

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**Tuesday, 31 October 2023**

The PRESIDENT (Hon. T.J. Stephens) took the chair at 14:17 and read prayers.

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

*Bills***APPROPRIATION BILL 2023***Assent*

Her Excellency the Governor assented to the bill.

SUCCESSION BILL*Assent*

Her Excellency the Governor assented to the bill.

*Parliamentary Procedure***ANSWERS TABLED**

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

PAPERS

The following papers were laid on the table:

By the President—

Report of the Auditor-General—Report 9 of 2023: Climate change risk management

By the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation (Hon. K.J. Maher)—

Reports, 2022-23—

Department of the Premier and Cabinet
Dhilba Guuranda-Innes National Park Co-management Board
Dog and Cat Management Board
Ikara-Flinders Ranges National Park Co-management Board
Infrastructure SA
Mamungari Conservation Park Co-management Board
Ngaut Ngaut Conservation Park Co-management Board
Office of the South Australian Productivity Commission
Premier's Delivery Unit
South Australian Motor Sport Board
Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park Co-management Board
Witjira National Park Co-management Board
Yumbarra Conservation Park Co-management Board

By the Attorney-General (Hon. K.J. Maher)—

Reports, 2022-23—

Administration of the Freedom of Information Act 1991
Administration of the State Records Act 1997
Controlled Substances Act
Legal Services Commission

Office of the Public Advocate
Privacy Committee of South Australia
Summary Offences Act 1935 Part 16A Child Exploitation Offences—Access to data held electronically
Summary Offences Act 1953 Return of Authorisations Issued to Enter Premises Under Section 83C
Suppression Order
Surveillance Devices Act 2016 South Australia
The Public Trustee
Youth Treatment Order Visitor
Regulations under Acts—
Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935—General—ILOL Notices

By the Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development (Hon. C.M. Scriven)—

Reports, 2022-23—
Adelaide Cemeteries Authority
Architectural Practice Board of SA
Community Road Safety Fund—Revenue and Expenditure
Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator
State Bushfire Coordination Committee
State Planning Commission
Surveyors Board SA
West Beach Trust
Regulations under Acts—
Road Traffic Act 1961—Miscellaneous—Ultra High Powered Vehicles

Question Time

BIOSECURITY

The Hon. N.J. CENTOFANTI (Leader of the Opposition) (14:28): I seek leave to make a brief explanation before asking a question of the Minister for Primary Industries regarding biosecurity.

Leave granted.

The Hon. N.J. CENTOFANTI: On 26 September, I asked a question of the minister on the long-term management of varroa mite, given the decision of the national management group to transition to management rather than eradication of the pest, and what her department and her government was doing to prepare South Australian apiarists and the primary industries more broadly for the new management strategy, to which the minister responded:

As I have already mentioned, the updated plan is expected soon. It's something that we are working on...

My question to the minister is: given we are now six weeks post the decision of management rather than eradication, has the minister and her government released their updated plan to industry, and if not, why not?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN (Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, Minister for Forest Industries) (14:29): I thank the honourable member for her question. I have had a great deal of feedback, as one would imagine, in regard to the national change from an eradication program for varroa mite to a management program. It is worth noting and emphasising that we do not have varroa mite here in South Australia at this time and, of course, we will continue to be doing whatever we can to ensure that it does not come into our state.

New South Wales, of course, continues to battle additional outbreaks that have been identified. Here in South Australia, in consultation with industry, we have established a consultative committee to look at the best ways forward in terms of management, and once there is more to say from that committee, I will be happy to update the chamber.

BIOSECURITY

The Hon. N.J. CENTOFANTI (Leader of the Opposition) (14:30): Supplementary: when will the minister release the updated plan?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN (Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, Minister for Forest Industries) (14:30): I just answered that question.

BIOSECURITY

The Hon. N.J. CENTOFANTI (Leader of the Opposition) (14:30): Can you not give us a date?

The PRESIDENT: The honourable Leader of the Opposition, your second question?

MARINE SCALEFISH FISHERY

The Hon. N.J. CENTOFANTI (Leader of the Opposition) (14:30): I seek leave to make a brief explanation before asking a question of the Minister for Primary Industries on marine scalefish fishery reform.

Leave granted.

The Hon. N.J. CENTOFANTI: In a recent *Sunday Mail* article regarding licence fee announcements for 2024-25 for the marine scalefish fisheries sector, the Minister for Primary Industries commented that, and I quote, for the marine scalefish fishery section:

The proposed changes would see those with greater quota, and therefore greater access to the resource, pay more than those with minimal or no quota entitlements for tier-one species.

My questions to the minister are:

1. Can the minister confirm that the same rules apply with respect to West Coast King George whiting fishers?
2. Do the King George whiting fishers on the West Coast pay the same base licence fee and amount per kilogram compared to those in Gulf St Vincent?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN (Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, Minister for Forest Industries) (14:31): I thank the honourable member for her question. The marine scalefish fishery reform, which commenced under the previous government and is nearing the end of its transition phase, changed the fisheries to individual transferable quota. The West Coast fishery was not part of that aspect of the change and therefore it doesn't have individual transferable quota. I think if the member would like to reflect on that, she might like to rephrase her question so that it is appropriate.

MARINE SCALEFISH FISHERY

The Hon. N.J. CENTOFANTI (Leader of the Opposition) (14:32): Supplementary: why wasn't the West Coast fishery involved in the marine scalefish fishery reform?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN (Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, Minister for Forest Industries) (14:32): Given that that reform and that decision was made under the government of Steven Marshall, so the former Liberal government, I would hope that those opposite should be able to ascertain that information. However, I am happy to see whether there were any public comments made at the time by the former government. The honourable Leader of the Opposition is after all a member of that same party, but to obviously assist her, given that they clearly don't communicate within their own party, I am happy to take that on notice and bring back some response.

MARINE SCALEFISH FISHERY

The Hon. N.J. CENTOFANTI (Leader of the Opposition) (14:33): I seek leave to make a brief explanation before asking a question of the Minister for Primary Industries on marine scalefish fishery reform.

Leave granted.

The Hon. N.J. CENTOFANTI: Currently it is the opposition's understanding that Spencer Gulf prawn fishermen are able to take all the tier 1 squid for no cost, no quota and no restrictions. My question to the minister is:

1. Can she confirm that this is the case?
2. If it is indeed the case, can she explain how that fits under her user-pays system?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN (Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, Minister for Forest Industries) (14:33): Again, I would point out to the Leader of the Opposition that this was a reform that was undertaken by the former Liberal government.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: We are hearing the interjections from those opposite, saying—

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. I.K. Hunter interjecting:

The PRESIDENT: The Hon. Mr Hunter!

Members interjecting:

The PRESIDENT: The Hon. Mr Hunter, your contributions aren't assisting. The honourable Leader of the Opposition and the Hon. Ms Girolamo, I want to listen to the answer. Minister, please.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: As I was saying, this reform was done under the former Liberal government, so if we are talking about the overall marine scalefish fishery reform—

The Hon. K.J. Maher interjecting:

The PRESIDENT: Attorney-General!

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: —these sorts of questions could easily, by those opposite, be directed to their own colleagues in the other place—

The Hon. K.J. Maher interjecting:

The PRESIDENT: Attorney-General!

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: —those who made the decisions at the time about how that reform would roll out.

Members interjecting:

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Those opposite don't like to admit and acknowledge that this was a reform that their colleagues did. In terms of that sort of detail about what discussions happened at the time, back in 2020-21, or those kinds of decisions, then, really, they should ask their colleagues. But, of course, we know what those opposite are like when it comes to communication within their own party: it's so poor that they lose members left, right and centre.

However, in terms of the specifics of the question, since those opposite obviously can't communicate with their own members who made those decisions back at that time, it is fair to say that there are fishermen who have licences for a main species and have rights to some other species. If the member opposite would like to provide more detail, I am happy to provide that additional information on reference to the department.

MARINE SCALEFISH FISHERY

The Hon. N.J. CENTOFANTI (Leader of the Opposition) (14:35): Supplementary, Mr President.

Members interjecting:

The PRESIDENT: The Hon. Mr Martin, don't blot your copybook.

Members interjecting:

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. N.J. CENTOFANTI: Given the minister's comments around the former government's reform—

The PRESIDENT: What's the question?

The Hon. N.J. CENTOFANTI: —does the minister not support the reform of the marine scalefish fishery sector?

Members interjecting:

The PRESIDENT: Attorney-General, if you want to answer the question, stand up; otherwise, sit down and be quiet.

Members interjecting:

The PRESIDENT: The Hon. Ms Girolamo and the Hon. Mr Hanson, can we please listen to the minister. It's her time.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN (Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, Minister for Forest Industries) (14:36): The reform was undertaken under the previous government. We have come into government towards the end of that transition. I am happy to work with the industry, as I have been doing very collaboratively, about how to finalise some of that transition. We do know, of course, that the former government made a huge mess of it in many ways.

We heard that the former Minister for Primary Industries had made exceptional circumstances decisions with no legislative framework. If we remember, that was the determination that was made: there was no legislative framework, according to SACAT. So they made a huge mess of what admittedly is a complex and difficult process. However, the fishery now has individual transferable quota that means that there is an asset for those licence holders to either use—

Members interjecting:

The PRESIDENT: The Hon. Mr Hunter and the honourable Leader of the Opposition!

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: —to catch fish or, indeed, to trade or to sell. When it comes to the overall intent of having the reform—that overall intent, which clearly has missed those opposite—it's about sustainability of the fisheries. I would hope that there would be bipartisan support for sustainability of the fisheries.

The Hon. N.J. Centofanti interjecting:

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: If we don't have a sustainable fishery, no licence holder will have an economically viable business. Without sustainable fishery stocks, no business will be able to survive and we will have to have in place things that restrict the ability to fish. That's not what anybody wants. We have seen that with the snapper fishery. It was allowed to deplete to the stage where bans had to be in place—first of all, bans under the former government and then bans under this government—because of the status of the stocks. The overall goal of sustainability for fisheries—

The Hon. N.J. Centofanti interjecting:

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: —is to make sure that we protect the resource, which is, after all, a community-owned resource. The fisheries of our state belong to the people of South Australia and we of course want to support the sustainability. That's why the reform was done, and of course I support sustainability.

AUGUSTA ZADOW AWARDS

The Hon. J.E. HANSON (14:38): My question is to the Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector. Will the minister inform the council about this year's Augusta Zadow Awards?

The Hon. K.J. MAHER (Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector) (14:39): I thank the honourable member for his question and his interest in this area and also note the interest shown by many members of this chamber who were at Government House in recent days for the Augusta Zadow Awards. I was pleased to previously advise the council about the work of the people who were nominated for the Augusta Zadow Awards that are held during Safe Work Month by health and safety regulator SafeWork SA.

I previously touched upon the contribution that Augusta Zadow has made to South Australia. Augusta Zadow was born in Germany in 1846 and immigrated to Australia with her husband and young son in 1877. Her immigration to South Australia followed after early years of travel through Europe, working as a seamstress, where she observed the working conditions of women employed in clothing factories, and her lifelong passion for women's health and safety was ignited.

After moving to Adelaide, Augusta Zadow became a formidable advocate for women in the textile and clothing industry and a well-known trade unionist. Augusta helped to establish the Working Women's Trade Union and became a delegate to the United Trades and Labor Council. She was also an active campaigner for the enfranchisement of women. Her tireless years of campaigning led to the passage of the Shops and Factories Act in 1895, after which she was appointed by former Premier Charles Kingston as—and the title was—Australia's Lady Inspector of Factories, overseeing the safety and working conditions of women and children in factories. This was a role Augusta held until her untimely death from influenza in 1896.

It was a testament to her contribution to the community that her funeral was attended by the Premier and members of cabinet, as well as dozens of the women factory workers she had supported throughout her life. The legacy she contributed to the early days of this state continues, with her being honoured in the annual Augusta Zadow Awards, an initiative of SafeWork SA which provides funding and recognition for projects, research and further education, which improves the health and safety of women and young workers in South Australia.

These awards have been run by SafeWork SA since 2005 and have resulted in 35 grants to a value of over \$350,000. As I said, many members of this chamber and the other chamber attended a ceremony hosted by Her Excellency the Governor of South Australia at Government House on Friday 20 October. I look forward to informing the chamber of more of some of the remarkable contributions that award winners of this year's Augusta Zadow Awards have made at a future date.

TEACHERS DISPUTE

The Hon. R.A. SIMMS (14:42): I seek leave to make a brief explanation before addressing a question without notice to the Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector on the topic of public school teachers.

Leave granted.

The Hon. R.A. SIMMS: Last week, the Australian Education Union indicated that it would be considering striking again on 9 November if no acceptable offer has been made by the government by the deadline of 6 November. On 1 September this year, thousands of educators went on strike, calling for better pay conditions, more school services officers and more time face to face with students.

AEU SA Branch President, Andrew Gohl, has told *The Advertiser* that he believes it is becoming increasingly clear that the Premier doesn't see public education as a priority for his government. My question to the minister therefore is: does the minister see public education as a priority for the government, and what action is he taking to meet the needs of teachers by the deadline of 6 November?

The Hon. K.J. MAHER (Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector) (14:43): I thank the honourable member for his question. This is an area we have traversed previously in this chamber. In relation to the first part of the question, the Premier, the Minister for Education in another place, myself and in fact the entire Labor team see public education as critically important, and certainly support for public education has been a hallmark of this government. I won't go into laborious detail, but many, many initiatives, many, many millions of dollars, have been put towards improving public education outcomes in South Australia.

In relation to the enterprise bargaining that is currently underway with the Australian Education Union, there have been numerous meetings; I have attended a number of those personally with representatives from the Australian Education Union. As I have said previously, we are negotiating in good faith and we will continue to do that. As the member has indicated, the union has publicly said that they are considering further strike action.

I think it is the government's view that that would be unfortunate, particularly as the proposed strike action falls during year 12 exams, which is often a stressful time for students and parents and a critical time for those educators who teach those students. We will, as we have in the past, continue to negotiate in good faith. If we can meet the deadlines that the union imposes, we certainly will, but we want to make sure we are doing everything we can to meet the needs of students.

TEACHERS DISPUTE

The Hon. R.A. SIMMS (14:44): Supplementary: if public education is really that critical to the government, why won't they pay teachers what they are worth?

The Hon. K.J. MAHER (Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector) (14:45): I thank the honourable member for his question. Certainly, that is exactly what we are looking to do during that bargaining process. I just don't have the figures in front of me, but so far what the government has indicated they would be willing to agree to as part of this enterprise bargaining round, if I am remembering correctly but I will check these figures, equates to something like \$130 million worth of things that aren't just in terms of pay but that will help public education, like a reduction in face-to-face teaching time. We will continue to work with the Education Union to, as I say, bargain in good faith and resolve the current negotiation period that is occurring with teachers.

DECLARED PUBLIC PRECINCTS

The Hon. J.S. LEE (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:45): I seek leave to make a brief explanation before asking a question of the Attorney-General about the declared public precincts in the CBD.

Leave granted.

The Hon. J.S. LEE: According to an InDaily article published on Friday 27 October, SA Police have arrested and charged 44 people for breaking strict bans on entering the Adelaide CBD around North Terrace and Rundle Mall, with offenders facing fines of up to \$1,250. The article goes on to state, however, the various concerns of the program held by independent bodies, including the Law Society of SA President, James March, who said:

The society is concerned about the potential for the regime to affect disproportionately Aboriginal, young and disadvantaged people.

The society has asked the Attorney-General's Department to provide the evidence upon which the decision to expand the regime was based.

Measures that give extraordinary powers to state authorities that significantly restrict individual rights and liberties much be based on sound evidence. Without the evidence being published, it is difficult to see how the public can have confidence in the credibility of such measures.

My questions to the Attorney-General are:

1. Can the Attorney-General confirm whether there is any sound evidence to support his decision to expand the declared public precincts in the CBD and extend this operation until April next year?
2. If there is indeed any sound evidence, why has it not been released and will the Attorney-General commit to publicly releasing the evidence upon which a decision to expand the regime was based?
3. What further steps is the Attorney-General taking to ensure that this operation is not disproportionately affecting disadvantaged people, including young people and Aboriginal Australians?

The Hon. K.J. MAHER (Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector) (14:47): I thank the honourable member for her questions. In relation to question 1, I can confirm that these decisions are made, as they have been in the past under local, Liberal and Labor governments, on evidence that's put forward to the government by the police in relation to release of information. I am happy to check to see if it is appropriate to release information. Of course, there may well be operational issues that it wouldn't be appropriate to release, but I can seek some advice.

In relation to the honourable member's final question, there are certainly things that are being put in place that make sure it's not just a police but a multiagency response. I have talked previously about the safety and wellbeing task force established by the government and, for example, in August of this year, the new safer place to gather site that was established at Edwards Park by the Department of Human Services.

LIMESTONE COAST

The Hon. T.T. NGO (14:49): My question is to the Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development. Can the minister tell the chamber about the government's announcement of a significant investment in regional connectivity in the Limestone Coast region?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN (Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, Minister for Forest Industries) (14:49): I thank the honourable member for his question. It was a great pleasure to be, along with my cabinet colleagues, in the Limestone Coast last week for the MacKillop country cabinet visit. As a resident of the Limestone Coast, I can certainly attest to the wonderful lifestyle that we enjoy in our part of the state. We are proud of our communities and the significant contributions that the region's industries make to the state's economy, from dairy and livestock to broadacre farming, forestry, fishing, tourism, the list goes on.

One observation that visitors and residents of the Limestone Coast often make is that there are so many mobile and data blackspots, which adversely impact on visitor experiences, business operations and service delivery. Our government has listened to those concerns, and last Thursday we announced a significant \$5.5 million investment in Limestone Coast regional connectivity. This investment forms part of a Telstra project which, if successful in securing commonwealth government funding, will be the largest mobile co-investment project Telstra has ever put together in South Australia, and one of the largest nationwide.

The \$27.7 million project includes the installation of 27 new mobile base stations in the Limestone Coast region, adding around 2,400 square kilometres of new 4G coverage, which is a 44 per cent increase in the land mass covered. The new towers will increase mobile coverage, wireless broadband and data sharing capabilities.

At a practical level, that means we will have more efficient communication and monitoring in the forestry, dairy, agricultural, winery and wool industries, as well as better connectivity for tourists and improved access to remote health services. It also means enhanced communications for vital emergency services, including additional 000 connectivity for users of other non-Telstra networks in emergency situations.

One of the most impressive aspects of this co-investment project has been how key stakeholders have come together, recognised the benefits of enhanced connectivity and committed their own funding to this project. In addition to the funding contributions from the South Australian government and Telstra, six of the seven councils in the Limestone Coast region have also committed project funding, as has the South Australian Forest Products Association.

This combination of industry, state and local government funding presents a compelling case to the commonwealth government's Regional Connectivity Program, round 3. I look forward to the outcome of Telstra's application to that program, and I commend the project and all of its co-investors for taking advantage of this opportunity to improve regional connectivity in the Limestone Coast.

LIMESTONE COAST

The Hon. B.R. HOOD (14:52): Supplementary: is the minister and her government confident that the federal Labor government will fund this project?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN (Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, Minister for Forest Industries) (14:52): As I mentioned, I think this project presents a compelling case to the federal Labor government. What is unique about this project is that it is that whole collaboration, not just Telstra and federal government funding potentially but the involvement of the state government, of local government—six out of the seven in the region—and of industry. That is something that really does present a very strong case. I hope that the commonwealth government sees it in that light and that we can look forward to funding from the federal government to see this come to fruition.

LIMESTONE COAST

The Hon. B.R. HOOD (14:53): Supplementary: if the federal Labor government does not fund this project, will the state government make up the shortfall?

The PRESIDENT: It's hypothetical.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN (Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, Minister for Forest Industries) (14:53): I certainly hope that that is just a hypothetical question and that we do indeed get funding from the federal government. I look forward to seeing the outcome of the funding application.

The PRESIDENT: I have the Hon. Ms Bonaros listed next. The Hon. Mr Pangallo, will you take that question?

ADELAIDE CASINO

The Hon. F. PANGALLO (14:53): I seek leave to make a brief explanation before asking the Attorney-General, representing the Minister for Consumer and Business Affairs, a question about the crisis-plagued Adelaide Casino.

Leave granted.

The Hon. F. PANGALLO: The chairman of SkyCity Entertainment Group, the owners of the Adelaide Casino, has made the startling revelation that the company will probably admit to allegations that the Adelaide Casino breached anti-money laundering laws and pay a multimillion-dollar penalty. Speaking to a journalist in New Zealand, where the company is based, chairman Julian Cook said:

We are yet to strike a final agreement with AUSTRAC, but, if we do, it will most likely include admissions of such nature. We will probably be paying a fine.

