary, working to address any matters of substance that remain a cause for concern following that process.

I think it sounds not unreasonable that industry has given its feedback. In the course of my time, I have valued enormously the contribution from each of those bodies that I have identified, among others, in usefully contributing to the process. My colleague the shadow minister in another place is actively engaged with assisting in that process. Therefore, I trust and expect that, by the time the bill makes its way to another place, there will be that opportunity. I hope by then the government has been able to secure a more concluded view than what has been practical in all the circumstances that the bill has found its way here. So, let us deal with it in the house promptly and in due course with that opportunity, as I have flagged, address matters that may be outstanding in another place.

The Hon. N.D. CHAMPION (Taylor—Minister for Housing and Urban Development, Minister for Housing Infrastructure, Minister for Planning) (12:15): I thank the deputy leader for his contribution. The government has made great strides since the Housing Roadmap, with this bill directly originating from that process. Concordia is probably the most sort of graphic example of this, Deputy Speaker, and it is adjacent to your electorate. It has been on the drawing board since 2010—15 long years—more than a decade went past from it being identified.

This government included it in its land release and included it in its road map. The code amendment is now done, 10,000 or so properties, with an associated infrastructure scheme to manage all of the costs of infrastructure which are substantive. The fundamentals of this bill are—and industry will like this—the use of technology and AI to make planning decisions quicker so they can be made in minutes instead of weeks and, most importantly—and this is a sort of terribly boring reform in one sense—a dramatic productivity improvement for the housing sector: the enablement of electronic dealings in property and land division which could save up to three months.

So, with respect, the UDIA, the MBA, the HIA, all my favourite friends in the industry, should be falling all over themselves to get the opposition to help us pass this bill. Of course, I suspect the deputy leader's outline of their misgivings is that there are elements of this bill around infrastructure schemes, around requiring a property owner's consent to put in a planning application, which I regard as a sort of basic property right, and one that came up when the Deputy Speaker hosted, at least in part, the government's community cabinet in Two Wells. This exact issue came up of a property owner who had a planning application put in on their property without their consent.

It would seem to me a fundamental property right that you at least get asked for your agreement if someone is putting in a planning application on your property. So there are a range of small issues in this bill that are attached to the bigger reform, and those small issues do need to be resolved for the good order of the industry and the state. We are happy to work with the opposition, of course, on that, but we do need to listen to industry. It is important that we do so, but we also have to balance their submissions with what I think would be best described as common sense and the public interest. With those words, I will conclude.

Bill read a second time.

Committee Stage

In committee.

Clauses 1 to 39 passed.

Clause 40.

The Hon. N.D. CHAMPION: I move:

Amendment No 1 [HousingUrbDev-1]—

Page 15, after line 14—Before subclause (1) insert:

- (a1) Section 163(1) and (2)—delete 'this Subdivision' wherever occurring and substitute in each case:

this section

Basically this just cleans up some technical issues. Some provisions of the State Development Coordination and Facilitation Act 2025 commenced on 7 October 2025. Those provisions inserted a new section relating to primary infrastructure schemes into subdivision 2 of division 1, part 13, of the Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016.

That means there are now two sections of subdivision 2, one relating to basic infrastructure schemes and one relating to primary infrastructure schemes. The amendment alters the wording of the section relating to basic infrastructure schemes by amending references to 'a scheme under this subdivision' to 'a scheme under this section'. It is entirely an amendment to resolve some drafting errors.

Amendment carried; clause as amended passed.

Remaining clauses (41 to 85) and title passed.

Bill reported with amendment.

Third Reading

The Hon. N.D. CHAMPION (Taylor—Minister for Housing and Urban Development, Minister for Housing Infrastructure, Minister for Planning) (12:21): I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

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 16 October 2025.)

Mr TELFER (Flinders) (12:22): I rise to speak on this Education and Children's Services (Enrolment and Attendance) Amendment Bill 2025, and to reflect on the speech the minister gave when he was introducing this bill, where it is aiming to strengthen the enforcement of compulsory school enrolment, attendance and participation in South Australia, particularly in cases of noncompliance.

We know that the issues of non-enrolment and non-attendance in South Australia drives the poor outcomes we can see in different areas. We recently saw a report come out around which schools were the strongest ones when it came to attendance, and I will give a shout-out to one in my electorate that highlights this well. I give a shout-out to the Kimba Area School, which is highlighted in reports as having really good, high-level attendance, being either number one or number two in the state.

That also correlates to the positive educational outcomes we have seen delivered by the Kimba Area School. It is no surprise that there is a correlation between the two: attendance is high and outcomes are strong. To see that in a regional school, in particular, as we have at the Kimba Area School, really shows that the culture at that school is strong, that the community is strong, and that the leadership and teaching at the school is strong. That is borne out by the positive outcomes that we are seeing for the school's student numbers and educational outcomes as well. So I give a big shout-out to Kimba Area School, a great regional school that is delivering really good results.

This really does highlight the need for there to be accountability when it comes to school attendance, and that is what this bill is looking to really home in on. It aims to strengthen enrolment. The minister, in his second reading speech, noted a slight improvement in school attendance from 2022 to 2024. We do note that, unfortunately, it is still remaining below the pre-COVID level. We are facing a situation at the moment where the percentage of school attendance is still not back to the pre-COVID level, so it is something that certainly needs to have the attention of decision-makers.

It has also been concerning to hear that the number of children attending school more than 90 per cent of the time is significantly lower than pre-pandemic levels and that a small number of children are not enrolled at school at all. This is something that is obviously front and centre and something that I am sure both sides of the aisle have eyes on, because the future prosperity of our state is really hinging on the education that the next generation are getting and that our schools are delivering.

The bill aims to address issues of non-enrolment and non-attendance by, firstly, introducing statutory written warning notices prior to commencing prosecution for non-enrolment or non-attendance, putting in place measures to make sure there is a step-by-step escalation; reducing the notification period for parents to notify a school of absences from five to three days; and removing from the act an exemption that enables students to not attend school for fear of them being affected by an infectious or contagious disease. The minister in his explanation said that this only exists in South Australia, so I will have to take his word for it as I have not done my cross-jurisdictional research.

The bill also seeks to clarify and expand the range of information that the chief executive requires for non-attendance to include medical, psychological and social wellbeing reports and allied health referrals. The bill also aims to increase the power of authorised officers attending residential premises to require certain information about a compulsory school-age child, rather than just request it.

In considering our position on this bill, I know that the shadow minister in the other place, the Hon. Heidi Girolamo MLC, has done a lot of legwork to ensure that the consultation process has been vigorous for this bill because obviously there is a range of different arrangements with schools in South Australia—we have the Catholic sector, the independent sector and the public sector. I understand that the Association of Independent Schools of South Australia provided feedback in the consultation that preceded this bill and they have no objections to the proposed legislation.

I also understand, from talking with the shadow minister about this subject in particular, that Catholic Education South Australia have indicated their support, while also flagging their strong belief that providing support for families should come before the imposition of penalties. I think this is the crucial balance that needs to be made when it comes to education: if there are students who are in a situation where their non-attendance or non-enrolment comes to the attention of the department, the first step should be trying to ensure that supports are in place for those families because there might be some really tragic, sad or other reasonable excuses for that situation, and there needs to be understanding.

I know that Catholic Education South Australia also highlighted the necessity for prioritising proactive, relationship-based collaboration with families to address attendance barriers, not just making carte blanche decisions based purely on the situation on a piece of paper. I understand that Catholic Education South Australia have also warned that the imposition of fines may disproportionately affect vulnerable families, emphasising an equity-focused approach to informing policy implementation and early intervention and engagement.

There are a few different aspects of this bill. The opposition, in principle, supports this bill because we are looking at the intention of what it is trying to achieve but we are also aware there are a few different aspects we are looking for clarity on when it comes to our consideration of this bill. The expansion of powers to authorised officers is one, and this is obviously an increased level of ability for these authorised officers to require, as I said, rather than to just request.

Also, in consideration of this, in the committee stage in particular, we need to consider the impacts on disadvantaged families, the range of fines and the legal consequences that can be imposed and also some of the other impacts that this bill could have inadvertently. This is where, when it comes to our decision-making and law making, we need to ensure that the legislation is fit for purpose.

On the weekend, I was watching *60 Minutes*—and we have seen this in a number of different news articles recently—and saw the expanded number of homeschooled children right across Australia, including in South Australia. That interaction between the education department and families who decide to school their children at home also needs to be unpacked a little bit.

As far as my perspective goes, the core essential foundation as to who we are as a society is built around family and making sure that families are the ones helping drive the future outcomes of their children in education, health and a range of different aspects. Government is there as a safety net, as a support structure, because we know there are times when that family unit can break down and government can be there to support it. The intrinsic value that we have on this side is that the family unit should be the core driver for outcomes. That is the balance we need to make sure we are making when it comes to legislation that we are considering.

As I said, on this side, we are broadly supportive of this legislation and the changes that it is looking to bring in. Through the committee stage, we look forward to seeking some clarity on a few different aspects of this legislation. With that, I commend the bill.

Ms SAVVAS (Newland) (12:32): I am always really pleased to be able to speak in the house about the strength of our schools and particularly as an MP who represents 15 schools, which is actually quite a lot for a metropolitan electorate. I visit all of them really regularly and I would like to acknowledge the role that our educators and support staff play in creating safe spaces for our students. I think it is really important for us to acknowledge that.

A couple of weeks ago, I went along to an event celebrating Department for Education staff. One of the teachers told the story of how they were invited along as a student's special person on Special Persons Day—the kid invited their own teacher. I think that goes to the importance that teachers, support staff, SSOs, etc., play in the lives of our young people and, of course, also to the importance of having a village assist to raise your children in whatever way that village may look for you and your family.

This bill is really important. It 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 other approved learning programs. I do not think we can possibly overstate, particularly in an increasingly complex world, the importance of attending school.

More and more we are seeing the impact of our new world on young people. I am someone who is incredibly proud of the work that we are doing to ensure that social media stays out of the hands of our kids. I am probably one of the only ones, at least on this side of the house—there may be one or two elsewhere in the parliament—who was actually raised on social media. I was on Myspace in primary school and I remember getting my first Facebook account when I was in year 8.

I have seen firsthand the impact that had on me and my friends, particularly as a teenage girl. I say it a lot that there is literally nothing worse than being a teenage girl, with all the pressures that you have around you, but particularly being a teenage girl for me with all my friends on social media, whether it was comparisons of outfits, how much was being spent on a party, all of those sorts of things. I was raised in a generation where that was on show for the first time.

I have seen firsthand the impact on so many of my friends—on their self-esteem and their mental health more generally—and it is as a result of being raised in that generation that I am so vehemently opposed to children being on social media. I am also someone who still has two teenage brothers and six teenage cousins, and I have seen firsthand what that next level is doing to our kids and what school is starting to look like again only now that phones are being banned too.

School is supposed to be a safe place for our children. It is a place where children are given their education in a clear, objective, moderated environment, safe from the perils of the outside world, particularly those perils that are put in such a way on social media. It is also a safe place for friendships, for building relationships, for learning to connect with others.

I think it is also really important for us to acknowledge the safe place that it can be for those who are struggling at home. Although of course, for the most part, there are lots of people being raised by healthy, happy, supportive families, we know that that is not the case for every child and that school can be a really safe escape for those who do not have safe spaces at home. I think it is really important that we acknowledge those students here, those students who we, as a government, well and truly have a duty to protect.

This change aims to address various issues which have been identified, to enforce the current arrangements and ensure procedural fairness for those parents who may be considered for prosecution. There has already been a public consultation, including through the YourSAy website earlier this year, and also strong levels of engagement compared with consultation on similar legislative reforms in the past.

In addition to the proposals in the bill, the consultation also sought views on two changes to the regulations regarding enrolment and the powers of authorised officers to address related issues with respect to the enforcement of enrolment and attendance requirements. I think it is really important that we acknowledge that alongside balance. One of the main changes is that we require written notice to be sent to a person responsible for a child before proceedings are commenced.

I think it is really important that we acknowledge that there could, of course, be a number of reasons why a student is not attending school. One of the things that has been listed here is removing the list of valid reasons that a child missed school, because there are already provisions in the act for medically compromised children, for example. There are lots of reasons why a student may not be attending school. It may be because of inaction by the parents, it may be complications at home, it may be mental health issues of the student. I think it is really important that we do have that balanced position where we are supporting children to return to those environments in a way that suits them.

I know, for example, that at one of my local schools, Modbury High School, they have an incredible FLO program, an alternative education program for those students who are unable, for whatever reason, to engage in a traditional formalised high school environment. There are a lot of other schools that do offer similar pathways, whether it be for the entirety of that education or whether it be a follow-through process to return those students to school. I think that balance when we are having that conversation is really important.

The bill is also empowering authorised officers who are visiting homes to require information from parents so that there is consistency as to those visits, and the authorised officer should require it when a child is at a public place at a time when they should be attending school. Of course, when we refer to public places, I am sure we have all seen students going to shopping malls, etc., in their school uniform in the middle of the day. You might have a bit of a look at them and wonder what is going on there.

It is really important that everyone plays a role in having that conversation and ensuring that those children are attending school. It also clarifies 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.

Again, I would like to acknowledge all those individuals who play a role in that. I am sure that as members of parliament you have all received inquiries from either schools or parents about students' non-attendance. I would like to acknowledge, particularly at my high schools, the way that our teachers, our principals, those in leadership—at least in my community, I know firsthand—go above and beyond in supporting children back into that schooling environment or supporting their parents to get those students back into the schooling environment.

Again, we know that now, in 2025, young people's mental health is worse than it has been in generations gone by, particularly with the influence of things like social media, and that of course when an individual, for example, is being bullied on social media or bullied at school, that access to Facebook, Instagram, etc., when they go home means they do not often have that reprieve in the way that they have had in generations gone by.

That is why it is so important that the federal government are making the social media reforms and that we continue to do what we can as a state government to ensure that children are protected, that students are protected and that school is a safe place for students to be. I think that that is important to acknowledge—the role that people play, that teachers play, that support staff play, that counsellors and student psychologists all play in ensuring that pathway is viable for students to go back to school when perhaps they do not feel that school is a safe place for them.

There are also some other things that were looked to be considered outside of the draft legislation. Some of the things that respondents mentioned were that parents were only having the option to enrol their child in a South Australian school unless an exception applies. They also noted that they wanted to best support all South Australian students to attend a South Australian school. There were also questions about whether fines should be introduced for parents who fail to enrol their child in a school, fail to ensure they attend or fail to respond to reasonable requests for information about their child.

As a result of the feedback received during this consultation period there will be further work undertaken, particularly with respect to exploring expiations. I do think that that is really important. The member for Flinders mentioned before about how, of course, an expiation may be seen to disproportionately affect a vulnerable family, particularly those vulnerable families who may be more at risk of having their children not attend school. So I think it is really important that we do pursue that further work.

There was also the question of interstate enrolments to look into. Again, I think that is really important to consider when we think about things like separated families. In my own community I have seen examples where parents have broken up and are undergoing, perhaps, custody proceedings and both of those parents are trying to engage in the best way to enrol their child at school—perhaps a local school or perhaps one wants to move interstate, etc.—and I think it is very important that we consider that as we move forward as well.

We know that when a child is not enrolled in school or is not supported to regularly attend school they will be denied the opportunity to achieve their best and to contribute to society in a meaningful way. We know it can have short and long-term impacts not just on their prospects in things like the job market but also on their safety and their wellbeing, and that includes their mental wellbeing.

I think it is really important that we here in this place—the entirety of our parliament—do not ignore these things, that we ensure we work as well as we can to address them, that we continue to support students to be the best they can and to be in a school environment that nurtures their strengths and gives them that safe place and that we continue to pursue pathways that help those students get back into the formalised school environment in the way that best suits them. So I am really, really happy to be supporting this today.

Mr HUGHES (Giles) (12:43): I also rise to support this bill. In so doing I acknowledge there is a little bit of irony involved, given that I was one of those students who spent a fair amount of time

not at school in the latter stages. Indeed, I had this unnerving ability to manage to get expelled from schools, two in particular: one for being, I would like to say, a rebel, and the other for being a ratbag. When I was the ratbag I often did not turn up, and the school eventually had enough, and the principal came around to speak to my mum and dad and said, 'We're going to expel your son.' He did say I could come back the next year if I mended my ways, but as a result of that I spent nearly 10 years as a labourer instead of going to university.

I never regret that. I think it was an incredibly valuable grounding in life. But I do recognise, as a parent of three children who fortunately did not replicate my behaviour and who went all the way through the public education system in Whyalla, how important it is that children do attend school on a regular basis. Clearly, not all children do. It has been flagged here that there can be a range of complex reasons why that might be the case.

Indeed the communities that I represent have had some educational challenges. The Whyalla Secondary College brought together 10 other schools: seven primary schools, because year 7s became high school students, and three high schools; two junior high schools fed into a senior high school.

All those kids from all those schools in one hit started at the brand-new Whyalla Secondary College. It coincided with the period of COVID and the impact that had. It would have been far more sensible, I believe, for the education department to have staggered the creation of the student body at the new school, starting, say, with years 7 and 8 and then working your way through, but that was the situation.

As a result of that situation, there was patchy attendance. There was a whole range of other issues. There were suspensions, there were clashes of all sorts, and the school at that time got some poor publicity. I am pleased to say that things have settled down and it is a lot better than it was but it indicated that there was a set of circumstances there that, in itself, led to some of those children—they might not have felt safe or it could be a whole range of other reasons—not attending school during that period.

In other parts of my electorate, at some of the schools: Roxby Downs sometimes has a particular issue given the shift patterns in Roxby Downs with the seven on and seven off. It was one of the discussions I used to have with the teachers and with the excellent then principal at the school, how some parents, during that seven days off, would sometimes take their kids out of school to go away on short holidays. That had implications for those students, their long-term education and what they hopefully might be able to attain.

Of course, I have the APY lands in my electorate: very small communities, very remote communities where English might be the second or the third language. It has a whole range of particular challenges when it comes to education. The teachers in the main, throughout our system, are dedicated and do try to do the right thing.

Sometimes kids do not attend school because some parents do not value education and that can be for a range of reasons but, as the member for Flinders has indicated, sometimes there are complex issues going on within families. You want to address the problems but you do not want to take a heavy-handed, punitive approach because that can often make the issue worse. In the extensive consultation that was carried out, whether fines can be used as one of the options in order to modify behaviour, there were some real question marks about that. There is that real prospect that the people who are already socio-economically disadvantaged would be further hit. It does need solid engagement with families and sometimes that is beyond the education system. Indeed, it often is beyond the education system to address some of those particular issues.

It is flagged in the bill that these are modest but important changes. It is an issue that schools have grappled with. I have had some parents who have separated. One of the parents will come to me because the other parent has responsibility for the children, and the children are not turning up to school for a variety of reasons. Other families have their own particular set of circumstances that lead to some difficulties.

As has already been mentioned, the impact of COVID has had a significant impact on children attending school—and this is a national issue—where school attendance obviously did drop

off during COVID for very understandable and needed reasons. Subsequent to COVID, the recovery period and afterwards, the number of children attending schools nationally did drop off. Some ended up being home educated, but others just got out of that habit of being in school and engaging with their peers.

One of the changes is requiring a written notice to be sent to a person responsible for the child before any proceedings are commenced. That is an entirely reasonable thing. As has been flagged, that is a basic element of procedural fairness. I think that is a protective element that is important. It also clarifies the information that the parents have to provide. You need to get a picture of what is going on in that child's life, so I think it is a reasonable step. It also removes the list of valid reasons, and it mentions contagious diseases, infections, infectious diseases, and points out that that is actually already covered elsewhere. They are important changes.

It also reduces the amount of time available to a parent to explain exactly what is going on from five days down to three days. It also empowers authorised officers when visiting homes to require information from parents, and clarifies that officers need to take all reasonable and practicable steps to get things back on track.

Over the years, I think there have been some issues when it comes to the resourcing that is necessary to ensure that children attend school. In the past, certainly, there have been times when the effort has not been commensurate, the resources have not been commensurate, with the challenge that we face. We all know—I think most of us know in this chamber—the value of education, and wanting to ensure that all kids get to develop their potential.

Certainly not the exclusive element but one incredibly important element is what happens in the school setting. If our children are not in that setting, if they are away without a valid reason on a regular basis, it is going to have an impact. It was alluded to that the world is becoming more complex. When I got expelled from school, my dad made sure I turned up at the shipyard a few days later and got a job as a painter and docker. You could do that in those days. You could walk into a place with no skills, with no tickets, and get a job. That world has largely gone.

There is that wider issue when it comes to society as a whole. Not only does the child missing school impact on that child's life—and that impact could be incredibly prolonged—but it also deprives society more generally of what might have been if that child had attended school on a regular basis, and whether that child would then, with regular attendance, go on to get a trade, to get a job with some skills, to go to university, to go to TAFE.

