

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Thursday, 18 September 2025

The PRESIDENT (Hon. T.J. Stephens) took the chair at 14:16 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.

Parliamentary Procedure

PAPERS

The following papers were laid on the table:

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

Travel Report for Minister for Human Services from 21 July to 24 July 2025 prepared pursuant to the Public Sector Act 2009

Travel Report for Attorney-General from 19 June to 21 June 2025 prepared pursuant to the Public Sector Act 2009

Travel Report for Attorney-General from 1 August to 5 August 2025 prepared pursuant to the Public Sector Act 2009

Travel Report for Minister for Arts from 24 July to 25 July 2025 prepared pursuant to the Public Sector Act 2009

Travel Report for Premier from 16 June 2025 prepared pursuant to the Public Sector Act 2009

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

Reports, 2024-25—

Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission—Assumed Identities and Witness Identity Protection report pursuant to section 47 of the Criminal Investigation (Covert Operations) Act 2009

Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission—Undercover Operations report pursuant to section 47 of the Criminal Investigation (Covert Operations) Act 2009

Independent Commission Against Corruption South Australia report pursuant to section 47 of the Criminal Investigation (Covert Operations) Act 2009

South Australia Police—Covert Operations report pursuant to section 47 of the Criminal Investigation (Covert Operations) Act 2009

By the Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector (Hon. K. J. Maher)—

The Mining and Quarrying Occupational Health and Safety Committee—Report, 2024-25

Ministerial Statement

CLOSE, HON. S.E., RESIGNATION

The Hon. K.J. MAHER (Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector, Special Minister of State) (14:18): I table a copy of a ministerial statement relating to the resignation of the Deputy Premier made earlier today in another place.

MULLIGHAN, HON. S.C., RESIGNATION

The Hon. K.J. MAHER (Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector, Special Minister of State) (14:18): I table a copy of a ministerial statement relating to the resignation of the Treasurer made earlier today in another place.

*Parliamentary Committees***PRINTING COMMITTEE**

The Hon. K.J. MAHER (Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector, Special Minister of State) (14:18): I move:

That the Hon. J.E. Hanson be appointed to the committee in place of the Hon. E.S. Bourke (resigned).

Motion carried.

*Question Time***ALGAL BLOOM**

The Hon. N.J. CENTOFANTI (Leader of the Opposition) (14:21): I seek leave to make a brief explanation before asking a question of the Minister for Primary Industries on the topic of algal bloom and sustainability.

Leave granted.

The Hon. N.J. CENTOFANTI: South Australia's fishing sector is in crisis as a result of the algal bloom that is devastating our coastline. This bloom has wiped out marine life across thousands of square kilometres, leaving fishers and aquaculture operators reeling and regional communities struggling. While the government has announced temporary relief, the sector is looking for certainty about its long-term future.

Fishers have seen what has happened with snapper, where delays and lack of action led to 10-year closures and beyond, and they fear the same outcome here. They have also been told that the department's rapid stock assessment will take months to complete, leaving them in limbo about what management decisions the government will take and when. My questions to the minister are:

1. How can the government describe the current stock assessment process as rapid when it is expected to take many months to complete, leaving fishers without clarity during this critical time?
2. What assurances can the minister provide to fishers and aquaculture operators that decisions will not be delayed indefinitely while they wait for the results of this assessment?
3. When will the government release a clear and comprehensive plan for the future of the fishing sector, outlining what measures will be put in place to ensure sustainability, while also supporting businesses and jobs?
4. Does the minister concede that, without urgent and transparent decision-making, fishers risk facing the same fate as snapper, with closures imposed for years due to government inaction?
5. Will the government commit to publicly releasing the methodology, benchmarking and timelines of the stock assessment so that industry has confidence in the process and its outcomes?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN (Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, Minister for Forest Industries) (14:23): I thank the honourable member for her question. In terms of stock assessments, they are normally done at reasonably large intervals. The rapid stock assessments refers to the fact that, clearly, we need to have as much information as soon as possible in regard to the impact of the algal bloom.

SARDI has been working with industry about the stock assessment process. My understanding is that could potentially involve some commercial fishers being involved in collecting

the information or contributing to the collection of the information, which is important for them in terms of being part of what will ultimately be the solution.