At the centre of SkyCity's pain is Federal Court action initiated by AUSTRAC alleging criminals laundered almost \$4 billion at the Casino over the past six years. While a final outcome is yet to be determined, SkyCity recently advised the Australian Stock Exchange that it has put aside \$45 million to cover a potential civil penalty from its anti-money laundering case. My questions to the minister are:

1. What penalties can the government impose on the Casino operator should it plead guilty to the charges or is found guilty of them?
2. Has the government sought legal advice on withdrawing SkyCity's licence to operate the Casino should it be found guilty or admit guilt to the charges?
3. Does the government continue to have confidence in the operators of Adelaide Casino given these latest revelations?
4. How many compliance checks/inspections have been carried out by government inspectors since the AUSTRAC allegations were revealed and is it more than would normally occur given recent events?

The Hon. K.J. MAHER (Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector) (14:55): I thank the honourable member for his questions. As he outlined, the responsible minister is the Minister for Consumer and Business Affairs, the Hon. Andrea Michaels, in another place and I will be more than happy to pass those questions to the minister responsible and bring back a reply for the honourable member.

ABORIGINAL REMAINS, RIVERLEA PARK

The Hon. J.M.A. LENSINK (14:55): I seek leave to make a brief explanation before directing questions to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs about the discovery of Aboriginal remains at Riverlea.

Leave granted.

The Hon. J.M.A. LENSINK: I didn't need to make an explanation. My questions for the minister are:

1. Has the minister been briefed on how the Aboriginal remains were not discovered in earlier stages of this project?
2. Given the significant concerns raised by Kurna community members, does the minister believe that the decision-making process regarding the reinterment of the remains is transparent and inclusive?
3. What additional steps are being taken to identify and protect other potential sites across the state?

The Hon. K.J. MAHER (Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector) (14:56): I thank the honourable member for her questions and her interest in this area. In relation to the discovery of remains and trying to make sure that these things are known about or discovered earlier, it is quite a difficult area because, by the very definition of discovering remains, you have already disturbed the ground for those remains to be discovered.

It would be a difficult thing to know where all burial grounds are over a large area. On a continent that has had tens of thousands of years—thousands of generations—of human occupation, it is a simple fact of history that for nearly all parts of this state and all parts of this nation there has been human interaction with that country that has included people living there and in a lot of areas people's ancestors being buried there. In an ideal world, you would have a knowledge of exactly where all ancestral remains may be buried, but the facts often are that they are not discovered until there are ground-disturbing works that occur.

In relation to the member's other questions, yes, it would be great to have an absolute knowledge of where these things are. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of Aboriginal sites and Aboriginal objects on the central archive that is kept by the department, but just because something isn't on the central register that the department holds does not mean it's not afforded protection under the Aboriginal Heritage Act, which has been in place since 1988.

I think her final question, which was her second question, is in relation to taking into account people's views about the treatment of ancestral remains when they are discovered, as has happened in this case through ground-disturbing works. There is a process that is currently underway under the Aboriginal Heritage Act. That process will run and there has already been, and continues to be, extensive consultation, so the views of traditional owners and I think the language under the legislation is 'other Aboriginal people with an interest' are taken into account when there are decisions made about how Aboriginal heritage is managed.

ABORIGINAL REMAINS, RIVERLEA PARK

The Hon. J.M.A. LENSINK (14:59): Supplementary: given the complexity of this particular discovery and the grief that it's causing, is the minister satisfied with the current process and does he intend to make any changes to it?

The Hon. K.J. MAHER (Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector) (14:59): I thank the honourable member for her question. She is right: there is significant complexity, it does cause distress and, within Aboriginal communities when these processes are undertaken and applications are made, there often are very significant and different views.

Certainly, there were amendments—and I just can't remember the year but maybe within the last decade—to try to give Aboriginal people and organisations more of a say at the front of these processes through Aboriginal heritage bodies. We haven't seen many of those established, but with the establishment of more of those it is hoped that Aboriginal people and Aboriginal organisations

will have more of a say at an earlier stage in many of these processes under our Aboriginal Heritage Act.

ABORIGINAL REMAINS, RIVERLEA PARK

The Hon. F. PANGALLO (15:00): Supplementary: when does the minister intend issuing authorisation for carbon dating testing on those remains?

The Hon. K.J. MAHER (Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector) (15:00): I thank the honourable member for his question. I am not going to go into details about an application process that is currently underway, but what I can say is that very often in these sorts of application processes, part of the application process is the ability to talk to traditional owners to allow for testing.

Carbon dating testing is a destructive method of testing. It requires the destruction of parts of material and in this case ancestral remains. As I say, I won't go into details about an application process underway, but very often in these sorts of application processes, one element is the authorisation to allow for that destructive testing for carbon dating testing. In this particular application process, as I outlined to the Hon. Michelle Lensink, it's expected it will conclude sometime early next year.

DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION

The Hon. R.B. MARTIN (15:01): My question is to the Attorney-General. Will the minister please inform the council about the new Southern Domestic Violence Prevention and Recovery Hub?

The Hon. K.J. MAHER (Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector) (15:02): I thank the honourable member for his question and his interest in this area. I am pleased to share with the council that a new domestic violence prevention and recovery hub is being established in Adelaide's south, located within Colonnades Shopping Centre in Noarlunga.

This establishment fulfils a commitment that was made to establish two hubs—in Adelaide's southern and in Adelaide's northern suburbs—that will provide a place of support and solace to women experiencing family, domestic and sexual violence, in this case with this hub in the southern metropolitan area. The hub will be run by Southern Community Justice Services SA as the lead coordinating agency. It has been established through the substantial engagement of key stakeholders in the region, such as the Southern Domestic Violence Action Group.

Part of the stakeholder feedback included the location, with the new hub having been identified as accessible, safe and secure for women whilst also enabling co-location with important services based within and close to the centre. Set to be open for business by the end of the year, the hub will be providing core domestic violence prevention and recovery supports to women in the south, as well as health and counselling services through the existing Yarrow Place and Cedar Health services, both services within the Women's and Children's Health Network.

This establishment is in line with a commitment the then Labor opposition made, having committed to providing \$1 million to establish both the southern and northern domestic violence prevention and recovery hubs. There are currently 10 women's safety hubs operating across regional South Australia, so this commitment is a great step forward to furthering the outreach and support for women experiencing family and domestic violence.

I would particularly like to acknowledge and thank Southern Community Justice Services SA, the Can:Do organisation in Noarlunga for the renting of their space and, importantly, the Southern Domestic Violence Action Group and all other stakeholders in getting this hub established and the space secured.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON PROHIBITION OF NEO-NAZI SYMBOLS

The Hon. T.A. FRANKS (15:04): Under standing order 107, I seek leave to make a brief explanation before addressing a question to the Hon. Sarah Game on the topic of the prohibition of Neo-Nazi symbols select committee, which she chairs.

Leave granted.

The Hon. T.A. FRANKS: In response to a spate of what appeared to be Nazi or Neo-Nazi activity and harm in Adelaide at the time, back in 2022 the Legislative Council established a select committee to inquire into the prohibition of Nazi symbols. At the time, the Labor Minister for Multicultural Affairs, by way of a media release also quoting the Hon. Sarah Game MLC, noted that Labor would support the One Nation MLC to chair this committee. The original date for receipt of submissions was then 13 January 2023.

According to the parliamentary website, the committee has now received and published at least 29 submissions and held three public hearings, those hearings being held on 16 March 2023, 11 May 2023 and 23 June 2023. It appears it is now four months since a public hearing has been held. It is also nine months since the submissions closed and well over a year since the committee was announced.

In that time we have seen all other states—Victoria, Queensland, New South Wales, WA, Tasmania—and the Australian Capital Territory move to legislate bans on Nazi symbols and salutes and other associated actions. At this rate, we may well be the very last jurisdiction in Australia to move to address this scourge. My questions to the member, as the Chair of the Select Committee on Prohibition of Neo-Nazi Symbols, are:

1. When does she anticipate this select committee will report?
2. Should this council wait for that committee's report before enacting legislation to prohibit Nazi symbols in our state?

The PRESIDENT: The Hon. Ms Game, you can choose to answer that question, but I will remind you that deliberations of a committee that haven't been made public are not to be discussed at this point.

The Hon. S.L. GAME (15:06): I am very proud of my Jewish heritage, and I want to use this opportunity to stress that I am very motivated to stamp out any antisemitism, particularly in the current climate, although obviously I feel for everyone involved in the current global conflict.

My understanding was that there was federal legislation taking place. I will have to check procedures, but I understood we were awaiting some sort of feedback about national progress with that committee. I would also remind the chamber that in February my father died, and there was a delay for that reason. I am committed to the committee, but I was of the understanding that we were awaiting work that was happening under the Labor government at a federal level.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON PROHIBITION OF NEO-NAZI SYMBOLS

The Hon. T.A. FRANKS (15:07): Supplementary: noting federal legislation has commenced, but that the roles states and territories play has also been called to be enacted because it won't be strong enough without states and territories acting, will the Chair of this committee let this council know when we will receive a report, so that we can get on with legislating to ban Nazi symbols in South Australia?

The Hon. S.L. GAME (15:08): I will take that on notice.

ABORIGINAL REMAINS, RIVERLEA PARK

The Hon. H.M. GIROLAMO (15:08): I seek leave to give a brief explanation before asking a question of the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs regarding the Walker development at Riverlea.

Leave granted.

The Hon. H.M. GIROLAMO: In a recent news article, the Kurna Yerta Aboriginal Corporation asserted that specimens had been taken away from the site at Riverlea for radiocarbon testing and that results would be a few months away. My questions to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs are:

1. What detail or level of support has been provided to the Kurna Yerta Aboriginal Corporation, and what feedback has been provided?
2. When did the minister last meet with this corporation?

The Hon. K.J. MAHER (Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector) (15:09): I thank the honourable member for her questions. I assume the questions are about the preamble the honourable member gave in relation to carbon dating and testing of ancestral remains. I think it was in another media report just yesterday that it was reported that there was a misunderstanding that has occurred somewhere and that no remains, according to that report, had been removed. I think that quoted the chair of the Kaurna Yerta Aboriginal Corporation in that article to say that, despite earlier comments in a media report, in fact no remains had been removed.

As with a question the Hon. Frank Pangallo asked earlier, I won't go into specifics of a process that is underway under the act at the moment, but often in these sorts of applications if there is a desire for destructive testing, such as radiocarbon dating of ancestral remains, they form part of an application process.

KAURNA YERTA ABORIGINAL CORPORATION

The Hon. H.M. GIROLAMO (15:10): Supplementary: when did the minister last meet with the Kaurna Yerta Aboriginal Corporation?

Members interjecting:

The PRESIDENT: No. It didn't arise from the original answer, so I can't rule that in favour.

GREEN TRIANGLE TIMBER INDUSTRY AWARDS

The Hon. J.E. HANSON (15:10): My question is to the Minister for Forest Industries. Will the minister inform the council about the recent Green Triangle Timber Industry Awards night held in Mount Gambier?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN (Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, Minister for Forest Industries) (15:10): I thank the honourable member for his question. Members on this side of the chamber understand the importance of forestry and the timber industry here in South Australia. As I have said on many occasions in this place, the forest industry employs both directly and indirectly over 21,000 people, many of whom reside in the Limestone Coast and provide an overall economic value to the state of over \$1.4 billion.

These figures are certainly worth celebrating, and that is exactly what happened last Friday night when we had the fourth annual Green Triangle Timber Industry Awards night at the Barn, near Mount Gambier. The event was attended by over 500 people from across the timber industry in the Green Triangle and celebrated and acknowledged the vital contribution made by so many people involved in the industry.

I think I have attended every awards night since their creation, and I am pleased to say that this was the biggest one to date. It just keeps on getting bigger and better. Of course, events like this don't just occur. Months of planning went into the event, and it was clear on the night that organisers left no stone unturned. I want to give special thanks to Adrian Flowers and Gaylene Newton for all of their hard work in running a very successful event, supported, of course, by their committee.

It was wonderful to have the Premier attend and reinforce through his speech the significance of this industry to the state. I also note hardworking local members, the member for Mount Gambier and the member for MacKillop, were in attendance. The Hon. Ben Hood was there too.

Members interjecting:

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: Nominations across 10 award categories were judged and awarded, and I want to take this opportunity to congratulate Andrew Burston from OneFortyOne for winning the Sawmilling and Processing Excellence Award; Adam Merrett from Merrett Logging for winning the Logistics Excellence Award; Jamie Marlow, again from Merrett Logging, for being awarded the Harvesting and In-Field Chipping Excellence Award; and Jason Whyte from Berry and Whyte Surveyors for taking out the Silviculture and Timber Support Services Excellence Award.

There were joint winners in the Safety Excellence Award, with Deb Kuhl and Ryan Cassar being acknowledged as equally worthy of that award. Grace Tse from Timberlands Pacific was awarded the Trainee/Apprentice of the Year Award. Wendy Fennell from Fennell Forestry was the winner of the Environment and Sustainability Award. The Safety Excellence Award for more than 30 staff was won by Merrett Logging, with Glenara Transport taking out the Safety Excellence Award for fewer than 30 staff.

Last but certainly not least was the winner of the prestigious Timber Legend Award, and I am delighted to say that that was won by Dr Jim O'Hehir. Dr O'Hehir has played a significant role in the forest industry in the Limestone Coast for many years, is internationally recognised for his research and more recently has been a critical player in the rollout of the Forestry Centre of Excellence.

It was a pleasure to see high-calibre nominees and winners who were all rightfully recognised for their ongoing contributions to the forest industry, an industry that has a great future in our state. Once again, congratulations to all involved.

PARENTAL ALIENATING BEHAVIOURS

The Hon. S.L. GAME (15:14): I seek leave to make a brief explanation before directing a question to the Attorney-General regarding parental alienation.

Leave granted.

The Hon. S.L. GAME: Parental alienation is a widespread issue that has for too long now gone unaddressed. It is mostly an unrecognised crisis for thousands of South Australian families, yet the Malinauskas government has yet to even acknowledge the problem exists. It is a well-documented issue which extends to grandparents and other family members including all those who play an important role in a child's upbringing. To ignore its existence is to perpetuate family violence.

I understand the Eeny Meeny Miney Mo Foundation, which dedicates its efforts to advocate for targeted parents and works towards the reunification of children across Australia, wrote to the Attorney-General on 17 May seeking assistance. My questions to the Attorney-General are:

1. Will the Malinauskas government acknowledge the existence of parental alienation and when can the Eeny Meeny Miney Mo Foundation expect a response to its correspondence with the office of the Attorney-General?
2. Why was the office of the Attorney-General unable to confirm it had indeed received correspondence from the Eeny Meeny Miney Mo Foundation following an inquiry from my office on 25 October?

The Hon. K.J. MAHER (Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector) (15:15): I thank the honourable member for her question and I note that this issue is something that the honourable member's federal party, through Senator Pauline Hanson, has talked about extensively in the federal parliament, and particularly in reference to Senator Pauline Hanson's personal family experience and downplaying the experience of victim survivors who are women who have experienced domestic violence.

There is very little that I agree on with Senator Pauline Hanson, and the idea that many women in particular are using criminal processes and the Family Court in particular to alienate children from their parents is one that I think is exceptionally contested in much of the research and much of what I have seen.

I had my office check, and in relation to specific correspondence that I receive, I think back in May I received some correspondence offering the same sort of views about parental alienation and the role that courts or others play. I think this particular piece of correspondence referred to, and I will quote from it, 'the women's DV industry'.

When I hear that sort of language that seeks to downplay and minimise the effect that domestic family violence has on women survivors it is often a red flag as to what people's views are,

and so when people use language such as 'the women's DV industry' to belittle and downplay, I think that says a lot about the rest of the views that sometimes many people hold.

PARENTAL ALIENATING BEHAVIOURS

The Hon. S.L. GAME (15:17): Supplementary: did the Attorney-General note that the founder of the Eeny Meeny Miney Mo Foundation is a woman who was motivated to establish the foundation after in fact being alienated from her own children by the father?

The Hon. K.J. MAHER (Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector) (15:17): I am happy to reply, sir. When I receive correspondence that denigrates the lived experience of survivors and victims of domestic violence with language such as 'the women's DV industry' I think that says a lot.

MOUNT GAMBIER, PUBLIC TRANSPORT

The Hon. B.R. HOOD (15:18): I seek leave to make a brief explanation before asking a question of the Minister for Regional Development regarding public transport in Mount Gambier.

Leave granted.

The Hon. B.R. HOOD: The state government has renewed Mount Gambier's bus tender contract to continue current operations until 2035. In 2021, the City of Mount Gambier council undertook a comprehensive review of public transport services where myriad service gaps and inadequacies were found including restrictive 9am to 5pm operation hours that make catching a bus unviable for workers and students, insufficient or non-existent services to sites such as Mount Gambier hospital, Foodbank, the new Wulanda Recreation and Convention Centre and seniors' villages, and the complete absence of any bus operations at all on weekends.

While six new buses are proposed to be in use by 2025, and a review is to be undertaken by the department, the contract will not offer any improvements to these existing issues. The current arrangements have been described by the Mayor of Mount Gambier and other community leaders as vastly inadequate. My question to the regional development minister is: does the minister believe that the current service levels are appropriate for our state's second biggest city with a catchment of around 30,000 people?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN (Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, Minister for Forest Industries) (15:19): I thank the honourable member for his question. He rightly notes that there is a review underway, which is looking at regional public transport. As the honourable member would be aware, our government has been engaging with regional communities on a very active level, including, for example, our recent country cabinet in MacKillop just last week—

The Hon. N.J. Centofanti: Fly-in fly-out.

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: —and of course our very first country cabinet that we had following the election was held in Mount Gambier. Although I know we shouldn't respond to interjections, I might point out—

The Hon. N.J. Centofanti interjecting:

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: —that whilst we were happy to engage with the member for MacKillop, unlike those opposite, there were many ministers, myself included, who were there in the first part of the week, throughout the week and until the end and, of course, the Premier was there for several days, including coming to the timber industry awards, as I mentioned in a previous answer to a question.

As part of our election commitment, our government committed to reviewing the operations and availability of public transport options in regional centres. I have spoken in this place myself on a number of occasions about the difficulties that are currently in place. There are a number of, for example, community organisation based transport services, perhaps once or twice a week, transporting commuters or residents to particular activities, and we want to look at how that can best be integrated with other public transport services. I look forward to the outcome of the review and

will of course continue to work with the Minister for Transport, whose portfolio this is, on what those solutions might be.

MOUNT GAMBIER, PUBLIC TRANSPORT

The Hon. B.R. HOOD (15:21): Supplementary: does the minister think it's strange that this government has signed a contract of inadequate services for eight years in the City of Mount Gambier on public transport and then initiated a review after signing a contract?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN (Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, Minister for Forest Industries) (15:21): The facts of the honourable member's question are incorrect. The review was certainly commenced, as my advice is, prior to the signing of the contracts. However, if the signing of the contracts, as I understand it, had not proceeded, then transport services could have been ended prematurely, which wouldn't be a positive outcome for anyone.

MOUNT GAMBIER, PUBLIC TRANSPORT

The Hon. R.A. SIMMS (15:22): Supplementary: does the minister recognise that public transport is integral to regional development and therefore core to her portfolio?

Members interjecting:

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN (Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, Minister for Forest Industries) (15:22): As I said, I have spoken on numerous occasions in this place and elsewhere about the importance of transport in terms of connectivity for regional residents. We know that it's also a sustainable option and it addresses, too, those members of the community who may not be able to drive, either perhaps because of health issues or other issues. So it's certainly something which is incredibly important and I am glad that I have been able to be involved in the discussions on it so far.

MOUNT GAMBIER, PUBLIC TRANSPORT

The Hon. B.R. HOOD (15:23): Supplementary: has the minister had discussions with the Minister for Transport regarding the review and the structure of that review?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN (Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, Minister for Forest Industries) (15:23): I thank the honourable member for the supplementary question. I have had multiple discussions with the Minister for Transport about public transport issues, including in the Limestone Coast.

The PRESIDENT: The Hon. Mr Ngo—and, the Hon. Mr Ngo, it's good to see you up and about after your recent illness.

LAW SOCIETY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA JUSTICE AWARD

The Hon. T.T. NGO (15:23): Thank you, Mr President. I just got my memory back. My question is to the Attorney-General. Can the minister tell the council about the winners of the Law Society of South Australia Justice Award for 2023?

The Hon. K.J. MAHER (Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector) (15:24): I thank the very healthy looking honourable member for his question and his interest in this area.