There is something incredibly important here around equity. Not exclusively but often it is in areas with more of a socio-economic challenge, where kids are not thriving in the way that we would like to see them thrive. We need to be doing all we can to give all of our kids every opportunity in life, and school is an important part of that.

Addressing attendance at school is one element of that. If we do not do that in a decent and proper way, if we do not allocate the resources and the time to invest in families, whether it is through the education department and the relationships between the school and the family or, in some cases, that wider group of agencies that might be involved with the family, we are running the real risk of disadvantaging that child for many years to come. Even though these are relatively modest changes, they are important changes. I commend the bill to the house.

The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD (Reynell—Minister for Child Protection, Minister for Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence, Minister for Women) (12:56): As has been expressed, this bill makes modest but really important changes to the Education and Children's Services Act 2019. I thank the Minister for Education for bringing this bill to this place. These changes are designed to strengthen the effectiveness of the current scheme relating to the compulsory enrolment, attendance and participation of South Australian children at school.

We know that deep engagement in supportive and inclusive education can absolutely change a person's life. For children and young people, we know that attendance at school in those early years sets the foundation for a successful future adulthood and also creates the conditions in which children and young people can mentally, emotionally, physically and socially thrive. Schools are places where children and young people learn to write, to read, to explore concepts, to better

understand the world, to innovate and to create. They are also places where children and young people learn to connect with other children and supportive adults, to contribute to collective learning and interactions, and to embrace routines and diverse experiences and people.

Schools are also places where layers of protective factors are in place and where risks to children and additional supports required can be identified. For many children and young people, as was the case for me when I was at school, schools are places where children find a sense of belonging, a community family, deep comfort and understanding that they are not alone. For some children, positive engagement with school, great teachers, SSOs and other staff can be the most consistent and nurturing aspect of their lives.

I come from a long line of teachers, who, I know, each approach their vocation with a deep sense of wanting to be there for the kids who need us most, who want to be that steady person in a young person's life, who meets them where they are at and encourages them. My older brother, Luke, has taught for decades and decades. He coordinates Aboriginal education at Sacred Heart College and has pretty much undertaken most of the teaching and many of the teaching leadership roles there for many, many years. I am really proud of him.

Wherever I go, I am asked by young people all the time if I am Luke's sister. I do not understand why they do not ask if he is my brother. Every time they ask—every single time—their faces light up, and they talk about what a difference he made for them, that he was the person who saw them, who was there for them. I seek leave to continue my remarks.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 12:59 to 14:00.

NORTHERN PARKLANDS BILL

Assent

Her Excellency the Governor assented to the bill.

Parliamentary Procedure

ANSWERS TABLED

The SPEAKER: I direct that the written answer to a question be distributed and printed in *Hansard*.

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: We have some guests with us today. We have students from Pembroke College, who are guests of the member for Dunstan. Welcome to parliament. We also have students from St Aloysius College, who are guests of the member for Adelaide, and students from Blackwood High School, who are guests of the member for Waite. Welcome to all the students who are in here to watch question time today.

I have a guest in here as well, who is a longtime reader of *Hansard*. She is a public servant who started in Super SA when she left school in 1984, and she still works there and has to read the *Hansard* all the time. She is a first-time visitor to question time. Mary Cotton, welcome; it is great to have you in here today. Mary has been looking after the parliamentary super area for the past 20 years, so if you have any questions just duck up into the gallery. I am sure Mary would be pleased to answer any of your queries. Mary, thanks for all your hard work; we really appreciate it. Welcome to your first question time.

PAPERS

The following papers were laid on the table:

By the Treasurer (Hon. A. Koutsantonis)—

Regulations made under the following Acts—

Railways (Operations and Access)—General

By the Minister for Multicultural Affairs (Hon. Z.L. Bettison)—

Multicultural Commission, South Australian—Annual Report 2024-25

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

Regulations made under the following Acts—
Disability Inclusion—Community Visitor Scheme
Disability Services—Community Visitor Scheme

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

Regulations made under the following Acts—
Building Work Contractors—Limitations on Insurers' Liability

By the Minister for Trade and Investment (Hon. J.K. Szakacs)—

Attorney-General's Department—Annual Report 2024-25
Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission Chair, Board of the—Annual Report 2023-24
Controlled Substances Act 1984—Return of authorisations issued under section 52C
Annual Report 2024-25
Equal Opportunity SA—Annual Report 2024-25
Parliamentary Superannuation Board, South Australian—Annual Report 2024-25
Privacy Committee of South Australia—Annual Report 2024-25
State Records Act 1997, Administration of the—Annual Report 2024-25
Summary Offences Act 1953—
Access to data held electronically report pursuant to Part 16A
Annual Report 2024-25
Return of authorisations to enter premises under section 83C
Annual Report 2024-25
Surveillance Devices Act 2016—Annual Report 2024-25
Terrorism (Preventative Detention) Act 2005—Annual Report 2024-25

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

Local Council By-Laws—
District Council of Yankalilla—No. 8—Miscellaneous Amendment 2025

By the Minister for Climate, Environment and Water (Hon. L.P. Hood)—

Rules made under the following Acts—
Marine Parks—Authorised Management Plan Amendment

Question Time

FISHING RESTRICTIONS

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA (Hartley—Leader of the Opposition) (14:07): My question is to the Premier. When did the government first consult RecFish SA and the Marine Scalefish Fishery Management Advisory Committee regarding the fishing restrictions announced on 23 October 2025?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier, Minister for Defence and Space Industries) (14:07): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. The government, through the Harmful Algal Bloom Taskforce, has been regularly receiving advice from our experts, particularly from SARDI and PIRSA. The Leader of the Opposition would well be familiar with the fact that when the government, some time ago, first announced our \$28 million package to address the harmful algal bloom going back a number of months, one of the items that was contained within that package was the funding of a rapid fish stock assessment piece of work.

Evidently, of course, there has been an enormous amount of marine life lost to the harmful algal bloom. That's happened in a number of parts of the state but undoubtedly the most acute has been in the Gulf of St Vincent. The timing of the marine fish stock assessment work was important.

We wanted to do it as quickly as we could, but it was subject to conditions. My advice is there were pieces of work they would have conducted earlier if not for the difficult conditions in the winter months.

We are also working collaboratively with the commercial fishing sector that is mandated to report where they go fishing, when they go fishing, what they go fishing for, and what they catch. A combination of that data-collection effort started to see results come in to the task force exercise in the last few weeks, and the government had a difficult decision to make.

The advice that we received at our most recent taskforce meeting, and the one prior to that, was that from the data coming in it was clear that there was a significant impact on the Gulf of St Vincent, in particular, and that the size that it impacted necessitated quick decision-making.

It was open to the government to delay our decision. That would have allowed far greater degrees of community engagement regarding the decision that we took. The problem was, however, the advice that the government was receiving was that every moment of delay that would allow for more catching of fish to occur, particularly in the Gulf of St Vincent, would result in potentially it taking longer to recover, hence why we made a determination to make a judgement quickly. There was engagement with RecFish SA in the immediate lead-up to that decision, but not necessarily on the particulars of the decision itself, which was taken in the task force on the basis of the advice that the government received from PIRSA and SARDI.

Herein lies the point—and it is a genuine point of difference between the government and the alternative government—on this side of the house we are being very deliberate in our commitment to follow the government's advice. We should scrutinise the advice we receive from our agencies, we should test some of the propositions that are put to us, absolutely, and that work has been happening. But it is also true that we remain determined to act on the advice and the science that we get access to in government to inform our decision-making.

I appreciate there are points of difference in that approach. I appreciate that the Liberal Party, who backed the science in the lead-up to COVID with our support, have departed from science. They are abandoning net zero, they have abandoned the science in regard to the algal bloom and they are embracing the Pangallo method of testing information—and that is your prerogative; you can do that. If you want to have that approach, that's fine. But on this side of the house we intend to be consistent, we want to listen to the science and we want to make sure we act in accordance with the science, because our solemn obligation is to do the best thing we can by the environment, ensuring a speedy recovery and the sustainable nature of the fishery, which is important to future generations.

FISHING RESTRICTIONS

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA (Hartley—Leader of the Opposition) (14:12): My question is to the Premier. When did the government receive stock assessments showing declines of some fish stocks and will the government make this data available? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: On 23 October the government published a media release saying that stock assessments of the waters off the Gulf of St Vincent, Kangaroo Island and Spencer Gulf have shown declines of some species including calamari, garfish and King George whiting, particularly in the Gulf of St Vincent.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier, Minister for Defence and Space Industries) (14:12): The Leader of the Opposition is right. On the advice the government has received, the Gulf of St Vincent has been most adversely affected through the harmful algal bloom. In one respect that is not surprising by virtue of the fact that is where the bloom has persisted. We are very grateful for the fact that the bloom obviously hasn't been on the West Coast of the state, nor in the South-East. It has long been gone from parts of the Southern Fleurieu, which is a good thing, but it is the Gulf of St Vincent which has been the most adversely affected, which is consistent with what we would expect. The Spencer Gulf has also been affected, but the harshest effects are in the Gulf of St Vincent amongst all of the—

The Hon. V.A. Tarzia: Where's Arno Bay?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: Where's Arno Bay? Well, you should ask that as your next question. In terms of the species that are most affected: crab, King George whiting and garfish. Garfish, in particular, is a concern, but the species that has been most affected in any particular location, on all the advice we have received thus far, is undoubtedly calamari in the Gulf of St Vincent.

FISHING RESTRICTIONS

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA (Hartley—Leader of the Opposition) (14:14): My question is to the Premier. What criteria or scientific thresholds will need to be met for fishing restrictions to be lifted earlier or extended further?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier, Minister for Defence and Space Industries) (14:14): I repeat in this place, particularly given this is the first time the parliament has met since the announcement of the curtailment of both commercial and some recreational fishing, the point that I made in a press conference—and I will invite the opposition to make note of this—that we are very determined to remain flexible, because if evidence presents itself or advice to the government and the cabinet were to evolve on the back of fish stock assessment data changing, the algal bloom circumstances changing or if new reports on how the fisheries were performing commercially were to change, then the government should change its position as quickly as we can.

We have no desire to limit the amount of recreational fishing in the Spencer Gulf or anywhere else unnecessarily. We are only making decisions in accordance with the advice we are receiving.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: The member for Flinders interjects with a point regarding Coffin Bay. We can make adjustments as time goes on for a range of things: species-specific adjustments or regional adjustments in terms of boundaries. We have received advocacy regarding parts of the lower western side of Eyre Peninsula, such as Coffin Bay, for reasons that are well understood. As it stands, the zones that have been in place for the various districts across our marine waters—South-East zone, Gulf St Vincent, Spencer Gulf and then the West Coast zone or the western zone—have been in place for some time.

We have, up until this point, used those boundaries because they are well understood. Every time the government puts in place rules or boundaries, what those rules and boundaries are and how well they are understood should inform decision-making, but if we can adjust it without compromising a particular species or any other consequence then we should be open minded to that, and we have made that clear. We understand the issue on the western side of EP and it is worthy of further work. In fact, I have already spoken to senior government bureaucrats regarding that issue, likewise others.

But we will remain flexible, and where we can make adjustments or reduce the level of restrictions that are in place we will do it, because there is no point doing it unnecessarily. It is only when it is consistent with the preservation of the sustainability of the fishery that we want those restrictions in place. I come back to the top-line point: no-one caused this harmful algal bloom in South Australia. This is a global phenomena that is the subject of climate change being a major contributor, amongst other things.

There is no-one anywhere who individually should be blamed for the harmful algal bloom. It wasn't someone releasing ballast water and it wasn't someone turning on a desal plant, it is a natural phenomena that we have seen in other parts of the world. The consequences are real and significant on a range of people and on the environment itself, and of course that is true for our fishing sector.

What we are seeking to do is to make sure that every judgement we make, particularly around fishing, commercial or recreational, has front of mind the sustainability of the fishery. That is the obligation we have to future generations and that is the obligation we have to the environment. We will continue to make decisions accordingly, even if they are politically unpopular, because the test of time will demonstrate that governments who make decisions in accordance with science are the ones that are genuinely committed to doing the right thing in the long term.

FISHING RESTRICTIONS

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA (Hartley—Leader of the Opposition) (14:18): My question is to the Premier. How is the government ensuring that fishing restrictions are proportionate to actual algal

bloom impacts on those stocks and not unnecessarily prolonged or applied without the necessary scientific foundation?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier, Minister for Defence and Space Industries) (14:18): The Leader of the Opposition's question goes to my previous answer. We don't want any restrictions in place if there is no need for them. We will constantly assess it. It will be done on the basis of the advice we receive from SARDI. What I know in the fishing sector is that there are always differing points of view. In fact, just earlier today I had a really good and productive meeting with RecFish SA again; I had one last week. I have met them repeatedly or frequently since the algal bloom really started.

Similarly, I have met with the commercial fishing sector. I acknowledge SISA, led by Kyri Toumazos. Their advice to government has also been very constructive, like that of RecFish SA along with other industry associations. They are important sources of information and advice to the government and that will continue to be the case. This is a very difficult and dynamic situation and we have to make decisions as best we can, knowing that those circumstances change.

The other thing I would say to the Leader of the Opposition and others—this was sort of lost in the news on Thursday, quite understandably, given the nature of the changes in the fishing sector—is that we released this information last Thursday and we are actually seeing a decline in the chlorophyll a levels in those areas where the algae persists across the state at the moment, both in the Spencer Gulf but particularly in the Gulf St Vincent. This has been measured over time and there is a positive trend downwards in terms of chlorophyll a levels.

Why that matters is because chlorophyll a is, in effect, a lead indicator of the presence of the *Karenia*. It is not a guaranteed proxy but it is a lead indicator and measurable proxy of sorts for the presence of the *Karenia*. This has been monitored over time and it is now on a trend back down towards long-term average levels. That is a good thing.

This does not mean that the bloom is going away and going to pass us by, because what we don't know is if they could return, especially with changing climatic conditions and particularly with warming waters. No-one from the government at all is suggesting that this problem is about to disappear but there is a positive trend that, if it were to be maintained, would be very good news indeed. But we are just not nearly far gone enough to be able to say that is the likely outcome, particularly in metropolitan Adelaide.

On all the testing results, the chlorophyll-a levels and the cell count data itself are demonstrating that the area of the state where the *Karenia* seems to be most persistent and present is undoubtedly in metropolitan Adelaide, which for beachgoers in metro Adelaide is unfortunate. But that is, of course, why we have partnered with Surf Life Saving SA. We have worked with them in terms of having people working on the beach more frequently, the information on the Beachsafe app and working with local government to have beaches cleaned frequently. We are doing everything we can to make a difference, however we can, to mitigate the worst impacts of the bloom.

The data in a trend sense, at least for the chlorophyll-a levels, looks like it is heading in the right direction, but there is a long way to go before we can have any comfort that the bloom is passing us by in a way that will be sustained throughout the summer.

BEACHPORT INTEGRATED EDUCATION AND CARE FACILITY PLAN

Mr McBRIDE (MacKillop) (14:22): My question is to the Minister for Education. Will the government fund a new integrated primary school, preschool and early learning centre at Beachport? With your leave, Mr Speaker, and the leave of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

Mr McBRIDE: The Beachport Governing Council and Childcare Working Group have developed concept plans for a \$7.2 million integrated education and care facility. This will address urgent infrastructure issues and ensure equitable access to early learning opportunities in and around Beachport.

The Hon. B.I. BOYER (Wright—Minister for Education, Training and Skills, Minister for Police) (14:22): I thank the member for MacKillop for his question and his continued interest in

Beachport Primary School and the communities who live in Beachport and making sure that they have access to not only world-class education but also opportunities in the early years as well. I think I have fielded some questions from the member for MacKillop on this topic before.

I have taken the time to visit Beachport and see the school myself, and I think I have been pretty frank in my assessment of the infrastructure there. It needs work; there is no doubt about that. Since that visit that I made, some work has been done to try to fix some of the issues. I am not suggesting that is everything that needs to be done at that site, because truth be told it probably needs a lot more attention, but the list of schools in that department is fairly long given that our stock is ageing.

I do appreciate, however, the interest and advocacy on this topic not just from the member for MacKillop but also from the school community as well. They are a very, very active governing council which I think is fantastic. Although it doesn't make life any easier for the education minister, I think every school deserves to have a governing council which is willing to go out on the front foot and advocate for new facilities and more funding for their school. That is certainly what is happening in Beachport, and that includes the plan that the member for MacKillop refers to here around long-term planning for a preschool and an upgraded primary school as well.

I can tell the member it is something that we are looking at. I don't have a commitment I can make to the member. You have my continued acknowledgement, having been to the site myself, that it is a school that needs further investment, but it is not the only school that falls in that category. I am pleased that there are some things we have been able to do since it has been raised and since I visited the school, and we will continue to look at whether or not we can do any more long-term upgrades there.

Of course, given that we are starting the rollout of our three-year-old preschool commitment from the start of next year, we are very attuned to making sure that the opportunity to get access to a second year of teacher-led play-based learning in South Australia is something that is not just available to people who live in metropolitan parts of our state but to people who live in regional parts of our state as well, and that includes Beachport.

HOUSING SUPPLY

Ms SAVVAS (Newland) (14:25): My question is to the Premier. Can the Premier update the house on how the Malinauskas Labor government is helping to get more South Australians into their own homes sooner?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier, Minister for Defence and Space Industries) (14:25): We have spoken much about this subject over a period of time—including, I know, from the member for Newland, who is particularly enthusiastic about maintaining a degree of affordability. She has seen demographic changes in her own community with a lot of young people moving in because the north-eastern suburbs of our state is a good place to live, with a pretty good sense of community, but affordability remains a challenge.

The truth is that there are silver-bullet solutions out in the marketplace for the housing crisis, but if they don't create supply they don't make a difference. In fact, there are plenty of ideas out there that don't create supply but do create demand, and what that in turn does is makes the problem worse. It makes the problem worse. In fact, if you increase demand for an existing amount of supply—say if you incentivise more people to bid on an existing home—the only winner out of that is a vendor, which is why for the life of me—

The Hon. D.G. Pisoni: So the 5 per cent deposit is no good, then? Albanese's 5 per cent deposit is no good? Is that what you're saying: it's a disaster?

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

The honourable member for Unley having withdrawn from the chamber:

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: We can dissect distinctions in policy between those who want to create demand and those who want to create supply all day, but what we have announced recently on the weekend is yet another policy specifically oriented towards getting more supply. We

have obviously already done a lot in regard to the urban growth of metropolitan Adelaide, which in and of itself isn't all easy. There are costs associated with that, which we acknowledge, but we believe that families who want a backyard should have that opportunity, which is why we are funding water connections in particular—opposed by those opposite in no small way.

But we also want to provide the option of going up in our CBD. We believe the city should be able to grow up and out at the same time if we are sincere about wanting to address the supply constraints. In our city we have a challenge, though. There is a degree of market failure when it comes to the financing of apartment buildings. Apartment buildings that are at the luxe end—the million-dollar apartments with the magnificent views and so forth—get built, and that's great because it might be a downsizing option for people who own a home elsewhere.

But for young people trying to enter into the market, we don't see apartment buildings getting built at more affordable price points: that \$540,000-odd range which is the affordable price point and up to \$1 million. We just don't see that. One of the reasons for that is that developers can't get the adequate pre-sales in that end of the market, because if you're a first-home buyer you're inclined to buy something you can see.

So we have partnered with industry to come up with a very substantial policy to unlock that pre-commitment: half a billion dollars on the table by the South Australian government, in effect providing the pre-commitment at that affordable price point. What that allows for is for a developer to get what is—in the case of over 2,000 apartment dwellings—already approved out of the ground and built up. When you layer on top of that an extraordinary piece of work from the minister to engage with Adelaide Airport to go block by block by block throughout the CBD and unlock a new height limit in conjunction with the Airport, that expedites the approval process. Again, there is not one solution here that makes a difference but a whole range of policies that add up and they are coming together to make us the number one state in the country when it comes to housing growth.

PRISONER EARLY RELEASE

Mr BATTY (Bragg) (14:29): My question is to the Minister for Correctional Services. Has Luigi Gligora been granted home detention and, if so, why, and what action is the minister taking? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

Mr BATTY: *The Advertiser* reported this morning that:

A dangerous criminal who almost killed a young father in a horror crash is set to be secretly released from prison more than six months before his non-parole period expires—while his victim is gagged from speaking about it.

The Hon. R.K. PEARCE (King—Minister for Emergency Services and Correctional Services, Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing) (14:30): I thank the member for his question on this matter. In short, no, he absolutely has not been. When this matter was first brought to my attention yesterday, I immediately made contact with the department to reiterate how important it is to ensure that the voices of victims, sentencing remarks and prior history are taken into consideration on decisions as important as this.