What it seems the opposition is implying, when there are already references to supposed delays, is that management decisions about the fisheries should be made without evidence. The opposition seems to be suggesting that management's decisions should be made without evidence. We need the evidence of the stock assessments to be able to make management decisions, remembering that management decisions are made in consultation with industry. We have various advisory committees and advisory councils that are involved in those decisions.

It shouldn't surprise us that they think we should be making decisions without evidence. We have seen previous examples, particularly those that have been highlighted this week, about their desire to not have evidence, to just jump to conclusions.

Members interjecting:

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: What we would say again on this side of the chamber, in government, is these decisions need to be responsibly made. They need to be based on the best evidence that we have, not made-up solutions, not made-up evidence, or in isolation of all the factors. We are a responsible government. We very much value our fisheries and aquaculture sector and we will make the decisions as soon as able, once the evidence is available.

ALGAL BLOOM

The Hon. N.J. CENTOFANTI (Leader of the Opposition) (14:25): Supplementary: has the stock assessment process with industry begun and, if so, when?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN (Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, Minister for Forest Industries) (14:26): I think the Leader of the Opposition in this place is again revealing her ignorance of the fisheries sector. Which species is she referring to?

Members interjecting:

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: She thinks it is a very simple question. Which species is she referring to? The assessments have to be done taking into account, for example, the spawning season. There's a lot that is involved in determining the program stock assessment. That work is underway.

ALGAL BLOOM

The Hon. N.J. CENTOFANTI (Leader of the Opposition) (14:26): Supplementary from the original answer: have any stock assessments of any species begun with industry involvement and, if so, when?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN (Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, Minister for Forest Industries) (14:27): I have already answered no.

SARDI FISH DEATHS

The Hon. N.J. CENTOFANTI (Leader of the Opposition) (14:27): My question is to the Minister for Primary Industries on the topic of fish deaths at West Beach. Is the minister aware of whether any further fish mortalities have occurred at the South Australian Aquatic Sciences Centre over the past two weeks and, if not, will the minister commit to seeking a briefing from her department to gain information about any recent significant fish mortalities within her department and bring it back to the chamber?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN (Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, Minister for Forest Industries) (14:27): I haven't been advised of any significant fish deaths in the last two weeks at the SARDI facility, if that's what the question was in regard to.

SARDI FISH DEATHS

The Hon. N.J. CENTOFANTI (Leader of the Opposition) (14:27): Supplementary: will the minister seek a briefing from her department and will she bring that information back to the chamber?

The PRESIDENT: The minister didn't mention anything about a briefing.

The Hon. N.J. CENTOFANTI: I did ask her.

The PRESIDENT: I know you asked it but it's about the answer.

ANIMAL WELFARE ACT

The Hon. N.J. CENTOFANTI (Leader of the Opposition) (14:28): I seek leave to make a brief explanation prior to addressing questions to the Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development on the topic of the Animal Welfare Act.

Leave granted.

The Hon. N.J. CENTOFANTI: A survey of members by industry body Livestock SA noted that as of 2024 85 per cent of respondents supported the use of virtual fencing, noting, and I quote Livestock SA Chair Gillian Fennell, who said:

The message from producers is clear. They want the option to use this technology, and they want it now.

Through the Animal Welfare Act review last year we received assurances from the State Government that the regulations would be amended to enable the technology to be used in our state.

Other states are getting on with it. We need to stop dragging our feet and give South Australian producers access to a technology that is already transforming livestock management across the country.

There have been years of trials on the technology. It is well proven, improves animal nutrition, farm sustainability and productivity, and at this stage any further delay is simply putting our farmers at a herd management disadvantage. The Animal Welfare Act was assented to well over six months ago, with a clear promise to industry that regulations would follow. My questions to the Minister for Primary Industries are:

1. When can industry expect those regulations to be drafted for consultation?
2. How many staff, in FTE, are working on drafting those regulations?
3. Can the minister give assurances that those regulations for the Animal Welfare Act will be tabled before the 2026 state election?

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 recall that when an article came out about this topic we did have a bit of a discussion in our office, because of course we were actually ahead of some of our interstate counterparts. I think it came out at about the time that New South Wales, if I remember correctly, made an announcement. That was an announcement that they were at the beginning of the process. We were already far further along the process in terms of the drafting of regulations.

The work is continuing. As the honourable member should be aware, regulations under the Animal Welfare Act fall under the purview of the Minister for Environment and Water. That particular piece of legislation is devoted to that portfolio. When I did have a briefing fairly recently, I can't recall exactly the date, it was that the work was continuing with the intention that it would be available before the end of the year. I am happy to get a further briefing from that office and bring back a response.