The Law Society Awards, a couple of which I have mentioned in this chamber over the last few weeks, recognises contributions that legal practitioners and those involved in the law in South Australia have made to the profession. The Law Society's Justice Award recognises the contribution that legal practitioners in particular have made to promoting access to justice in South Australia, particularly for socially and economically disadvantaged people. The Justice Award is presented to an individual legal practitioner or practitioners whose commitment to promoting access to justice in South Australia has been demonstrated in a range of activities over an extended period or in a single activity of significance.

I am most pleased to inform the council this year that the Justice Award was won by Mr Graham Russell and Mr Greg Mead SC. The two winners of this year's Justice Award, who were honoured at the legal professional dinner earlier this year, have left lasting impacts on the access to justice in this state, something for which I am very grateful, as are many other South Australians.

Mr Graham Russell has been at the Legal Services Commission for an incredible 46 years. He has championed the legal rights of children and families right throughout his career. Graham was the manager of the Legal Services Commission's Family Law Unit for 28 years. Throughout his tenure he has established a number of programs, including the child support specialist unit, do-your-own-divorce classes, the independent children's lawyer's program, the family dispute resolution program, the family advocacy and support service and the cross-examination scheme. All of these programs have extended the reach of Legal Aid to many people who would not otherwise have been assisted with their family law disputes.

In more recent times, Graham has been a key member of the Legal Services Commission's policy team, providing practical and well-informed advice to the leadership on legal policy and matters relevant to South Australia and nationally. Graham's decades of service to the development of access to justice in family law have been fittingly acknowledged, with the co-awarding of the Justice Award for 2023.

The other winner, as I mentioned earlier, of the Justice Award is Greg Mead SC, who has also spent almost his entire career at the Legal Services Commission, starting out as a legal officer in the criminal practice division. In 1993, Greg set up a free after-hours custody service, which is run by volunteers and enables people charged with serious criminal offences to navigate their legal rights, access legal advice and receive support for special needs. This service still operates today, after having been set up way back in 1993.

In 2005, Greg was appointed as the Legal Services Commission Chief Counsel, and his expertise was recognised when he was appointed Senior Counsel in 2010. Greg has been one of the state's key figures in ensuring that people going through the criminal justice system can access their legal rights. He has been instrumental in the introduction of the legal practitioner panel system, developing merits testing for Legal Aid applications and protecting confidentiality and protecting legal professional privilege.

An enduring presence in the criminal courts, often to be seen as counsel in some of the most serious trials, Greg is well-known for his courteous demeanour, even when defending his clients with utmost tenacity and skill. A keen legal mind, dedicated to ensuring that the most vulnerable South Australians get legal representation, Greg Mead is obviously a worthy recipient of the Justice Award for 2023.

I commend the winners of the 2023 Justice Award. They serve as an example to anyone considering a career furthering access to justice, particularly as both these winners are from the Legal Services Commission, and a career in the Legal Services Commission. Those two aims—furthering access to justice and working with the Legal Services Commission—in my experience are very closely related.

Mr Graham Russell and Mr Greg Mead SC have had an unwavering commitment to ensuring that justice is accessible to all, regardless of circumstance or background, so I am very proud of this year's winners and commend their achievements to the council.

Bills

ADELAIDE UNIVERSITY BILL

Second Reading

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 19 October 2023.)

The Hon. J.S. LEE (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (15:29): I rise today on behalf of the Liberal Party as the lead speaker to speak on the Adelaide University Bill 2023. This is a bill for an act to establish Adelaide University as a new university that has global standing by combining the

University of Adelaide and the University of South Australia, to repeal the University of Adelaide Act 1971 and the University of South Australia Act 1990, to make related amendments to other acts, and for other purposes.

This is an important bill, make no mistake about it. There is significant public interest and media interest about the university merger. Some 200 news articles can be found just by doing a quick search on the internet and on all the mainstream media outlets, and educational journals have published news and stories about the merger.

Presently, South Australia has three major public universities: the University of Adelaide founded in 1874, Flinders University founded in 1966 and the University of South Australia formed in 1991 by the merger of the South Australian Institute of Technology and the South Australian College of Advanced Education, which together form the university sector (the sector).

These three institutions operate separately and have historically performed competitively in the context of global rankings. The university sector is at the heart of South Australia's economic prosperity. Each year, the sector educates an estimated 70,000 domestic and 20,000 international students. The overall contribution of education and training to the South Australian economy exceeds \$7 billion annually. International education has been described as one of the state's most significant exports, with an annual value of around \$1.8 billion.

On 2 July 2023, the state government signed a joint heads of agreement with the University of Adelaide and the University of South Australia in relation to the proposed amalgamation of the two universities. The agreement was announced concurrently with a proposal for the state government to invest \$300 million for the establishment of two perpetual funds, one for research and the other to support the enrolment of students from low socio-economic groups, alongside the provision of other funding to support the proposed merger.

The Adelaide University Bill 2023 has now been introduced in the Legislative Council and the government has indicated they wish to conclude all stages of debate by the end of this Wednesday's sitting. As members will be aware, it was the subject of a parliamentary joint committee inquiry for three months over the winter break to call in witnesses and for witnesses to provide evidence, and we received nearly 100 submissions.

I wish to acknowledge all the joint committee members who participated in the inquiry. I would particularly like to acknowledge the strong leadership and passion shown by the shadow minister for education, the Hon. John Gardner, member for Morialta, in the way that he has engaged with stakeholders, worked diligently and relentlessly and been thoroughly involved in the comprehensive research and preparation of briefings to major stakeholders as well as the Liberal parliamentary team.

The Joint Committee on the Establishment of Adelaide University undertook a significant body of work considering a matter of public policy that, unusually, does not appear to have been subject to serious policy analysis by a government agency prior to its announcement. We encourage all members to read the full report of the joint committee, along with the minority reports, because it contains lots of information that all members should be aware of. Normally, the cabinet ministers would present it with a full scope of evidence before determining government policy, and we were very disappointed that they did not do so.

I would like to highlight some of the issues pertaining to the bill. On the balance of evidence considered by the joint committee, the economic and social interests of the state of South Australia might be advanced by the proposed amalgamation, but members should take note that this opportunity carries with it a number of considerable risks that need to be mitigated.

The Hon. John Gardner and I have outlined that the proposal itself is not objectively good or bad. It is a subjective call, with opportunities and risks inherent in either approach. The potential benefits of the proposed merger certainly merit the parliament's serious consideration, but to dismiss the concerns and risks, such as those raised by a range of eminent professors, individuals and interested stakeholders, without taking further steps in their mitigation will not be in the state's best interests.

A university merger of this magnitude should have been considered as part of the full cabinet process prior to the announcement of the proposal, with submissions including details of all the issues raised by important stakeholders. We know that cabinet did consider this proposal, as it does with all government legislation and spending proposals over a certain threshold. However, many matters do not seem to have been the subject of a rigorous policy analysis or advice from a government department. The Liberal Party found this process to be remarkable.

In the interests of good government, the Liberal opposition has recommended that any public sector initiative being considered by cabinet should include a justification statement setting out the implications of the initiatives. The justification statement should apply evaluation principles that are appropriate for the size and nature of the public sector initiative being evaluated, and also, having regard to the estimated cost, magnitude and sensitivity, include sufficient scope and details to enable the approver to make the decision on an informed basis.

Turning to the merits of the proposal itself, the merger, we begin with a positive aspect, and in doing so recognise that there are substantial opportunities for South Australia, no doubt. The merits identified during our joint parliamentary committee refer mainly to rankings, research and international students. These are the main motivating factors for the claimed economic benefits by the two universities but, given that universities serve a far greater purpose than raising revenue for the state, we will also consider other matters.

First and foremost among the broader purpose is the education of domestic students. If this merger proceeds, the new institution will be responsible for the education of more than two-thirds of the degree-level domestic student market in South Australia. Two-thirds of our teachers, scientists, engineers, accountants, lawyers and so on will be educated here in South Australia. The quality of their education and their effectiveness working in their chosen professions participating in our workforce will have implications for every aspect of our society. Access to university study can only be enhanced by effective use of proceeds of the \$100 million equity fund, so long as the institutions also at least maintain the sum of their existing efforts.

I now want to turn my attention to rankings. The new university has already been granted Group of Eight status, the reputation of which is understood to carry more weight for domestic students than ranking. The prospect that two-thirds of South Australian students might graduate with a Group of Eight status degree will certainly be appealing to those graduates.

When coupled with the fact that Flinders University is on track to be one of Australia's top 10 universities, according to rankings, within a similar time frame to the establishment of a new university, this will see South Australia's graduates all being from institutions considered top 10 in Australia, in this country. This is an appealing prospect, but we reject that this is sufficient reason in itself to proceed. Rankings are a function primarily of research and their status is desirable, but are rarely, for domestic students at least, considered as a dominant factor in their decision-making.

Further, the ranking of a university is barely, if at all, linked to teaching quality or the satisfaction of students, graduates or their employers. Some of Australia's highest ranked institutions perform relatively less well by the standards used to measure these factors. On the other hand, the University of South Australia as it exists now performs very well on a range of these measures by Australian and world standards, despite being ranked lower than the University of Adelaide or Flinders University. Its lower level of research intensity should not be mistaken for any question over the quality of its teaching and learning, which is widely regarded as world class, nor is there any problem with its research, rather it is a question of volume.

As the Hon. John Gardner and I observed over the committee stage and also through engagement with stakeholders, rankings appear to be, more than anything else, a measure of the volume of high-quality research undertaken at an institution.

I want to now turn my attention to teaching, learning and culture. The vice-chancellors of the University of Adelaide and the University of South Australia appeared before the committee twice, on one occasion joined by their respective chancellors. I want to take a moment to thank two of the vice-chancellors because they have been most useful in engaging with the Hon. John Gardner and the Liberal Party over this period.

However, when we presented the joint committee report, there was a disputed question about whether or not there is a connection between the scale and the quality of teaching and learning. Key to the vice-chancellors' arguments about the opportunity presented by the merger proposal was that substantial funds—indeed, a significant proportion of the transition cost—will be applied to building curriculum and course content afresh using the expertise of staff at both institutions.

The confidence of the vice-chancellors that this would lead to a new set of course offerings that take the best aspects of both existing institutions and creates something better than either was very appealing. Academic staff members who appeared before the committee were divided between those who shared the vice-chancellors' confidence and those who consider that confidence to be misplaced. Strong views were presented on both sides.

The universities and the union both undertook consultation that was presented to the joint committee, and we also consulted widely about this question outside the committee process. The low response rate from staff to any of this consultation process makes it really difficult to assess how strongly one point of view or the other is shared.

A number of witnesses pointed out that the two universities currently have very different cultures. This question of whether cultural integration between the institutions will succeed is a critically important consideration, but we do not believe there was sufficient evidence either way to give us full confidence that the mitigation of managing a successful cultural integration will take place.

One conclusion may be that, while strong views are held by some staff both for and against the proposal, a large group in the middle are neither strongly in favour nor against. These individuals just want to keep their jobs and do their work at both universities.

In relation to what courses the new institution might offer, some departments would appear easy to integrate, with existing collaborations underway or potentially complementary offerings being capable of being offered side by side. Other departments will require integration of what is currently a duplicated effort and such work will be an important test of the cultural question we have just explored.

One area that merits serious consideration is that of courses with low student numbers. We heard evidence that a risk inherent in the status quo is for such courses. As these courses require subsidy from other parts of the university's budget, the future of these courses might be vulnerable in times of financial pressure. It was suggested that the proposed scale of the new institution will give such courses a stronger level of protection.

Such courses might be considered critical to what the university should offer: examples included but are not limited to disciplines such as classics, languages and areas within performing arts, although such examples are not limited to the humanities section. For these disciplines, it was suggested that the merger would provide a scale that would better enable the institution to withstand transient budgetary pressures and enable such courses to be both protected and their opportunities fully realised with a larger pool of students and financial resources available to them.

Regional delivery, regional communities and regional students are paramount in the consideration for the Liberal Party and for the Hon. John Gardner and myself. The opportunity for regional students to access tertiary education must be a priority for education policy in South Australia as a whole. Regional students deserve opportunities and regional communities need a professional workforce who enjoy living and working in those regions.

It can be hard to attract teachers, doctors, nurses and other professions to regional towns. Graduates coming home to a region are more likely to stay long term and become valuable assets to the regional community. Encouraging more regional students to do these courses is an important part of providing sustainable pathways to our regions and maximising our long-term wellbeing as a state.

Remote and digital delivery is an important part of making course variety accessible to all students but cannot by itself replace the physical campus experience. Equity scholarships may assist regional students to come to the city, but having a campus or a university hub or other programs available in the regions makes access to tertiary education so much easier.

Regional university campuses support regional communities in terms of volunteering work, community services and part-time workforce, while students are undertaking their studies. This in turn will help support local industries such as the agricultural industry, the tourism industry, other business activities and the whole regional economy.

A risk inherent in the status quo is that regional delivery is expensive to deliver and requires subsidy from other parts of the universities' budgets. It is likely that these courses will continue to be supported but in the event of future downturns in revenue—whether due to a change of government policy, reductions in international student numbers, or another pandemic of a global scale—then all universities will look closely at those parts where there are offerings that make a loss. In such a case, regional delivery might be put at risk and be compromised.

It was argued that the scale that would be provided by the new institution, combined with the opportunity created by extra cashflow in the order of \$100 million to \$200 million a year, will provide a great deal of protection for those offerings. We find some merit in this point, but would argue that access to quality tertiary education opportunities for regional students do not just need to be protected but must be enhanced.

The investment by government that would flow from a decision by parliament to support the merger should require a greater ambition than just protecting the existing effort. We make a recommendation that:

4. The government should require, and the representatives of the University's Transition Council should offer, a firm commitment to expanding the variety and volume of tertiary education offerings in regional South Australia, over and above the current efforts of the University of Adelaide and the University of South Australia.

I now want to turn my attention to opportunities and risks for international students. Various figures have been put forward in relation to the suggested budgetary and economic impacts of the proposal. The joint committee also had the opportunity to engage with the University of Adelaide and the University of South Australia at some length in relation to how they arrived at the figures put forward.

Put simply, it was argued that most international students would determine the country in which they wished to study and then judge what university to go to based on affordability and rankings within that country. The merits of the proposal rely on the new university maintaining a ranking at a similar or—in time—better level than the University of Adelaide's current ranking, in which case the proportion of its international students within the overall student population might be similar to the University of Adelaide's current proportion.

Approximately 30 per cent of students at the University of Adelaide are international students compared with 21 per cent of students at the University of South Australia. The new Adelaide University would have a marketing position closer to the existing University of Adelaide and consequently could attract student numbers in similar proportions. The net effect of the anticipated growth in numbers is modelled on an increase in the order of 5,000 to 7,000 students.

The direct benefit to the institution of such an increase would be in excess of \$100 million per year, along with other direct and indirect financial benefits to South Australia. Those sorts of numbers explain the strong endorsement of the proposal from a range of different stakeholders in South Australia's business sector.

Further benefits flowing from this financial windfall would be realised through significant new investment in research, aligning with the state's interests. The impact this has on rankings forms a virtual circle of activity: more high-value, quality research activity leads to better rankings, leads to more international students, leads to more funding and so on.

The corresponding benefits to our state are very appealing. These include increased economic activity, driving tourism into our state, social engagement and long-term positive benefits from those who make Australia home and who would end up participating in our workforce as well as our society. They also include benefits arising from those who return home with positive views of our country, and with networks and connections within our community. There is also the benefit to local students of having the opportunity to engage with a cohort of international students.

However, with all those benefits we can never forget that there are also some key risks associated with the merger. Just to highlight one of the key risks that, again, requires a subjective assessment: the assumptions described by the university rely on the new university attracting more international students as well as maintaining or gaining a better ranking to the existing University of Adelaide within a short period of time.

During the committee stage we heard that it is likely there will be an initial drop in ranking. This is a risk. Some of the University of Adelaide's high-quality research staff might not want to stay during a transition period, although it was heavily contested as to whether this would be a small number or a large number—we do not know. As pointed out, this is a subjective call in the absence of very reliable data. Basically, we cannot predict it; we do not have a crystal ball.

The vice-chancellors gave evidence that they were confident the return of the rankings would be smooth, perhaps in a couple of years, backed up by the opportunity to invest new funds in research underpinned by the proposed research fund and the university's own resources. Other witnesses suggested it might take longer—how long we do not know, potentially a decade, and then only after new investment over and above that currently provided for in the proposal.

In any case, a more significant deterioration in rankings during the transition period and/or a slower restoration of those rankings would have a large impact on the new university's capacity to recruit extra international students and a corresponding impact on the ability of the university to use their fees to invest in research.

It is the view of the Hon. John Gardner and the Liberal opposition that while the economic and social opportunities put forward by the merger are significant, particularly if the modelled increase in numbers of international students is to be realised, the recommendation endorsed by the majority does not sufficiently acknowledge the risks inherent in merging two enormous institutions with such different internal cultures and making them into a very successful new institution.

I now want to turn my attention to other issues, which include Flinders University. If the potential benefits of the proposal are to be fully realised and to ensure that South Australia's international competitiveness is maximised the broader higher education sector needs to also be considered. In particular, the issue of an uneven playing field created by perpetual funds available only to one new institution needs to be addressed.

It is noted that perpetual research and equity funds being provided for the new institution, that is, the new Adelaide University, but not the other main institution, Flinders University, may have a destabilising impact on the sector in South Australia. It might even prevent the state from garnering all of the potential net benefits of such an investment.

The equity fund, for example, will give scholarships to students studying courses at Adelaide University, the new university, but not all courses are offered by every institution and so over time this would incentivise cohorts of students to choose Adelaide over Flinders, despite the fact that our state needs students to undertake a range of courses that are only available at Flinders. Studies to become paramedics are an obvious and urgent example.

Similarly, in terms of the research fund it is not a simple matter of the perceived unfairness that one institution benefits from the new level of state intervention—government funding—but the other does not. Rather, the testimony provided by Vice-Chancellor Colin Stirling from Flinders University is compelling in this regard: that the net benefits of such a fund can only be realised if it is not confined to one institution.

We cannot constrain the new institution from ever employing a researcher currently doing their work at Flinders. However, if a Flinders researcher were enticed to seek a job at Adelaide University as a result of the more favourable conditions enabled by the government investment, then while that would provide a benefit to Adelaide University it would provide no new net benefit to the state. It would merely be a transfer. It would merely be an example of the government picking winners between two institutions and paying for it. Such a scenario is entirely conceivable: it is easier for someone to change their commute than to move to a new state or country to undertake their studies or research.

The model investment fund proposed by the government—perpetual funds retained within the state's Treasury, with earnings available to institutions—reduces the impact on the state budget while providing a level of confidence to the institutions that they might proceed with less risk. It is unfortunate in the sense that the headlines in the Premier's media statements of early July came across as if the government were giving nearly half a billion dollars to the universities. We feel that, if anything, this lowered public confidence in the proposal.

The truth is much more modest. Indeed, the anticipated returns to the university from these funds would be no more than government invests in a number of schools across our state. Nevertheless, every cent invested should be to the net benefit of the state, and we consider that for South Australia to fully realise the opportunities that might be enabled by a new level of engagement with the tertiary sector, investment in research at Flinders University that is at least proportionate with that of the new institution is essential. The Hon. John Gardner has argued for this strongly in the public domain.

Some witnesses suggest that these funds should require competitive bids. Clear evidence provided by the chancellors and vice-chancellors was that their councils' confidence in the proposal relies on the creation of dedicated funds that would mitigate their financial risk as an institution. Whether or not this would be a better model of investment is therefore irrelevant to the question before us of whether the proposal should proceed. We know that it will proceed because the government does have the numbers with the crossbench support in this Legislative Council and it will also definitely have the numbers in the House of Assembly.

I want to point out a consideration in terms of Flinders University. We recommend that if the proposal is to be supported, the government and the parliament should institute equivalent perpetual research and equity funds for Flinders University on at least a scale equivalent per capita to that of those funds available to Adelaide University. Unfortunately, because it is considered appropriation of funds for the money bill, those clauses within the Adelaide University Bill for the Legislative Council have been struck out, so none of the honourable members in this council will be able to scrutinise any part of those clauses within the Adelaide University Bill. I think that is a concern.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. J.S. LEE: I am sure the other crossbench members will put their case forward during their contributions. I want to quickly turn to look at the Magill campus. It is noted that the eastern portion of the Magill campus land falls within the Morialta electorate, represented by the member for Morialta, who has raised his concerns. He has made lots of remarks in his presentation and contribution. I encourage all members to perhaps read his contribution, so I will not be repeating them here.

However, I do want to talk about the Magill campus land. As part of the public consultation, we call on the government to include an offer to deliver the council suggestions for the development of community facilities on the eastern part of the Magill campus land. I think that is something that the Hon. John Gardner, the Hon. Vincent Tarzia and also the local council have advocated for. I think this process is a really important consideration for the government.