As a state we have a really proud history of the lowest rate of reoffending here in our state and the programs that we have in place are in huge part contributing to this. What is absolutely a primary commitment that we need to make is to ensure that our community remains safe and has trust in that system. I am really proud to be able to report to the house that the acting CE has reviewed the matter and has made the decision to not grant home detention in this particular case.

PRISONER EARLY RELEASE

Mr BATTY (Bragg) (14:31): My question is to the Minister for Correctional Services. Has the minister imposed any limitations on her chief executive's discretion to release the prisoner on home detention? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

Mr BATTY: Section 37A of the Correctional Services Act provides the power for the minister to limit the discretion which may include the exclusion of prisoners sentenced for a specific class of offence or any other class of prisoners from release on home detention.

The Hon. R.K. PEARCE (King—Minister for Emergency Services and Correctional Services, Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing) (14:31): As I have just advised, there has been a process in place and ultimately there has been a decision that has been made by the acting CE, who has the ultimate power to be able to make a decision in matters such as these. The steps that I have taken are to reiterate to the department and also to the CE how important it is that victims are taken into consideration on these matters, as much as it is important that the sentencing remarks and prior history are taken into account. This has been a matter that has been reviewed by the acting CE and she agrees that home detention in this case should not be granted. It does not meet community expectations based on the circumstances that have been presented, and I am supportive of that decision.

PRISONER EARLY RELEASE

Mr BATTY (Bragg) (14:32): My question is to the Minister for Correctional Services. How many prisoners have been released from prison before their non-parole period expires during this term of government?

The Hon. R.K. PEARCE (King—Minister for Emergency Services and Correctional Services, Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing) (14:33): I am able to advise the house that these numbers have been consistent—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Members on my right and the leader can come to order, because I can't hear the minister.

The Hon. R.K. PEARCE: As I was saying, I can advise the house that these numbers have been consistent for a number of years over multiple terms. In fact, when I have had a look back on the numbers, I note that the peak of these numbers actually occurred in 2019.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Members on my right will come to order.

RED CROSS TRANSPORT SERVICE

Mr McBRIDE (MacKillop) (14:33): My question is to the Minister for Human Services. Could the minister please explain to the house what new arrangements have been developed for the old voluntary Red Cross car/driver services across South Australia?

The Hon. N.F. COOK (Hurtle Vale—Minister for Human Services, Minister for Seniors and Ageing Well) (14:34): I presume the member is talking about the Community Passenger Network, now known as the community transport network of South Australia. There have been some changes made through new commissioning practices following a big fulsome review of that service. People would be aware that the service, which started in the nineties—so it has been going for about 30 years now—has changed significantly in terms of its demand and who requires use of that network.

Based on the evolution of the NDIS, differences in support for disability, consumers in the public and also aged care, this network is for people under the age of 65. There is a focus now on reducing social isolation, as well as providing other avenues for transport throughout South Australia. It does disproportionately benefit—and we are pleased that it does—people in regional areas.

There were some changes with some of the boundaries to align better with other boundaries across service provision, and that has affected the member for MacKillop's area. There were also some changes to providers within that. The provider of the services in the member for MacKillop's area now has gone to the Tailem Bend Community Centre, which is a much-loved and much-respected service provider based in Tailem Bend, but they have a very wide reach in terms of the good things that they do provide. They have taken the role that the Australian Red Cross was

providing. That was their decision to change their capability for service delivery, being the Red Cross, and now Tailem Bend are transitioning to that.

DHS has been working closely with the provider, since the beginning of the year, to transition the areas and the service providers to make sure that people's needs are being met out in the community. There is some information about the transition plans that I can provide. They have been monitored closely by DHS and the great team working there, to make sure that the arrangements were as smooth as they possibly could be for transition to the new provider model on 1 September.

We wanted to make sure that there was a timely establishment of services and that there weren't any gaps, and there were solutions available for times when they needed to use alternatives to their volunteers and their cars. So I think there has been a piece of work that has been ongoing, and I know the member has been reaching out to me and to the community centre and I hope is in receipt of a letter that I sent in the last week in regard to this.

For other members who represent areas across South Australia that rely on the community transport services, there were minimal changes in other areas. So it's really great that we've got a trusted provider continuing in most of the other areas but, because of capability and the desire to not do that particular service, there was a change in the member for MacKillop's area. But where there has been a change there was comprehensive communication, and we are continuing to work with those providers.

DIGITAL LITERACY

Ms CLANCY (Elder) (14:38): My question is to the Minister for Education, Training and Skills. Can the minister please update the house on how the Malinauskas Labor government is developing the digital skills South Australians need for work and life, and is he aware of any alternative views?

The Hon. B.I. BOYER (Wright—Minister for Education, Training and Skills, Minister for Police) (14:38): I thank the member for Elder for her very pertinent question today and for her interest in digital literacy as well. We know in this day and age how important digital literacy is, including in the jobs we do in this place as well—very, very important. In fact, some of the information that I have seen not just as the Minister for Education in this state but as the Minister for Skills and Training includes some very recent information regarding what the cost is in terms of those who have low levels of literacy, numeracy and digital literacy.

In fact, a recent survey by the Australian Industry Group revealed nearly 90 per cent of Australian businesses are suffering productivity issues due to low levels of literacy, but including now digital literacy as well. Our state is not immune from that. I would say that possibly our profession in this place is not immune from that as well. But the good news in terms of South Australia is that we have invested heavily in adult community education. In fact, I joined the members for Elder, Gibson and Boothby recently at MarionLIFE, one of our fantastic adult community education (ACE) providers, where we announced that we were putting more money into adult community education and specifically around digital literacy.

One of the things that MarionLIFE told the members for Gibson and Elder and me was that they were seeing more and more people coming in seeking advice on how to use tricky things like social media, particularly Instagram, and other things like that, which can be pitfalls for many of us. What I can say in terms of those alternative views that the member for Elder asked about is that the previous Minister for Skills, the member for Unley, actually cut \$1 million from adult community education. It is an amazing thing for a skills minister to cut money during a skills crisis for adult community education.

I can see the faces here. They don't believe it either. It happened. It actually happened. It's an incredible thing. I think we are seeing the ramifications of decisions like that in this place and potentially from those on the other side of this chamber as well. What I can say to the house, very proudly though, is that one of the first things this government did—and I think I was actually joined by the Minister for Human Services at this stand-up—was announce that we were putting that \$1 million that was cut from adult community education back in. Not only that but we have boosted it because we know that during a skills crisis, if we are going to be successful in supporting South

Australians into those jobs that we know are there now, then some of it starts with the absolute basics around literacy and numeracy, and digital literacy too. That is why this is a focus of this government.

Most importantly, of course, what we know in this place, and members on that side of the chamber as well, is that can't just be provided at places like MarionLIFE. It needs to be in regional South Australia as well, where often access to these kinds of things can be much more difficult.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. B.I. BOYER: The Leader of Government Business raises the Riverland. I can advise that there are some wonderful providers of adult community education in the Riverland, both in Berri and Waikerie, where digital literacy education has been funded through this government's recent addition to funding for adult community education, which I think is a fantastic thing. So should there be perhaps some people in this place who may reside in regional South Australia, who want a bit of help perhaps with the buttons to push and the buttons not to push, I say, 'We are supporting you. That money and that support is there.' What we stand for on this side of the chamber is a bit less adult entertainment and a bit more adult education.

CRUISE SHIP INDUSTRY

Ms PRATT (Frome) (14:42): My question is to the Minister for Tourism. What improvements can be made to Kangaroo Island berthing infrastructure for large cruise ships and what is the cost in lost trade when they cancel? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

Ms PRATT: Today the *Crown Princess* cruise was cancelled due to adverse weather conditions preventing three and a half thousand passengers from disembarking and spending tourist dollars on experiences and with food now spoiled.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON (Ramsay—Minister for Tourism, Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (14:42): Just the other week, I was at Outer Harbor welcoming the first cruise ship for the season, which was a Princess cruise ship. Of course, Kangaroo Island is a very big drawcard for those cruise ships. We often have people come into Outer Harbor, KI and then to Port Lincoln.

It was unfortunate that that cruise ship could not stop because of the weather. I don't have the details of how much that loss will be, but we continue to work with cruise ships quite strongly. In fact, I have been quite a champion of the cruise ship industry here in South Australia. When we heard that Carnival made the decision that P&O were pulling out of Australia, I immediately went to Sydney and I talked to Carnival and I talked to Royal Caribbean about what we can do.

We were only given 18 months' notice in Australia, but we know that cruise ships are booked about three years in advance. That is why I formed our Cruise Attraction Working Group. I was so thrilled that Phil Hoffmann, who is very well known in this industry, joined that group, along with the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) and the Australian Cruise Association (ACA). We did this just after hosting the Australian Cruise Association for their annual conference. We have been working with them about what we can do.

We do know that nationally we are undergoing some challenges in this event. I have been reaching out to my fellow tourism ministers in Tasmania and WA about how we can build out the southern elements of what we can do, because we know that often there are some challenges with crowding at the Sydney terminal and some increased charges at the Melbourne terminal. We look at this area of Australia and New Zealand as a whole, so this is when we must speak as a nation, along with our cousins in New Zealand, about how we attract cruise ships here.

I am really pleased to say, though, that we have a lot of different cruise lines coming. We have had 16 different cruise lines in this last season. We have had 21 new ships coming here, and that is because people are really attracted to South Australia. We have those very big cruise liners, like the Princess one, which has about 3,000 people on board, and we have our expedition ships, which can have a few hundred. Those expedition ships love what we have in South Australia.

Particularly, we have been working closely with Silversea. Through the Tourism Commission, they have increased how many they have coming in 2025-26. They are really high-end cruise ships

with a focus on food and wine, which is ideal for South Australia because that is our number one driver for tourism that we have here. I am really pleased that we have a really strong reputation. It is a challenging time for cruises in our nation. We do have to compete with different weather from time to time, but that does not detract from people being attracted to come to South Australia, and we will continue to build that industry.

BOAT AND TRAILER REGISTRATION

Ms PRATT (Frome) (14:46): My question is to the Premier. Will the Premier commit to offering rebates to boat and trailer owners who have recently registered their vehicles? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

Ms PRATT: On ABC radio this morning, rec fisher Matthew Moate shared concerns that he would not receive the declared compensation on his trailer and boat registration because it will expire after the temporary restrictions are lifted on 30 June 2026.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier, Minister for Defence and Space Industries) (14:46): I appreciate the member for Frome's question because it provides an opportunity to put on the record the details regarding the reduction that we have put in place for rego for boats and trailers as well. We made a very deliberate decision around this to avoid the circumstances to which you refer from the caller on ABC radio. We announced this last week, but there was a lot that was announced, so I can well understand why there is a lack of clarity about this in some parts of the market.

Once the government were making the decision in accordance with the science, as I mentioned, that we were going to reduce bag limits by 50 per cent in Gulf St Vincent and also in Spencer Gulf for some species, we had to turn our minds to what that means for someone registering their boat or their trailer. We made a decision to reduce the cost of registration for both of those things by 50 per cent: reducing bag limits and boat limits by 50 per cent, which reduces the cost of registering a boat and a trailer by 50 per cent.

It is true that people can go to other parts of the state where there are no restrictions and plenty of fish, but lots of the fishing happens in Gulf St Vincent and Spencer Gulf, so we made that decision. It is from 1 December to 1 December, and we made it deliberately a 12-month period because we did not want a set of circumstances where someone registered their boat in September and then missed out on the benefits. By doing it for a full 12-month period, we catch everyone whose registration comes up during that period of time, which would include the gentleman on ABC radio to whose circumstances you referred.

SNAPPER FISHERY BAN

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (14:48): My question is to the Premier. What scientific data supports the extension of the snapper closure by another 12 months?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier, Minister for Defence and Space Industries) (14:48): This is the advice I received, and I am happy to take the details on notice. From memory, the minister was due to contemplate data coming in November regarding the snapper ban that was instituted some time ago. I think the member for Chaffey was the minister at the time when the snapper ban was instituted, from memory, and we supported it because it was done with the right reasons at heart. That would then inform what happens to the snapper ban that was otherwise in place to 30 June next year. Because some of the data was collated prior to the algal bloom, a decision has been made to extend that period by 12 months, to 30 June 2027. There is a concern amongst some within the scientific community that some of that data has not yet taken into account the effects of the bloom, hence the extension to, as I said, 30 June 2027.

Having said that, if more information presents itself as the work continues to relieve that, then of course the government will contemplate it. But we didn't want a situation where we are announcing these other measures—when we had received that advice—and then not announce this at the soonest available opportunity.

Like plenty of other people, presumably, in this place, I hear the stories too, right? I have had no shortage of people out there, I have had no shortage of mates, into me about the fact that they are fishing in the Spencer Gulf, and every time they—

Mr Telfer interjecting:

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: That's right, I hear about it all the time, and I am copping it, let me tell you. I did a charter with the kids between Christmas and New Year; it was in late December or early January. I did a charter, and the guy operating it, a lovely bloke, said, 'Don't worry; I am not going to talk about anything to do with the fishing.' This was long before the algal bloom. Anyway, sure as eggs, it took about five minutes and snapper came up. So I get it. I hear all the stories too—

Mr Telfer interjecting:

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: Don't worry, mate, there was part of me that wanted to see the kids catch onto something, but if it was a snapper it just wouldn't have been worth it. But anyway, I hear all the stories too. What we have to do is not act on the anecdotal advice that we receive from mates who go out on the Spencer Gulf or on what we see on Facebook. We have to go with what SARDI and PIRSA are telling us. But we will continue to scrutinise it, we will continue to ask the questions, and if there is an opportunity to provide some relief in some places at a certain period of time without there being adverse effects, I am keen as mustard to do it, but only if it's backed up with the science and the advice that we receive as a government.

ROCK LOBSTER INDUSTRY

Mr McBRIDE (MacKillop) (14:51): My question is to the Minister for Trade. Could the minister please explain to the house the benefits and the strength of the lobster industry in South Australia, particularly the southern rock lobster industry, since its recovery and openness to the China market?

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) (14:52): I thank the member for his question, and in particular for his passion for the southern rock lobster zones. I obviously heard the member for Flinders interject and note the success of all lobster zones across South Australia, and there has been extraordinary success for our lobster fishers and our exporters.

But the great news is that this is good news for local regional communities. Going back a couple of years, to those sorts of dark old days when politics prevailed over trade and economic policy from the federal government, what we saw was a decimation of the prosperity and wellbeing of regional communities, particularly in the member for MacKillop's area, in Robe, where lobsters in his zone play such an important role in the economic prosperity and wellbeing of his community. As I said before, it's not just in the southern reaches but in our waters all the way across the West Coast, in Ceduna and further.

Rock lobster, and particularly how sought after it is around the world, is part of what South Australia is best known for—our premium, high-quality, sustainable seafood, whether it be shellfish, whether it be tuna from Eyre Peninsula and the Port Lincoln region, or whether it be wine and primary products. This is what is in our DNA.

The good news, and in direct response to the member's question around the rebound, is the success of southern rock lobster. It is fantastic news. In fact, it's news that has been record setting and record breaking for our state. In the last 12 months, since we as a state government have worked so hard in collaboration with the federal government to not just return rock lobster into China but to diversify rock lobster right across the world, we have seen the doubling of our record lobster exports. This is fantastic news. These are great, decent local jobs in our regions.

We have backed this in as a state government through direct financial investment in that diversification piece. We are really pleased to see the return of lobster into China; in fact, China is and remains our largest trading partner, and we as a government see the future of our economic collaboration—the trade, the exports into China—as being really important to our state's economic

frame. We want to see more trade with China. The federal government wants to see more trade with China.

But when it comes to our lobster industry and our seafood industry, we are seeing great gains made through the diversification efforts that not only the industry is undertaking but that diversification piece of which our government is investing in. Just a couple of weeks ago, as I was announcing this good news with the head of the South Australian seafood industry, Kyri Toumazos, at his family's export facility, they were boxing up fresh live lobsters to head off to Singapore.

That is a great example of not just the efforts that we are making with our region in Singapore but also the efforts that have been delivered by our government, the great work of Minister Bettison and her department, as well as the support of the Department of State Development to get more direct flights. Not just today has South Australia seen the great news with Air New Zealand, but these extra flights going to New Zealand were carrying the member for MacKillop's prized lobsters into Singapore.

NET ZERO

Mr BROWN (Florey) (14:56): My question is to the Minister for Energy and Mining. Can the minister update the house on the government's policy on net zero, along with any alternative views?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS (West Torrens—Treasurer, Minister for Energy and Mining) (14:56): Thank you very much—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Members on my right will come to order. The Treasurer is seeking my protection from you, Premier.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The Premier will come to order! The Treasurer.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I thank the member for his question—a strong supporter of our net zero policies. Let's be clear: there is no change in our policy. We remain committed to net zero targets, namely an emissions reduction target of at least 60 per cent of 2005 levels by 2030. We continue to support the Albanese government's vision of being net zero by 2050 and staying on track to achieve 100 per cent net renewables electricity generation by 2027.

But I note that my friend the shadow minister for energy has come under attack today, and I want to defend him. He is the shadow minister for net zero—you might not know this—and there has been a scathing attack on him today. So you imagine, the Liberal Party State Council, you're there, you have the chambray pants on and your shirt and your RM Williams, you are ready to go, and you walk in and your colleagues are saying things like this to the shadow minister for net zero:

...net zero is a costly illusion—a political slogan masquerading as science, imposed without honesty and absent realism.

Mate, you let me know when you need me in a scrap, I'm there with you, right next to you, right? And I'll say this: this Liberal colleague, about my friend the shadow minister for net zero, says, and I quote:

Net zero has become a moral vanity project for those who can afford it and an economic catastrophe for those who cannot.

Why would they say that about my friend the member for Morphett, the shadow minister for net zero? Why would you say something like that about this poor fellow? He is out there trying to achieve net zero targets; meanwhile, he has his boss, the member for Barker, running around saying:

The government speaks of transitioning—but transitioning to what?

Well, I'll tell you, Mr Speaker, the shadow minister for net zero will not take this sort of rubbish. He will stand up to people in his own party who attack things like net zero. We have got the Hon. Michelle Lensink in another place who has said that she has seen these people, she has seen these people attack the shadow minister for energy. She says and I quote:

The policy motions went ahead regardless and sadly my predictions have come to pass, in that a press conference today (focused) on state council's decision to include on its agenda a bunch of virtue-signalling motions.

Like that speech by the member for Barker. She goes on to say:

Let's break this down. Some people—

not the member for Morphet—

within the Liberal Party decided that it would be a good idea to pass policy motions, amongst other things, opposing net zero...

Does every time this happens a little part of you break? Does a little part of you break? It's in your title, I have got it here. It says, 'shadow minister net zero'. You have worked so hard to get there. It says, 'shadow energy and net zero', and they continually attack you. I have to say that even though the Leader of the Opposition won't defend you—because he can't, he's afraid to speak out against his bosses, Alex Antic and Tony Pasin—I will. I will, Mr Speaker.

An honourable member: We're with you Patto!

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: We're with you Patto!

Members interjecting:

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: We're with you. Every one of us is right behind you. Don't let them bully you, we're right behind you.

MARINE SCALEFISH FISHERY REFORM

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (15:00): My question is to the Premier. Can the Premier explain what new information taxpayers can expect from the \$500,000 study into voluntary marine scalefish fishery licence surrender? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

Mr PEDERICK: A comprehensive reform was recently undertaken that included the implementation of a structural adjustment package and voluntary buybacks.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier, Minister for Defence and Space Industries) (15:01): That was a very expensive program initiated by the former government and one that has not necessarily enjoyed widespread support amongst many people within the fishing community. Since the initiation of that program and its institution what we have seen is the harmful algal bloom, which has been a major disrupting force to our fisheries, particularly in Gulf St Vincent and Spencer Gulf. What we are seeking to do, on the back of this extraordinary event, is more work to inform the government about the merits or the possibility of voluntary buyback measures.

We are going to develop, in government, a terms of reference for that exercise in conjunction with both the direct fishing sector and also the commercial fishing sector. We want it to be informed by the science and the economics. Ideally we want it reporting to the government of the day by the middle of next year, if indeed that can be achieved, notwithstanding the fact that we know, with the harmful algal bloom, that it is impossible to predict where it will be at next month, let alone throughout the first half of next year.

But if there is an opportunity to actively inquire into this, on top of the work that has already been conducted, in order to add yet more science to the effort, or to bring that science together, then we are very keen to do it and have that as an option. There are people within the commercial fishing sector that are keen on the opportunity potentially of our licence surrender or buyback. There are many people within the rec fishing sector that would support that, particularly if it aided recovery of the marine environment and, in turn, fish stocks.