AUTISM INCLUSION TEACHERS

The Hon. R.P. WORTLEY (14:31): To the absolute delight of my colleague the Hon. Robert Simms, my question is to the Minister for Autism. Will the minister inform the council about the autism inclusion in secondary schools student round table?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE (Minister for Emergency Services and Correctional Services, Minister for Autism, Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing) (14:31): I thank the honourable member for the question that he wrote, I understand, and for his interest in this particular topic.

Members interjecting:

The PRESIDENT: Okay, let's listen to the minister.

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE: We know there is a lot to be talking about on this particular issue and we know that we have been able to achieve a great deal for autistic students in our classrooms. We also know that our families, students and teachers have long called for better knowledge on how to best support our diverse classrooms.

That is why the Malinauskas Labor government is committed to lead, and that is why we are continuing to support inclusion in our classrooms—from partnering with South Australian universities for their teaching degree to offer courses with autism learnings to TAFE SA committing to the development of knowledge and skills and confidence through mandated inclusion training in their Certificate III in School Based Education Support. Changes like these will equip our pre-service teachers and support staff with knowledge about autism before they even enter the classroom.

As part of our government's commitment, public primary schools in South Australia now have access to an autism inclusion teacher whose role is to help build staff understanding and improve inclusion and practices for autistic students. This program is now being piloted to expand into nine secondary schools across the state to build additional knowledge and resources in our high schools and classrooms.

As part of this pilot, it was my pleasure to attend the autism inclusion in secondary schools student round table last month where autistic students gathered to share their experiences with us. I was lucky enough to have a chat with Noah, who shared with me that he thought his voice would never be heard but now he finds himself at the round table and feels like it is the best thing that ever happened to him. Noah and other autistic students participated in the round table discussion about autistic identity and workshops to share their ideas on building autism inclusion in secondary schools.

There to listen and learn from the students was the education minister, the Hon. Blair Boyer, and representatives from the Department for Education and the Office for Autism. This pilot will inform future policies in this space, as we know the transition from primary to secondary school can be a challenging time for autistic high school students. But with feedback from Noah and his peers we know we are on the right track.

AUTISM INCLUSION TEACHERS

The Hon. H.M. GIROLAMO (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:34): Supplementary: how many autism inclusion teacher vacancies are there currently across the state?

The PRESIDENT: Minister, I will allow it.

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE (Minister for Emergency Services and Correctional Services, Minister for Autism, Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing) (14:34): I would have to seek further information from the education minister.

CLIMATE EDUCATION

The Hon. S.L. GAME (14:34): I seek leave to make a brief explanation before addressing a question to the Minister for Emergency Services and Correctional Services, representing the Minister for Education, regarding climate change teachings in primary schools.

Leave granted.

The Hon. S.L. GAME: This week saw the release of the federal government's National Climate Risk Assessment, which contained predictions for Australia such as a 400 per cent increase in heat-related mortalities, flooding to areas inhabited by more than one and a half million Australians, plus other forecasts about dire economic impacts if we don't reduce our 1 per cent share of the world's carbon dioxide emissions.

In response, prominent Australian developmental psychologist Clare Rowe said primary school children are being, and I quote, 'taught to be scared' about climate change, with some fearing they won't make it to adulthood as a result. Ms Rowe said that the mental health of students was actually being harmed by climate change claims in the classroom, not climate change itself, with some primary school-age children paralysed with anxiety and reduced to tears.

A report authored by Ms Rowe recommends abolishing the cross-curriculum priority of sustainability, and also recommends delaying climate education until secondary school. My questions to the Minister for Emergency Services and Correctional Services, representing the Minister for Education, are:

1. Is the government concerned that exaggerated climate change information being taught in South Australian schools is causing unnecessary anxiety among primary school-age children, including potentially contributing to the dramatic rise of eating disorders in primary school-age children?

2. Will the government abolish the cross-curriculum priority of sustainability, which forces teachers to insert sustainability into lessons such as music, geography, sport and so on?

3. Can the government explain why climate change anxiety is the only anxiety condition validated in schools, while the aim is to erase all other forms of childhood anxiety?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE (Minister for Emergency Services and Correctional Services, Minister for Autism, Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing) (14:37): I would have to seek further information from the minister in the other house.