By way of concluding remarks, we note that the government certainly has botched this process of introducing the legislation into parliament and, in doing so, has created a range of risk factors in terms of the public, staff and stakeholders' confidence in the process of transition. I am going to foreshadow that I will be moving two amendments to the bill and I inform honourable members of this now.

I will be moving amendments at clause 7, where clause 7(1)(e)(ii) references serving our state's interests through elevating education, scientific and artistic developments, adding the word 'social' after 'scientific' to reflect the humanities areas because we know that universities do not exist just to provide educational, scientific and artistic developments. They have elements of humanities, languages and are part of the shaping of our social policy debate. I foreshadow that I will be moving that amendment.

I also foreshadow another amendment to be moved under clause 49. The bill proposes the council appoint an auditor each year to audit its accounts and financial statements. However, the

Auditor-General has written to members pointing out that this would diverge from current practice, which is that the Auditor-General conduct the audit as a more appropriate measure. Therefore, I will be moving an amendment in that regard.

The Liberal Party would confirm that the current practice, allowing the Auditor-General to conduct the audit, be established in the legislation, rather than the proposed power for a council to appoint their own auditor. We feel that in the context of significant new government investment in universities, this public oversight of the accounts is more important than ever.

In conclusion, this is a very important bill. The Liberal opposition, via the leadership of the Hon. John Gardner, has comprehensively analysed and assessed both the pros and cons of this proposal. We do want the university sector in South Australia to succeed, but we do not want to see the merged institution just be bigger and not better. I think all of us need to take on serious responsibility in this regard, to ensure that these measures and every measure in this legislation is going to produce maximum economic, social and cultural benefits to South Australia. It is only then that we can sleep better at night.

Our current generation of students, the future generation of students and our international students are able to get all the benefits they get not just from educational achievement in their research propositions but they can make a difference in changing Australia—making a real difference through that change—and make great contributions to the world as well. With those words, I conclude my remarks.

The Hon. R.A. SIMMS (16:08): I rise to indicate on behalf of the Greens that we will not be supporting this bill. We will, however, be working very hard during the committee stage to try to get better outcomes for staff and students, as we have done during this entire process. I will be moving 23 amendments and I will use my second reading contribution to talk to some of those amendments and detail their rationale for the chamber.

It is appropriate that we are meeting today on Halloween because last week we saw the horror of the Labor Party doing a deal with One Nation, and this week we are seeing the potential for a Frankenstein's monster as the government seeks to rush through this legislation without appropriate safeguards for a new university.

I bring to this chamber my experience in having worked in the university sector. Indeed, I have an association with all three of our universities. I hold a bachelor's degree from Flinders University, a graduate certificate from the University of South Australia, and I have worked at both Adelaide University and Flinders University, and I have seen all the different elements or applied the different lenses of what it is to be in our university sector.

I was a student activist during the noughties and a student president at Flinders Uni. I later went back to Flinders and worked as a casual academic, doing some casual teaching work, and later I have worked on professional staff, on casual contracts and on longer term contracts. I have seen the effect that the corporate university model has on staff and on students.

We have an opportunity with this reform to actually remake this new university and to make it something better, to make it a leader when it comes to governance. I am really disappointed that that opportunity has not been embraced by the crossbench in their negotiations with the government—not all of the crossbench; I recognise that the Hon. Frank Pangallo did not sign up to that deal. It is disappointing that the opportunity to make this new institution something better was not embraced by One Nation and the Hon. Connie Bonaros in their negotiations with government.

I really do want to acknowledge the leadership of the NTEU in the way they have engaged with this issue. I was proud to have been a member of the NTEU in the past. I am not currently a member of that union, but I have been previously. They offer a really good service to their members and they have played a very important role in highlighting the concerns of staff and highlighting the potential implications of this proposal for staff. The Greens share the concerns of the union and the anxieties that staff have around this proposal, and they have certainly been in our thoughts during this time.

I might use this opportunity to refresh some of the arguments the Greens touched on in our minority report. The legislation has come to the parliament today after a committee process. It is a

matter of public record that that committee would not have been established if not for the leadership of the Greens, if not for the leadership of the Hon. Frank Pangallo and the leadership of the Liberal Party, because the government made it very clear that they wanted to rush forward this legislation without appropriate parliamentary scrutiny. It was the Hon. Frank Pangallo, the Greens and the Liberals that put the brakes on that and ensured there was appropriate parliamentary scrutiny, and I think that process was really worthwhile.

Of course, we may not have needed to have a parliamentary inquiry if the Labor Party had met the commitment it took to the last state election, that is, to establish an independent commission of inquiry. It is a regrettable outcome that this process has been politicised by the government. It was really disappointing to see the two vice-chancellors lining up with the Premier and announcing their plan without having brought that direct to members of parliament. There was no approach to reach out to the Greens from the vice-chancellors of those two universities, and this proposal was presented to the parliament as a *fait accompli*.

Basically, the message we got from the government was that any delay is denial, that you have to sign on the bottom line and make it happen, do not ask any questions. That is not the way we do business in this place and that is certainly not the role of the upper house. There needs to be appropriate scrutiny of these sorts of proposals. It should have come from an independent commission of inquiry that could have considered this fundamental question of whether or not this is the right direction for our state. That should have been the threshold question and an independent person could have asked that and then made some proposals for the parliament to consider.

Alas, that was not the process that was adopted. Instead, sadly, some members of the university community, some university staff, found out about this plan via an article in *The Advertiser*. That is not the way that people should be advised of key decisions that impact on their jobs and livelihoods. That is not a respectful way to approach university staff or students.

One of the key issues that the Greens have been concerned about throughout has been the secrecy that has underpinned this proposal. It has been very concerning to us that cabinet did not review the business case before putting money on the table to support this merger plan. Today, we had discussion in question time about the need for the government to step up and support teachers, yet they were willing to commit nearly half a billion dollars sight unseen on this merger plan. They say they cannot afford to meet the needs of teachers at the moment but they were very happy to put half a billion dollars on the table without even reading the business case. When does that ever happen?

It is not an appropriate approach to take and that is why the Greens have been advocating consistently to say that business case should be put out into the public realm so that the community can consider it and form a view. That is why tomorrow in this chamber I will be moving a motion calling on the universities to do just that, to make those business cases public.

We also need to know what external consultants, if any, were engaged in developing this proposal. It was very concerning to me to read the revelations of InDaily regarding potential conflicts of interest and the involvement of Deloitte in this plan. Any consultants engaged with this university merger proposal should be named and the community has a right to that information.

In my opening remarks I talked a little bit about governance and one of the key issues I think, and it has been a fundamental problem in our universities over many years, has been the lack of diverse voices on university councils. We have an over-representation of people who come from the business community; we have an over-representation of people who have links to fossil fuel companies; and we have an over-representation of people who have been former ministers of governments, in particular might I say the Liberal Party.

It is appropriate that we have members on university council who actually bring skills and expertise relevant to the higher education sector. There is the old saying that it is the cobbler who makes the shoes but it is only the wearer who knows how it fits. Really, you need to have staff and students in the room for those decisions.

I mentioned before that I used to be a member of the university council when I was a student representative at Flinders University back in 2004 or 2005. At that time, there was more

representation of students on those councils. We know it was a sad day when the former Labor state government reduced the number of students on those university councils. I recognise your leadership, Acting President, in standing up against that at the time because that was a backward step and one that has robbed students and staff of vital power at the decision-making table. That is something the Greens are seeking to remedy through our amendments today.

Another issue that has been of considerable concern to us has been the remuneration of vice-chancellors. I have talked about this at length. Indeed, members will know I have a bill before parliament to cap the salaries of vice-chancellors in line with that of the Premier. In our view, it is obscene that a vice-chancellor can be earning over \$1 million a year in the middle of an economic crisis. That is why we are moving an amendment that will require the vice-chancellor's salary to be set by the Remuneration Tribunal. That is the rule that applies to politicians, and that is the rule that applies to other key public officers.

These are public institutions getting public money, so why should that rule not apply to them? It is obscene that we see vice-chancellors earning over \$1 million a year, particularly after the difficult years of COVID when staff saw a reduction in their pay and when staff were being laid off. I think it is really rich to see them raking in those huge salaries. We have an opportunity to fix that with this bill.

Another issue that we are concerned about is the student experience. We need to ensure that there is a student association in this new university bill and they need to get the lion's share of the student services and amenities fee. That is vitally important. We need to see support for low socio-economic students across the board, not just those who seek to go to this new university. We do not want to see students who are going to Flinders University being disadvantaged.

I might make some general comments about the impact on rankings, because I know that is one of the key issues that has been the basis of this proposal. At the committee level, we got some contradictory evidence around university rankings, and this idea that we are going to see a boost in the rankings does seem to be highly contested. Indeed, there was some evidence that we might see a reduction in rankings in the short term. The Greens are concerned that that might impact on the potential for this new university to recruit students.

I should say, of course, that it is our view, and we remain concerned, that international students are being used as cash cows in our university system and that we do not have enough resourcing of our universities. University should be free. It should be accessible to everybody. Your access to university should be determined by your brains, not your bank balance.

That is a simple proposition, but it is one that has been undermined by the Liberal Party, in particular in Canberra over the bleak Howard years, but also by the lack of leadership by the federal Labor Party under Gillard, under Rudd, under Gillard-Rudd again, and there still has not been the leadership under this new government either. That is key for us in terms of addressing the needs of the sector.

We should be moving away from this corporate university model, one that actually treats students like consumers rather than students who have a right to have a say in the direction of the institution and who are there to build their skills and capacity and to reflect on life and to make a positive contribution. Should that not be what universities are about, rather than being about just trying to make money?

I will talk a little bit about the amendments that the Greens will be seeking to advance today. I want to flesh those out in a bit more detail, and in doing so it might save us a bit of time in the committee stage. The first amendment that I will be moving will require the university to be an exemplary employer. This draws on some of the evidence presented to the committee. We will talk about making the new university an exemplary employer that offers secure and meaningful employment to staff. That is one of the key objectives for this new university.

I cannot fathom why anyone in this place would oppose that. In particular, it is difficult to comprehend why the Labor Party, the party of the worker, would oppose such a simple inclusion in the act, but let's see what happens. I will call a division and we will see how they vote, whether they

stand with staff of the university sector and advocate to improve their conditions or whether they fall into line with the university chiefs. We will see.

The other amendment that I will move will remove the requirement for the university to support and contribute to the realisation of South Australian economic development priorities. It is not the role of a university to realise the state's economic development priorities. That is not the role of a university. The role of a university is to make a contribution to the community, to educate the community and to be a key civic and community leader.

We are also going to be moving an amendment to require the fees for student services to be paid to a student representative body and we will be moving an amendment to require the university council to in all matters endeavour to advance the interests of the university educational and research outcomes for the university and have a primary focus on the student experience. It does worry me that there has not been enough discussion around students in this push for a university merger and the impact this may have on them, their experience in university and their access to a diverse range of courses and opportunities, and it is really important that that is put in the act.

The other key thing we are suggesting is that there be some changes to the composition of the council. We want to see an increase in student members and academic staff and that also will follow through to the transition council. We are going to be moving an amendment to ensure that the council will include two members who are culturally and linguistically diverse and we will also be moving amendments to ensure that a majority of the council are staff and students. We will also be pushing to have graduates from the previous universities involved.

We will be moving another amendment that requires council members to act in a way that the member thinks will benefit and promote the best interests of the university and educational and research outcomes for the university, again putting that primary focus on the university experience.

We will be moving an amendment that requires the council to have a code of conduct and a requirement for its members to comply with that. This is an important measure because we are bound by a code of conduct and most staff of the university are bound by a code of conduct. That should also apply to those on the university council. There are some misconduct provisions relating to what happens if people do not comply with that code.

We are also moving a number of important transparency-related amendments. One of those will require meetings to be held in public with public notice. We will be moving for the universities to publish their minutes and we will be moving for them to publish their agendas. These are public institutions and they receive public money. They should not be secret societies operating behind closed doors, operating under the guise of commercial-in-confidence and shutting the community out of their decisions, so we will be moving to get that information into the public realm.

We will be moving amendments relating to the vice-chancellors' pay, and I have touched on those, and we will be looking at the disclosure of any consultants that are providing advice to the council. We will also be moving to divest this new university of fossil fuels and its assets in the defence industry. We are very concerned about the potential for this new university to be playing a role in advancing the climate crisis and the ongoing militarisation that we are seeing, and the militarisation agenda for our state, so our amendment will nip that in the bud.

We will also be seeking some important disclosure through the annual report of information on the arrangements relating to staff. Under our proposal, the university would be required to report on the number of casual staff it employs and those that are ongoing and the nature of their contracts. This is important information because it would shine a light on the way in which our universities treat their staff. Again, what will the party of the workers do? I pose the question: what will the party of the workers do? Will they line up with the Liberals and oppose this amendment or will they actually advocate for this important principle to be established in the legislation to provide some transparency around arrangements relating to staff? Let's see. We will have an opportunity to test that proposition tomorrow.

Finishing with staff, I do want to just touch on some of the important figures that come out of the National Tertiary Education Union's submission that it made to the committee on the establishment of the new university. They did a survey of their staff and I think it is really important

to look at some of the findings of that survey, because I think it should focus the mind of the Labor Party in terms of how they approach this bill and the opportunity that they have had presented to them that the Greens' amendment provides.

I want to look at the survey results that relate to consultation and stakeholder engagement. The NTEU asked the university staff as part of their survey how they had been engaged with this process. Ninety-five per cent of survey respondents indicated that they had not been appropriately consulted by the SA government: 95 per cent. Sixty-six per cent of University of Adelaide and 49 per cent of University of South Australia staff indicated that they had not been appropriately consulted by their respective employers before and during the feasibility project.

Indeed, the union makes the claim that these results show that the process to date is failing the stakeholders they are meant to empower and the prevailing governance institutions are failing their communities. They say that if the merger process is to succeed, staff, students, unions and community stakeholders must be front and centre of all decision-making moving forward and have active participation at every stage of the co-creation process.

We entirely agree and that is why we will be moving to ensure that staff and students play much more of an active role in the interim council that is setting up this new institution. Again, what will the Labor Party do? Will they listen to the staff and students or will they simply fall in behind the university chiefs, who we know regard staff and students as often being an inconvenience?

I think I have ventilated the concerns that the Greens have with this bill. I will make further contributions during the committee stage and I urge members to carefully consider the Greens' amendments. While we are not supportive of this bill, we are presenting members with an opportunity to achieve some better outcomes for students and staff. There are 23 amendments there. I urge members to take up that opportunity. With that, I conclude my remarks.

The Hon. S.L. GAME (16:32): I rise briefly and want to express what a privilege it has been to be part of the Joint Committee on the Establishment of Adelaide University over the last few months and express my gratitude to all those who submitted to the committee. The consideration of merging two universities together is an enormous undertaking which affects many people: staff, students and also the wider community. I have immersed myself in this committee and undertook my own research in addition to that presented.

At the forefront of my mind has always been: what is in the best interest of South Australians as a whole, not just those who want to be at university? Many people are not interested in university. They undertake apprenticeships, get trades, start businesses, maintain farms, become housewives or house fathers, with many making fabulous contributions to society. Such a big decision had to be in the interest of everyone, not just those intent on undertaking a university degree.

Additionally, was this good use of government money right now when there is a cost-of-living crisis and life is extremely difficult for many? Was a merged university the best way to give South Australians the greatest chance at improved economic prosperity and bridging the current wage gap with other states?

When talking about the investment of the government, it is important to stress that the government is investing in the South Australian community. The government is investing in enhanced research and development capabilities that will help everyone, not just those who want to go to university. These enhanced research capabilities will have a multitude of tangible benefits, including the potential to save lives. This is important.

The government is investing in its people and, importantly, the government is investing in people who are doing it tough—those from poorer socio-economic backgrounds, people from rural and regional communities—who may, in other circumstances, find it difficult to afford to go to university.

I am a strong believer in pathways other than university. There is a skills shortage in nearly every trade, and we must encourage our young people to see value in these careers and undertake them with pride. Many are extremely well paid, and they are vital for the successful functioning of our society. However, I am also a strong believer that we currently have an untapped pool of talent in

our community, that too often privilege feeds further privilege, and that society misses out on the valued and needed contribution in certain areas of those trapped in disadvantage.

I absolutely support the investment by the government in assisting those from rural and regional backgrounds and disadvantaged circumstances to attend university if they have worked hard and desire it for their future. Educating more South Australians is important for addressing skills shortages in certain areas.

I want to thank the chancellors and vice-chancellors of both universities involved for their extensive efforts to enable my understanding—and, in fact, absolute conviction—that the establishment of the University of Adelaide is a needed and essential step in improving economic prosperity in this state, benefiting everyone. Attracting talent generates money and boosts the economy for everyone. Streamlining money for the academic purpose rather than the administrative purpose makes sense. Pooling money to enhance investment or build infrastructure makes sense.

I am satisfied that those tasked with the establishment of the new university are absolutely committed to ensuring a positive student experience which, together with the ability to find satisfying and meaningful employment, I hold is more important than a prestige ranking, although I do believe that a merged university gives the greatest chance of maintaining a highly esteemed university in South Australia in the long term, with increased global competition.

I have been reassured by the universities that the government will not be tasked with future infrastructure costs. This was important. The government must do its part of the deal now, as well, by ensuring the improved education standards of our young people—which, of course, begins in the early years.

I look forward to the coming discussions regarding the legislation, and I am open-minded to supporting members on their contributions to ensure the best, most robust piece of legislation is established.

The Hon. F. PANGALLO (16:37): I rise to speak on the bill, and indicate that I will not oppose it, but I do so with a high level of apprehension and much reluctance. This is a pet project for Premier Malinauskas, a leader who appears to avoid scrutiny, particularly on vanity projects like this and 18 others totalling more than \$20 billion that the Auditor-General is unable to tick off because the government will not let him view the cabinet documents. Coupled with Labor's highly speculative hydrogen project, nothing quite on the scale of these two projects has been attempted anywhere else in the world.

The Hon. R.A. Simms interjecting:

The PRESIDENT: The Hon. Mr Simms!

The Hon. F. PANGALLO: As the joint committee on the establishment of this new higher education institution found, this merger is going to come at a risk, a considerable risk. There are no guarantees it can work, particularly for the money that is going to be required just to fuse the two universities together.

I was not opposed to this merger, but nor was I about to jump into the 'love boat' with the Premier and others to give it the tick just because he tells us it is going to be good for the state somewhere down the track. There is little or no evidence to support what he and the university vice-chancellors have been saying and would have us believe.

What I wanted to do, and what I articulated throughout the whole process, is to have appropriate time to digest the joint committee's report and then discuss it with those who will be impacted most by it. This is a massive deal, one that requires due diligence, and this has not happened. However, the Premier got the numbers before the dust even settled, and so be it. I will be supporting it, but with some real reservations. Even the committee could not bring itself to unanimous agreement. I note the dissenting views of the Hon. Robert Simms and also the Hon. John Gardner.

If it bombs and the new entity does not become the great learning institution and creator of job opportunities that the Premier promises, will he ever take responsibility? It is not likely he will be around if it does come to pass. Let's hope it does not, because this is one hell of a gamble the Premier is taking at a time when his government is carrying massive debt levels, most likely to climb

towards \$40 billion unless they introduce some new taxes or increase them to pay for their extravagances and ideological indulgences.

South Australian families are feeling economic pain from cost-of-living pressures, and it is only going to worsen. I would say this merger and all the elitist mumbo jumbo surrounding it has not resonated at all with the vast majority of South Australians. 'If' is the operative word about these grandiose plans. Take the chair of the SA Productivity Commission, Adrian Tembel, a specialist lawyer in mergers, who told the committee:

...if it can be a catalyst for important change in the university, so they are more integrated with our economy and business, then we absolutely acknowledge the merit of doing so and that is sound economy policy.

He also said:

If a merger was competently executed, then that catalyst for change could accelerate the reforms that we were recommending...

Note the word 'if'. Business SA Chief Executive Andrew Kay said:

The merger would assist South Australia to gain the skills it needs to deliver the AUKUS program and opportunities for more meaningful research.

It is not that these opportunities do not exist now. Up until today, we still do not even know if there will ever be an AUKUS nuclear submarine built in Adelaide, going by the obstacles being put in the way by American politicians in Congress who want to ensure first that the US can meet its own sub needs before pumping out or loaning any to its ally down under.

Just remember there were also a lot of ifs and hopes and expectations that surrounded the naval subs deal with the French before it was torpedoed, leaving a sour taste in the mouths of many small defence suppliers in this state and around the country, not to mention the multibillion-dollar payout to the French company. The confidence of these businesses has been shaken a little, and now they are expected to get excited again and plough capital into gearing themselves up for another grand defence plan coupled with a university merger.