That is why we allocated a half a million dollars to that program, and we will keenly anticipate its commencement once those terms of reference are finalised and who conducts that work and then it will report, like I said, all things being equal, subject to the science, ideally by the middle of next year for whoever it is that occupies the Treasury benches following next year's state election.

MARINE SCALEFISH FISHERY REFORM

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (15:03): My question again is to the Premier. Has the government considered voluntary buybacks of marine scalefish fishery licences and quota based on data already held? With your leave, sir, and that of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

Mr PEDERICK: Industry have long called for voluntary buybacks, however the government is spending \$500,000 to examine this data despite already holding quota and licence data.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier, Minister for Defence and Space Industries) (15:04): What the member for Hammond will well appreciate is that the data is changing, because we've got this harmful algal bloom and it has had an unprecedented impact on the marine environment, particularly in Gulf St Vincent.

It would be reckless and foolhardy to make decisions on the basis of information that is now effectively redundant. Literally, every week that goes by the science matures, the data points improve and more information comes in. If we were making decisions on buybacks from six months ago or 12 months ago, that would not be making decisions on the basis of the information that we need when we are forward thinking regarding the challenge.

Buybacks have their own consequences and they just have to be thought through. The worst thing we could do now, I would say to the member for Hammond, is to rush to make a decision on buybacks that don't stand the test of time and rush to make decisions without looking at the science or the evidence that we continue to get in following the harmful algal bloom. I would have thought that that is an obvious approach to take. These decisions tend to be permanent in nature once they occur and we have just got to think it through very carefully, and we want to make sure it is on the basis of all the information we can get our hands on.

MARINE SCALEFISH FISHERY REFORM

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (15:05): My question is to the Premier. How long does the government expect the \$500,000 voluntary marine scalefish fishery licence surrender study to take and will its findings be made available to industry and the public?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier, Minister for Defence and Space Industries) (15:05): The first thing is, as I said in my first answer, we are aiming for it to be done by 30 June next year. In terms of the information and the outcomes of that exercise, of course it will be public. If it results in a buyback, of course that will be public information. It wouldn't be a secret, would it?

ALGAL BLOOM

S.E. ANDREWS (Gibson) (15:06): My question is to the Minister for Climate, Environment and Water. How have algal bloom community forums assisted the development of the state government's response to the ongoing harmful algal bloom?

The Hon. L.P. HOOD (Adelaide—Minister for Climate, Environment and Water) (15:06): I thank the member for her question and also for the care and commitment she has shown to her local community during the algal bloom. Since the start of the bloom, the state government has been committed to not only sharing the latest information with South Australians but also listening to them to understand their concerns and take on their feedback. The views of South Australians have been integral in the Malinauskas government's \$102.5 million summer plan, in partnership with the federal government.

The three main objectives of the plan are to ensure South Australians can enjoy summer, that we are backing our coastal businesses and communities and advancing research, and also investing in environmental resilience and recovery. A key plan in listening to the community as we brought the plan together has been the extensive engagement through our community algal bloom forums. These community forums have been an invaluable source of information and feedback as we developed the summer plan.

To date, we have held 20 forums in metropolitan and regional areas, and these forums include representatives from government as well as experts from the environment department, SA Health, primary industries and tourism, who are all available to answer questions from community members. I myself have attended or hosted a number of the forums. My first was in Kingston in the state's South-East, where I spent many of my summers. I also attended and hosted them in Aldinga, Goolwa, Seacliff and West Lakes. I very much experienced and heard the passion and care South Australians have for our coastal communities and also the environment.

As I said, we have held 20 forums. The next one will be held next month in Mount Gambier on 14 November. So far, we have had more than 2,000 people attend these forums, and almost 90 per cent have said that they have found the forums very useful. We lay out the science, we lay out the government response, also the health advice, and allow a significant portion of time for questions and answers with the audience and panel members.

As well as the forums, the state government is reaching out to our communities in a variety of ways. There have been almost 350,000 views on the algalbloom.sa.gov website, more than 4,400 people have subscribed to the e-newsletter and, as I was saying, the feedback from these community forums has helped inform our extensive \$102.5 million summer plan. Whether that has been the extension of the Surf Life Saving Beachsafe app that helps you plan your trip to the beach, the introduction of dining cash-back vouchers or the major investments in our environment—more than \$20 million to build native community oyster reefs, restore seagrass and blue carbon to improve our marine environment—the government has very much been listening to South Australians and turning their passion and ideas into action.

Grievance Debate

YOUTH CRIME

Mr BATTY (Bragg) (15:10): Unfortunately, another day, another example of how the Malinauskas Labor government has lost control of law and order on our streets and in our suburbs. We are now seeing the failings of our system play out most acutely, unfortunately, at the local pub and the local bottle shop at everywhere from The Highway to the Arkaba. We have been hearing really horrific stories over the past days and weeks about groups of often young people going into these establishments, stealing alcohol, running riot, terrorising employees and really putting community safety at risk.

The fact of the matter is, as a young person you should be able to go to work at your local bottle shop without fear that some crazed group of kids is going to come in and start throwing rocks at you or punching you in the face multiple times. You should be able to go to work at your local pub without fear that someone is going to come in and bite you. It is entirely unacceptable behaviour. The core business of any government should be keeping its citizens safe, and the Malinauskas Labor government is failing this every step of the way.

Unfortunately, it is far more than just the shocking statistics that I could tell you about. What it is really about in all of these instances is the victims of these horrific crimes. I want to read some of the words of those victims into *Hansard*. Just a couple of weeks ago Peter Hurley, who is the proprietor of the Arkaba Hotel, wrote a letter to the editor following a really concerning incident where someone allegedly committed wilful damage and assault following a violent rampage at his hotel. Mr Hurley said:

Despite three hotel employees being assaulted—one of them bitten—and damage to gaming machines exceeding \$80,000, Magistrate Davis offered Mr Ajal words of comfort, assuring him he was a 'good person' who had done a stupid thing.

We frequently hear of the right of workers to feel safe in their workplace. Yet in this case, those rights seem to have been disregarded.

Mr Ajal received a suspended sentence, was placed on a good behaviour bond and is not required to compensate the Arkaba for the extensive damage caused.

This outcome falls well short of community expectations for such serious offences.

The staff, the Arkaba Hotel and the wider public have been let down by a justice system that appears to prioritise the offender's comfort over the victim's wellbeing.

Damning words from a victim of crime. This morning, we heard on radio the general manager at another hotel, The Highway hotel, reflecting on his experience with crime. This follows just this week an incident where about a dozen youths, some of them aged as young as 10, came into the place. They began throwing rocks, they smashed windows, one youth held a metal star dropper at a staff member and another punched a staff member several times to the face. Mr Symonds, the general manager there, said:

...that is so unfair on our staff...you can reasonably expect to come to work [for] a four hour, six hour, eight hour shift in a bottle shop and have the right to feel safe and that's just not the case right now, particularly for night staff...

He went on to say:

...at some of our other venues where young kids...12, 13...who we had continuous problems with and the coppers told me at the time that some of these kids have been arrested over 200 times and let off 200 times because the system doesn't allow anything to happen to them and the kids know.

These are the victims, the very real victims, of these crimes describing in their own words the impact and describing in their own words the failings of this system. These sorts of crimes are not happening by accident; they are happening because we do not have enough police, they are happening because we have weak laws and they are happening because we have a government that is just never interested in law and order.

In contrast, what you have seen from the Liberal Party over the past week or two is the announcement of a new police attraction and retention policy. We have demanded tougher laws. We see the government coming to parliament this week seemingly forgetting that they had promised to introduce all these laws in the police portfolio. They forgot that they promised laws about 3D-printed guns two years ago.

It was not the last minister and it was not the minister before that, it was the minister before that who told us they were going to introduce legislation about 3D-printed guns, and the new attack dog, the new minister, comes in today finally remembering—only after question time, I might add—to introduce those laws. It is the same with copper theft, and we have weak laws that still allow kids to commit crime time and time again being introduced by the Attorney in the other place. It is not good enough.

NORTHERN TRANSMISSION PROJECT

The Hon. A. PICCOLO (Light) (15:15): On 14 October I advised the house of a community meeting I attended at Eudunda regarding the proposed northern transmission line through the Mid North by ElectraNet. I understand that ElectraNet is a private company, 45 per cent of which is overseas owned and 55 per cent of which is owned by Australian superannuation funds, and was originally created as part of the privatisation of the Electricity Trust of South Australia in 1999 by the Liberal Party of South Australia. ElectraNet is also a private monopoly regulated by a number of state and federal regulators on different elements of their business undertakings. Unusually, ElectraNet also has the power to compulsorily acquire private property, a power that is usually reserved for governments.

ElectraNet is responsible for operating the high-voltage transmission network that moves electricity from generators to substations and large customers. ElectraNet is currently undertaking a major project in the Mid North of South Australia referred to as the Northern Transmission Project, with the project having two elements, namely north and south of Bunday. The north Bunday alignment has been finalised, but the southern alignment is subject to a considerable amount of community concern and angst about the impact the current corridor options will have on very productive farmland.

In this context, I was invited to participate in two community forums recently, one in Marrabel on Sunday 19 October and the most recent on Wednesday 22 October at Riverton. Both these community forums were well organised and well facilitated. This ensured that they shed more light and understanding, not just heat. These forums were in response to the way ElectraNet has undertaken its community consultation.

In short, ElectraNet has raised the ire of local farmers and residents because the information sessions have been viewed as a box-ticking exercise. ElectraNet has generally sent out community engagement staff who often are not in a position to respond to complex questions or do not have a broad understanding of how the sector works. To my knowledge, no executive with decision-making power has attended any of these information sessions. In the view of farming communities, this is not effective community engagement or consultation. I share this view.

This infrastructure, while necessary to ensure we have a long-term, stable grid, will nevertheless have a lifetime effect on some farmers. It warrants a genuine dialogue. ElectraNet has been invited to participate in the community forums. They have chosen, or decided, that it is better for them to not attend. I do not share that view. They have not acquired the trust of farming communities, and their lack of participation has further eroded the level of trust. They need to do better.

Last Wednesday, just prior to the Riverton community forum, ElectraNet advised people who live within the corridors of the options under consideration that, yes, they would hold a community forum, but it would be a virtual forum online—yes, a virtual forum. In what virtual reality does ElectraNet live if they believe a consolation prize of a virtual forum would be viewed by farming communities as reasonable, respectful and fair?

My experience as a Labor MP has been that while farmers are angry and anxious about the proposal and process they would be willing to have a meaningful dialogue, given the opportunity. My side of politics is not the one normally favoured by farmers, but when I have attended the community forums those present have been passionate but at the same time respectful and courteous. They have asked relevant questions and listened to the answers. The requests by farmers are simple, relevant and reasonable. I quote from the petition circulated at the community forums to demonstrate this:

Affected farmers and communities want ElectraNet to:

1. Undertake forthwith meaningful direct consultation with the affected communities and
2. Formally assess a potential fifth transmission corridor, located east of Goyder's line, alongside the current [northern transmission] route options, noting this alternative route would in all likelihood:
 - a. Avoid high-value cropping land and key tourism landscapes that the current proposed corridors would impact.
 - b. Follow lower-productivity grazing country, which aligns more closely with South Australia's planning priorities, regional development, and long-term food security objectives.

If ElectraNet chooses not to treat the farming communities with respect and enter into a meaningful dialogue with them, then I think the farmers, the farming communities and I have every right to intervene and agitate with the relevant regulators at every point. They will be heard.

NORTHERN TRANSMISSION PROJECT

Ms PRATT (Frome) (15:19): The Mid North of the state is my home and it always has been for my family, extending back five generations. Over the years, as farmers, we have diversified our primary production across grains, legumes, wool, sheep and pigs. We have maintained our existence by living off the land. I admire my cousins who continue to farm around Blyth, Barunga Gap and Bute, Pinery, Parndana and Pinnaroo. As farmers we take great care of our natural environment and we love the lifestyle, as hard as it is sometimes.

We steel ourselves against the inconsistencies of the weather but our morale drops when man-made barriers impede our ability to produce the nation's, and the world's, food and fibre. My region of the Mid North is home to some of the best cropping and food-producing land in the state, yet I can see that it is under siege from new housing estates and energy infrastructure.

Currently I am working with all of my farmers and the relevant regional councils to convince ElectraNet that the only appropriate corridor for the installation of proposed transmission lines is east of Goyder's line. That is in pastoral country. Last week in the town of Riverton I addressed over 200 people and gave an update on the 300 submissions that farmers in my community have made via my office where we are all pushing for a fifth, alternative route.

The message is clear. Productive agricultural land cannot become a corridor for high-voltage powerlines. Routing transmission lines straight through this area threatens loss of productive farmland and impacts on homes, communities and tourism and causes environmental and landscape damage. There are better options like routes east of Goyder's line which would avoid high-value cropping land and tourism areas and would impact far fewer homes and businesses.

Farmers are experts in their own terrain and have developed intelligent reasonable questions that are yet to be answered by the Northern Transmission Project team. Our community campaign has been about protecting the land that feeds us and we will continue to demand sensible planning.

More and more rural communities carry the burden of energy infrastructure that is invisible to the city consumer. This point was made in August by Robert Gottliebsehn who wrote in *The Australian*:

The governments believe the best way to achieve emission targets is to plonk limited-life windmills and solar panels in remote locations and then spend countless billions on transmission lines to get the power to markets. And gas power generating stations will still be required to cover times when the turbines and solar farms are not generating...Generating the power where it is used makes a great deal more sense and should trigger economic investment in capital city grids so they can take excess power.

His final point being:

The current renewables thrust, including transmission lines, is not only high-cost but creating a very angry rural community.

That is certainly the case for the Mid North. For a company like ElectraNet, which is a regulated monopoly, to propose a project of this scale requires some non-negotiable elements. It is imperative that any energy project in South Australia receives a social licence to proceed from the community they are courting and we do not feel they have done enough. ElectraNet has repeatedly missed opportunities to accept friendly invitations to attend community meetings and therefore take the opportunity to dispel any myths, put forward facts instead of misinformation and reassure us, the potential hosts of these towers, that they are still in early stages of consultation.

You cannot crop up to the foot of a tower. You cannot seed. You cannot cultivate. You cannot harvest. Every tower footprint is going to nibble away at our productivity, our land, our cropping land and therefore reduce yield. I think it is short-sighted for any part of arable farmland across this country to be taken up with infrastructure or housing where there are other alternatives, which is why we will continue to push for the fifth corridor because nothing else will do.

MAIN SOUTH ROAD DUPLICATION

The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL (Mawson) (15:24): I rise to celebrate what is almost the end of a major project in the electorate of Mawson, and that is the duplication of Main South Road from Seaford down to Sellicks. It is something that we took to the election in 2018. We funded it in the 2017 budget and then put the next bit in in the Mid-Year Budget Review in December 2017. Little work was done in that first four-year period; in fact, the real work did not start on the project until 2022.

Since that time, locals have put up with a lot of disruption as hundreds and hundreds of workers have been out there turning a really unsafe, deadly piece of road infrastructure into a safe, efficient dual-carriageway network that we can be very proud of and that will help people in the Port Willunga, Aldinga, Sellicks, Myponga, Yankalilla and Kangaroo Island areas get to and from Adelaide and northern parts of the state much more easily and much more safely.

But it is to those hundreds of workers that I really want to give a special thanks to today. They have done a remarkable job, working out there in driving rain, windy conditions and beating-down sunshine. I got to meet a few of them a few weeks ago. It was on the Friday morning before the October long weekend and we went down to muster. Before each shift starts, everyone comes together. On this particular morning, they put on an excellent egg-and-bacon sandwich breakfast and coffee for all of the workers, and they had one of my favourite people—Fred Sheilds—come along and speak.

Fred was one of the driving forces for this road duplication. A lot of times, governments get all the credit, but governments do things on behalf of the people. Democracy is very simple: of the

people for the people. Fred had a serious crash on Australia Day in 2003 on Main South Road, and he spent 47 days in hospital. When he came out he was in a wheelchair. He had to learn to walk, learn to talk and to read again. It was a traumatic experience for him.

I first met Fred in 2005, when he was working on a local road safety group, and Fred came along and spoke that morning. He brought the red accident marker from the crash that nearly took his life. That red marker is now where the second lane is on the duplication of Main South Road. To Fred, to everyone else who was injured on that road, and to those families who have been left behind because they had loved ones killed on that road, we hope that these new works will make it a much safer trip to wherever people are going.

Apart from the workers who have done an incredible job, I would like to thank the engineers who somehow have managed to keep the road open so that you can still get through. Sometimes you might have to slow down a little bit to get through, but it never ceases to amaze me how they can work out the traffic flows and the workflows to ensure that, while this really important work is happening, cars and trucks and other vehicles can keep moving through the area.

I would also like to thank Lee Waters, Jeanette Koukourou and Michael Rander, who have worked for the Department for Infrastructure and Transport. They have a weekly call with Jenni Mitton, who is the office manager in the Mawson electorate office. With those lines of communication by having that weekly call, people in our area who might have a complaint or a suggestion or some feedback can contact our office and we are across all of the issues. So it's terrific that we have had that great relationship, and I want to thank them.

It will not be long now—end of the year or early next year—when this project is complete and it is owed to so many people, including the politicians of the day: Jay Weatherill was Premier, Tom Koutsantonis was Treasurer and Stephen Mullighan was transport minister when we went down there in 2017 to announce this fantastic piece of infrastructure. So to all of those people—whether you have been out there in a hard hat and a fluoro vest, or you have been running this state as the Premier—I would like to put the thanks of all the people in my local area on the record here today.

SHADOW MINISTRY

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER (Morialta) (15:29): Ahead of my retirement from politics in a few months, I have been reflecting on some of the things I have learnt and observed over 16 years by way of giving advice to colleagues and candidates who will be here in the years ahead. As David Pisoni will say from time to time, 'Everyone is entitled to my opinion.' It is my earnest hope that over this period of time I have picked up a few things that may potentially be useful to people. Today, I just want to reflect briefly on the role of a shadow minister. Despite its guaranteed disappointments, it is still a privilege and a role where you can make your mark.

It is not lost on me as I retire, having spent about three years from the grandstand seats back here, about four years as a minister in the preferred role and approaching nine years as a shadow minister, that those proportions are not ideal. The other way around would be a lot better. Being a minister, by its nature, is a job filled with purpose, momentum and activity, whether you are any good at it or not. People you have never met are very nice to you. Some, of course, are very much not so, but a lot of people will know who you are and you have many people to support you in your role.

To be a good minister, who adds value to the state, who is able to improve people's lives, you also need, of course, to have strong ethics, sincere values, clear principles, an inquiring mind and healthy doses of scepticism, pragmatism and patience. But in terms of the lived experience of the job for the small number of people who are able to fulfil these roles, can we just take it as read that it is better to be a minister. For anyone with a passing interest in politics, being a minister is a good job; being a shadow minister is a more challenging job.

But what is a shadow minister? It does not translate easily into some languages. They do not have shadow ministers in Russia. Early in my career, when I had the privilege of being part of a study tour and visiting China for a little while with some of my colleagues, it was very difficult for our translators to convey to our hosts what our job was. There was no translation. It did not come easily to explain it. I understand that one of those translators settled upon 'assistant minister' as the translation for shadow minister.

To an extent that is true. There have been occasions when I have been in social circumstances. I will not name, other than one minister, who I am talking about, but there were occasions when I would have a good run in the media. It happened occasionally. Sometimes that would be awkward when you are then in a social circumstance with the minister or their adviser or one of their senior officials and I would have to explain that I was helping them to bring due attention to their portfolio so their cabinet colleagues would, therefore, give them the money they needed to fix this issue that I had been complaining about. The South Australian Museum comes to mind, for example. To those ministers: you are welcome to that service.

The American system does not have shadow ministers either. Executives can be separated from legislatures in democracies. Everyone in America, for example, has the role that they ran for. The Westminster system has this quirk. By its existence, the shadow ministerial role encourages ministers to be better, departments to be more accountable and our systems to be fairer with better outcomes for the people of our state. But nobody seeks to be a shadow minister as an end in itself. Like an apprentice or a candidate, by definition it is an expression of your aspiration, a chance to demonstrate why you would be better at a job than the person whom you are up against.

Opposition can be depressing. The fact you are often judged by how effectively you are providing character critiques and capability assessments of the person whose job you want can fray at the edges of anyone's mental health, even the most tempered person. When success is measured in column inches and radio grabs, the opposition will never succeed. Shadow ministers can critique ministers, say what we would do differently after the election, but at 5.45 in the morning, it can be hard to convince a radio producer of the priority of what you have to say.