SPIT HOODS

The Hon. C. BONAROS (14:37): I seek leave to make a brief explanation before asking the Attorney a question in relation to the use of spit hoods in police custody.

Leave granted.

The Hon. C. BONAROS: In recent weeks and months, many advocacy organisations have expressed deep concern about the Northern Territory Country Liberal Party state government's decision to reintroduce spit hoods in youth detention and police custody. As we know, we in this place legislated to ban spit hoods in South Australia after a Wiradjuri, Kokatha and Wirangu man died in custody while restrained with a spit hood.

The reform was rooted in respect for human dignity and evidence, and moved this jurisdiction closer to fulfilling our national obligation under the United Nations Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture which, again, I understand the Attorney is more than familiar with, and has been discussed at previous Standing Councils of Attorneys-General. Groups including Australian Lawyers for Human Rights, Amnesty International and Children and Young People in Justice have condemned the move by the NT. The First Peoples Disability Network noted in a media release:

The Northern Territory Government is knowingly choosing to use instruments of torture on children with disabilities, directly defying the recommendations of the 2017 Royal Commission and violating international human rights law.

My question to the Attorney is: given this now government support for banning spit hoods, what, if anything, are we doing in the context of raising this with our Northern Territory counterparts at the next meeting of attorneys-general and urging them to abandon any plan to reintroduce spit hoods in youth or detention settings?

The Hon. K.J. MAHER (Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector, Special Minister of State) (14:39): I thank the honourable member for her question. Yes, it is the case that the use of spit hoods has been banned in detention facilities in South Australia. In fact, I think we might have been the first jurisdiction to do that around Australia, back in 2020 or 2021, from memory—very good legislation that was put forward in relation to that. Since it was banned in South Australia, it certainly has been something that I know has been, early on in this term of government, on the agenda of the Standing Council of Attorneys-General. I don't recall it being on the agenda more recently, but I am happy to see if there is any appetite for it to be on there.

SPIT HOODS

The Hon. C. BONAROS (14:39): Supplementary: given that we did pass that very good piece of legislation in this state and it has previously been on that agenda, is the Attorney committed to ensuring that there are no backward steps in South Australia in terms of revisiting the issue of spit hoods in youth or adult detention settings?

The Hon. K.J. MAHER (Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector, Special Minister of State) (14:40): Certainly, we have no intention to wind back that legislation in South Australia.

PRISON SECURITY

The Hon. D.G.E. HOOD (14:40): I seek leave to make a brief explanation before asking a question of the Minister for Correctional Services about staff safety in prisons.

Leave granted.

The Hon. D.G.E. HOOD: It has been revealed recently by a number of sources that there are serious security concerns at Port Augusta Prison in particular, with whistleblowers revealing that CCTV blind spots in the Saltbush Unit mean that up to 120 prisoners can move through common areas, including kitchens, lounges and showers, without any camera coverage at all. Staff had warned that this leaves them vulnerable, with assaults among inmates going unnoticed and creating 'our word against theirs' scenarios.

The report also highlights that convicted violent offenders have been placed in conditions that appear inconsistent with their risk profile, raising further concerns about prisoner management and staff safety. The Public Service Association has stated that their repeated warnings about safety and security breaches have been ignored or downplayed. My questions to the minister are:

1. Can the minister confirm whether there are, in fact, CCTV blackspots in the Saltbush Unit at Port Augusta Prison and, if so, where they are and provide some detail on that?
2. How many assaults between inmates and against staff have actually been recorded in the Saltbush Unit in the past 12 months, and how many of these occurred in areas without the CCTV coverage?
3. Is it true that high-risk offenders such as convicted murderer Barry Fyfe have been housed in Saltbush under lower security conditions despite a history of violence and, if so, why is that the case?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE (Minister for Emergency Services and Correctional Services, Minister for Autism, Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing) (14:42): I thank the honourable member for his question. As I have mentioned before in this chamber, maintaining a safe and secure prison system is a priority for our government and the Department for Correctional Services. The Port Augusta Prison is one of our high-security prisons, and I am advised prisoners are moved into various divisions based on their regimes and approved placement plans, which are regularly reviewed.

I am advised that across Saltbush Unit more than a dozen cameras provide around-the-clock CCTV surveillance. I won't go into the exact locations of cameras for operational reasons, which I am sure the honourable member can appreciate, but I am advised their deployment is informed by a range of security considerations. Our government has invested \$6.8 million in the state budget to implement security enhancements across our prisons to increase the safety of staff, prisoners and the broader community and reduce contraband entering the prison.