Considering the merger will also be reliant on thousands of international students coming from China, I am sure the People's Republic of China will be thrilled to know some of their nationals could also be part of the unique skills development path to build these sophisticated vessels designed to counter any threat from China in the region. Nonetheless, we do already have three world-class universities here that can achieve the same outcomes Mr Kay is speculating about.

I never had the opportunity to go to university, but universities have come a long way since the days when Californian academic Clark Kerr jokingly described them as places for students to have sex, alumni to play sport and the faculty to enjoy free parking. He wrote a book in the 1960s called *The Uses of the University* in which he mapped the evolution of the university from its ancient Greek origins to the modern era as agents for social and economic change, prime instruments of national purpose. He wrote, and I quote:

What the railroads did for the second half of the last century [the nineteenth century, that is]...may be done for the second half of this century by the knowledge industry: that is, to serve as the focal point for national growth.

So the nuclear subs may be the prime instruments he talks about that can propel our state and national growth in the second half of this century. I will not be around by then to see if that happens but I hope AUKUS and this university love match do not descend into the abyss of the white elephant graveyard predicted by former Coalition defence minister Alexander Downer last weekend.

As Mr Kerr put it, and again I quote, 'As society goes, so goes the university, but also as the university goes, so goes society.' The Premier is a risk-taker and there is nothing wrong with him being bold and adventurous in his ambitions to make this a great state. I know he is sincere about his motivations. However, he is not playing with his money; it belongs to taxpayers.

Therefore, it was remarkable when he admitted he had not even seen the business case for the merger—nobody apart from the two universities has. I remain very uncomfortable with that lack of knowledge and insight. Even the Auditor-General, Andrew Richardson, thought it was sensible for the government to have examined the business case first before making any commitment.

The two institutions will also need to plough their own hoarded funds into this project to navigate the enormous logistical and technological maze required to make things work by 2026. What a great year that is going to be. It is an election year no less. The same year the hydrogen plant should be switched on, the Premier jumps bare-chested into a pool as part of a media stunt to baptise his \$80 million state election promise to build a new Adelaide Aquatic Centre.

Cranes will no doubt be atop the new Women's and Children's Hospital site, the digging starts on tunnels for the north-south corridor, the new extension at the Flinders Medical Centre is open and fewer ambulances are queued up for hours outside our hospitals. There is about 40 per cent of Labor's 700 election promises still to be fulfilled, but all this big-ticket activity will be a boon to their re-election prospects.

We are told this merger will cost anywhere between \$500 million and \$650 million, along with a further \$60 million plus in ongoing investment. There is also money there for low income families to be able to send their kids to university and a kick along for those living in the regions thrown in as sweeteners to get the deal done.

Adelaide University physicist Dr Tony Thomas says he has heard estimates that it might end up costing well over a billion dollars by the time they unfurl the new flag and logo, hit the enter button on their IT systems and students start swarming into the lecture theatres. Dr Thomas told the committee that university administrators have a history of huge blowouts when it comes to changes in administrative software and this could loom as a potential financial disaster.

Dr Thomas said that if the universities had to dig into their own operating funds it could destroy the operation of the new university for many years, and he could not understand why no analysis was done on the alternative of spending the amount required for a merger on the two universities separately, adding that if \$1 billion was spent over the next five to 10 years on existing research, it would almost guarantee strong institutions. He said, and I quote, that if the \$1 billion was spent over the next five to 10 years on the existing universities' research and teaching, you would be guaranteed to have those strong institutions without any risk.

Among the grand sales pitches for this merger are that it will boost research capabilities and global university rankings. Adelaide is now out of the top 100 and UniSA is in the middle 300s somewhere. The merger in 2004 of the two Manchester universities in the UK, the Victoria University of Manchester and the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology, cost well over £85 million—more than double what was estimated—and has so far failed to deliver the desired objective of it being in the top 25 universities. It is not more cost effective than Manchester uni was in 2004, but the Premier touts this one as a success. However, there are very few examples anywhere else in the world of successful mergers, let alone where they grew economies.

The merger talks in Western Australia have been abandoned, mostly because of the enormous risks. On their own, our two universities do not have the financial resources to pay for the merger, so our government, with huge debt levels threatening to be a millstone around our necks for decades, has to chip in without any support coming from the federal government.

Why not, you would ask, when the Premier keeps saying the AUKUS deal would be one of the beneficiaries of the skills to be developed? Why not, when only yesterday it was revealed that South Australians will shoulder the nation's second highest state debt level of more than \$19,000 per person, narrowly behind Victoria, as borrowing soared to fund the north-south corridor tunnels and the new Women's and Children's Hospital?

If you took a poll today, South Australians would tell Mr Malinauskas that there are far bigger priorities on their minds at present. Here is another if: the larger the student cohort increases the likelihood of investment in research. The ambitious goal here would be to get numbers up to around 70,000, with many coming from overseas nations like China. I have pointed out previously that they are not exactly one of our friendly neighbours.

As defence and international strategic experts are pointing out right now, the likelihood of conflict with China is actually very real. If that happens, what happens to this reliance on students from China and the income? A conflict in the Indo-Pacific region—something that cannot be

dismissed—could drastically alter the landscape here and potentially sever that umbilical cord the two universities are counting on as their economic lifeline.

Being big is not necessarily good for universities or their students. A student experience survey last year, completed by 200,000 respondents nationwide, revealed what students really thought of their learning environment. Three of the country's biggest universities, Sydney, UNSW and Melbourne, with numbers each in excess of 47,000 and geared highly towards research, were ranked near the bottom of the list of 42 for student experiences, even though they reached the top 20 of the QS World University Rankings, which do not measure what students actually think of their institution.

While Adelaide Uni and UniSA performed better in student expectations than those three, it was not by that much. So the question is: will a much larger campus provide students with better skill development, learner engagement, teaching quality, student support and learning resources? Another big if. Global rankings seem more relevant to international students than locals.

Interestingly, the student survey found the universities most valued by their students for educational experience were three small private institutions: the University of Divinity, which had a positive rating of 91 per cent, followed by Avondale at 88 per cent and Bond at 86 per cent. The best of the public universities were Edith Cowan, Deakin and New England.

Richard Blandy, the eminent Flinders economics emeritus professor and adjunct professor in economics at UniSA, expressed his disapproval to a merger the last time it was mooted, and I doubt he has changed his view now. At the time, he wrote to the then chancellor, Kevin Scarce, warning him it was a loopy idea in that it would lessen competition in the local higher education market and not improve the quality or relevance of teaching and research in Adelaide. Competition was good to get costs down and benefits up, but it would not improve the quality or relevance of teaching and research.

Professor Blandy believed increasing the size and combining numbers of students to around 43,000 was not going to achieve a high international ranking, despite what the Premier is now spouting. He pointed out that Harvard has about 22,000 students, Yale about 12,000, Oxford about 24,000 and Cambridge about 19,000—world-class universities that are about the same size as Adelaide and UniSA.

His assessment is that size does not matter at all, but there are benefits from competition and cooperation between all our universities. He points out that RMIT University in Melbourne has more students than a future Adelaide and UniSA combined, yet still ranks below each of them in average international ranking, particularly Adelaide, and ranks below each of them in total research income.

He goes on that ANU in Canberra is smaller than both Adelaide or UniSA in terms of student enrolments, but ANU has a research income of \$300 million—greater than Adelaide and UniSA combined—and is ranked in the top 50 world universities. Adelaide is ranked about 175 by comparison and UniSA about 325. Scale has nothing to do with why ANU, with around 18,000 students, outranks the larger Adelaide and UniSA. Professor Blandy wrote:

The assertion in the discussion paper that 'a large merged institution would have the potential to generate economies of scale, which could in turn generate funds for strategic investment', is based on no evidence whatsoever. Adelaide and UniSA are both well and truly on the flat part of their average cost curves, where increasing scale alone will not lower average unit costs further.

He is a highly respected and highly credentialed economist—just remember that. He then refers to what he describes as waffle in the discussion paper put out. Here is some of the waffle, and again I quote Professor Blandy:

The new university will be distinct from the two predecessor universities with a new curriculum, having a critical mass of research capacity aligned to key economic sectors, being differentiated not only nationally but also internationally as a new research-intensive, outcomes-focused institution of scale.

The university's compelling course portfolio will bring together professions with related disciplines, to realise benefits from shared learning and resources. It will have diverse courses that equip all students for their futures as citizens, employees and entrepreneurs.

The university will position Adelaide as the preeminent higher education city in Australia, attracting highly-skilled people, investment and prosperity to South Australia.

Dr Blandy said this nonsense could have come straight out of the spiel for the multifunctionpolis (the MFP) in the 1980s and 1990s. I remember that quite clearly—there would be some members here, the Hon. Tammy Franks, the Hon. Robert Simms, Michelle and others. I remember it quite clearly; often in the newsroom where I was working we would chuckle about this incredible fantasy going on at Gillman and wondering why the government kept pumping this money into it. Again, it was a vanity project, another Labor-inspired white elephant contagion that also infected the State Bank under Premier John Bannon in the 1980s.

Dr Geoff Hanmer, another respected academic at the University of Adelaide, also thinks the merger is a dud of an idea because the proponents have not been able to explain how the combined uni will achieve all the good things they claim in their pitch, a pitch he describes as 'drivel'. Dr Hanmer says that only one university in the top 10 and seven of the top 50 in the academic ranking of world universities are larger than the University of Adelaide and that nearly all highly ranked research universities have between 10,000 and 25,000 effective full-time student load, which is roughly the size of Adelaide Uni and UniSA.

He believes it is likely the ranking of the merged institution will be damaged with a roll-on effect of reducing export income by around \$100 million and also reducing domestic research income by lowering the quality of research across both institutions. Again, this is why we and the Auditor-General needed to see the secret business case to see if all this stacks up.

Because of the rushed nature of this legislation, I have not had the opportunity to discuss it with the relevant stakeholders, including all three vice-chancellors, the National Tertiary Education Union, student bodies and other stakeholders. There were initiatives, research and teaching I wanted to also explore, especially at Roseworthy Agricultural College. That opportunity now seems lost.

Dr Andrew Miller, the NTEU division secretary, and Anna Strzelecki, the union's division president, wrote to me yesterday expressing their disappointment, saying that staff at both institutions are devastated by the lack of genuine governance. They want more representation of staff and students in the decision-making process and that the majority be elected to the council and accountable to those they serve. What about the future of staff, courses and whatever?

I would like to read a little bit more from that letter I received from the NTEU asking me to please support the Greens' amendments to the bill. I indicate that I will be supporting every one of them and quite gladly I will be supporting every one of them. The letter goes on to state:

Moreover, for a contemporary comprehensive university to genuinely reflect the character, perspectives, and voices of the peoples and cultures it serves, the Council structure and composition must be genuinely diverse, representative, inclusive, and elected.

The vast majority of people on Council should be elected and thus accountable to the electorates and peoples they serve—not appointed behind closed doors or with no public-facing accountability.

This is our opportunity to lead the country for wholesale governance reform that genuinely re-democratises university governance for the public benefit.

What's more, for the new Adelaide University to be an 'exemplary employer' as outlined in the *Accord Interim Report* and as stated by the Minister for Education, then governance reform is the cornerstone of that transformation—as it is governance and those who govern must take responsibility for the failings of our campuses; namely, the high rates of sexual assault and sexual harassment, wage theft, precarious employment, psychosocial hazards and workload intensification and work overload.

We urge you to support the amendments proposed by the Greens, as these amendments reflect those made by staff, students, and community stakeholders in the hundreds of NTEU letters submitted to the Joint Committee on the Establishment of Adelaide University.

This is the moment—please make it count. Please support these important amendments for the sake of all South Australians and for the sake of industrial democracy and collegiality of our newest public university.

That was signed by Dr Andrew Miller and Anna Strzelecki. It is important to note that in all the speeches so far I have not really heard, apart from the Hon. Robert Simms of course, about the ones who were casting doubt about it, who actually gave comprehensive submissions to that committee.

There is something else I would like to disclose, for the benefit here: I have a lot of contacts at both universities and I was alarmed when I heard that threats were made to some members not to speak out about this merger. It concerns me that they were not to speak out about it. Why couldn't they? Again, this is why we need proper governance.

I was also approached by University of Adelaide Emeritus Professor of History and Law Wilfrid Prest AM, who warned:

Like many academic colleagues, I am concerned that the proposed merger of the state's two largest tertiary education institutions may not serve the best interests of students, staff or South Australia.

While recognizing that you will already have heard many arguments for and against the proposal I wonder whether you might be willing to meet a small group of senior academics from a variety of disciplines, in order to discuss the matter before legislation is tabled in the Legislative Council?

I did not have that opportunity, unfortunately, even though I wanted to meet with them. That was taken away from me as well. I was also contacted by William Pincombe, a postgraduate research student at the University of Adelaide, who expressed the personal relevance of the proposed merger to him. He wrote:

I implore you not to approve of the current merger plans. There is no clear evidence that merging our universities will benefit education and research in South Australia, while there is great risk that it could lead to disruption, crisis and a reduction in education quality with terrible consequences.

It is claimed that the merged institution will achieve a higher international ranking than either of the two existing institutions. One of the central claims is that an achievement of the merger will be to be placed among the 'top 100' universities world-wide.

The University of Adelaide is ranked 88 in the 2023 Times Higher Education world rankings, suggesting South Australia does not need a merger to achieve 'top 100' university.

This same index places the University of South Australia and Flinders University in the 301-350 category out of 2345 universities. South Australia is doing pretty well in international higher education rankings to achieve these rankings for a place that represents around 0.02% of the world population. I would ask you to consider whether it is an improvement to go from 3 very highly ranked universities by world standards to 2.

But more importantly, university rankings are not dependent on the size of the institution. Rankings of research output measure output per researcher. Rankings of student satisfaction measures satisfaction per student. These are not going to magically increase by adding more researchers and students together.

Traditionally, Adelaide has performed higher on research rankings while UniSA has been better on student satisfaction and teaching.

In fact it has been, hitting almost 80 per cent in that student survey I was referring to earlier. William continues:

However, merging seems like to lead to an average of these rankings, rather than an improvement.

It is also claimed that the merged university will attract more students, researchers and/or funding from internationally and interstate. Ignoring the questionable claims about increasing rankings, I don't see any evidence that just because we reorganise our universities here in South Australia from 3 down to 2 this will lead to students and researchers deciding to move to South Australia.

Larger institutions are not necessarily better. Many elite international universities are very small, such as Caltech (only 2397 students). Both Adelaide (27,357 students) and UniSA (37,873 students) are already large institutions—adding them together would create an exceptionally large university by international standards.

The larger a university is, the more impersonal and distant it becomes to each of its students. The management would likely become even further separated from the actual day-to-day activities of the institution.

I find it much more likely this mega-university would be a lumbering bureaucratic giant rather than an effective educational institution.

Mergers are frequently just an excuse to cut funding. The University of Adelaide has just been through rounds of mergers of faculties and then schools which seem to fit this pattern. This was pushed through by the same Vice-Chancellor who is now pushing for a merger.

The universities are promising 'no net job losses' until 2027, which would be only one year after the merger. This is a tellingly hollow promise. The government says, quite rightly, that we need to expand the number of students in tertiary education and our research output. We cannot do this by sacking staff and reducing the size of our university sector.

Finally, given all this, the merger risks chaos and disruption for essentially no benefit.

The merger process would need to reconcile different enrolment systems, employment structures and the many disciplines in which both universities have schools. This is a huge task. Is it really worth it for unclear benefits and great risks?

There are much better things the government could do in tertiary education. There is no need for the \$500 million investment promoted by the state government to be tied to the merger.

The government could invest in the university sector anyway. More importantly, they could consider:

- setting up a statewide organisation to coordinate the curriculum between all three universities, to make use of economies of scale and to implement common standards for what should be covered in courses.
- reduce public transport fares and provide housing for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Full-time students have at most very limited income, and yet must pay for transport and, if they need to move out of home for study, for exorbitant and constantly increasing rents. For students without supportive, financially comfortable families, these costs can be prohibitive.

That was an email I received from Mr Pincombe, and I thank him very much for that. I also got one from concerned Adelaide lawyer Ross Boyd. He reached out expressing his concerns, and again let me quote:

The article on page 6 of today's 'Saturday paper' is a neat summary of the damage being done to universities through rampant managerialism.

I've previously been equivocal about the proposed merger of Adelaide and UniSA however after reading the article I'm convinced that Parliamentary approval must be at least delayed until Minister Clare's ongoing review is completed, and probably reject the merger altogether.

I commend the article to you and request you exercise your parliamentary vote to delay or defeat the proposal.

That is the end of the email I got from lawyer Mr Ross Boyd. For balance, I will also speak to the emails supporting the merger that I received, and I know some of these researchers. I received an email from Andrew Zannettino, who is the Executive Dean of the Faculty of Health and Medical Science at the University of Adelaide. He wrote in part:

I was hoping to meet with you for 30 minutes to discuss the positive impact that the proposed merger of the UoA and UniSA will not only have on the SA economy but more importantly on the access to education for disadvantaged communities in SA.

As a child of immigrants and the first in my family to attend University, I am cognisant of the incredible opportunities that a tertiary education has afforded me.

Furthermore, I wish to discuss the impacts that the merger will have on Faculty of Health and Medical Science's ability to improve the health of people in the Northern suburbs.

The merger will afford us the ability to establish a clinical school at the Lyell McEwin Hospital—a clinical school that will deliver education in areas of nursing, dentistry, allied health, and medicine.

It will not only provide educational opportunities to students located in the north, at site; but will provide access to healthcare to the local community.

I do hope that you will have some time to meet over a cup of coffee in the next week or so. To that end, I have taken the liberty of cc'ing my EA, Leah Chau, with the hope that your office can liaise with Leah to set up a convenient time for us both to meet.

That is from Andrew Zannettino, and I had the great pleasure of talking with Andrew about the great work that he does. I appreciate him sending me that, but unfortunately again I just did not have the opportunity to sit down with him over a cup of coffee and exchange some views on that, so that opportunity has gone as well.

I also have to say this: while he says the merger will afford the ability to establish the clinical school at Lyell McEwin, what is stopping the government from doing it without the merger? Why not? Why not do that? Why not pump more money into Flinders as well? Just this morning I received a letter from Flinders University's Vice-Chancellor Colin Stirling, outlining that university's views. He said:

Flinders University acknowledges that the Honourable Connie Bonaros MLC and the Honourable Sarah Game MLC have confirmed they will support the Adelaide University Bill to establish the new Adelaide University, created through the amalgamation of the University of Adelaide and the University of South Australia.

Further, Flinders acknowledges that in addition to the \$100 million student equity support fund for the new university, the Government has also committed to creating an additional \$20 million fund to support students from regional South Australia.

The State Government has also committed to a \$200 million research fund to support the new university, purchasing \$114.5 million in land from the university and \$30 million for measures to attract international students.

Separately, the Government will also deliver a \$40 million Equity Support Fund for Flinders University students from low SES backgrounds.

Finally, to support the implementation phase of the new Adelaide University, the Government will appoint an independent expert with experience in higher education to work with the Government, universities, and other stakeholders, including representatives of staff and students.

Increasing access to higher education for low socio-economic students and students from regional South Australia—

and no-one can argue with that—

Flinders University acknowledges advocacy from members of the Joint Committee on the Establishment of Adelaide University for a strong South Australian university sector, where institutions are competing on a level playing field.

'Competing', that is an operative word as well. Remember that competition is going to be reduced in South Australia after this goes through. It continues:

Flinders currently educates approximately 40% of all low SES students who attend any of the three public universities in South Australia. As such, a \$40 million student equity fund for Flinders is appropriate relative to the \$100 million equity fund for the new Adelaide University.

The creation of an additional \$20 million fund to support students from regional South Australia would be welcome, but the allocation of that fund entirely to the new university is unfair to those regional students who would choose Flinders University.

A fundamental principle underpinning healthy competition and student choice is that equity incentives should apply to students not institutions.

Flinders students come from across South Australia, with over 2,500 regional and remote students studying with Flinders, representing 13.4 per cent of our domestic student cohort.

Flinders University also has a substantial regional network in South Australia, with locations in Barossa, Berri, Mount Gambier, Murray Bridge, Renmark and Victor Harbor.

Furthermore, there are a number of course offerings (such as paramedicine and nuclear engineering) and regional campuses (such as the Riverland) where Flinders is the only higher education provider in the region.

By only targeting state government support for students from regional South Australia via the new Adelaide University, students who may wish to pursue higher education with Flinders will not be eligible for regional scholarships and packages via the additional \$20 million.