The daily experience requires patience, forbearance and a lot of hard work, but it can be rewarding. By throwing yourself into engaging with stakeholders and learning everything you can about an area, you can fulfil the potential of the role. In my case, and indeed in the case of Nick Gibb, the excellent conservative education minister who finished up at the last election and who has just written a book, visiting hundreds of schools, speaking to hundreds of engaged, interested stakeholders, learning to understand and share their passion has been a privilege. Being in a position to influence government policy and legislation, or block it if it is bad or help nurture it if it is good, is a privilege.

Sometimes you can fix things with a call to the minister. You can proactively bring ideas to the table that stakeholders have brought and get them done. Ideally, you can also identify problems and help design solutions that will work in practice. Go hard, argue your case, fight hard but with values and principles, and shadow ministers can do important work. For all the Labor people who will fill those roles after March, I urge you to do so in good spirit, and for the people of South Australia.

MODBURY SPORTS AND COMMUNITY CLUB

Ms SAVVAS (Newland) (15:34): I, too, would like to thank the member for Morialta for the advice that he has given me over a period of time. Having seats next door to each other, we are often seated next to each other at events, and he always has a kind, if not opinionated, comment for me from time to time. I am very grateful for the support he has given me, even from the other side of politics.

It does bring me great joy to be here today speaking about the future of the Modbury Sports and Community Club, which was officially opened on 17 October. There are quite a few people I would like to thank in acknowledgement of this project. Firstly, of course, I would like to acknowledge my two sidekicks, the member for King and the member for Wright, as well as Tony Zappia, the member for Makin, who joined me on the night of the opening but who also have been there alongside me as representatives of the north-eastern suburbs throughout this process.

We spend a lot of time at the Modbury Sports and Community Club, whether it be for preso nights, ladies' days, sponsors' lunches or home games. The member for Wright and I often bring our dogs over to the oval. I can actually walk there from my house. Like all the sporting clubs in the Gully, the players, volunteers and committee members have all made us incredibly welcome, and for that I am very grateful.

I would of course like to thank the people who have made this wonderful project come to life, particularly Greg Byles, president of the Modbury sporting club, and his committee, alongside Andrew Bircher, Ryan Richards—it seems strange to call footy club members by their actual names; I was trying to remember their names that are not their nicknames when saying that at the time—and also Daniel and the team at the cricket club and all the other members of the new build committee. I would also like to acknowledge the incredible work of the City of Tea Tree Gully, particularly Greg Salmon and his team, as well as the team at Walter Brooke, CPR Engineers, BESTEC, Rider Levett Bucknall, and the incredible builders at BluBuilt.

The new Modbury Sports and Community Club is one of the best places I have been; I can say that now because I still have, I think, three or four election commitments that have not opened yet and will do so over the next few weeks. If you are yet to see the view at the Modbury Sports and Community Club, I encourage you to go out there, grab a beer from Sandy at the bar and have a look at our beloved Modbury Oval. It has been designed in a way that well and truly caters for the future needs of the Modbury sporting club. One of my favourite features is that you can separate the bar. It is sort of like a partition in the middle so the club members can enjoy celebrations after the game on one side, but you can also hire out a function space on the other side at the same time.

There are also so many elements of the build that are quintessentially Modbury. There is, of course, the Building the Nest board, which acknowledges all those players, volunteers and committee members who contributed financially to the project. There is the Tim Davey Wall of Fame, which they announced at the preso night a few weeks ago. There are awards, there are plaques and all sorts of different pieces of memorabilia acknowledging the role of the Modbury Sports and Community Club in our community for 160 years.

It was at the beginning of 2021 that this project really started to take shape when Greg Byles met with the member for Wright and the member for Makin to discuss the future of the club. I was a Tea Tree Gully councillor at that time when those conversations first were being discussed, way before I knew that I would end up as the candidate for Newland at the state election. At the 2021 presentation night, I was really proud, alongside the now member for King, the member for Wright and our now Premier, to announce that we would contribute a significant amount of money towards the new build should we be elected in 2022, and how glad I am that we did.

It was also the same night that I saw the true commitment from the club to get the job done. Lots of groups ask for money, but not all are willing to roll their own sleeves up, make the contribution and put the hard work in to deliver a project for their mates. That night, we learned about the Building the Nest project, where members, players and life members were all encouraged to contribute a financial donation to the build themselves and be acknowledged for time immemorial in the new build should it happen.

Like the members, I have been really excited to watch each stage of the project, whether it was the sod turn, watching the frame go up, watching the old club go down, and now watching our new incredible club come to life. It has been a labour of love for so many people at the Modbury Sports and Community Club. I am really excited about the new home for the Hawkettes. I want to acknowledge the players, volunteers, coaches and all those who have committed to the future of footballers, cricketers and, of course, community members at Modbury. I am well and truly looking forward to being part of some of the next 160 years of the club.

Private Members' Statements

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Mr WHETSTONE (Chaffey) (15:39): I have always been concerned that the federal government's water buybacks prey on vulnerable irrigators in our regions, particularly in the Riverland. This week I was absolutely alarmed to learn that the floodgates are wide open for our small family farmers to be extorted through the federal government's water buyback scheme. Round 1 irrigators are still having their entitlements processed; meanwhile, round 2 is currently open but only for large water portfolios, and some are selling larger parcels for upwards of \$10,000 per megalitre.

The small irrigators selling in a tough season are forced to take what they can get for their entitlement, to pay bills and put food on the table, and companies and large water holders are coming in and offering stressed growers thousands of dollars less for their government payout and then pocketing the difference. It is the big end of town preying on the small family farms, the majority of which are stressed wine grapegrowers, and it will continue to happen under the federal government if they do not process round 1 expressions of tender from the trust irrigators.

I sympathise with our growers wanting to sell their water for many reasons. I say to my irrigator food producers: please consider selling your water to your neighbour, or retaining it in the local distribution network within South Australia. If you have to sell, you can and you should get as much from the government as the big guys, but once that water is sold to the commonwealth it is gone forever for producing food.

Mr McBRIDE (MacKillop) (15:41): I rise today with a plea to our regional communities, a call to action that could save lives and protect property and our landscape. As we head into another bushfire danger season, we know all too well the power and devastation of bushfires. Between 2019 and 2022, the Keilira, Blackford, Avenue Range and Coles fires left deep scars across the electorate of MacKillop. Families were left devastated, farms and livelihoods destroyed and landscapes changed forever. At the Coles fire, CFS volunteer Louise Hincks paid the ultimate price when she was killed by a falling tree.

Today we face a serious challenge. Volunteer numbers are declining and, with another fire danger season fast approaching, this trend puts us all at risk. So I am asking—urging—anyone who can to consider joining the CFS. Let's honour the legacy of those who served before us. Let's ensure our towns and rural areas are prepared. Let's make sure that, when the next fire comes, we are not short of the brave volunteers who make all the difference. Thank you, and please consider putting your hand up for the CFS.

Mrs HURN (Schubert) (15:42): It goes without saying that local businesses really are the backbone of our regional communities. They employ locals and they really add to the sense of vibrancy that we see in main streets, and that is particularly evident in communities right across my electorate of Schubert.

I rise today because I want to put under the microscope and shine a light on some of the struggles that some local businesses in Gumeracha have spoken about publicly, in particular the hardworking and really amazing Jessie from Peregrine in the main street of Gumeracha. Jessie took to social media to share some of the challenges that she is facing when it comes to keeping the doors of this local business open. She spoke about rising costs, she spoke about there being less foot traffic in the main street of Gumeracha, and she also shared that business is down some 60 per cent. This is obviously pretty devastating for local businesses like Jessie's, and also for Mell Penno from the Big Rocking Horse and a couple of others from around the Adelaide Hills.

So I really want to use this as an opportunity to encourage people to support local businesses as much as they possibly can, particularly as we are heading into the Christmas period. Every single dollar that you spend in a local small business matters, so I encourage people to not just use words of encouragement to back our local businesses but set foot into these local establishments and support them as much as you can, because they really do need it.

The Hon. A. PICCOLO (Light) (15:44): On Saturday I had the good fortune of attending the annual Kapunda and Light Agricultural Show. I would like to put on the record that I thank all the sponsors, volunteers and committee members; without their hard work and commitment shows like this do not happen.

I would also like to acknowledge the president, Douglas Hazel; the vice-president, Mrs Janet Hazel; secretaries Ms Tess Gerhardy and Ms Crystal Hall; and treasurer, Mrs Stephanie Bishop. I would like to also acknowledge the trade section coordinator, Mr Bradley Haylock, as I had a stall at the event and he was very helpful in trying to make sure my stall was a success on the day. I could talk a lot about this show, but I will use the words of the president himself when he described the show because I think he does capture, if you like, the spirit of the show:

Each year, the show brings together the heart and soul of our community, from the tireless volunteers and passionate exhibitors, to the families who've made this a cherished annual outing. Agriculture remains the backbone

of our region, and this show is a celebration of that legacy. It's where innovation meets tradition, and where young minds can be inspired by the possibilities that rural life has to offer.

I certainly saw all these things on Saturday. It is a great testament to that community that they can actually hold an annual show. Certainly, I enjoyed the opportunity to engage with a whole range of people on the day despite the weather.

Bills

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

Second Reading

Adjourned debate on second reading (resumed on motion).

The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD (Reynell—Minister for Child Protection, Minister for Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence, Minister for Women) (15:45): I will resume my remarks. As we went to the break I was speaking about my brother Luke, who coordinates Aboriginal education at Sacred Heart College. He has taught there for decades. I was speaking about how proud I am of him and was saying that wherever I go I am asked all the time by young people if I am Luke's sister. I do not understand why they do not ask if he is my brother.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: It does seem harsh, doesn't it?

The Hon. K.A. HILDYARD: Exactly! Every time these young people ask that about him—every time. Their faces light up and they talk about what a difference he has made for them, that he was the person who saw them, who was there for them, who listened to them and helped them to find their way.

I can name teachers whom I think about in exactly the same way. I want all children and young people to have those opportunities to find those people who absolutely see them, listen to them, meet them where they are at, and help them on their journey. Schools are where talents are identified and nurtured, where kernels of leadership expand and grow, and where children and young people learn to believe in themselves, to know that their voices and they themselves matter, to understand their potential and identify, articulate and begin to reach for their dreams.

We want all children to have the opportunity to experience all of this in ways that help set them up for the ups and downs of life and their journey ahead. We know that for some children and their families, enrolment and consistent attendance at school can feel really hard. For some on some days, for many reasons, it can seem almost insurmountable.

This bill is not about punishing those families who, in difficult circumstances, are doing the very best they can to engage their kids with learning or to work through with the education system how they can find learning environments that meet their child's unique needs. It is about providing stronger provisions around those parents who are determined not to enrol and send their kids to school, who, through some distorted thinking, refuse to engage and thereby deprive their children and young people of the many opportunities that come through engagement with a positive learning environment.

The changes in this bill aim to address issues that have been identified through efforts to enforce the current arrangements and to help ensure procedural fairness for those parents who may be considered for prosecution. The bill was the subject of extensive public consultation, strongly engaged in. In addition to the proposals in the bill, the consultation also sought views on changes to the regulations about enrolment and the powers of authorised officers to address related issues with respect to the enforcement of enrolment and attendance requirements. The key changes include:

- mandating written notice to a child's guardian before initiating proceedings for failure to ensure school enrolment or attendance;
- ensuring procedural fairness;
- specifying information the chief executive can request for parents, such as medical details or health service referrals;

- eliminating infectious or contagious disease as a valid excuse for school absence, as medically compromised children are covered by other act provisions, and the department will adhere to SA Health infectious disease guidelines;
- shortening the timeframe for parents to explain a child's non-attendance from five to three days, aligning with government school non-attendance procedures;
- authorising officers to demand information from parents during home visits, aligning with their ability to require information when a child is in a public place during school hours; and
- clarifying that authorised officers must take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure a child's attendance, emphasising practicality whilst maintaining that very important focus on attendance.

We know some children face a challenging, sometimes heartbreaking time, or have complex behaviours that may prohibit their consistent attendance at school. We also know that some mums and dads are facing complex and often interconnected challenges: domestic, family or sexual violence; poverty; intergenerational trauma; or mental ill health, which may sometimes prevent them from actively engaging in and supporting their children's schooling and educational needs.

I am really pleased that the bill recognises these challenges, and I absolutely know our Minister for Education also acknowledges these challenges and we are committed to continuing our work together to build these families up rather than punish them for their circumstances.

I have the pleasure of hearing firsthand stories from some of the most courageous and resilient children and young people about how feeling supported to complete their SACE enables them to thrive into adulthood.

I recently heard about a young man finding it really hard to attend school and find his place in the education system. With the support of his care team around him he was able to transfer to a more specialised school and attend more frequently. He went on to complete his year 12 SACE and I now understand he is undertaking further studies in a field he is deeply passionate about. Those are the opportunities we want to ensure are provided to children and young people.

The act already provides robust protections for children and families experiencing complex circumstances: a clear defence for parents or carers who have taken reasonable, practicable steps to support their child's attendance or engagement in an approved learning program; recognition of unavoidable circumstances as valid reasons for absence; and a requirement that authorised officers must exhaust all practicable actions before any enforcement measures are considered. In addition, the underlying principle, which must be considered in relation to the operation, administration and enforcement of the act is that the best interests of children and students is paramount.

The changes through this legislative reform aim to address situations when parents and carers are not meeting their legal obligations and do not have a valid reason for not doing so, again, not to penalise parents or carers who are working actively with schools and medical professionals to support their child's engagement with their educational program.

The department already assesses each potential case for prosecution on a case-by-case basis to determine suitability. This includes considering whether the best interests of the child would be served by prosecution. There are, however, a number of cases that have not been pursued for prosecution due to high levels of complexity, or the prosecution on balance determining that it would be detrimental for the child. Investigation includes a number of considerations, including what interventions have been attempted and the child and parent or carer's capacity to engage with supports when experiencing multiple, complex and compounding barriers to attendance.

Respondents were asked to provide feedback on additional proposals not included in the draft legislation, including the requirement for parents to enrol their child in a South Australian school unless an exemption applies or the Department for Education approves otherwise; strategies to effectively support all South Australian students in attending a local school; and the potential introduction of fines for parents who do not enrol their child in school, fail to ensure attendance or

neglect to provide requested information about their child. Following feedback received during the consultation, further work will be undertaken to explore expiations and other enrolments.

Again, a child deprived of school enrolment or consistent attendance is robbed of the chance to reach their full potential and faces immediate and lasting consequences, including for their safety, their wellbeing and future success. Education is the foundation for a thriving life and every missed day risks derailing a child's growth, potential and opportunities. This proposed bill takes real action to help ensure that every child has access to the education they absolutely deserve and safeguards their path to a brighter, fulfilling future.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER (Morialta) (15:56): I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak on this bill and indicate that I am the lead speaker on behalf of the opposition. I thank the member for Flinders, my colleague, who spoke first earlier while I was actually with some Modbury High School students in support of their graduation and their outstanding achievements.

I am really pleased to speak on this bill. This is a topic where, in principle, I suspect the government and the opposition have significant agreement. We want all children to attend school, we want children to attend school every day that they are able and we understand that every day lost in a child's education has an impact. When a child misses three days in a row, it has a bigger impact. When a child is chronically truant, it has an enormous impact.

The outcomes in life for children who miss that level of schooling—especially when there is not a reason—and therefore the scaffolds and supports that are able to be put in place to compensate for them missing the schooling, are going to be lower. It is not even a statistical fact, it is just a plain fact. Schooling is the thing that helps lift us, and a lack of schooling does the opposite.

In principle, this bill is certainly supported, as I said. We have some questions and there is some detail that we will be seeking to tease out. However, in essence it is a further iteration of successive legislation over decades trying to grapple with this issue: at what point do a child's parents have to take legal responsibility? There is a level of question about the messages that we send, to be sure. There is a level of question about what is fair and what is not fair. However, when it comes down to it, the biggest and most significant question in this area is: what is the mechanism that we can use in government and through the legal system to ensure that a child is attending school?

It is a question that has been dealt with in terms of the practicalities a number of times, and the practicalities are that there has to be a legal recourse. There has to be a process where the court will consider a matter of whether there is a liability that is going to lead to a fine or other action against a parent. When that happens, there is a subjective test of whether indeed the parent has met the threshold required under the act for sanction to be given or, indeed, whether that is fair.

When it comes down to it, sometimes we talk about fairness in these things and sometimes we talk about what works. What works will often be informed by the legal advice being given to the Minister for Education. Prior to the 2018 election, there was a new education act being developed, and one of the things that that act sought under the member for Port Adelaide, who was the then minister, was to reform the policy in relation to enrolment and attendance. Indeed, at that stage expiation notices were on the agenda, but the alternative proffered by the opposition at the time was to lift the fines. There was a competition of ideas, but I think it was in good faith. I seek leave to continue my remarks after we have heard questions on the Auditor-General's Report.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

Auditor-General's Report

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT

In committee.

The CHAIR: I declare the examination of the report of the Auditor-General 2024-25 open. I remind members that the committee is in normal session. Any questions have to be asked by members on their feet and all questions must be directly referenced to the Auditor-General's Report 2024-25 and Agency Statements for the year ending 2024-25, as published on the Auditor-General's website.

I welcome for the government the Premier and for the opposition the Leader of the Opposition. I call for questions. At the end of the allotted time—we have 30 minutes, so we will finish at 4.30 this session.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Good afternoon, Premier. In Part C: Agency Audit Reports, Department of the Premier and Cabinet, financial statistics, page 264, the report states that 390 FTEs fall under the responsibility of DPC. My question is to the Premier. Can he please advise: of these, how many additional FTE were brought on for CreateSA?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: CreateSA obviously fits within the Minister for Arts' portfolio. We do not have that number at hand, but I am sure the Minister for Arts will be able to advise the leader throughout the course of the Auditor-General's process and discussions.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: How many FTEs' primary job description involves communications, social media and media?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: They are going to bring it up for us, so we can eventually come back to that—appreciating that there is the department and then there is the Office of the Premier and that the Office of the Premier employs, as has always been the case, the media advisers who get allocated to various ministers' offices. With respect to employees of the department, that is of course all publicly disclosed every year, including their salaries. But in terms of within DPC we will get that number.