I am advised DCS is conducting more searches across the prison system and has seized a record amount of contraband because of this. I am advised more than 104,000 searches were conducted in 2023-24. I am advised that is a 14 per cent increase on the previous year and a 35 per cent increase compared to the last year of the former Liberal government.

PRISON SECURITY

The Hon. D.G.E. HOOD (14:43): Supplementary: the minister mentioned the Saltbush Unit. When will the digital upgrade occur to the monitoring system in that unit, as has been promised?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE (Minister for Emergency Services and Correctional Services, Minister for Autism, Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing) (14:43): I will need to triple-check this, but I have a feeling that has been delivered. If that is incorrect, I will update the chamber.

KNIFE LAWS

The Hon. T.T. NGO (14:43): My question is to the Attorney-General. Can the Attorney-General update the council about the government's nation-leading knife law reform commencement and weapon surrender?

The Hon. K.J. MAHER (Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector, Special Minister of State) (14:44): I thank the honourable member for his question and his very strong interest in knives and the proper regulation of them. Last week, the government announced the final phase of our nation-leading knife law reforms and when they will commence next year. The laws form the third phase of reforms requiring secure storage of knives for retailers and the display of prohibition notices, aimed at better protecting South Australians from opportunistic knife crime.

We know this will require a change to the way some retailers do business, which is why we have allowed for a 10-month lead-in time before these changes fully come into effect. This will ensure that affected businesses have time to understand how the new laws affect them, as well as allow retailers to take any necessary measures required to comply with requirements before they do commence.

Exemptions to the secure storage requirement for retailers will apply in cases where the knives being sold don't actually pose a threat, such as disposable bamboo knives used for the consumption of food, butter knives or similar knives sold in a cutlery set that do not have a sharp point or a sharp, dangerous edge, as well as razor blades that are permanently enclosed in a cartridge.

Exemptions will initially apply for fishing and tackle stores, in recognition of the impact of the algal bloom on these sectors. These will be set out in regulations in the coming months. These storage requirements are similar to what we have had in place for spray cans, which have been in place since 2001. We want to eliminate the potential to steal weapons from retailers and use them to threaten staff and other people in stores or in those sorts of retail environments, as well as committing offences elsewhere.

This is a final transfer of reforms in relation to this set of knife law reforms, which has included stronger search powers for police, including the ability to do metal detector wandering at shopping centres, public transport hubs and places where an incident of violence is likely to occur; a complete ban on the sale of dangerous knives to all minors; and reclassification of swords and machetes as prohibited weapons, where as a result penalties of up to \$20,000 or two years' imprisonment will now apply for possession.

In conjunction with the reclassification of machetes and swords, the Commissioner of Police announced a three-month surrender period, which ends in two weeks, on 30 September at midnight. South Australians can continue to anonymously dispose of dangerous weapons to police stations outside the CBD until the end of September. After this date, anyone surrendering weapons will have to give their name and contact details.

It is pleasing to see South Australians respond in kind, and since the start of the three-month surrender period I am advised 2,343 weapons have been surrendered to SAPOL between 1 July and 4 September, including 1,156 machetes and 722 swords. That is an average of nearly 36 weapons a day that are not in public and potentially falling into the wrong hands. The government is grateful that so many members of the community have been ready to back these new laws by doing the right

thing and getting rid of dangerous weapons. The safety of the community is a top priority for the government, and we are committed to ensuring the state has strong and effective laws in this respect.

GREYHOUND RACING

The Hon. T.A. FRANKS (14:47): I seek leave to make a brief explanation before addressing a question to the Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing on the topic of greyhound injury data.

Leave granted.

The Hon. T.A. FRANKS: Category F is an injury category used in the nationally agreed convention for classifying injuries in greyhound racing. It is used in some jurisdictions in their annual reporting. Category F shows all fatalities, together with serious injuries that meet specific criteria, including fractures, dislocations, joint or skin injuries where the standdown period is some 60-plus days, or soft tissue injuries where the standdown period is 90-plus days.

Data provided to me by the Coalition for the Protection of Greyhounds shows that in a state comparison of those jurisdictions in Australia that continue to run greyhound racing South Australia consistently has the highest number of category F injury rates by 1,000 starts by far. Currently, in the financial year 2024, we sit at 5.6, and the next jurisdiction of NSW is 3.6, dropping down to 2.5 for Victoria.