There you go. It continues:

Equity must be equitable; [therefore] to redress this Flinders proposes either;

- equitable access to the endowed additional \$20 million fund for students from regional South Australia irrespective of the institution they choose; or
- a commensurate additional \$8 million (i.e. 40 per cent) to the Flinders Students Support Fund to support students from regional South Australia who choose Flinders University.

Growing South Australia's share of funding for high-quality research.

In our submission to the Joint Committee into the Establishment of Adelaide University, Flinders University advocated for equitable investment in research across the sector. The state government's well-intended proposal to establish a new \$200 million research fund to support Adelaide University's research initiatives is important acknowledgement that an uplift in state investment is needed.

However, investing in research in one institution while excluding the other inhibits competition, undermines the potential of the university sector in South Australia, and could artificially inflate the success of the new Adelaide University at the expense of Flinders. Having achieved the highest research growth rate (140 per cent) of any Australian university of the last five years, it is disappointing that Flinders' research impact and trajectory has been overlooked by not committing commensurate investment in our research endeavours.

Flinders recognises that the new university will have additional costs associated with merger over the short term and the research fund is designed, at least in part, to assist the new university's research activities during the merger process. We also recognise that while Flinders University will incur some costs associated with the merger

(including the restructuring of various legal partnerships with the University of Adelaide and the University of South Australia) our costs will be marginal compared to those incurred by the new university in the first three years.

However, the research fund is to be legislated in perpetuity and therefore advantages the new university over Flinders University with ongoing taxpayers' investment over the long-term. To redress this, Flinders renews its recommendation for state government investment in research to be applied equitably across the sector by either:

- equitable access to the \$200 million research fund to support research initiatives; or
- a commensurate additional \$80 million Flinders Research Fund for Flinders University research initiatives.

Independent expert to support implementation of the new university.

Flinders University welcomes the government's announcement that it will appoint an independent expert with experience in higher education to work with the government, universities, and other stakeholders to support the implementation of the new [Adelaide] University. While not party to the new Adelaide University, Flinders has already incurred costs associated with the merger of the University of Adelaide and the University of South Australia, and we anticipate incurring more as the complex process of merger is now implemented in earnest.

Flinders respectfully requests that a truly independent expert is appointed as soon as possible, with a mandate to achieve equitable outcomes that do not disadvantage Flinders in favour of the new Adelaide University. Furthermore, Flinders requests the establishment of an instrument that will ensure that costs incurred by Flinders as a result of the merger of the University of Adelaide and University of South Australia are not borne by Flinders.

That is the end of the letter I received. I seek leave to table that letter, along with the other letter I received from the union.

The PRESIDENT: The Hon. Mr Pangallo, you are seeking leave to table the letter but you have just read it out; it is already in *Hansard*. Is it necessary?

The Hon. F. PANGALLO: Those comments are quite—

The PRESIDENT: The Hon. Mr Pangallo, you have just read out the letter. Is there any need to table it?

The Hon. F. PANGALLO: I am sorry. I think I said from the union. You may not have heard that. I also would like to table the letter from the National Tertiary Education Union.

The PRESIDENT: Okay.

Leave granted.

The Hon. F. PANGALLO: That letter from Flinders is quite pertinent in many ways. They have become the forgotten institution here, left on the wayside while the ambitious two vice-chancellors went down their merry way and convinced the Premier that all this needs to happen, and they have basically cut Flinders out of the deal. Let's just go back and remember the election promise that the Premier made initially in relation to this merger: that there would be a commission set up that would comprise the three universities. That did not happen. They just got cut straight out of the deal.

This is the other thing, and this is what disappoints me, that I was not able to meet with Mr Stirling to discuss their views and what they wanted in there in the event that I could then go to the Premier and say, 'Well, look, Premier, would you consider this—a more equitable outcome for this university?' I never got that opportunity. Now we see that Flinders is, I have to say, quite piqued at what has gone on here. Of course, they now have to absorb additional costs in relation to what this merger is going to do.

As I pointed out, sadly, due to the rushed nature of this legislation, I have been unable to meet with any of these people, although they have now communicated with me through letters and email, but I still intend doing so, as that is our job in this place as politicians and representatives of the community. We have an obligation to our constituents, and all of these institutions and the students who go there are our constituents.

Again, as I mentioned, and with great reluctance, I will be supporting the bill. I only do so because I do not really want to see—this thing is going to go ahead and all this money is going to be spent without any proper accountability. It is quite clear that the numbers are here for it to go through,

but I think I have pointed out why I was quite concerned about it and why I was showing some reluctance to immediately jump into bed with the Premier.

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. F. PANGALLO: Don't worry about it—

The PRESIDENT: I am sure the Premier is pleased you are not jumping into bed with him also.

The Hon. F. PANGALLO: —I think they had me in bed with them the last time, in 2018; there was a meme that had been put out as well.

As I indicated, I will be supporting all the Greens' amendments, particularly those that strike at the heart of proper governance, and I am looking forward to getting some straight answers during the committee stage.

The Hon. T.A. FRANKS (17:28): I rise also to speak on behalf of the Greens but not as the portfolio holder on this particular bill that seeks to create the Adelaide University. I note that in my colleague's absence I was one of the members of the joint house select committee that looked at this merger proposal and so bring that experience but certainly will not be going over some of the things that my colleague has already raised as a contribution.

I rise to oppose the Adelaide University Bill 2023. I do so not because I do not believe in our public institutions but because I do believe in our public institutions. I think public universities play an important role in a democracy, in a community, in a society. They bring critical thinking, they bring challenge and they are a very important part of the debate. I am concerned when I hear voices silenced in any political debate, and the voices that have been most silenced in this debate have been those of the students and the staff, the very people that will be needed to make any merger work.

As separate entities, these two universities, that of the University of South Australia currently and the University of Adelaide currently, both perform very well in serving quite different student demographics and needs. I note that I was in fact the very first undergraduate student representative on the University of South Australia's University Council, and so I bring that strong commitment to the democracy within the institutions to this debate today.

I have been horrified to see the erosion of staff and student voices in decision-making. I have been further horrified to see not only the Premier not read the business case, the minister not read the business case, but in this committee in a question that I asked, not only have we not had people read the business case, we were not even allowed to know, as members of the committee inquiring into this merger, who wrote the business case. I find that extraordinary. Was it Voldemort? Was it that consultancy that we dare not speak the name of?

This is an important question to have been answered. Sure, you can claim cabinet and commercial-in-confidence, but I note that the very speech that these members of the council here today have received as the second reading explanation for this bill actually has at the top in red and at the bottom in red on each and every page, 'Official: Sensitive//SA CABINET'. This is a cabinet document. We are allowed to have a cabinet document when it suits the government, but when it does not suit the government, and when it does not suit in this case these particular two institutions, we cannot even be told who wrote the business case, let alone be assured that the ministers responsible for making this decision, bringing this legislation to us, have read the business case and what it entails. I find it extraordinary.

Universities play a very important role in our community. I agree with the Malinauskas government on that. As it says in the second reading speech, 'They educate, research, bring diversity to the state and help meet the state's skills and workforce needs.' I totally agree. What is very concerning here, though, is that this government has gone on to blame the previous Marshall government in their second reading explanation, saying that while mergers have been talked about for years, and indeed decades, the key piece missing in 2018 was 'interest and investment from the government of the day'.

I think here, though, where the Malinauskas government has chosen, in their own words, to be active rather than passive in these conversations is that they have led this debate with the hierarchy of the two institutions that we will now see merge. Yet we know that the Malinauskas government, and the then Malinauskas Labor opposition, in the election process promised an independent commission of inquiry—not a parliamentary committee, as the Greens forced the hand of the government on, not a reading of a business case or a lack of reading of a business case, but an independent commission of inquiry. Had we had that piece of work done, the Greens would have a lot more confidence in this piece of legislation before us actually working in the long term.

My advice is, while we are hearing from the Malinauskas government that a commission of inquiry is their first broken election promise—of apparently no broken election promises being their promise—this will all start in 2026, a few short years away, well timed for the March 2026 election, or perhaps poorly timed, depending on where things stand in those months leading to the next state election. Certainly, my advice from expert sources is that it takes a good 10 years for a merger like this to settle and to be done properly.

So I have grave concerns about the rushed nature, the broken election promise and the lack of information provided not just to the parliament but to the community of South Australia about whether or not this really is a well-founded and appropriate way forward that will serve our students, our staff, our researchers and the state of South Australia.

I am concerned, and I share the concerns of the vice-chancellor of Flinders University, when he raised his concerns about being done out of the deal not because he thought that would be necessarily a problem for Flinders University—and, I have to say, I feel Flinders will be the big winners out of this merger—but the approach to create a research fund not able to be accessed by Flinders is quite concerning. Surely that fund should be statewide, surely it should not be picking winners, and surely it should not be giving an incentive for those researchers to leave Flinders in pursuit of those additional funds.

If this state parliament is to allocate funds like that for research, it should be for all of our public institutions, noting that we do, indeed, have private universities that operate within our state borders, but I am not talking about those today. I am talking about our public institutions that we have a long and proud history of.

I note that there have been many attempts over many years to create mergers. I have been part of a merger. As I said, I was the first undergraduate student rep at the then new University of South Australia. I was there when we debated the name. It was not always going to be called University of South Australia. Spence university was in fact my pick and certainly a reflection of the proud history of women's education that particularly the old colleges of advanced education—

There being a disturbance:

The Hon. T.A. FRANKS: Thanks, Siri. I have broken an arm and got Siri helping me with my assignment here. I digress. Spence university would have been my preferred name for that university, but it came on to be the institution that we now know and love as the University of South Australia. It plays a particular role, it has a particular vocational workforce and social good reason for being, and, yes, it is not as historically imbued with research as the University of Adelaide is, but it actually has better rankings for student satisfaction.

In many cases, that is because, while it is a larger institution, it is on smaller campuses and the quality of the student experience, in some cases, has been better. The University of Adelaide, as it is currently called—although, I note in the legislation before us, we will be, from here on in, calling the two merged institutions Adelaide University—also has a fine reputation in the areas that it has historically thrived in, but it has a different focus than the University of South Australia. It has a different culture. I am concerned, having seen the Dawkins era mergers, that this, what has been called a bit of a shotgun wedding, may well not produce the good results that we saw with the creation of the University of South Australia. Again, perhaps Flinders University will be the big winner.

On a personal note, I was at Salisbury campus. The Hon. Frank Pangallo mentioned the multifunctionpolis and those ideas of the past. I was at the Salisbury campus of the University of South Australia when I did an assignment on the MFP. The MFP does not exist and Salisbury campus

certainly does not exist. That was not on the cards when we merged. It was a campus that served the working-class community of the northern suburbs.

I note here in the history that the then Premier, Mike Rann, has been a champion of merged universities, but I have to say he got involved in that because that was not what he had foreseen. The closure of the Salisbury campus was something that he got himself involved in the politics of and attempted to thwart, but even then Premier Mike Rann could not stop those decisions of the then University of South Australia to shut down that campus and to erode access to higher education for lower SES students.

That is the way of the future to enhance access to education. Those people were the first and often the only one in their families to attend a university, did not have the culture of a family who understood what that would entail and, as they went through that university, they found it increasingly difficult to get right through the degree as student tuition support was eroded—again, during the Hawke and Dawkins era.

Again, I raise some concerns about the way this scholarship approach will be applied. There is a lot of talk that this will be good for lower SES students. I fully agree and echo the sentiments, and the Greens strongly believe, that it should be your aptitude, not your access to wealth, that ensures that you have an academic future and that you can get through a degree and into further degrees. We know that the culture of universities, particularly for those students who are bright enough to get in, means that the hard slog of holding down one, two or maybe more jobs because they do not have access to wealth, and then hit the hurdle of doing placements that are unpaid, where they cannot even hold down those jobs, means they are more likely to drop out as we go along.

I heard very little in my time on the joint committee looking into this merger about the plight of those students. Sure, we might have a new scholarship fund that is going to get people into university, but is it going to keep them there? When we have a cost-of-living crisis, and we know that these students need extra support, with the cultures of these universities—and if we inherit a culture of a university that typically has had more students with access to wealth rather than fewer students with access to wealth—we may well see worse outcomes for lower SES students in the long term.

I do caution members to not necessarily think that that pot of money will be the be-all and end-all. How it is spent and how it supports those students not just to get in but to stay and to have the time to be successful at university will be incredibly important and will be one of the things the Malinauskas government will be judged upon.

I thank the NTEU for its hard work and contribution to this. For those members of this parliament who have not read the surveys done by NTEU, they are a cautionary tale here: 66 per cent of respondents to the NTEU survey in regard to the conversation around this merger did not trust university councils to make good decisions for staff, students, alumni and the public; 91 per cent and 88 per cent considered transparency of information and stakeholder engagement important to ensure public interests are served; and 86 per cent considered detailed public analysis of the pros and cons of the merger important to ensure public interests are served. Only 30 per cent and 26 per cent were confident that the governance structure of any new university would serve the public interest or engage in transparent processes.

These are people at the coalface. This is their careers, this is their lives, this is their working environment. They do not have trust in this process as it currently stands, and in this piece of legislation before us they are not given additional transparency. They are not afforded what should be the face of the universities of the future, with more of a say at the table, more information. In fact, they have been told by the Malinauskas government that they should get used to being shut out of decisions and that they cannot even see the minutes of the university council meetings, let alone the agendas, and should just get used to that as well.

That will not make for a productive workplace, it will not attract people to stay here in this institution, and it is a big lost opportunity, given that we have some really welcome work being done by Minister Clare at a federal level, seeking to reshape our public institutions, our public universities, to be there for the public good, to have more transparency rather than less, and to have more staff

and student engagement at the highest levels rather than less. In fact, we are going the wrong way with this legislation on that.

I cannot believe the Labor government will not support more staff involvement in these decisions and more transparency around the transition process as we go forward if they want this merger to work in such a short time frame.

The Hon. R.A. Simms: It's outrageous.

The Hon. T.A. FRANKS: It is not outrageous necessarily, it is ill-thought-out because if you want this merger to work you will engage and work with the people you need to make it work. Even if you were just looking at this as a political venture, surely you would want those people you are going to have to rely on to be happy with the process to be happy with the process. You are setting yourselves up to fail by shutting out staff and students. I urge the Labor government to reconsider their current opposition to those amendments around better governance that is more inclusive and more reflective of this being a public institution.

I note that the Hon. Sarah Game spoke glowingly of her time on the committee. I did not have such a fine time as the Hon. Sarah Game did on the committee. I found myself shut down and shut up by Labor members, spoken over many a time, and I found that quite offensive. It was actually one of the worst committee experiences I have had in my time in this parliament. I ask Labor to consider and reflect upon—it was not members of this council because I think members of this council understand the role of a crossbench and our right to be here, but I found members of the other place not willing to allow me to ask questions of witnesses and shutting me down in a way that certainly was not reflective of good committee practice and process and possible progress on this.

I note that the Hon. Sarah Game welcomed the new University of Adelaide. I remind the Hon. Sarah Game that it is actually called the Adelaide University from here on in once we merge it, so I am not really confident that she was aware of what was going on in the committee if she does not even know the name of the new institution that she was inquiring into.

With that, I do look forward to the committee stage because I will be interested to hear some of the answers. I urge Labor members to reflect on their practices in regard to industrial democracy and the very reason that the Labor Party was created to ensure better industrial democracy, to reflect on the work of their federal minister, Minister Clare, and to see this as an opportunity for a better university of the future not one where we are destined to keep making the same mistakes that we currently are.

The Hon. J.E. HANSON (17:47): I think it is fair to say I have been alive and for as long as I have been alive I have known that universities are a pretty key part of where I live. In regard to this debate, it cannot be all about money. Our universities are pretty crucial for our state's economy and the university sector is essential for future prosperity, for jobs, with students increasingly dependent on qualifications to get jobs in the areas of technology and innovation.

Student numbers at our universities are increasing. We have about 70,000 students a year who undertake research that leads to new business and jobs. Our universities also teach about 20,000 international students. Contrary to the position of the Hon. Mr Pangallo, I do not share the cynicism around that. To give some human context to some of these numbers, some comments were made around China. We have about 1,800 international students from Hong Kong to our universities. They signed up in January to June of this year alone.

The Hon. F. Pangallo: Hong Kong?

The Hon. J.E. HANSON: Hong Kong, that is right—1,800.

The Hon. F. Pangallo: Who rules Hong Kong?

The Hon. J.E. HANSON: You are making my point for me, the Hon. Mr Pangallo. International education before COVID-19 was a major economic driver, supporting thousands of jobs across our state. As we have risen out of COVID, we have seen these numbers continue to recover. As an indicator, COVID amounted to hundreds of millions of dollars in lost economic value to our state.

As I mentioned at the beginning, dollars are not everything. They are something, and without a doubt something that we all have to care about. At a time when economic growth and job creation must be an overriding priority for any government, particularly if we want to attract industries and keep jobs in our state, including in the vital area of defence, South Australia cannot afford a languishing university sector.

At a time when we need to be arguing for greater interaction with our region, international education for students from overseas gives us strength and engagement in trade in areas around our region and more brainpower in that trade, and that cannot and should not be flippantly overlooked. For young adults, for people wanting to retrain here, for everyone who benefits from research and for the sake of our state's economic growth, we have to ensure that our universities do not just stay as they are; they have to thrive.

The harsh truth is that, on dollars alone, each of our universities alone is too small and too undercapitalised to make it into the list of top international universities. While we have plenty of extraordinary research coming out of the bright minds that are resident in our universities, we have to—we need to—build that capacity to build our universities' visibility. We need to strengthen the visibility of those institutions. Otherwise, put simply, we hold our state back.

Combined, for instance, our three universities do not equal the revenue of the University of Melbourne just by itself. South Australia does have three excellent universities, each of which contributes to the state's economy by educating our young people and transforming lives. They also attract international students to study and live in Australia and undertake research that enriches South Australia's culture and creates employment.

International education is South Australia's biggest export, at \$2.2 billion. That said, it cannot all be about money. I think everyone in this chamber and in the other place and in this government wants what is best for the institutions that we have now and for what they proclaim they instil, and that is a good education for all, for our state and for the future of both.

South Australia needs an internationally recognised top 100 university, and we need it in order to ensure the highest quality research is funded in this state to drive economic growth. This would lead to our state being attractive to the best and brightest students and staff. I do not share the cynicism that has been put by some people here that small will necessarily continue to achieve that. In terms of top 100 universities that are not small, there are many: Tokyo, Peking, Singapore, London, Tsinghua, California. They are all massive institutions. They are all in the top 100 and they attract students from around the world.

I am not sure how many members in this chamber will know the name of Denise Irene Bradley. Until recently, I did not. Among her scores of other achievements, in 2005 she was named the South Australian Australian of the Year, so I probably should. My only excuse for not having heard of Denise is that when she was making her name I was probably fairly self-focused at uni, trying to get my degrees.

Denise was an Australian higher education administrator with specialist interests in educational equity and excellence. As a young person, she wanted to attend university. She wanted to go to the University of Sydney, but her father refused to pay for it. In fact, he thought she should get married and have children, maybe a prevailing attitude of the time. She said, 'Stuff that.' She got herself a scholarship and she pressed on.

Denise began her career as a high school teacher, and she later transitioned across to higher education administration. She worked in various universities. She served on the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission in the 1980s, advising government on funding for universities. Denise Bradley was a very influential figure in the early years of the University of South Australia. She was influential in the process of amalgamating its predecessor entities, chiefly the South Australian Institute of Technology and the South Australian College of Advanced Education.

She was appointed UniSA's vice-chancellor in 1997 and I have learned that, at the time of her appointment, Denise Bradley was only the third woman to take the helm of an Australian university. That was in 1997, so let's not dwell on that for too long. In the 26 years since her appointment there have been 30 more women who have followed.

Clearly, Denise was a formidable agent of change and there are a great number of women in leadership positions across our nation's universities today and quite likely in other nations as well who would name Denise as a mentor and an inspiration. Her administration was marked by progress and reform, building the capacity and the reputation of UniSA as an institution. She had a keen eye for an emerging issue—an ability to identify the questions that needed to be addressed. For example, she was the first university vice-chancellor to appoint a chief financial officer, and on a bit more of a juicy quote, a very good friend of hers recently said that she had an excellent BS detection device when it came to education.

Meanwhile, during the period of Denise Bradley's decade-long tenure as V-C of UniSA, the University of Adelaide ticked along. I got degrees from Adelaide during that decade. In 2003, I got a Bachelor of Arts and in 2006 a Bachelor of Laws, but I will come back to that.

Denise Bradley, after finishing her term at UniSA, was selected in 2008 by another fantastic product of university education in our state, the Hon. Julia Gillard, as the Minister for Education in the Rudd government—it was the Rudd government at that stage—for the Bradley review of higher education. That was in 2008. This was a wideranging and ambitious review.