The other thing I am happy to consider is that there has also been a centralisation of many of these functions as well from other agencies into the Department of the Premier and Cabinet through the creation of the hub.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: How many of these FTEs are executives?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: I will not take it on notice just yet because they are procuring a list now and hopefully I will be able to give you the answer before we finish.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: In the same section—and it could also be one that you might be able to furnish there if you are able in a short space of time—by how much have executive FTEs grown since July 2022?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: That I will have to take on notice, but the actual number I think—

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I suppose related to that is: in relation to the number of executives in terms of FTEs, how does that align with the government's commitment to reduce executives—I think it was by 50 FTE—from 2022 numbers?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: That relates directly to the previous answer we are taking on notice, which we are happy to do.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Related to that, can the Premier provide an update on how the government is tracking on that commitment and advise how many Public Service FTEs have reduced since taking office?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: I am happy to have a look at that. Is that across government, or in respect of DPC?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: DPC. I refer to Part C: Agency Audit Reports, Department of the Premier and Cabinet, significant events and transactions, page 264. Can the Premier provide detail on why the Office of the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment was transferred to DPC?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: The commissioner for the public sector is an attached office; it always has to be attached to somewhere in government regarding corporate services and the like. It was transferred to DPC because the commissioner for the public sector is a central function within government, so it made sense to put it with a central agency—it could be DPC, it could be DTF. It was moved to DPC, but it still stands as a standalone attached office.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: As an attached office to the department, can the Premier define what reporting is provided to DPC by OCPSE?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: The same reporting that is always provided to governments. The role of the office has not changed.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Does OCPSE oversee the government's commitment to reduce executive numbers?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: That responsibility ultimately sits with chief executives of various agencies.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: The report states that 'Land, buildings and improvements assets were revalued up by \$27.9 million.' Can the Premier advise which valuations contributed to the rise and, of each revaluation, how much?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: The \$27.9 million—to be more specific, \$27.853 million—is made up of \$2.992 million from leasehold improvements, \$2.901 million from buildings, I am advised, and \$21.96 million from land. In terms of what made that up amongst the land, I am advised that it is predominantly the following: Adelaide film studios to the tune of \$19.8 million, Lion arts centre by \$1.175 million, Queen's Theatre by \$275,000, and Walkley Heights by \$480,000.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I refer to Part C: Agency Audit Reports, Department of the Premier and Cabinet, employee related expenses, page 266. On page 266, the report states that employee-related expenses decreased mainly due to the transfer of OCIO Digital Programs and ODA employees to DTF. So, whilst that shows a reduction in overall employee expenses, did any programs within DPC have any increases in employee expenses? If so, in which programs and in which roles?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: The short answer to your question, I am advised, is yes. Those reductions were partially offset by increases in employees associated with the Major Projects division to the tune of \$524,000: First Nations engagement, the Office of Autism, the Children in the North initiative and engagement of the Cross Border Commissioner.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: How many employees employed by DPC have a total remuneration greater than \$400,000?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: My advice is that the financial statements disclose those numbers over various thresholds. That should be on the public record. If we can find those for you—I have seen something similar to this myself—over 400. In 2025, there are one, two, three, four is the advice I have here.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Is that more or less than last year?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: More by one. In 2024, according to this—and this is publicly available—there was one in the band from \$391,000 to \$411,000. In 2025, that person was not in that band and presumably went up to the \$411,000 to \$431,000 band. It could be the same or different by one.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Can the Premier advise what each of these staff do?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: My advice is, as is often the case with public servants, we do not disclose the names of those individuals. I think an exception is provided with respect to the CEs, the chief executives of departments, but not the names of the individuals in those roles, and therefore those roles with the exception of the chief executive.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: In saying that, are we able to get the job titles or job descriptions? We are not necessarily asking for the names of the individuals.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: That would serve the same purpose in terms of the specific job title. My understanding is that is a practice that has been in place across governments for some time for privacy reasons and the like.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Referring back to a previous answer, what caused the increase in employee-related expenses in the major projects division?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: The function of those roles is across a number of certain things. Where major project delivery services are covered off within DPC, such as, for instance, the

Cultural Institutions Storage Facility, Barossa Park—the team there is doing the work on the North Adelaide golf course proposition—any project that needs to be overseen by someone within government that does not automatically fit within DIT can be done by that unit.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I refer to Part C: Agency Audit Reports, Department of the Premier and Cabinet, highlights of the financial report, income, other, page 265. Of the \$7 million of income categorised as 'Other', can the Premier advise the resources that his department has received free of charge? What does that mean?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: When you say 'free of charge', what do you mean?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I will get some clarity on that. While I do that, I will go to the next one. I refer to Part C: Agency Audit Reports, Department of the Premier and Cabinet, highlights of the financial report, expenses, supplies and services, page 265. Can the Premier advise the amount spent on consultants in the last financial year?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: I am happy to take that on notice.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: For those consultants paid on a time and material basis, can the Premier provide those receiving more than \$100 per hour?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: I am happy to take that on notice.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Under 'Expenses' for supplies and services, the report states \$133 million spent. Were there any variations to the budgeted amount?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: Not much was budgeted in the last financial year for supplies and services. I am happy to get the detail for the leader. My advice is it almost certainly would have varied from the budget because of events and activities that happened throughout the course of the year. In terms of what specific amount was allocated at the budget, we will have to take that on notice.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Do we have any of those other answers to the earlier questions? Do you want to take the time to do some of those? I might have some questions from those. Is the Premier able to provide a breakdown? When we go to the \$133 million for supplies and services, how much was used on sponsorships and external contributions?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: The \$133 million, and the more granular number that we have here, \$132.430 million, can be broken up in these ways: \$80,802 from intra-government transfers; public information activities, \$8.672 million—I am just giving you some of them, for example—information technology and communication charges, \$6.7 million; general administration and consumables, \$5.1 million; temporary staff, \$1.1 million; Microsoft licence and support, \$1.3 million; and managed network services, \$260,000. There is a whole range of things—repairs and maintenance, \$3.7 million. It sort of jumps around a bit. I am happy to read out the full list if you want.

Just to go back to your question about the distinction between the budget, the budget was \$74.95 million, ending up being \$132 million. The variance is \$57 million and that is principally accounted for by a range of things, including intra-government transfers being the biggest contributor to that. So the variance in the budget accounts for, and I will read them all:

- intra-government transfers, \$8.3 million;
- accommodation, \$1.49 million;
- Public Information Services, \$661,000;
- information, technology and communications charges, negative \$24.8 million;
- general administration and consumables, negative \$189,000;
- repairs and maintenance, \$781,000;
- sponsorships and external contributions, \$212,000;
- contractors, negative \$2.63 million;

- Shared Services, \$1.5 million;
- consultants, \$225,000;
- Microsoft licence and support, negative \$1.6 million;
- temporary staff, negative \$2.7 million;
- staff development and recruitment, negative \$360,000;
- managed network services, negative \$4.770 million; and
- other suppliers and services, negative \$2.701 million.

This adds up to a variance of negative \$26.709 million. That is the variance between the 2025 number and the 2023-2024 financial year.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: The consultants that the Premier referred to, can you outline what they do?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: What I can share with you is the information I have here at hand. If there is any more you need, let us know. There was a decrease in consultants between the 2023-24 financial year and the 2025 financial year of 48 per cent, or the \$2.63 million figure. The decrease is primarily due to the Office of the Chief Information Officer, Digital Programs, data analytics that transferred to DTF. That was primarily offset by the increase through the Inklings pilot program, which is money we have invested in the Inklings Program, which is associated with autism; ICT infrastructure, \$215,000; and establishing the Government Advertising and Insights Hub, \$262,000.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: In relation to the sponsorships and external contributions that we were talking about, does that line item cover money spent to stand up the Government Advertising and Insights Hub? If so, can the Premier explain how that came to, I think, \$3 million?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: The advice I have for that question is that the answer is no. I have the other question you were asking, about the comms and social media from DPC: 14 FTEs is the advice I have received.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: If it is more efficient to centralise government advertising, why did it take DPC that time to take on the responsibility of the government advertising and insights position, and why is that occurring just before an election?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: Sorry, say that again?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: In terms of government advertising, obviously that has been somewhat centralised. Why did it take DPC the time that it did to take on the responsibility of government advertising and insights?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: My understanding is everything was lined up to commence in February. In terms of taking time to appoint someone, it was just going through a process. There was a process for the head of the hub.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I refer to Part C: Agency Audit Reports, DPC, highlights of the financial report, expenses for supplies and services, page 265. Of the \$133 million spent on supplies and services, how much of this spending was to grow existing events in the state?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: You said 'existing events'?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Yes. The question, and where I am going, is: of the \$133 million spent on supplies and services, how much of this spending was to grow existing events? I suppose the lead-on is: how much of this was spent on new events in the state?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: I have to take that on notice because I am just trying to distinguish between the two. I will take that on notice.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I refer to Part C: Agency Audit Reports, DPC, highlights of the financial report, administered items, page 268. Can the Premier advise what the objectives/activities are for the department's administered items?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: Page 268? Sorry, what are you asking here?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Highlights of the financial report, administered items, page 268: I am asking what the objectives/activities are for the department's administered items.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: As per the Department of the Premier and Cabinet's 'Notes to and forming part of the financial statements'—that is to say, the department's financial statements—A1.2 goes directly to the leader's question about objectives/activities of the department's administered items. Their analysis is as follows.

Special act salaries and allowances: the department disburses the parliamentary salaries and allowances pursuant to the Agent-General Act 1901 and the Parliamentary Remuneration Act 1990 on behalf of the state government. There is the Bank of Tokyo Cultural and Social Exchange: the department holds funds for the purpose of supporting cultural and social exchange between South Australia and Japan. SA Okayama: the department holds funds for the purpose of furthering South Australia's relationship with Okayama. The fund was established from the trading surplus from South Australia's presence at the Seto Ohashi Expo 88.

Promotion of the state: the department provides the funding for activities that advance the interests of South Australia by promoting the economic, social and cultural aspects of the state on behalf of the state government. SA Motor Sport: the department holds funding associated with the Motor Sport Board for the Adelaide 500 and the Motorsport Festival and other motorsport activities. Finally, the Office of the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment: the Office of the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment is an attached office of the department, effective from 1 July 2024, as a result of the administrative restructure, as published in the *South Australian Government Gazette* on 27 June 2024.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I refer to Part C: Agency Audit Reports, Department of the Premier and Cabinet, highlights of the financial report, income, on page 265. There is a table there which shows \$18 million from the sale of goods and services for 2025, down from \$25 million during 2024. Is the Premier able to explain that variation? Do you have any of the questions taken on notice from before?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: The advice I have received is that it is to do with the transfer of land and buildings from the DPC to the Adelaide Festival Centre.

The CHAIR: The time has expired. I welcome the Treasurer and the member for Morphett, who I assume is going to be the spokesperson for the opposition. I call on the member for Morphett for questions. We will go for 30 minutes, starting now.

Mr PATTERSON: Thank you, Chair. Turning to the Office of Hydrogen Power South Australia, financial statements, on page 11 it talks through employee-related expenses and in particular breaks down the bands of employee remuneration over 2025. It shows there that one employee was paid between \$831,000 and \$851,000. Is that relating to the former CE of the Office of Hydrogen Power?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: No.

Mr PATTERSON: So then who? In comparing the 2024 to the 2025 figures there, you had eight employees on remuneration in those bands, moving over to seven. So does it relate to one of the employees from 2024?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I am advised that the employee included in the employee remuneration bandwidth received a termination payment at the end of April 2025, in addition to 10 months of their salary, from July 2024 to 30 April 2025. The expenses reported include the employee's salary, termination payment as well as other costs, including superannuation and remaining leave entitlements.

Mr PATTERSON: Can you provide a breakdown between the actual salary portion of that band and then the termination portion of that band?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I will endeavour to do that.

Mr PATTERSON: You will take that on notice and bring it back?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I will endeavour to do it, yes.

Mr PATTERSON: That being the case then, in terms of these reports here, if it is not the CE, can I confirm, though, that the CE moved across to become the state lead of the Whyalla Steelworks industrial transformation, and was that on the same salary as was applied in 2025?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: As a result of legislation passed in this parliament, the Whyalla Steelworks was placed into administration. As a result of that administration, the commonwealth and state governments are investing over \$1.9 billion into the maintenance of structural steel manufacturing in this country, a capability that is incomprehensible in its economic sovereignty impact on our nation.

Given the nature and the size of the task, it was appropriate that we had someone who had a familiarity and knowledge not only of Whyalla but of the transformational task because at its core the Hydrogen Jobs Plan was about the transformation of the steel industry, and that transformation of the steel industry was about providing hydrogen as a reductant to remove oxides from iron oxide, not as a heat source, as members opposite have implied.

So it was only appropriate that the chief executive of the Hydrogen Jobs Plan then move across as the state's lead on this because the negotiations with the commonwealth government, the errors—I want to say errors but I suppose the rush by the banks and the former administration to (1) appoint an administrator and (2) award the sale process to Mr Sanjeev Gupta—were something that, if we could turn back the clock, we would all want to change.

The banks are motivated by, obviously, a return on their debt. They are the ones that funded the administration, they are the ones that placed Arrium into administration, and the moment they had a cash offer that they were happy with, they accepted it and the administrators settled and Mr Gupta walked out with a multibillion dollar asset for about \$700 million in which he never reinvested and he just strip-mined Whyalla for the next nearly decade after that, building up an empire in Europe while taking billions of dollars out of Whyalla, including over \$4 billion in steel turnover and over \$7 billion in iron ore sales. That is something I think we can all look back on and say should not have occurred.

So, yes, Sam Crafter is someone the government has complete confidence and trust in. He is an exceptional individual and an exceptional public servant. I remind the house that on the change of government in 2018 he was kept on by the then Minister for Energy and Mining, who later became the deputy premier. I think both governments have recognised his quality and recognised his commitment to the state and his ability to serve the government of the day, no matter its political persuasion, and that is a strong trait he has.

Mr PATTERSON: Now that we have gone through that part of it, in terms of the other employees, why were those other ones not mentioned? Why did they not need redundancy? Have they been moved into the Department for Energy and Mining?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: The advice I have is that the overwhelming majority have been redistributed back within government. These are people who are highly qualified public servants who have expertise and skills the government can use. They were directors or executive directors and they have gone and found roles within government. My understanding is only a couple did not have their contracts renewed, and one took a redundancy. I think overall this is a very good example of a very efficient operation by the government in terms of being able to recruit staff from within government to run this project. Once the project was halted because of what was occurring in Whyalla, we were able to redistribute that staff very efficiently back into government.

Mr PATTERSON: Just referring to Part A: Executive Summary of the annual report, on page 13 the Auditor-General provides a breakdown of the \$285.2 million spent to 30 June and lists

\$136 million for land, property, plant and equipment combined. Of that \$136 million, how much is associated with land as an asset?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: My understanding is a small portion of it was for land and a large overall portion of that was for equipment.

Mr PATTERSON: Thank you. I was looking for a specific breakdown.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: We are in a procurement process now for our generators. I do not want to have to give away the price to the people who are about to purchase them. I know the member has been erroneously saying we spent half a billion dollars with nothing to show for it. Of course, that is completely false and a lie, and if he dares to repeat it in the chamber, there could be a privileges committee into the way he deliberately misleads the parliament.

The truth is we have gone out and bought infrastructure and we have bought land. These are assets that the government has and owns, and they will have a value. If the member continues with his erroneous lies about what has occurred here—he can say one thing on radio, but the parliament is something very different. If he doesn't believe me, he can ask his former Deputy Premier Vickie Chapman what happens to people who mislead the parliament.

Mr PATTERSON: I asked for the land value. That was what it was.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: The land value was between \$12 million and \$13 million.

Mr PATTERSON: In terms of property as well, did that include any accommodation in Whyalla?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: No, not in that portion. The \$136 million is for land that we purchased from the council and the rest is for plant and equipment that the government has as an asset.

Mr PATTERSON: Just in terms of that plant and equipment, is there any dollar amount of that \$136 million associated with the electricity infrastructure that is mentioned further on as associated with the contingent liability, or had any of that contingent liability fallen due by 30 June?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: The contingent liability is something I need to explain probably again to members opposite. The contingent liability is only there if no-one else uses the infrastructure and the government then pays money for that infrastructure to be built.

So ElectraNet or SA Power Networks, depending on who built the particular infrastructure, built that on the basis it was a transaction that would be levied over a period of time. The contingent liability is that if no-one takes up that capacity, the government will pay. That is how you underwrite infrastructure, much like the underwriting of Project EnergyConnect that members opposite dived into headfirst while they were closing off our gas-fired turbines and banning gas extraction in the state.

What we have done is we have invested with ElectraNet and SA Power Networks to underwrite and unlock greater capacity in the Upper Spencer Gulf and Eyre Peninsula. I would have thought any member of parliament from Eyre Peninsula or the Upper Spencer Gulf would be thinking, 'You know what we have never had in the Upper Spencer Gulf? Really good quality power with excellent capacity for upgrades for industrial applications, because it is a long, skinny grid that is rarely invested in.' Here we have a government that is investing in infrastructure in the Upper Spencer Gulf, yet alas, members opposite call it a waste of money.

Mr PATTERSON: From your answer, can you confirm that there are no dollars associated with electricity infrastructure in that \$136 million?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I said generators are part of that \$136 million. That is electricity infrastructure. They are an asset the government owns. I have to be very careful here. The Vickie Chapman principle is if you mislead the parliament you have to go. You have got to go, there are no two ways about it, so it is very important that we get this right.

So, yes, the \$136 million does include energy infrastructure because it includes generators. We are in a procurement process. This is a payment towards a total payment. A part of it is land and

the other part is plant and equipment. The plant and equipment part is energy infrastructure. What you are asking about is poles and wires. My advice to the opposition is say what you mean and mean what you say. If you want to know the cost of underwriting energy infrastructure, ask it.

Mr PATTERSON: So, from your answer two before, there is no money in that \$136 million associated with poles and wires?

The CHAIR: Take a deep breath and have a drink as well, then count to ten.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Yes, Mr Chairman. I think I made it pretty clear. Contingent liability is the underwriting of electrical infrastructure, transmission and distribution. Plant and equipment is plant and equipment that we own. Contingent liability we do not own; we pay, because we have underwritten it, only if no-one else uses it. I will give you an example. If I underwrite the renting of your house and I say, 'Every week it's not rented, I will pay you the rental,' but you rent it out every week, what do I pay you? Nothing. However, if it is not rented out, it is listed as a contingent liability because I might have to pay it if it is not rented out. Is that simple enough for you?

Mr PATTERSON: On the same page, let's talk about the \$125 million of ongoing obligations. Just to confirm, that is over and above the \$285.2 million that has been spent as of 30 June 2025.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Are we at the same page, page 13?

Mr PATTERSON: Yes.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: You are talking about \$285 million and those subsets make up a part of it?

Mr PATTERSON: No. The Auditor-General at the top says \$285.2 million spent as of 30 June, then in the second paragraph I am just confirming, in addition to that, the reported contractual commitments of \$125 million. That is in addition to the \$285.2 million.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: The member just recently announced an election commitment to buy 200 megawatts of generation. Take a guess, roughly—I know your shadow treasurer is sitting alongside you, so you would have had some sort of shadow cabinet bilateral. Did you disclose what you think it might cost to buy 200 megawatts worth of generation? I have just told you that, of the \$136 million, about \$12.4 million or so was for land and the rest was for generators, then there is another bit in there for the rest of the generators.

I see the smile on your face. It is all coming together now, isn't it? It is obviously more plant and equipment, but the part that the member deliberately misleads on is that that is an asset the government has. It is not foregone, it is not lost. That is an asset we own—an asset I would remind the committee that the member himself has already gone out and promised and said if he is elected and he is energy minister he is going to go out and buy. Yet he is telling everyone what we have just done, which is buy 200 megawatts of generation, is a waste of money. So if our 200 megawatts is a waste of money, what does that say about yours? The silence is deafening.

So, yes, I think members opposite are starting to come to the realisation that they are building a house on mud. They are building their house on mud. I think it is pretty self-evident what is occurring here. It is pretty obvious to any reader and layperson reading this that generators in the market are anywhere between \$1 million and \$1.5 million and \$2 million a megawatt to purchase. If you have land and property and equipment at \$136 million and you know that a portion is for land and then you have another \$125 million commitment coming after the next financial year—well, one plus one equals a generator.

Mr PATTERSON: I go to page 8 on the financial statements for the Office of Hydrogen Power.

The CHAIR: What page was that, sorry?

Mr PATTERSON: The financial statements for the Office of Hydrogen Power South Australia, page 8. It talks a bit about the \$125 million.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Page 8?

Mr PATTERSON: Yes, in the financial statements. The report says that these \$125 million commitments relate to rental agreements for the offices located in Adelaide and Whyalla. How much of that \$125 million relates to rental agreements for the office for Adelaide and Whyalla rentals?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I understand it is about \$120,000 for rental.

Mr PATTERSON: I will go to Part A.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Part A?

Mr PATTERSON: Part A of the annual report, Executive Summary.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: What page?

Mr PATTERSON: Page 13. The Auditor-General talks about business money spent to 30 June—\$85.7 million that was impaired because the costs provided no immediate future economic benefits and were predominantly related to the early contractor involvement costs. Can the minister provide a breakdown of that \$85.7 million? How much was paid to contractors, how much was paid to consultancies and how much was paid in legal costs?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: It has to be done to protect the position of all governments to be able to contract for consultant services and make sure that we do not get ripped off, but this is important work. This is work that, through an accounting standards sense, the Auditor-General is required to call an impairment because this project now has been suspended. That does not mean that the work has no value to government and cannot be used for another application.

For example, members opposite have announced a policy that, if they are elected in March, they will be buying a generator. A lot of the consultancy work that we have done is about the operation and management of a generator. If members opposite form government in March 2026, they will go to the Department for Energy and Mining and the Department of Treasury and Finance and they will say, 'You know that stuff the Auditor-General called an impairment? We would like to grab it, please, because we are about to buy some generators and those generators need to be run and dispatched into the grid. So we want to see the consultancies that the government used to be able to identify how they are being used and how they are being run and how to dispatch them.' You have to distinguish and delineate between a project that is no longer going on and the information gathered within that project.

When the algal bloom ends—and it will end—all the scientific consultancy work that we have done through that work will technically be an impairment because the algal bloom will be over. Does that mean that that work has had no value? Of course not—absolutely of course not. We will use that information. It is no different here.

I am going to make sure that we protect our ability to go out and contract with contractors. I do not want to disclose the individual values because the government is constantly in tender processes with consulting agencies. I do not want other consultants to know exactly what we are paying different groups. We always have consultants come in and give us advice to crosscheck what the public sector says to us, and the public sector uses that, but we want to have competitive tension there. The moment you say, 'X consultant got Y for this body of work,' that is something—what we do is we say the total amount.

Mr Telfer: You did not say what body of work it includes.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: The bodies of work are on things like the generators and how to integrate hydrogen with the steelworks, because hydrogen in the steelworks, whether members opposite understand it or not, is coming. It is not a matter of ideology. It is not a matter of Labor or Liberal. It is a matter of chemistry. The only way you decarbonise steelmaking is you move away from coking coal, which is blast furnace technology, to direct iron reduction.