My question to the minister is: why does South Australia, since at least 2019, consistently have significantly higher category F injury rates than any other jurisdiction in the country? What is the injury and death rate of greyhounds that this government will accept?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE (Minister for Emergency Services and Correctional Services, Minister for Autism, Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing) (14:49): I thank the member for her question and ongoing advocacy in this space. As the member is aware and as the chamber is aware, the government appointed Sal Perna AM into the position of the Greyhound Industry Reform Inspector. I am advised that as of 8 September 2025, he has verified 42 recommendations arising from the independent inquiry that this chamber is very much aware of in regard to the governance of the greyhound racing industry.

I also am advised that matters that may not fall within the specific recommendations will also be taken into consideration by Mr Perna at the end of the two-year period as part of the final report and I make the decisions on whether the industry has met those requirements as well. As I have said many times in this chamber, I appreciate that there are many from within the industry and many that just love their greyhounds and the people that want to support them and rehome them as well.

I have had the privilege of meeting with a number of people and will continue to do so to make sure I am hearing all sides of the story and, as I have said before in this chamber, the greyhound industry is in the hands of the greyhound industry.

GREYHOUND RACING

The Hon. T.A. FRANKS (14:50): Supplementary: given the GIRI confirmed to the Budget and Finance Committee he is not monitoring this data, will the minister ensure that this is part of the criteria that the government expects to be reported on?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE (Minister for Emergency Services and Correctional Services, Minister for Autism, Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing) (14:51): I am happy to follow that up further.

HELICOPTER CONTRACTS

The Hon. J.M.A. LENSINK (14:51): I seek leave to make a brief explanation before addressing questions to the Attorney-General on the helicopter contracts.

Leave granted.

The Hon. J.M.A. LENSINK: While I was seeking information on regional helipad compliance, it was confirmed by the Minister for Health and Wellbeing in another place on 20 June, and I quote:

The helicopter and fixed-wing contract sits with the Attorney-General's Department and provides that service for all the agencies that need those services.

Based on that, my questions for the Attorney are:

1. When was the new fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft contract signed with Toll, and when did it come into effect?
2. Is this contract the reason why pilots are refusing to land at regional hospital helipads that have been recommissioned but are not operational?
3. Has the Minister for Health and Wellbeing requested a briefing, and has one been provided to escalate solutions for life-saving regional health infrastructure to return to being back online?
4. Has the Attorney or anyone from the cabinet met with Babcock to understand what their advice is regarding compliance for landing since construction was completed?
5. Can the minister explain why pilots aren't landing and how long country communities and volunteer ambulance officers will be denied access to new helipads?

The Hon. K.J. MAHER (Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector, Special Minister of State) (14:52): I thank the honourable member for her questions. I know the Attorney-General's Department does the contract management for helicopter and fixed-wing services across government, and that spans a number of areas of government. I don't think there are any actually within the Attorney-General's Department but, having significant contract management expertise, management does contract management.

I will double-check, but I think the infrastructure for helipads at hospitals, particularly regional hospitals, rests with the health minister. I am happy to take those questions on notice and bring back a reply for the honourable member.

HELICOPTER CONTRACTS

The Hon. J.M.A. LENSINK (14:53): Supplementary question: so is the minister suggesting—and I appreciate that he is going to take this on notice—that these questions should be appropriately directed to the Minister for Health?

The Hon. K.J. MAHER (Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector, Special Minister of State) (14:53): The helicopter and fixed-wing contract is managed by AGD. I don't have the information as to when it was signed, but I am happy to take those questions on notice and bring back a reply.

ALGAL BLOOM

The Hon. J.E. HANSON (14:53): My question is to the Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development. Will the minister inform the chamber of the importance of SARDI's work throughout the algal bloom and as part of the response, and the damage that can be caused by spreading misinformation?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN (Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, Minister for Forest Industries) (14:54): I thank the honourable member for his question. The science and research programs are an extremely important part of the \$28 million state and federal support package, as the state continues to manage and recover from the harmful algal bloom. I am proud of the work SARDI is undertaking on behalf of the people of South Australia.

I am pleased to provide an update on the work SARDI is undertaking as part of the algal bloom response. The science program is well underway, including progress on an early detection system for future blooms; identification of algae, utilising and developing molecular techniques for early detection and rapid quantification of algal blooms; and assessments of fish stocks and fisheries to gather data on the impacts of the bloom, including modelling of ecological impacts.