It resulted in the implementation of the demand-driven system, the establishment of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency, targets for how many Australians should have degrees by 2020, reforms to student income support, and HEPPP, which provides extra support to students from disadvantaged economic backgrounds, from the regions and of course Indigenous Australians to get to university and to graduate.

It has now been almost 15 years since the Bradley review and a lot has happened. A lot of things have changed, some of them permanently. Australian higher education has significantly evolved during that time and many universities along with it, as is the case with so many things. For the great majority of higher education institutions, progress or movement forward has been what has led to success.

I raise all this because the debate about merging the University of Adelaide and the University of South Australia is not new. In fact, the debate about the number and the nature of the organisation of this state's universities has been going on for decades. By 2018, the state had edged closer to structural reform, with the University of Adelaide and UniSA again in deep talks—I remember it—very seriously considering a merger of the two institutions.

But we know there was a key piece missing in 2018, which was the interest and necessary investment of the government of the day—the necessary investment of government—and that is part of the reason why we have made the decision to play an active role and I agree with us playing an active role in supporting the University of Adelaide and UniSA in advancing the issue.

The government has worked closely with the universities of South Australia and Adelaide to envision what a new university in this state might be like and how we can get it to the place that we imagine. Significant resources are needed to support the endeavour. We are assisting to provide a share of those resources and there are a number of arguments in favour of us doing so.

The new Adelaide University will deliver a nation-leading curriculum and student experience. It will expand access to educational opportunities for more South Australian young people and it will provide world-class research. These things will happen. They are not ifs. They will happen and let's be clear about how important that is.

Having an outstanding research capability is a huge part of what makes a university's reach extend beyond the boundaries of the jurisdiction in which it is changing the lives and shaping the futures of its students. Universities with world-class research change lives and shape the futures of people right across the world. They attract investment and financial and human capital. They attract brighter minds. They attract students from far and wide.

Let's talk about South Australians and their futures and about opportunities in tertiary education that they deserve. Let's talk about the doors a top-class university education can open for more of us. I was the child of a single-income family. My dad was a toolmaker and my mum worked in a shoe store. I would not say that I am necessarily the product of lower income socio-economics, but my dad was. He grew up shooting rabbits and he worked very hard to make something of himself.

My dad was a machinist and worked in factories, and when he got out of them he made damn sure that his son knew that his achievements would need to exceed his father's. That is how he wanted me to honour the efforts that he made, the efforts that he had no choice but to make, to be honest, to beat the odds that he did so he did not have to go down the mine like his father had to.

I am nowhere near the sort of kid who would have been expected, looking at my family history, to go to university and certainly no-one from my family ever did. I was fortunate to have parents who encouraged me, probably pushed me, and I am pretty fortunate to have a society that is one of opportunity that rewards that kind of pushing and encouragement.

Social and economic mobility is not the pipe dream here that it is in other jurisdictions. Tertiary pathways are more accessible here than in plenty of other places, but I recognise that I am an exception. I am not the rule. I had a number of other advantages that most do not. I will not go through the stats here because we do not have time, but it is pretty obvious that we are not meeting the standards across the nation to get lower socio-economics into tertiary degrees.

The opportunities that I got—opportunities that many others like me did not get—align with the aims of what we are seeking to do here, and what the government is getting itself involved with. The \$120 million for the new Adelaide University Student Support Fund to provide bursary-type support for students from low socio-economic backgrounds is a good thing. Another \$40 million for the Flinders University Student Support Fund is a good thing.

These investments, and ones like them, will make a huge difference to a whole lot of young South Australians, providing opportunities like, frankly, the one that I would not have got without my dad pushing me. Among other investments, they will support efforts to put Adelaide University on the footing that our young people, our research sector, our state and our economy all deserve. I know that not everyone will agree with everything that is being put and that is fine. The fact that this debate here has acknowledged a certain level of requirement for South Australia to have an ambition for a top 100 ranked university I think says a lot.

Increasingly, South Australians have been looking interstate for their university options. That is a fact. In fact, prior to COVID, around 10,000 South Australians opted to look elsewhere for university education in 2017 alone. That was an increase of 3,500 from just six years before that. I do not want to see my family, or any family that would rather have its young people stay close, have to look interstate or overseas for a top-quality higher education opportunity.

We cannot afford to lose our brightest and our best students to universities elsewhere, because the likely result of that is they will also choose to begin their careers elsewhere too. In fact, they do now and that is having a detrimental impact on our local economy. Students, both local and international, who are able to choose between universities and what they offer are more likely to select higher ranked universities. There is evidence that the quality of students enrolled correlates with how well the university performs in its rankings. I understand you can get stats for anything, so I can understand you can contest that.

If we are here to keep the best of our young people in South Australia, though, we need to have a high-ranking university. High-quality researchers are likely to choose to work at universities with higher rankings and currently our universities are not making that grade. This then leads to more productive research and higher levels of research funding as you go further up. Internationally, partnerships on teaching and research are influenced by international rankings.

Partner universities will seek out quality institutions, as measured on their rankings. Partnerships with higher quality international universities increase the quality of teaching and research. Top-ranked universities internationally use this status as part of their branding now and a higher ranked university puts us in the game to achieve the same.

Right now, as has been referenced by the Hon. Ms Franks, we are seeing major sectoral reform through the Australian Universities Accord. We are already seeing major changes in future skills both here and in our regions, we are seeing more need for better research outcomes, and we are seeing greater demand for extending the demand-driven system we are using now more fairly.

I agree with what the Hon. Ms Franks has put in that regard about what Mr Clare, our federal minister, is doing in this space. We need to be asking ourselves—as Mr Clare might say—how to

open our uni doors wider to greater opportunity and for more people to access it. I quoted the efforts of Denise Bradley during my speech and I will end, noting the time we have, with a quote she gave on her time in education that I feel sums up what we are actually doing here. She said:

I've often been afraid of failing, of looking like a fool or of saying things I know will be unpopular. I have found myself in many uncomfortable spots. But I learnt that you don't achieve anything if you don't take risks...we strive to be the best person we can be and to add something to the lives of others.

Anyone who works in education would believe that.

The Hon. C. BONAROS (18:06): I rise to speak in support of the Adelaide University Bill 2023. I apologise that I am going last, because while some of us have been busy bagging the merger process others have been busy trying to secure outcomes for our students with the universities. That is certainly where I have focused my time and attention.

Before I get onto that, and at the outset, I would like to thank the leadership of the University of Adelaide and the University of South Australia for all their hard work and for the tremendous efforts they have gone to, particularly over the last four months, to keep us up to date with all the information we have requested of them regarding this process.

I would like to make special mention and give special thanks to Professor John Williams, who has made himself available to all of us throughout this process to provide information relating to the merger. I would also like to thank all the witnesses, but two in particular: Ms Georgia Thomas and Mr Isaac Solomon, who appeared before the committee on behalf of the two student associations. As I said during the committee inquiry process, if that is the calibre of graduates from those respective universities then they have a lot to be proud of.

It has been my absolute pleasure to engage with both of them throughout this process. I would particularly like to thank them for their forward thinking, for their desire to keep students engaged in the process and their practical approach to this issue, which should not go unnoticed; indeed, from where I sit it should be celebrated.

I do not make promises lightly but when I do I usually overcommit and then find myself on a mission to deliver. There are individuals I have given my word to, and Georgia and Isaac are two of those, in terms of doing my level best, as far as possible, to address the concerns that have been raised with me around the merger. When we deal with this issue in the committee stage tomorrow I will elaborate on that further.

I would like to thank the countless experts and stakeholders who have made themselves available to me over recent months at all hours of the day and night, including those I may not have ultimately agreed with in terms of my final position on the merger, including Professor Hanmer, who spent a great deal of time having discussions with me outside of the committee process.

Despite some people thinking I sit in my office scheming deals, or perhaps even filing my nails, I have made it my job to go through every shred of evidence available to us through this process and beyond. There were no holidays, there were no Mediterranean trips, there were no interstate trips, there were no school holidays. Those of us informed of the merger have done nothing but live, breathe and eat this for months on end. Every member of this place has had the benefit of following the evidence that was provided to that committee and engaging with stakeholders appropriately throughout.

When the idea of the merger was announced by the Premier via his election commitment, my starting point was—and, indeed, has always remained—that I remain open-minded. I have never been opposed to the concept of a merger, and I have made that clear from the very outset. I have never held any ideological opposition to it—indeed, any ideological position. In fact, what I have said to people is that I am rather agnostic. If the merger stacked up, then the merger would have my support. I did not go out publicly and comment on the merger during those times. It is on that basis that I have gone about the past few months, and I am very glad that I did.

For those who want to criticise and make comments that frankly are offensive about the work that we have done, and I think I have said it before in this place, I will not be lectured to by anyone about the work that I have done on this issue or any other.

The Hon. T.A. Franks interjecting:

The Hon. C. BONAROS: That was not directed at you. On to brighter things, as outlined in the majority report, the university sector is at the heart of South Australia's economic prosperity. Each year, the sector educates an estimated 70,000 domestic and 20,000 international students. This is outlined in the majority report, which I was pleased to support. The report states:

The overall contribution of education and training to the South Australian economy exceeds \$7 billion annually. International education [is recognised] as one of the State's most significant exports, with an annual value of around \$1.8 billion.

By the end of this inquiry process, there was no doubt in my mind that the economic and social interests of the state can be advanced by the amalgamation of the University of Adelaide and the University of South Australia into the new Adelaide University. Mergers are rare opportunities, and opportunities like this one that have the potential to transform our state are even rarer. It is my firm belief that this is a transformative and historic opportunity for our state and, at the heart of that, opportunity for our students.

We all know the difference education can make to a person's life. We know the domino effect that it can have on a person's life, on their networks, on their local community and on the community more broadly. We know this bill is not just about getting students through university but also those knock-on benefits that it has for our community and our economy more broadly. We know that when we are talking about engaging with lower SES students and research and development that this is also about minimising the brain drain in South Australia. It is about getting people into higher paid jobs and it is about better economic opportunities and outcomes.

It strikes me that the inquiry process has been the first opportunity I can remember in this state's history to delve headfirst into the tertiary sector and truly dissect what all this means and can mean for South Australia: where the opportunities lie, where the problems are, what we can do to address them, the federal implications, and so on. I do not need any further convincing that if we were to miss this opportunity there simply will not be another one that presents itself, and there is no other opportunity when it comes to merger options.

Flinders University was quite categorical in its evidence. It was not interested in a merger proposal. The two universities involved in this were quite categorical. This is the only opportunity. It has taken this long to land here and they have put their best case forward and they have done the hard yards to back that in.

Certainly, my willingness to speak publicly last week should speak volumes about what I am willing to do when I believe something is in the state's best interests. This bill and this proposal are about outcomes and achieving something hugely rewarding and transformative for this state, and I for one want to be part of that journey. I have done my level best to ensure that I am, and I am proud of that position.

I am also a realist when I go into those sorts of decision-making processes. I want to be part of something that is bigger than all of us and especially our political interests and agendas. I know from my discussions with the universities directly that they have always wanted this to be a multipartisan approach, and I am pleased for the universities that others have now come round to that position.

I have acknowledged publicly and respected that for some that has taken a little longer, because they did not have the benefit of the committee process. But, again, I remind all honourable members: the universities made themselves available to all of us. Stakeholders have made themselves available to all of us. Witnesses have been more than willing to talk to all of us. There is not a single person that I have reached out to who has not made themselves available to me.

Let me be clear: this will not proceed, as the Hon. Jing Lee suggests, because the government has the numbers because there has been a deal. It will proceed, from where I sit, because it is in the best interests of the state. It might be shocking to some of my colleagues in here, but I do support the sentiments expressed today by the Hon. Sarah Game about the benefits, I do agree with the Premier and I do agree with the Deputy Premier. As an elected member of this place, I am entitled to do that.

What was critical for me during that process was certainty for students and staff alike. The worst outcome for students and staff alike, as it turns out, given the ability to meet critical deadlines, was for the merger to creep into next year. I cannot emphasise enough how much that was made clear to us, and it was backed in by overwhelming evidence.

We all know that the reality is we have all had the benefit of this inquiry process. I do not know if some members were watching or tuning into the same channel as the committee I took part in, given some of the commentary that has been made today, but from where I sit it simply was not reflective of the majority of the evidence and the overwhelming evidence that was actually presented to that committee.

Indeed, while some of us have been busy tying ourselves up in knots over how to maximise political capital, over deals, over Lord knows what, I, for one, have been seeking commitments and undertakings on issues raised with me by stakeholders and members of the community. I have gone back to the V-Cs and back to the universities time and again and asked for consideration of various proposals over and above the \$60 million commitment that has already been announced.

I told other honourable members in this place to do precisely the same, because the university has said time and again, 'Everyone should come and speak to us. We have reached out to members. We are trying to see what it is that they'd like us to deliver that we haven't already thought of, and if we can we will,' and I will continue to do just that.

Today, I am particularly pleased to be able to outline what I consider the most important of those issues. And let me be clear: these are not deals or love boats. These are not 'jumping into bed with the Premier,' which I find offensive whoever it is directed at—and I would caution honourable members from using language such as 'jumping into bed with the Premier' and the appropriateness of that sort of language when it is directed at other honourable members in this place, whoever they may be. I would strongly caution against that sort of language in these chambers. If you want to use that privately, that is up to you, but be respectful when you are in here at least.

I am a University of Adelaide alumnus, and I am exceptionally grateful for the opportunities afforded to me as a result. It is my absolute fervent wish that all kids—regardless of their postcodes, regardless of whether they attended Salisbury East High School or Prince Alfred College, regardless of whether their mum or dad is a doctor or an abattoir worker or a factory worker—have access to the same educational opportunities if that is what they desire.

We know that no matter how bright a student may be, too often those opportunities are simply out of reach, especially for kids living in low socio-economic areas and, of course, in our regions. Some may consider them sweeteners, but others who have been in that position and others who have grown up in that position, those of us who are the firsts in our families to go to university and get a tertiary education, might be pleased to hear about the sorts of commitments that the university has been willing to give when it comes to that \$20 million additional funding, because this is something that I pursued directly with the universities and I was very pleased with the sorts of things that came back to me.

Let me articulate for some members some of the things that are being considered and the commitments and undertakings that are being given, because this is money that will be quarantined in perpetuity for those students. It is not going to be used for any other reason; it is for regional and outer metropolitan students.

When it comes to those scholarship programs, let's see what it is that we are considering. We have \$100 million that is legislated to facilitate equity consideration for people within the community who have experienced disadvantage in education, and it is anticipated that the fund will generate about \$4 million to advance the objectives outlined in the fund. It does not specifically identify regional or outer metropolitan areas as a particular focus for support from the fund.

So what could we do with that extra \$20 million? What is it that those of us who have sought those commitments are expecting to see? Access is an aspiration to higher education that we know has to start long before the first day of year 12 in high school. The path and support along the path must commence years before, often in primary school. The Children's University at the University of Adelaide is a good example of what can be achieved to encourage and engage with families and

children who have no or limited exposure to higher education. But there is, of course, a gap between primary and university that needs to be strategically addressed.

History indicates that many first-in-family students at university are attracted to health or early education degrees, for instance. They are also the skilled professionals who are in short supply in disadvantaged areas, so options such as the one that I am about to outline are the sorts of things that we are considering around the \$20 million.

A tailored support fund can be established to focus on pathways to higher education for regional and outer metropolitan students. It would include a bursary for students in years 11 and 12 at high school. In addition, the university would undertake mentoring, university preparation and on-campus experience. Once at university, a support scholarship for the length of their degree, for their mentoring and for their peer support would be wrapped around those students. A good example of this approach that we had raised with us during the committee, and what piqued my interest, was the example in Queensland.

If you take the modelling outlined above, you could have a program where you have a year 11 or year 12 student, for instance, receiving a \$1,000 or \$2,000 bursary. If you add that to the cost of a degree, that is about \$30,000. Just on that, just on those figures, assuming that 24 students get this opportunity and that the average duration is three years, it would mean that over the course of year 11 through to the final year of university, 240 students who would not have otherwise had access to a tertiary education—because of their socio-economic background, because of their postcode, because their families simply could not afford it—will now have access to that, and that will be quarantined in perpetuity for those students.

That, for me, is a remarkable outcome. It is a remarkable outcome which will ensure that those bright gifted kids who cannot get a leg up are going to have an even brighter future via a scholarship, and are going to have the wraparound supports that they need to see them through to the end of their degree.

That is an extraordinary gift and it has extraordinary benefits, quarantining that money in perpetuity for kids just like that. It also exists, of course, to individuals to donate into the program, so there could be a funding initiative where the 240 turns into 480, and so on and so on, by the universities themselves. You could have endowments that contribute again to that \$20 million and see that number increase even further.

This is the sort of thing that that quarantined funding could achieve, and if anyone thinks that is not a worthy outcome, and it does not include the money that we have talked about that has been secured for Flinders—and I will get to that—if anyone thinks that the opportunity for those children is not worth supporting, then I simply have no words.

I am going to say this because I have said at the outset: I have gone back—despite people thinking, like I said, that this has been some sort of 'love boat' exercise—I have continued to go back to the universities. I have gone back to them on languages. I have gone back to them on concerns that have been raised with me about programs that are being axed, not just at Adelaide and UniSA but at Flinders. I have gone back to them about the Roseworthy project. I have gone back to them about allied health.

I have explored every possible measure available that has been raised with me, and which other members have been invited to do, to see if anything can fit under the new merger proposal, and I have received positive responses and I am really pleased with that. I am really pleased with the commitments that have been given to me and I am comfortable and more than happy with where I have landed in relation to this bill.

When it comes to Flinders University, I listened to the evidence presented at the committee and it was clear to me that there was a desire there amongst members for funding to go towards low SES students at Flinders, and that is also one of the issues that I engaged in discussions on in terms of securing funding for low SES students. I am pleased that we were able to land on a position in relation to that.

It might come as no surprise to my colleagues opposite, but I do not agree with my honourable friends in the Greens' assessment of the process. I have said this to my friend, the Hon.

Rob Simms: our starting point was different, our starting point on this process was absolutely different. We simply did not share the same views.

I would like to comment on the role that the Greens played in terms of parliamentary scrutiny. As the Hon. Robert Simms knows, I supported a joint house committee because there were other members in this place who had expressed a view to be involved in a committee process. I seek leave to conclude my remarks.

Sitting extended beyond 18:30 on motion of Hon. K.J. Maher.

The Hon. C. BONAROS: For the benefit of members, obviously there are lots of things here I can speak to during the committee stage of the debate when we debate this clause by clause, so I will not do that today, I will not be very long. I will say, in relation to the comments of my friend the Hon. Mr Simms, that had I known about the discussions that took place, had I known about the discussions that had taken place around the committee, perhaps we could have explored it a little further. But as I have articulated to him in person, I did not know about those discussions, so it is a very sad state of affairs in my view that I did not know about a process and that I missed the opportunity to have those discussions with the honourable member.

I go back to what I said, that we have all had the opportunity to sink our teeth into this merger. The time frame has been known to all of us, the reporting date was known to all of us, the report was provided to us, and from where I sit I think we have all become used to these time frames. I will be the first one to stand up and say when they are not appropriate, but to suggest that we did not have notice of this, for me to stand here and hear those comments, is frankly objectionable.

Overwhelmingly, the position we are in right now—and one that I agree with—is that we have three regional universities. That is how they are seen, they are the optics of our universities, and it means we often miss out. This merger is designed, obviously, to put us in the absolute best position not just in terms of our university outcomes but in terms of the economic outcomes for the state.

Of course there are inherent risks. You cannot possibly expect to take on a project of this magnitude and not accept that. The questions we have to ask ourselves are: have they been appropriately addressed; have the universities done enough to reduce the risks as far as possible; are the risk management strategies appropriate; how does the university intend to mitigate risks going forward; and how does that compare with the potential benefits?

From where I sit—and I will touch on this further tomorrow for the benefit of the Hon. Rob Simms, because we will get on to the issue of the business case—I remind honourable members that, in addition to all the information we have all had and all been privy to, we of course had the opportunity to hear in camera evidence from the chief financial officers of the universities and we all had the opportunity to ask lots of questions, which I did, of those chief financial officers. We had the opportunity to go back to those chief financial officers and ask more questions and get more clarification around opportunity costs, risks, mitigation factors and what they were actually proposing, and I did just that and I know that other members did just that.