Direct iron reduction can be gas—that is, natural gas, which members opposite are opposed to—or hydrogen. The by-product using gas, while still emitting carbon dioxide, is considerably less than coking coal. When using coking coal, as a rough guide, for every tonne of steel manufactured or iron manufactured you get two tonnes of carbon dioxide, but for every tonne of iron produced using direct iron reduction you get 600 kilograms of carbon dioxide: a dramatic reduction from blast furnace

down to DRI. When you use hydrogen as a reductant, what you get then is you have no carbon emissions at all and the by-product is water vapour.

That consultancy work is vitally important and will be used by people who are considering purchasing the steelworks, but we have done this body of work already about the integration of hydrogen within the steelworks and how it can best be used—and, of course, the work we have done on getting gas to the generators that will also be used for direct iron reduction in Whyalla, because we believe in the Upper Spencer Gulf. We have invested money to try to understand how best to upgrade the Upper Spencer Gulf to maintain it as an industrial hub, whether it is protecting Whyalla and Port Pirie or, of course, investing in Northern Water for Roxby Downs and unlocking water for the Upper Mid North.

These are vital industries that we care deeply about. We want to add value to them. So while technically the Auditor-General must call these an impaired expense, these are vital pieces of information that the government has gathered that will benefit us for generations to come.

Mr PATTERSON: When you announced the deferral of the hydrogen power plant and that the money was going to be transferred across to Whyalla, the \$593 million budget was said to have been transferred across for the \$600 million support package. Here, the Auditor-General lays bare that when you take into account not only the money spent to 30 June, the \$285 million, but also the \$125 million you have contracted, plus the contingent liabilities, there are costs there that just cannot be recovered. How much of the \$593 million has been able to be transferred across to the support package as of 30 June 2025?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: The work on the electrical infrastructure that is a contingent liability was not part of the Hydrogen Jobs Plan; that was additional work we had done. I will give the member an understanding of this so he can understand it better. We could have built the Hydrogen Jobs Plan with our generator and our electrolyser using the existing availability of the substations and transmission lines that were there, but it would have sterilised any future upgrade, either for the steelworks or any other industry in the Upper Spencer Gulf, because we would have taken up all that capacity. We saw this as an opportunity to upgrade it.

While members opposite are seeking to catastrophise our intervention in Whyalla as much as they possibly can, despite voting for it, what we have done is we have invested additional funds outside the \$593 million to make sure that we could have robust infrastructure in Upper Spencer Gulf. That is money into our regions for industrial capability in regional areas and members of the opposition are complaining about it. Is it any wonder that of the Upper Spencer Gulf cities the opposition holds no seats, where once they held two out of the three? You have to ask yourself.

Mr Telfer: There are only two seats there.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: There used to be three. There used to be three seats. Frome used to cover Port Pirie. Stuart used to cover Port Augusta and Giles used to cover Whyalla. There was a time when the Liberal Party held two of the three seats in the Upper Spencer Gulf and now you hold none. These are industrial towns that the Liberal Party has walked away from and now you are complaining about us upgrading the infrastructure in those very towns that allows them to upgrade their industrial capacity at no extra cost to them.

Any proponent wanting to build new infrastructure in the Upper Spencer Gulf would have to pay that infrastructure if we had just taken up the latent capacity and not upgraded it. So we took time to bring more money into the budget to upgrade that infrastructure that the members opposite are now complaining about. The government makes absolutely no apology for that whatsoever because upgrading the electrical infrastructure, upgrading substations, upgrading transmission lines is good for the Upper Spencer Gulf and for Eyre Peninsula.

The upgrades of the swell lines that run down Eyre Peninsula and upgrading those transmission lines—the member for Flinders will know this: the number of complaints we used to get about the quality of power on Eyre Peninsula, the number of small businesses that would have their fridges and their equipment constantly wrecked by inconsistent power supply and surges and the quality of the power they received was a cost on business. We have invested in it. Those complaints have now all but dried up.

Mr Telfer: This government? The last government did that upgrade.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: It was not the last government. It was our government. It was our government. It was the Weatherill government that did it and members opposite complained about us doing it. That was when you were chair of the LGA and just a candidate. That was a time when you were championing what we were doing—

Mr Telfer: When I was a candidate was when we were in government. What is going on?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: It was not when you were in government. That is not how regulatory periods work. You do the regulatory period work. You do the work in the regulatory period beforehand. I know the shadow treasurer is a bit upset that the more senior shadow minister is asking all the questions, and he is sitting watching and not asking any questions, but the truth is we have invested heavily in infrastructure in the Upper Spencer Gulf. That is a good outcome for the people of the Upper Spencer Gulf and a good outcome, I think, for the South Australian economy.

The idea that \$593 million was all we spent—we spent money, extra money, upgrading infrastructure in the Upper Spencer Gulf that was not for our project. It was so that we would not sterilise any future investment in the Upper Spencer Gulf's industrial capacity. I think that was a good outcome for the people of South Australia.

The CHAIR: I am sad to say that time has expired. Next please. I think the Minister for Tourism and Multicultural Affairs should walk through that door shortly.

The ACTING CHAIR (Ms Stinson): I welcome the minister and the member for Frome and I call for questions.

Ms PRATT: I indicate that I am the lead speaker for the opposition and will be focusing during this session on the Auditor-General's Part C: Agency audits on the South Australian Tourism Commission, page 330. Minister, of the 140 FTEs employed by the South Australian Tourism Commission, what ratio of those employees might be based in the regions, how many, where and in what role?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I will just get that directly. I think it is 139 FTEs that we have. None are actually based directly in the regions, but of course our destination group are going out and connecting in the regions. I know they certainly have been out there a lot. When I have gone out to regions and had my round tables and visits, they often talk about the Destination Development team and their connection to that as well.

As you know, we fund regional tourism managers out into the regions as well. Of course, in the last budget, we increased the funding that goes towards having those regional tourism managers in 11 regions across the state. Something that I am very proud of is that we have increased the money that they get. Along with councils and regional development authorities, that is how they are engaged in their role. We are very actively involved with them.

As you well know, we have done that regional review and we are starting to roll that out. I, personally, am very committed to supporting our regions and that is what that money went to straightaway. It is also about how we can lift the products and experiences we have for the international market. I have been sharing that with our regional tourism managers when I catch up with them as we start to roll out these zones.

Ms PRATT: In your reference to the destination management team, are you able to provide a range in salaries from lowest to highest?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: No. We do not directly employ those regional tourism managers. They all have different ways of being employed—some with councils, some with separate bodies, some through the RDA—but we are not responsible for their salary.

Ms PRATT: Just to clarify then my understanding, when you mentioned 'destination management team' is that incorporating the 11 regional managers? Who makes up the destination management team?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: The Destination Development team is an internal team within the Tourism Commission. I will just get you a breakdown of how many people are in that team. That

is a very important team because it is about the growth in tourism. In particular, we have had quite a bit of success in regard to aviation commitments that we have had.

Just this morning, we saw the first flight come in with Air New Zealand and that is going from Adelaide to Christchurch—the first time we have ever been going to the southern island. Later on this week, we will see Qantas flying internationally from Adelaide for the first time in 10 years. They will be flying to Auckland. Of course, we have Cathay coming back, which we have been working on, because they used to be here prior to COVID. The one that I am so excited about, which will be very influential economically in South Australia, not just in tourism but in trade as well and defence, is the United flight that will connect us to the US. The Destination Development team is approximately 10 FTE people who work in that area.

Ms PRATT: I am getting my language right now, minister: the Destination Development team, 10 FTEs approximately, can you provide a breakdown of salaries ranging from lowest to highest and how many might be paid over \$110,000?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I can talk about that—if you want it specifically for Destination Development, we will just have to take that on notice in regard to the division of salaries there.

Ms PRATT: Just to clarify your figures versus the Auditor-General's, on page 330, the figure for FTEs is 140 but you stipulate 139. I am just looking for clarification on that. Is that an increase or a decrease of FTEs from last year?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: So the actual FTE count, if we are being very specific, at 30 June 2025 was 139.6. The average FTEs during the year was 144.2. Of course, that was in line with our cap. We have increased by one FTE from last year. Our cap has increased by one FTE from last year.

Ms PRATT: At page 331, can you explain or expand on the increase of appropriation funding as per the audit line where it shows income appropriation for this financial year at \$67 million—the increase of appropriation from 2024 to 2025?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: There was an increase in appropriation of \$3.9 million and that is additional funding to accelerate adoption and consumer awareness of our South Australia Brand, which, of course, we launched in April of this year. We really want to lift the state's appeal and awareness internationally and interstate and also to support our regions. There was some money in the previous budget for that specifically to work on it and the Celebrate the Simple Pleasures that we ran out on TV. Of course, there was additional support for the Regional Tourism Alignment Initiative to bolster regional tourism, industry capability and product development.

I consider myself a bit of a champion of regional tourism and that additional money was there to work with our regions to make sure that we are talking collectively as South Australia. That dispersal into the regions is really important. Particularly when we have had events, we really want to push people out to the regions. I remember distinctly with Harvest Rock: from the first time we had Harvest Rock to the second time, we saw this increase in the length of stay. We saw the same thing with Gather Round and this is what we want because we want to push people out to the regions. Particularly in Gather Round, I liked how about 50 per cent of people drove here, so we make sure that they are going through the Limestone Coast and not just staying one night but trying to stay more than one night and see some events.

We also had some additional funding to ensure that the Santos Tour Down Under met its expectation priorities of the UCI and it remains a world-class, compelling event. Of course, we want to see that growth in visitor expenditure and media value and community outcomes. We also had an indexation of our base funding. Obviously, every time you have an increase in appropriations there are some offsets. We did have some change in sponsorships and we had some savings that were there and, of course, we saw that the funding for the River Revival Voucher program had finished in that time.

Ms PRATT: Minister, moving between pages 330 and 331, just briefly reading out what is in the audit line, SATC continues to sponsor and manage major events; I think we can read that for ourselves. My question is: what is the full list of events sponsored and managed? Three are listed;

is that the full list? Does it extend further than that, and does it extend even further than what is listed on the bottom of page 331?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: To clarify, you are asking here if there are any sponsored and managed events other than the Santos Tour Down Under, National Pharmacies Christmas Pageant and Tasting Australia; is that what you are asking?

Ms PRATT: Yes. Would the combination of the references on both pages, the full list, include Gather Round and LIV Golf? What is the list of events sponsored and managed?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Let me start by saying there are three that we manage, which are the Santos Tour Down Under, Tasting Australia and the National Pharmacies Christmas Pageant. They are managed by the SATC. The full list of the major events receiving sponsorship in 2024-25 are Illuminate Adelaide, which of course is in July; the Australian Junior Volleyball Championships; the Suncorp Super Netball Grand Final; the AusCycling Masters and Junior Road National Championships; the 2024 Australian Short Course Swimming Championships; and Chihuly in the Botanic Garden, which was a particularly exceptional event for us.

We put money into the Socceroos versus China PR, the AFC match in October of last year; the spring finals of the National Drag Racing Championship; CheeseFest; the Webex Players Series; The Bend Classic; the Australian Superbike Championships; the Australian Beach Volleyball Tour; and the Adelaide International tennis, which was particularly special this year. We had 13 of the top 20 women in the world of tennis descend on Adelaide. I was very pleased to see the female winner, Madison Keys, coming back.

We also supported the Viking age treasure the Galloway Hoard; LIV Golf Adelaide; the Adelaide Festival; WOMAdeelaide; the Riverbend Nationals of the drag racing; the AFL Gather Round; the Adelaide Equestrian Festival; the Trans-Tasman Throwdown, which was a basketball competition between Australia and New Zealand; the Wheelchair Rugby National Championship; and the 2025 Australian Swimming Trials.

Ms PRATT: Having shared that list, minister, is a breakdown of funding per event available today or to be taken on notice and tabled?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: No. The sponsorship details are subject to contractual confidentiality restrictions and therefore cannot be disclosed, which is consistent with what I have said every single year.

Ms PRATT: On page 330, in reference to a long-term destination brand and collaboration with other government agencies, minister, can you just expand which other agencies yours has collaborated with? Did those agencies contribute funding and, if so, how much and what for?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Particularly, there was a lot of collaboration with Brand South Australia, which we re-established on coming to government in 2022. That work was obviously around our state's brand and coordinating those efforts that strengthen our image and reputation. We continue to work quite well with Brand SA. I can say also that when we were working through that process of establishing our place brand, we did work with DPC as well, but of course SATC took the lead in that. That is what the additional funding was in that previous year's budget that we did.

What we want to do is look at consistent messaging across key sectors: the tourism, trade, investment and education areas. Of course, in April we rolled out Celebrate the Simple Pleasures, and we will continue to support Brand SA to use that in their brand alignment—and that conversation continues as well. It was a very big decision for us to have something in market—namely, Celebrate the Simple Pleasures—that has longevity. What you might have seen in the past is a brand that is out there for about two years at a time, and what we really want to do is build an appeal factor for South Australia. In doing that, we did a lot of work on identity. There were a lot of interviews that took place about who we are as South Australians, where we see ourselves in the world and in the nation and what we want to share with the nation and the world. I think the work that was done there was exceptional.

Over this period of time we also updated our tourism strategy to 2030. It is very clear about our ambitions—ambitions about the authenticity of who we are. Since that time we are all clear in our

identity of knowing that the drivers of tourism are food and drink. It is festivals and events and the connection to nature. So those conversations to lead us to that point did work with Brand SA and with DPC as well. But we led, and the cost came from us.

Ms PRATT: Continuing on with the Simple Pleasures campaign and the long-term brand destination, can you expand on it from its launch in April to October and November? How are we tracking? How does the agency measure success?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Member for Frome, you asked me about this in estimates. We did not quite have enough at that point to talk about it. As I said, we are looking for longevity and looking to grow in consideration and appeal over time through sustained and consistent activity.

There is a performance study, conducted by an independent research agency on behalf of SATC, that demonstrates the campaign has a strong message take-out and portrays positively. Specifically, non-South Australian residents who recall seeing the Simple Pleasures campaign are significantly more likely to consider a visit and to find South Australia appealing. Amongst those who recalled the campaign, prompts and consideration were 9 percentage points higher, appeal was 8 percentage points higher and likelihood to visit was 9 percentage points higher. That is from an independent study that we had.

More than two-thirds of the people surveyed agreed that the Simple Pleasures TV ads make them think that South Australia is an appealing destination. That research confirms that those ads are successful in converting people from finding South Australia unappealing to finding it appealing. Of course, I would never say it was unappealing to start with, but perhaps not top of mind, which is obviously what we want to portray and what we have been trying to achieve in this situation. I thought the TV ads worked really well.

A separate study, conducted by Uber, who is one of our advertising partners, reported that people exposed to our Simple Pleasures ads are up to 28 per cent more likely to consider a trip to South Australia.

Ms PRATT: Minister, my question, which you have answered, was: how does the government track the success of that campaign? In your answer I heard about two independent studies. Is there any more to the metrics or the measurements, other than those studies, whether it is a tourism warehouse database—I have not got that language right, but what other mechanisms do we use, as government, to track the success of a campaign like that? Are there international groups that are involved for those international visitors we are trying to attract?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: We also measure digital lead indicators. In the six months since the launch, we saw more than 1.2 million of the leads generated go to South Australian tourism businesses via southaustralia.com. That is an 11 per cent increase, year on year, that is measured there.

Obviously, we have gone out internationally to New Zealand and the US to talk about our new ad, but I do not think I have anything at this point. I can take that on notice as far as how we are measuring that internationally. I guess what we can say, though, with the two new flights that are going into New Zealand, is that New Zealand is a really important market for us now with these additional connection flights. That will obviously see some cooperative marketing to look at those areas.

Of course, there is also this brand-new flight that is going from San Francisco through to Adelaide, which we have not had before. That is an opportunity for us to do cooperative marketing and also to look at it as a destination. But as far as how we are capturing that from an international audience, Meta is doing some also. We have some surveys that Meta did as well, which are all positive, but I will specifically come back about international measurement if that is different.

Ms PRATT: Referring to page 331, audit line underneath Statement of Comprehensive Income, where the Auditor-General has written, 'SATC's financial activities vary each year depending on the mix of marketing,' how would you describe the mix of ingredients this year? I am seeking a breakdown of funding for those three references: marketing, destination development, and event activities.

The ACTING CHAIR (Ms Stinson): While the minister is looking for that, where is that reference on the page, just so I can follow along?

Ms PRATT: Page 331, where the Auditor-General at the bottom says that the financial activities vary each year and therefore so does the level of funding.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Let me just start by saying that, if you actually look at page 332, you can see different things here—income and expenses. You can see that things have been quite consistent over the last three years in how we split things up between event operations, advertising, promotion and industry assistance. I guess I can say that they are consistent. I will just get those figures for you exactly. Your question was how much has contributed to each. Tourism development is \$9.3 million, tourism advances is \$98.7 million, and tourism marketing is \$34.5 million. That is how it is split.

Ms PRATT: On page 332 then, minister—perhaps I will go back to income, which is at the top of the page. I think we can read along as we go. The income from the SA government totalled \$126.3 million (I am reading the second paragraph) with a total revenue of 91 per cent. This included \$55.9 million received from the DPC Major Events Fund. How do we identify that amount of the \$123.1 million in the highlights on the previous page? How do we find that amount in the highlights of the financial report on the page before? We have total income on page 331 of \$141 million; how do I break down or identify the contribution from the SA government of \$126.3 million?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I think the way to answer that for you is to understand that it is an intergovernment transfer through the year-on-year event sponsorship, which is why you cannot see it in the way that you are looking to see it. So that happens, and, of course, that fluctuates throughout the year depending on when that money moves across.

Ms PRATT: Moving to 'net result', where the Auditor-General highlights that SATC has recorded negative net results since 2022, as the minister responsible—and you have touched on this slightly—how do you account for successive budget blowouts four years in a row, based on a budget in 2021 that was in the black?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I do not concur with you that it is a budget blowout in any way whatsoever. I think we have been in one of the most active periods of time for tourism. While we are looking at just the last year, I think the role of tourism has increased exponentially within its role as an economic driver for our state. Of course, we have stepped up to the plate many times, whether it is new events that are coming on, to help manage them or sponsor them, or when we have been there when South Australians needed us the most, so Rise Up for our River, and in this financial year we are rolling out rounds 1 and 2 of the travel vouchers.

In regard to your question, when we are looking at the equity or net assets that we have, it has decreased for the period from 2021 to 2025, and that is shown in those results, the statement of the comprehensive income and movements and statement of financial position. The movement in equity is part due to Treasury-approved budget deficits in each of these years, largely comprising the carryover payments and the grant funding programs earlier to latest year.

Particularly why you have seen that negativity is with the Tourism Industry Development Fund—that was \$20 million received in 2021-22 and 2022-23—but then the funds were expended over the following years, which contributed to those deficits up to 2024-25. The carryover happened every year, but the money that came out did not happen in that set period, so that is why it is.

In 2024-25, the decrease in equity of \$2 million was due to a budgeted Treasury-approved deficit of \$0.7 million, due to timing differences between the cash payment of rent and accounting recognition of lease expenses; the final budgeted carryover of spending on the Tourism Industry Development Fund grants program of \$0.1 million from earlier years, 2024-25; and there were some accounting revaluations for foreign exchange balances and employee leave liabilities of \$0.5 million.

Ms PRATT: Responding to the minister's response to me, I am merely interpreting what the Auditor-General documents, where expenses exceed income each year for those four years. Minister, I think we share a common passion for regional tourism, and there is a lot of work still to be done.

Based on the last four years, where expenses exceed income, it would appear there is a bigger claim to make on the Treasurer for increasing the budget. My question then is: have you had that conversation with the Treasurer, and are there any surprises in store for regional tourism by the Mid-Year Budget Review next month?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: It would be inappropriate for me to detail my conversations with the former or current Treasurer, although I am ambitious for tourism. I particularly think the focus around marketing has been a key focus for us and where we are heading, particularly when you think about the marketing that comes with additional events that we have had, which is important, and of course regional events that we do are very important to us.

We know that we have received \$5 million per annum as a part of the 2024-25 state budget, and that is about supporting the 'place' brand, and that is for all South Australia. We are nothing without our regions, so when I am selling South Australia I do not say that it is for this region and not the other. When I think about where a lot of the focus will go for our current voucher program, that is in the regions and those coastal areas as well. Of course, we will continue to have a look at that as well. We know that events drive visitation, but we really want to go out to the regions, such as the Barossa being used for Gather Round this year.

The ACTING CHAIR (Ms Stinson): The allotted time having expired, I thank the minister and her advisers and also the member for Frome.

Progress reported; committee to sit again.

Bills

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

Second Reading

Adjourned debate on second reading (resumed on motion).