The early detection work is progressing, with SARDI working alongside the CSIRO and private businesses to procure the necessary equipment and further ensure its capability for use in this context, with deployment of the early detection equipment planned for over summer, subject of

course to procurement processes running smoothly. Studies are being conducted on HAB ecology and the influence of various parameters on the distribution of HABs, and procurement processes are underway to establish an accredited brevetoxin analytical laboratory in South Australia, delivering faster turnaround times for industry.

Importantly, fish stock assessments are underway, with research priorities and scope of the program communicated and discussed with industry. I am advised work has progressed in the southern zone rock lobster fishery, northern zone rock lobster fishery, central zone abalone and for species within the marine scale fishery, including a draft research plan and catch and effort analyses for King George whiting, garfish and calamari, along with several other species. This work is undertaken in consultation with industry bodies across the fisheries sectors.

Stock assessments are thorough processes and take time, but the stock assessments as part of the science package are progressing well and will inform fisheries management decisions across multiple fisheries moving forward, better understanding the direct impact on fish stock in our state.

We are fortunate to have so much baseline information by way of the fact that our fisheries have been driven by data that supports sustainability for decades. I am appreciative of the hard work of many talented people at SARDI, led by Professor Mike Steer. We are very fortunate to have this level of expertise in our state. I would have hoped that those opposite would share that appreciation. Unfortunately, it brings me no pleasure to say, though, that those opposite, particularly the Leader of the Opposition and—we would call him her new colleague, but I imagine to those opposite it must seem a bit like an eternity—the Hon. Frank Pangallo. They think they know better than the SARDI experts.

Just imagine, if you can, a parliamentarian from any party or persuasion who was approaching an opportunity to be provided with information from the experts in their field via a parliamentary committee. Now, imagine, if you can, such a parliamentarian thinking to themselves, 'Wait a minute, I reckon I know better than these people who have spent their lives working in and studying our marine environment.'

Just imagine, if you can, the parliamentarian then conducts 'research' that amounts to a ChatGPT prompt. They think they have found gold. They don't bother to fact check any of it and then they march into the parliamentary committee and confront the experts, proudly boasting of their research and then shutting up shop when being found out, predictably, that the so-called research is not up to scratch.

Just a few weeks ago, if I had raised this as an example, we all would have thought, 'How unlikely. That would never happen. Surely parliamentarians would take their responsibilities far more seriously,' but here we are. This type of sloppy approach appears to now be part of the Liberal strategy and it is the best they can offer the people of Waite. Those opposite with their indignant defence of the Hon. Mr Pangallo must endorse this approach, it would seem.

The Leader of the Opposition may not research on ChatGPT—we certainly hope that is the case—but chooses a different way to undermine SARDI, trying to piece together parts of a puzzle that do not fit, but she seems to think that if she smashes them together hard enough and loud enough—

Members interjecting:

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN: —the public will take notice. It's an obvious strategy. It's one that won't work because choosing to ignore information, choosing to ignore investigative conclusions by far more qualified people in that particular sphere, rather than conducting that work yourself, just doesn't make it go away. So, while those opposite focus on conspiracy theories and continually, sadly, undermine the work of our renowned scientists and researchers, instead on this side we will back them and thank them for their important work because on this side of the chamber we accept the science. We don't try to minimise it and we don't pretend that we know better than the scientists when we are talking about science.

ALGAL BLOOM

The Hon. N.J. CENTOFANTI (Leader of the Opposition) (14:59): Supplementary: what data and science has the government gathered about the health of our gulfs and coastline prior to this SARDI science program over the last decade, as the minister pointed out?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN (Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, Minister for Forest Industries) (14:59): I am sure there is a lot of work that has been done, and the last decade, of course, includes the former government, the former Liberal government as well, but I am happy to provide information. I would point out that the sort of work that has been undertaken by SARDI over many years has often gone either unrecognised or undervalued.

I think the recent algal bloom, which is so difficult for so many of our regional communities, our fisheries and aquaculture industries, as well as, for example, the tourism industries and others, has really highlighted the importance of looking after our environment, including our marine environment. It has also highlighted the depth of expertise that we have here in South Australia, and for that we should be appreciative, and those opposite should cease trying to undermine them.