I think it is fair to say that probably not a lot of detail has been left out of the information given to us in camera in terms of the business case, because we know that as much as the universities could afford to take out of their business case and provide to that committee on a confidential basis they did. Of course they are going to want to maintain some level of competitive advantage and some level of commercial-in-confidence information because they cannot afford to do otherwise, but to suggest that the information has not been made available to any of us, frankly, and to suggest that the information provided to the committee has been half-baked, not thorough, not extensive or not forensically tested is patently untrue and unfair, and I do not accept that for a moment.

For those members who were not in there, I am sorry that there might be information you missed out on, but the reality is that the rest of us who had that opportunity and those of us who landed on the majority report did, and we were satisfied with the outcome. I am one of those members, and I am very proud of the fact that I have supported this merger. I do think it will be historic for the state and I do think it will be transformative. I am exceptionally pleased—exceptionally pleased—with the \$60 million that will go towards low SES funds at Flinders and the new university.

I am even more proud of the fact that there will be \$20 million quarantined in perpetuity for kids who simply would never have had access to university in the first place.

I note the time. I will speak further to some of these issues when we get to the committee stage debate. With those words, I indicate my overwhelming support for the merger.

The Hon. K.J. MAHER (Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector) (18:35): I thank all honourable members for their considered contributions to this debate. As outlined in introducing the bill, we cannot underestimate the importance that this has for our state. It has been encouraging to see so many members engaging at a level that recognises the gravity of the legislation that proposes this merger.

I will quickly touch on a couple things that honourable members have referred to throughout their contribution. Flinders University was mentioned by a number of members, and I can confirm that this government is committed to a strong university sector in this state and we will work very closely with Flinders University. Flinders University has many distinct partnerships with the government, including the building of a technical college at Tonsley and the \$9 million commitment to the Flinders Factory of the Future. In fact, in recent years the government and previous governments have provided over \$265 million, I am advised, of support towards initiatives that have directly supported or been of benefit to Flinders University.

It is in every South Australian's interest that the entire tertiary sector grow and strengthen. The government will be working as collaboratively as possible with the new university, as it will with Flinders University. This government has now committed to deliver a \$40 million student equity support fund for Flinders University to facilitate access to the university and address equity considerations for people within the community who are from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds. This is a significant additional contribution to the university that provides equitable access to funding support for Flinders University, just as there will be for the new merged Adelaide University.

With reference to the total student headcount of the three universities, the \$40 million investment broadly represents Flinders University's per capita share of the state's \$160 million investment in funds for this purpose. We are looking forward to engaging thoughtfully and constructively with Flinders University about this investment, as well as about any other initiatives that arise.

I know that particularly the Hon. Robert Simms and also other members have talked about the voices of students and staff. I am advised that the council composition in this bill recognises the important contribution that students and staff make to the governance of a university, with staff and students comprising 37½ per cent of the council membership (that is, six out of 16 members) to allow for a strong student and staff voice while also recognising the widely accepted best practice in university governance principle that the majority of members should be independent. A reduction in the number of independent members would create a potential risk for the university, as it reduces their ability to ensure an appropriate skills mix of council members to effectively govern such a very large and complex organisation.

Risk mitigation by government was raised in the second reading debate. To support the implementation phase of the new Adelaide University, the government will appoint an independent expert with experience in higher education to work with the government, universities and other stakeholders, including representatives of staff and students. The expert will ensure transparency and assurance, providing independent advice and recommendations to government on the measurement and achievement of proposed economic benefits, possible impacts on staff and students, and risk management measures, including transition and implementation risks.

There was discussion about the possible merger of the universities of Western Australia, and it was mentioned during the second reading speeches that merger talks have been abandoned. I am advised that that is not the case. The Western Australian university sector review is still in progress, looking into whether changes may help to better support the performance and financial stability of Western Australia's four public universities. The final panel report is due to be provided to the WA Minister for Education in the very near future, I am informed.

With that, I thank everyone for their considered contributions. I look forward to the committee stage at 11 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The council divided on the second reading:

Ayes12
Noes.....2
Majority10

AYES

Bonaros, C.
El Dannawi, M.
Hood, B.R.
Maher, K.J. (teller)

Bourke, E.S.
Girolamo, H.M.
Hunter, I.K.
Martin, R.B.

Centofanti, N.J.
Hanson, J.E.
Lensink, J.M.A.
Scriven, C.M.

NOES

Franks, T.A.

Simms, R.A. (teller)

Second reading thus carried; bill read a second time.

STATUTES AMENDMENT (OMBUDSMAN AND AUDITOR-GENERAL) BILL

Final Stages

The House of Assembly agreed to the bill without any amendment.

At 18:45 the council adjourned until Wednesday 1 November 2023 at 11:00.

*Answers to Questions***VOICE SECRETARIAT**

302 The Hon. S.L. GAME (27 September 2023). Did the government or the consultancies it engages make direct approaches to potential staff, executive or otherwise, to be employed working within/for the Voice Secretariat?

The Hon. K.J. MAHER (Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector):

I am advised no direct approaches were made.

UNIVERSITY MERGER FUNDING

303 The Hon. S.L. GAME (27 September 2023).

1. Does the South Australian government intend to borrow in full, or any part of, the finances required to fund the \$300 million worth of perpetual funds promised as part of the merger of the University of Adelaide and the University of South Australia?

2. If so, will the interest payments on this loan be paid for by the returns on the two perpetual fund investments?

The Hon. K.J. MAHER (Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector): The Treasurer has advised:

1. The \$320 million in funding required to establish the funds will be factored into the calculation of the government's overall borrowing requirements for the 2024-25 budget year. The government manages its borrowing program as a whole, not on an issue-by-issue basis.

2. Any returns achieved over and above the \$320 million for the two funds in the future will be available solely for intended use of the funds, and not to reimburse the government for any costs incurred in establishing the funds.

NATIONAL HERITAGE REFERRALS

305 The Hon. R.A. SIMMS (27 September 2023).

1. What self-referrals have the state government made to the federal Minister for the Environment for National Heritage Places within the last two years?

2. Has the new Women's and Children's Hospital development been referred to the federal Minister for the Environment for its potential impact on the National Heritage listed Adelaide Park Lands?

3. On what date was the referral made for the new Women's and Children's Hospital, or if it has not yet been made, what is the anticipated date for referral?

The Hon. K.J. MAHER (Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector): The Minister for Climate, Environment and Water has advised:

1. Under the provisions of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act), the state government has made one self-referral to the federal Minister for the Environment for National Heritage Places within the last two years. This related to the proposed new Women's and Children's Hospital. The referral for the New Women's and Children's Hospital was released for comment by the Australian government Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water on 17 October 2023.

2. The new Women's and Children's Hospital project team have advised me that a referral to the federal Minister for the Environment, under the provisions of the Environment Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, has been made.

This EPBC Act referral is for assessment as to whether the new Women's and Children's Hospital project will be a controlled action as it is proposed within the National Heritage listed Adelaide Park Lands and City Layout.

3. The new Women's and Children's Hospital project team have further advised this EPBC Act referral was made on 21 July 2023.

GOVERNANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY FUNDING

306 The Hon. H.M. GIROLAMO (28 September 2023).

1. On which dates did rounds of the 2022-23 governance and sustainability funding grant close?

2. By round, which date were groups originally intended to be advised if they had been awarded 2022-23 governance and sustainability funding grant?

3. By round, which date were groups advised they had been awarded a 2022-23 governance and sustainability funding grant?

4. By round, how many groups applied for the 2022-23 governance and sustainability funding grant?
5. By round, how many groups were awarded a 2022-23 governance and sustainability funding grant?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN (Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, Minister for Forest Industries): The Minister Human Services has advised:

Grants SA held one governance and sustainability funding round in 2022-23, and it opened on 16 January 2023 and closed on 23 March 2023.

There were 218 applications to the 2022-23 governance and sustainability funding round received, with seven organisations submitting two applications each, leaving 211 unique applicant organisations applying in this round. There were 64 successful applications.

There were two organisations who were awarded funding for two applications, however one application each was on behalf of another organisation through a sponsorship arrangement.

Successful applicants to the 2022-23 governance and sustainability funding round were notified by the Minister for Human Services on 27 June 2023.

MINISTER'S REGISTER OF INTERESTS

307 The Hon. H.M. GIROLAMO (28 September 2023).

1. On what date did the minister become aware that her Register of Interests was incorrect?
2. On what date did the minister update her Register of Interests?
3. What items did the minister update in her Register of Interests at the time of the latest update?
4. Has the minister reviewed her Register of Interests, to ensure it is up to date and correct?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN (Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, Minister for Forest Industries): The Minister Human Services has advised:

1. Refer to answers provided in Hansard 26 September, 2023.
2. Refer to answers provided in Hansard 26 September, 2023.
3. Refer to answers provided in Hansard 26 September, 2023.
4. Yes.

FLINDERS RANGES

In reply to **the Hon. T.A. FRANKS** (27 June 2023).

The Hon. K.J. MAHER (Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector): The Minister for Climate, Environment and Water has advised:

1. The Department for Environment and Water works closely with the Adnyamathanha people in relation to their cultural authority and heritage of the Flinders Ranges, in particular through dedicated co-management arrangements. Two co-management boards have undertaken extensive cultural heritage surveys, prepared new park management plans that puts cultural heritage at the centre of park management, and have developed cultural management plans and solutions for particular cultural sites of significance such as Sacred Canyon. Close consultation and collaboration have allowed new interpretive plans for the parks to be developed that include significant cultural information and interpretation including new interpretive signs installed throughout the parks. Co-naming of these parks was also a significant outcome from these processes of consultation and partnership with Adnyamathanha people.

Discussions about World Heritage have been ongoing with individuals, national park co-management boards, and the Cultural Heritage and Native Title group appointed by the administrator for the Adnyamathanha Traditional Lands Association. This consultation supports the consideration of cultural heritage matters in the nomination of the Flinders Ranges for World Heritage Listing.

In March 2023, the Australian government committed to providing \$0.5 million over four years to support working with the Adnyamathanha people for obtaining the free, prior and informed consent for the nomination. This is a significant contribution, facilitating how the Adnyamathanha people will contribute and give consent to the nomination.

2. While the Flinders Ranges will be nominated against a geological criterion under the World Heritage Convention, the nomination dossier will reflect the cultural values of the Flinders Ranges.

3. The rigorous requirements of demonstrating outstanding universal value for World Heritage limits the scope of what can be nominated in the Flinders Ranges. The narrative will focus on the dawn of animal life as reflected in the geological and fossil record. Significant cultural sites such as Warratyi will, with the consent of the Adnyamathanha people, be reflected in the nomination dossier.

EDUCATION SECURITY

In reply to **the Hon. S.L. GAME** (29 August 2023).

The Hon. K.J. MAHER (Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector): The Minister for Education, Training and Skills has advised:

The Department for Education behaviour support policy is based on international research and the legislative and social context of South Australian schools.

The behaviour support policy endorses a positive behaviour support approach, which is widely accepted as best practice in behavioural and biomedical science. This approach is used in disability, health, and education sectors globally, with its efficacy well established by research.

The Malinauskas Labor government is investing significantly to address violence in schools, having recognised the issue in opposition and made election commitments to address it. The Minister for Education, Training and Skills hosted a round table on violence in schools in 2022, and has released a range of immediate actions to address this issue.

This includes:

- Positive behaviour for learning, which is currently being piloted in 41 schools across the state;
- Additional professional learning for staff;
- A strengthened respectful relationships and consent curriculum;
- Targeted parents in education funding on violence prevention;
- Restorative practices funding.

These initiatives build on key election commitments including 100FTE mental health and learning specialists and autism inclusion teachers—which are important in addressing violence in schools.

These programs are underpinned by robust evidence, including demonstrated improved outcomes when implemented with fidelity. Where there are concerns about safety in a school, the department provides significant additional resources and supports to address these issues.

These supports may include:

- Enhanced leadership support and mentoring
- Allocation of an onsite behaviour support coach
- Support from a parent liaison officer
- Enhanced security onsite.

DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROSECUTIONS OFFICE

In reply to **the Hon. N.J. CENTOFANTI (Leader of the Opposition)** (30 August 2023).

The Hon. K.J. MAHER (Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector): I am advised:

As at 30 August 2023, 25 vacancies (10 legal officer roles, 15 other roles) existed in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, at least 23 of which became vacant in 2023.

PUBLIC SECTOR

In reply to **the Hon. J.S. LEE (Deputy Leader of the Opposition)** (12 September 2023).

The Hon. K.J. MAHER (Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector): The Premier has advised:

Mr Peter Hanlon was contracted as a strategic adviser to the Premier's Delivery Unit, pursuant to the relevant procurement policies.

YABBY NETS

In reply to **the Hon. J.S. LEE (Deputy Leader of the Opposition)** (26 September 2023).

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN (Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, Minister for Forest Industries):

With regard to question 1, I am advised that information on the PIRSA website advises the public of how to either responsibly dispose of banned yabby pots or to contact RecFish SA regarding the opera house net exchange program.

RecFish SA has been provided funding from Green Adelaide (part of the Department for Environment and Water) to undertake a yabby net exchange program. As part of this program, RecFish SA held a National Gone Fishing Day and yabby net exchange event at the Happy Valley Reservoir on 8 October 2023. The event raised awareness about recent regulation changes and provide a practical incentive to remove the now-banned opera house nets from South Australian waterways. I am advised that 1800 nets were swapped on the day. The event was led by RecFish SA, and Green Adelaide has provided promotion of the event through the Green Adelaide communications channels, including social media and their website. Information was also made available via the RecFish SA social media channels and Eventbrite website.

With regard to question 2, I am advised that Green Adelaide has supported the awareness raising initiative through its rewilding project budget. This project is investigating the feasibility of bringing platypus back to the River Torrens/Karrawirra Pari, and as opera house nets pose a significant threat to platypus, awareness raising about the net ban is critically important to the success of the rewilding project.

With regard to question 3, I am advised that RecFish SA has been contracted to undertake the yabby net exchange program.

FERAL PIGS

In reply to **the Hon. T.A. FRANKS** (26 September 2023).

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN (Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, Minister for Forest Industries): The Minister for Environment and Water has advised:

Outbreak 1—Less than 20 animals. All animals successfully removed. It is uncertain if these animals were intended to be used by an individual or group, or intentionally released to establish a pest population.

Outbreak 2—2 pregnant females. Both successfully removed. Discussion with government staff in south-west Victoria indicate persons are actively moving pregnant female feral pigs across south-west Victoria into Crown land areas to establish new populations for recreational hunting. Given the proximity to south-western Victoria, it is suspected these two pregnant females were an attempt to establish a feral pig population for recreational hunting in the Limestone Coast region of SA.

Outbreak 3—information obtained by authorised officers suggests a person or persons released approximately 12 animals for personal use to a remote area of the property without the knowledge of the landowner. Over the course of two-three years the population increased to the point of dispersing onto adjoining properties when the Limestone Coast Landscape Board was alerted. The owner of land immediately provided support to eradicate the population once notified.

Limestone Coast Landscape Board authorised officers have been investigating all three outbreaks.

Officers are investigating claims a person or persons have been transporting feral pigs from NSW and releasing them in the Limestone Coast region. Inquiries are ongoing to identify the name of the person or persons involved for interview. DNA samples are being tested to provide information on a possible source location.

GIANT PINE SCALE

In reply to **the Hon. J.M.A. LENSINK** (27 September 2023).

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN (Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, Minister for Forest Industries): I am advised:

Giant Pine Scale has been detected on Aleppo pines near Boundy Road within the Highbury Aqueduct Reserve.

GIANT CRAB HARVEST

In reply to **the Hon. N.J. CENTOFANTI (Leader of the Opposition)** (27 September 2023).

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN (Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, Minister for Forest Industries): I am advised:

My department provided me advice that following the giant crab stock being classified as depleting for the 2022-23 season, a reduction in the total allowable commercial catch (TACC) for the 2023-24 season was necessary to recover the stock, these reductions being 50 per cent to the current total allowable commercial catch for the northern zone of the fishery and 70 per cent to the total allowable commercial catch for the southern zone of the fishery. This corresponds to a total allowable commercial catch of 6.7 tonnes for the northern zone and 2.61 tonnes for the southern zone. The scientific advice I was provided stated that these total allowable commercial catch reductions were required as giant crab is a slow growing species particularly susceptible to recruitment overfishing and the continuous decline in catch per unit effort and catches since 2008 demonstrate that substantial reductions in the total allowable commercial catch are required to recover the stock.

In regard to the southern zone specifically, nine rock lobster licence holders hold giant crab quota, which was temporarily transferred to three licence holders to catch in the 2022-23 season. There is one miscellaneous licence holder in the southern zone who solely targets giant crab and holds almost 70 per cent of the quota in the southern

zone (as well as almost 70 per cent of the quota in the northern zone). The majority quota holder is supportive of the reductions to the total allowable commercial catch in order to prevent the continual decline in stock abundance and recover the stock.

I note that the total allowable commercial catch reductions will affect giant crab quota holders differently, as some have historically harvested larger proportions of their quota allocations. I am supportive of my department's decision to reduce fishing mortality, by reducing the total allowable commercial catch, so that future levels of recruitment are able to rebuild the stock from its 'depleting' stock status classification.

GIANT PINE SCALE

In reply to **the Hon. B.R. HOOD** (28 September 2023).

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN (Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, Minister for Forest Industries): I am advised:

The management of the Highbury Aqueduct Reserve is the responsibility of the National Parks and Wildlife Service in the Department for Water and the Environment. Therefore, the cost of clean-up is the responsibility of that department.

The Department of Primary Industries and Regions is assisting by providing appropriate technical advice as required.

PLANT PROTEIN

In reply to **the Hon. J.S. LEE (Deputy Leader of the Opposition)** (28 September 2023).

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN (Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, Minister for Forest Industries): The Minister for Trade and Investment has advised:

The state government grant is contingent upon federal support and remains in active discussion with the relevant parties.

Plant based protein remains a bipartisan undertaking with recognition of the growing global demand for high quality plant proteins, local employment opportunities and the export potential the sector could deliver.

The Malinauskas Labor government understands the importance of attracting both national and global investment to our state.

It is for this reason that the Invest SA was re-established—previously scrapped by the former Marshall Liberal government—that has in its first year in operation yielded over

\$1 billion of investment into the South Australian economy.

AVIAN BIRD FLU

In reply to **the Hon. N.J. CENTOFANTI (Leader of the Opposition)** (28 September 2023).

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN (Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, Minister for Forest Industries): I am advised:

Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) preparedness is a high priority nationally, and Australian, state and territory governments, and the poultry industry has been preparing for HPAI outbreaks over a long period of time.

The South Australian poultry industry is acutely aware and engaged with respect to the risk of avian influenza, given that avian influenza is an ongoing environmental risk routinely managed by the industry. Poultry enterprises practice a high level of farm biosecurity to prevent spillover of avian influenza from wild birds into commercial flocks. The industry participates in PIRSA's passive disease surveillance program, where sampling of sick birds is undertaken for early detection of a possible HPAI outbreak.

PIRSA is part of a South Australian industry-government poultry health group which engages the diverse poultry industry to share information and discuss current issues on poultry health. This group is aware of the changing risks of HPAI in Australia. HPAI will be on the agenda for discussion at the upcoming SA Poultry Industry Day in November 2023.

South Australia is actively investing in preparedness activities for high threat diseases, including HPAI. Last December, the South Australian government committed \$6.8m to enhancing emerging animal disease preparedness, investing in technical expertise and training.

The recent \$6.8 million investment of the SA government into EAD preparedness will assist with HPAI preparedness through:

- Epidemiology and risk—to enhance epidemiological capacity and technical skills required to support preparedness and effective, informed, flexible responses.

- Operational preparedness—to engage in national policy and procedure development and develop state level action plans to enhance operational preparedness and technical expertise in South Australia.
- Regional detection and response—to undertake regional activities to minimise risk of disease outbreaks, disease spread and ensure regional level preparedness, including working with livestock industry parties on contingency planning.
- Diagnostic capability—to improve SA laboratory services, capability and capacity to respond to an EAD outbreak.
- Emergency Response Capability and Capacity—to enhance PIRSA incident management team (IMT) capacity and capability for an EAD response.

The funding will also assist with procurement of capital items to assist with destruction, disposal and decontamination in an HPAI outbreak, including scoping for specialised equipment for mass depopulation of large numbers of birds, if required.

PIRSA is working with the national poultry industry as part of national emergency animal disease (EAD) preparedness activities for avian influenza. PIRSA contributes to:

- The nationally agreed AUSVETPLAN Avian Influenza Response Strategy which was reviewed recently, in consultation with industry, to include Victoria's recent experience with an outbreak in 2019 and is currently under review again to include the changing epidemiological situation overseas.
- The National Avian Influenza Wild Bird Surveillance Program which collects surveillance information from around Australia to better understand the epidemiology and risks of avian influenza viruses to the Australian poultry industry.