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER (Morialta) (17:36): It is with great pleasure that I resume my remarks on the Education and Children's Services (Enrolment and Attendance) Amendment Bill. As I described before, this is a bill that deals with that most important issue of how do we best serve the children in our community by ensuring that our systems, our structures and the law put them in the position where they are most likely to attend school?

We know that children of course have agency in their own lives, and some children present behaviours, resistance or challenges to getting them to school, and their parents have a more challenging circumstance here than other parents. However, there is a key question that courts always consider in relation to whether the parents are taking the appropriate steps to get their children to school. We would love every child to be at school every day of the week, every week of the year, but we know there are circumstances where that is not going to be the case. We cannot accept that. We must always be striving to do better.

As I described earlier, this bill represents an evolution that has been continuing for some time. I became the shadow minister for education early in 2016, as it was two years prior to the 2018 election, and I believe the member for Port Adelaide had been the minister for a little while before I was. However, in the 15 to 20 years prior to her assumption to that portfolio, my recollection is that there had been two prosecutions only in that whole time for parents who had allowed their children to be truant. That is my summary, because the description of the offence in the act is a lot more complex than that.

I recall at the time the debate happening, because there was the discussion of a new Education and Children's Services Bill, an evolution of which has now become the act, as of the 2019 legislation. In that bill a number of propositions were put forward by the member for Port Adelaide in relation to reform. I will come to the detail and the specifics later, but the point that I make first is that the resistance from the department and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions in particular was that they were concerned that a successful prosecution under the pre-2019 legislation was unlikely.

They were concerned that the standard of proof required to be met in order to achieve a guilty verdict was unlikely to be met and the resources required to establish that proof were also unlikely to be justified according to their KPIs because of the low level of the fine that was in question. I cannot remember whether it was \$250 or \$150, but for the tens of thousands of dollars it would have taken the Crown to prosecute such a case, they felt there was a low likelihood of a successful prosecution, according to the metrics that they used. Unfortunately, that was a reason that they said it was not good enough.

I do want to commend the member for Port Adelaide. I am going to come to a point of difference in a moment, but only a policy one to be clear and one that I think we reached a satisfactory landing on, but that is in the later part of the story.

In 2017, I suspect it was—and I imagine that it had been worked on for a little while earlier than that—the member for Port Adelaide as Minister for Education managed to persuade, convince overall or some other effect to get the prosecutors to take two cases to court. I will not go through the details of the cases. When we are talking about children in a vulnerable set of circumstances, or indeed a unique set of circumstances, there is always a story. It can be a very sympathetically told story. But ultimately there were three children, and two prosecutions from memory, who were not going to school who could have been going to school.

Despite the low level of penalty on question, despite the high level of resources that it took, the application of that law in those cases, as we were encouraging the government to do, as the minister saw the value in doing, as the minister instructed them to do, was multifold. First and foremost those kids, who I checked in on from time to time as the minister in the years subsequent, went to a lot more school than they would have had they not had that court action taken. It also sent a message to a large number of other families.

The Department for Education, the government of the day, the Liberal Party and the Labor Party, were all interested in whether their children were going to school. It is one thing to have a framework within which we are providing every opportunity for children to get the best outcome so long as their parents are engaged. But in a circumstance where there is enormous complexity that sometimes can be complicated. Sometimes getting the parents' attention actually requires that extra step of prosecution.

Certainly that was the case in 2017 under the old law. My recollection in that case was that they were able to identify not just the standard of proof to meet an individual case, but by having a number—10 or 12 cases I think it was—laid simultaneously, because, of course, the offence is the number of days they were missing from school and if you are able to establish the child has missed 10 times that number of days without reason, then you can get 10 counts of the case and that lifts the penalty.

It is not about applying a financial penalty to a family who might have been in a vulnerable situation in one case, who were not in the other case. It is not about the penalty. The courts apply discretion in such things not to need to apply the full penalty. It is about ensuring that attention is given to those children and that encouragement is joined by the enforcement to get those kids to school. And, indeed, other parents in the same situation can no longer think, 'They will never take us to court, it is never going to be an issue'.

From a policy point of view it was still seen as desirable by everybody to improve the legislation, because there were complexities in establishing a prosecution where potentially the threshold could have been easier. One of the factors being put forward by the opposition at the time, as we are now, was to substantially increase the level of fine and leave it to the court's discretion to determine what was appropriate. That has broadly been introduced in the subsequent 2019 legislation.

Another proposal was put forward to have expiation notices. That was in the original 2017 bill and we rejected it. We argued against it in the parliament and we rejected it from the ultimate bill. I understand that is still in consideration now and there are processes taking place. If a bill comes back in the future bringing that forward, it will be for other minds than mine to consider that aspect. It is not in this bill, the government has decided not to pursue it at this time. From my own point of view, I applaud that and I encourage anyone interested in the topic to revisit the debates of the time.

I think the whole point about a court being able to apply their discretion to come up with an appropriate penalty and, indeed, that you want to do everything you can to work with a family prior to pursuing a prosecution is potentially lost once you look at an infringement notice, a parking ticket, a speeding fine, if you like, an expiable offence. I am worried about them being applied too liberally in one sense but also as a burden in another.

So that takes us past the 2018 election. The 2019 bill as it came through resolved that issue in favour of increasing the fines allowing the courts to apply their discretion and not having the expiable offence.

I highlight one other issue that the 2019 legislation included, and that is this family conferencing system that has subsequently been used, I think the minister highlighted in his second reading speech, in 179 children's cases with 122 families. Those are the ones that are being reviewed for prosecution. Without having the stat in front of me in terms of family conferences, I understand it is in the hundreds, or at least over 100.

In those family conferences, it is an education conference. It is similar to the processes used in the Youth Court. It fundamentally involves getting a family around the table and establishing what has been going on, what are the challenges, who are the relevant officers of the education department or other government authorities that are relevant, the school and the parents, and seeking resolution in a collaborative session.

This is something that was first suggested to me when I was the new shadow minister in 2016 by a man called Trevor Elburn. Trevor Elburn is many things and he has been many things. He would be known to anyone involved in housing policy in South Australia. He has made a significant contribution to supporting people to downsize into their third stages of life. He is also a musician and a great singer.

Trevor Elburn was a truancy officer some decades ago, and he brought forward this idea about how you effectively engage with people, ensuring that there is a stick available to encourage them to the family conference, but the purpose of the family conference is to identify how the government and the school or the police, or whoever else, can best meet the needs of supporting that family for a good outcome for the students. That made its way into the legislation, which I think the minister and the department have been using to great effect.

The year 2019 came along, and I was very much looking forward to then following the lead of the member for Port Adelaide and supporting the department in prosecutions, potentially having the services of the Crown to give us assistance in securing some positive outcomes and getting some more kids back to school. Ultimately that was cut short, as were so many things, by the pandemic.

In February 2020, we changed our posture completely. We had approaches in Port Augusta, where we had piloted a new model of advertising and social media and a social awareness campaign about getting kids to school. We had all sorts of exciting collateral developed. I hope that the department has made some use of it in some of the things that the minister has done in the last couple of years.

All of these things, of course, were thrown out of the window when our posture shifted to telling everyone to keep their kids at home if they had the sniffles. It became extraordinarily difficult to determine, from a school's point of view, whether a child was truant, when our first order of business was to make sure that they were not going to make somebody sick by their attendance at school, to the point where you did not need a doctor's appointment to be absent, you needed a doctor's appointment to prove that you were well enough to attend, a test to say that you did not have COVID.

Keeping the community safe is a government's first priority in any circumstance. Children attending school is a very, very high priority, but there was a clear and immediate danger to the whole community of any outbreak. There has never been a year in recorded history when so few people have had the flu or the common cold as in 2020, but it meant that everyone had to stay home.

For the rest of the term of the Liberal government, we were unable to pursue any truancy-related policy, because from late term 1 in 2020, people may recall, we had school

attendance in South Australia down to about 65 per cent. It was less in some schools—far less in some schools, higher in others—but across the whole state it was about 60 per cent, and that was high by national comparison.

I remember that, coming into term 2 of 2020, South Australia, Western Australian and the Northern Territory were the only states encouraging their kids to go back to school. The Labor minister in the Northern Territory was Selena Uiibo, and the name of the Labor minister in Western Australia escapes me for a minute, but I suspect she was there before me with the member for Port Adelaide and after me with the member for Wright. The three of us were exchanging messages, competing with each other about who was going to have the higher attendance at school, while hardly anybody was at school in Victoria for 18 months.

It was a different set of circumstances, but ultimately it led to the position where we were not able to pursue that from a policy point of view. The minister has taken that up since the end of the experience of the pandemic. I commend the department for that, and I say to the minister, 'You are welcome,' for the preparation that was done.

I would highlight that as we seek to further iterate and improve the bill with certainly the in-principle support of the opposition—we are supporting the bill; there may be some questions to come when we get to the committee stage about detail—this is something that will keep evolving. We are not in a perfect state and there is no such thing, but we will keep improving this legislation in the years to come. The legal advice that ministers and future ministers will get will inform further improvements to the bill. Also, the challenges are different.

When I was the minister, I recall on any given day there were about 9 per cent of kids absent and about 91 per cent attending. Of that 9 per cent, the average would probably be that 3 per cent were sick, 3 per cent had a reason and 3 per cent did not have a reason. The 3 per cent who did not have a reason, or did not have a reason that would be acceptable, has grown: it grew by about 10 per cent in the years immediately after COVID. There are increases in school refusal, there are increases in anxiety and there are increases in people who are concerned about infectious diseases. That third one has directly informed one of the clauses in this bill that we are dealing with today.

So I make the point that some of this bill is further improvement in response to circumstances, some of this bill is further improvement no doubt in response to legal advice and some of this bill is related to consideration of policy questions. I am sure those policy questions will continue in the years ahead. I think as a function of the family conferences working, working out a way to use that family conference as a mechanism to identify whether or not a family needs to have a letter of concern or a potential prosecution investigated is worthwhile. I think that is clearly incorporated into the proposed legislation.

I think that in the years ahead there may be further changes needed. I am sure the Liberal Party will seek to support those from government, as we will be, and I hope that the Labor Party in opposition will take as constructive an approach to this sort of legislation in the future as we will for these remaining three months to five months while we are in opposition.

With that, I commend the bill. I acknowledge that either the member for Flinders or I, or potentially others, will likely have some questions at the committee stage. I look forward to its further consideration in due course.

The Hon. B.I. BOYER (Wright—Minister for Education, Training and Skills, Minister for Police) (17:51): I just want to make a few very short comments to thank those who have contributed to this bill, including the member for Flinders. The member for Morialta, of course, was a former education minister, as was the member for Port Adelaide. They have a lot of experience in terms of different things different governments have tried to do to tackle issues around non-attendance.

I think this is a pretty thorough piece of work. There are other things that could be considered that we have decided not to progress as part of this bill. I think I addressed those in the second reading speech around what I think are pretty decent reasons for not doing that.

I again thank all those members who have contributed in a very meaningful way and in a way that shows they are very keen as local members to do everything they can to make sure that

the young people who live in their seats are at school as often as they can be. We know that is kind of a base requirement. I commend the bill to the house.

Bill read a second time.

Committee Stage

In committee.

Clause 1.

The CHAIR: I thank the member for Flinders for being here, but given the time constraint I might ask the minister to move that progress be reported.

Progress reported; committee to sit again.

HIGHWAYS (WORKS FOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS) AMENDMENT BILL

Final Stages

The Legislative Council agreed to the bill with the amendments indicated by the following schedule, to which amendments the Legislative Council desires the concurrence of the House of Assembly:

No. 1. Clause 3, page 3, line 14 [clause 3(4), inserted subsection (9a)]—After 'may' insert ', with the approval of the Minister,'

No. 2. Clause 3, page 3, line 16 [clause 3(4), inserted subsection (9a)(a)]—Before 'the council' insert 'in the circumstances referred to in subsection (9ab)—'

No. 3. Clause 3, page 3, line 17 [clause 3(4), inserted subsection (9a)(b)]—Delete 'with the approval of the Minister—'

No. 4. Clause 3, page 3, after line 18 [clause 3(4), after inserted subsection (9a)]—Insert:

(9ab) For the purposes of subsection (9a)(a), the circumstances are where—

- (a) the State Planning Commission issued a certificate for the division of land under section 138 of the *Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016* in relation to development in the designated residential development area approved under that Act; and
- (b) in connection with the issuing of the certificate, the council advised the State Planning Commission that—
 - (i) any common driveway or private road (including all access points to and from the common driveway or private road) set out in the approved plans for the development had been constructed; or
 - (ii) the applicant for the development had entered into a binding arrangement, supported by adequate security, with the council for the satisfaction of (among other things) the requirement to construct the common driveway or private road; and
- (c) the advice referred to in paragraph (b) was incorrect.

(9ac) Before giving an approval under subsection (9a)(a), the Minister must—

- (a) give notice to the council for the district in which the area is located of the proposed approval (which must set out details of the circumstances referred to in subsection (9ab) in relation to the development to which the proposed approval relates) inviting the council to comment on the proposed approval within a period of not less than 30 days from receipt of the notice specified by the Minister; and
- (b) take into account any response received from the council.

No. 5. Clause 3, page 3, after line 31 [clause 3(4), after inserted subsection (9e)]—Insert:

- (9f) Any expenses and interest recovered or recoverable by the Commissioner under subsection (9a) in the circumstances referred to in subsection (9ab) may, if the relevant council considers that any error or omission in advice referred to in that subsection occurred as a result of an act or omission of the relevant developer or another person, be recovered by the council from that relevant developer or other person.

No. 6. Clause 3, page 4, after line 3 [clause 3(5), after inserted subsection (15)]—Insert:

- (15a) If the Commissioner varies a plan to open or close a road in connection with prescribed works carried out by the Commissioner for a development in a designated residential development area, the Commissioner must, as soon as reasonably practicable after completion of the prescribed works, vary the plan so that it is in accordance with the plans and specifications for the road approved in the development authorisation.

No. 7. Clause 3, page 4, line 31 [clause 3(4), inserted subsection (19)(c)]—Delete 'appropriate' and substitute 'reasonably necessary'

NURSE AND MIDWIFE TO PATIENT RATIOS BILL

Final Stages

The Legislative Council agreed to the bill without any amendment.

At 17:55 the house adjourned until Wednesday 29 October 2025 at 10:30.

*Estimates Replies***GRANT PROGRAMS**

In reply to **Mr BASHAM (Finniss)** (20 June 2025). (Estimates Committees A)

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS (West Torrens—Treasurer, Minister for Energy and Mining):

The Department for Infrastructure and Transport advise that the following table outlines the grant program/funds for the 2025-26 financial year—Controlled:

Grant program/fund name	Purpose of grant program/fund	2025-2026 Estimate \$000
Infrastructure and Transport		
Whyalla Airport Upgrade	To upgrade the Whyalla Airport to ensure aviation services can continue following the replacement of Qantas aircrafts.	11,500
South Australian Transport Subsidy Scheme	Taxi subsidies payable to individuals with limited mobility.	10,724
Country and Provincial Concessions	For passengers eligible to travel at concessional rates.	4,794
Kangaroo Island Maintenance Project	To conduct construction works to upgrade specified unsealed roads on Kangaroo Island.	3,730
Heavy Vehicle Safety Productivity Program Stage 7 & Bridge Renewal Program Stage 5	Grants from the Commonwealth to local councils in relation to productivity and safety improvement projects on the local government road network and Bridge Renewal Program. These are administered by DIT on behalf of the Commonwealth.	5,406
Regional Level Crossing Upgrade Program	This program is intended to fund programs to make railway crossings safer in regional areas.	1,508
South Australian Boating Facility Advisory Committee	To establish and improve recreational boating facilities in South Australia's coastal and inland waters.	1,310
National Transport Commission	To contribute to the national road, rail and intermodal transport reform agenda.	681
Car Club Grants	Enable clubs to host bigger and better events and get more South Australians involved.	500
Freight SA	To support the South Australian Freight Council.	459
Overland Rail Subsidy	Subsidy to support the continued running of the Overland train service between Adelaide and Melbourne.	350
Remote Airstrip Upgrade Program (RAUP)	To fund works on Round 10 of the Remote Airstrip Upgrade Program.	339
Cost Of Living Package	Cost-of-Living relief through direct financial support to disadvantaged South Australians.	154
KESAB Road Watch Program	To support delivery of the road watch program.	91
Rail Industry Safety and Standards Board (RISSB)	Funding for the RISSB.	49
Local Government Association (LGA)	Contribution to LGA Mutual Liability Scheme Aerodrome Risk Management Programme for the provision of services to councils and outback areas.	46

Note: The Department for Infrastructure and Transport advises that the grant programs beyond 2025-26, are subject to approval through future state budget processes.

The following table provides details, including the value and beneficiary, or any commitments already made to be funded from the program or funds mentioned in the previous answer.

Grant program/fund name	Beneficiary/Recipient	Purpose	Value \$000
Infrastructure and Transport			
Whyalla Airport Upgrade	Whyalla City Council	To upgrade the Whyalla Airport to ensure aviation services can continue following the replacement of Qantas aircrafts.	11,500
South Australian Transport Subsidy Scheme	Community	Taxi subsidies payable to individuals with limited mobility	10,724
Kangaroo Island Maintenance Project	Kangaroo Island Council	The conduct of construction works to upgrade specified unsealed roads.	3,730

Grant program/fund name	Beneficiary/Recipient	Purpose	Value \$000
Heavy Vehicle Safety Productivity Program	Multiple councils	Grants from the Commonwealth to local councils in relation to productivity and safety improvement projects on the local government road network. These are administered by DIT on behalf of the Commonwealth.	3,040
Heavy Vehicle Safety Productivity Program – Stage 7	Coorong District Council	Carcuma Road Upgrade – Stage 2B.	1,783
	Light Regional Council	Road Widening, Mudla Wirra Road, Kangaroo Flat.	1,626
	Light Regional Council	Road Widening, Argent Road, Kingsford.	76
Bridges Renewal Program – Stage 5	District Council of Mount Remarkable	Reconstruction and Widening of Appilla Spring Bridge, Appilla.	1,120
	Alexandrina Council	Upgrade of Wickham Hill Road bridge, Kuitpo.	600
	District Council of Mount Remarkable	Reconstruction of the Port Germein Road bridge, Port Germein.	298
	District Council of Lower Eyre Peninsula	Construction of Flinders Highway bridge, Hawson.	235
Regional Level Crossing Upgrade Program	Australian Rail Track Corporation, Northern Areas Council and Flinders Ranges Council	The program is intended to fund programs to make railway crossings safer in regional areas.	1,508
South Australian Boating Facility Advisory Committee	Whyalla City Council	Whyalla Boat Ramp.	575
Car Club Grants	SA Car Clubs	Enable clubs to host bigger and better events and get more South Australians involved.	500
Overland Rail Subsidy	Great Southern Rail	Subsidy to support the continued running of the Overland train service between Adelaide and Melbourne.	350
Remote Airstrip Upgrade Program	Council of Lower Eyre—for Port Lincoln Airport	To fund works on Round 10 of the Remote Airstrip Upgrade Program.	339
Freight SA: Strategy and Grant	SA Freight Council Inc	To advise on freight enhancement opportunities and develop a freight and supply chain strategy based on the principles developed in the national action plan by the Transport and Infrastructure Council.	250
Keep South Australia Beautiful (KESAB) Road Watch Program	Not-For-Profit (NFP)—KESAB	Delivery of the Road Watch Program.	91
Rail Industry Safety and Standards Board (RISSB)	RISSB	Funding for RISSB.	49
Local Government Association Grant	Multiple councils	Contribution to Local Government Association Mutual Liability Scheme Aerodrome Risk Management Programme for the provision of services to councils and outback areas.	46

The following table provides the requested information on grant program/funds under my responsibility for the 2025-26 financial year—Administered:

Grant program/fund name	Purpose of grant program/fund	2025-26 Estimate \$000
Infrastructure and Transport		
Thriving Suburbs	Commonwealth funded grants on-passed to local government entities and incorporated not-for-profit organisations for capital works that enhance liveability, strengthen social cohesion and support local amenity in in urban, suburban and pre-urban communities.	23,601

Grant program/fund name	Purpose of grant program/fund	2025-26 Estimate \$000
Urban Precincts and Partnerships Program	Commonwealth funded grants on-passed to recipients to provide transformative investment in urban precincts that grow economies and support local communities.	23,103
Growing Regions	Commonwealth funded grants on-passed to local government entities and incorporated not-for-profit organisations for capital works that enhance liveability, bolster social cohesion and support local amenity throughout South Australia's regions.	11,438
Regional Precincts and Partnerships Program	Commonwealth funded grants on-passed to recipients to provide transformative investment in urban precincts that grow economies and support local communities.	1,420
Catchment Management Subsidy Scheme	Flood mitigation	112