ALGAL BLOOM

The Hon. D.G.E. HOOD (15:00): Supplementary: the minister stated that her side of the chamber accepts the science. Does that mean in all circumstances, minister, that the government would accept a scientific opinion without questioning it under any circumstances?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN (Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, Minister for Forest Industries) (15:00): It appears that those opposite think that one single report is all that anyone should look at. In fact, that kind of seems to suggest the ChatGPT approach, and I would be very surprised if the Hon. Dennis Hood really subscribed to that kind of an approach. I think he has far more credibility and, indeed, far more intellect than that. I think those opposite know what it means when one talks about accepting the science, accepting the evidence. Unfortunately, they choose not to do so.

ANDGAR PIGGERY FIRE

The Hon. R.A. SIMMS (15:01): I seek leave to make a brief explanation before addressing a question without notice to the Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development regarding the fire at Andgar Piggery.

Leave granted.

The Hon. R.A. SIMMS: This week, hundreds of pigs were killed when a fire broke out at Andgar Piggery in Dublin. *The Advertiser* has reported that hay bales are believed to have spontaneously combusted due to dry and warm winds, leading to flames engulfing two sheds housing the animals. Andgar Piggery was investigated by the RSPCA earlier this year over animal cruelty allegations following video footage that revealed animals living in disturbing conditions. RSPCA and PIRSA veterinary staff attended the piggery in June, resulting in 14 pigs being euthanised. The RSPCA has also investigated other sites owned by the same company, including sites at Brownlow, Two Wells and Finnis Park, following the footage and images shared by the Farm Transparency Project. My question to the minister is:

1. What action has the minister taken in relation to the fire at Andgar Piggery?
2. Does the minister hold concerns for the conditions at other piggeries across the state, and what action is she taking?

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN (Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, Minister for Forest Industries) (15:02): I thank the honourable member for his question. On Monday 15 September, the CFS responded to a significant structure fire on a piggery at Dublin, north of Adelaide. At the CFS's request, officers from both PIRSA and the RSPCA attended to assist with assessment and euthanasia of pigs who were injured during the fire.

I am advised that it is estimated that approximately 200 animals perished in the fire, with another 45 pigs jointly euthanised by PIRSA and RSPCA. It is estimated another 75 to 80 pigs were euthanised by piggery management. I am advised that 78 pigs survived. PIRSA and the RSPCA

assessed and provided emergency veterinary care to these animals on the day of the fire, and PIRSA has offered to assist the piggery's management and private vet with reassessment of the surviving pigs. PIRSA will continue to assist the RSPCA with ongoing welfare investigations that are already occurring in relation to this site.

It is correct that the piggery involved in this incident has been under investigation by the RSPCA for serious animal welfare issues, reported to the RSPCA in May. I am advised that PIRSA has been assisting the RSPCA with their investigations, with three site inspections occurring between June and September. I am advised that significant improvements in the management and housing of pigs were observed during the September inspection. The RSPCA is the lead agency investigating the welfare issues, and will determine if prosecution of the piggery owners is warranted for the welfare issues detected.

The significant fire at the Andgar piggery is very, very unfortunate and sad in terms of the welfare of the affected pigs. There is obviously also significant infrastructure damage. However, according to my advice, it does not appear that the fire and previous welfare investigations are related.

PRISON ACCOMMODATION

The Hon. B.R. HOOD (15:04): I seek leave to make a brief explanation prior to addressing questions to the Minister for Correctional Services regarding our prisons.

Leave granted.

The Hon. B.R. HOOD: A recent news article raised questions about new prison cell designs and bed numbers. My questions to the minister are:

1. Will pin boards be installed in South Australian prisons and, if so, does the minister have any safety concerns about that decision or is this just an interior design error?
2. How many of the 50 new beds at the Adelaide Remand Centre will fit?
3. Is a new building to be constructed or will cells be divided, or will the government install bunk beds?
4. To the point of expansion, what is the department of corrections' projected prison capacity in five years and what is the projected prison population in five years?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE (Minister for Emergency Services and Correctional Services, Minister for Autism, Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing) (15:05): I thank the member for his question. I would like to first of all highlight that the concept images that he has mentioned are also consistent with the previous prison accommodation designs commissioned under his government. These designs have been in place, in my understanding, in some variation for a while, but also in regard to our investments as a government we have invested heavily in this space.

In regard to the number of beds that we have opened since coming into government, we have either opened or invested in over 750 beds in our prisons across the state, and it is really important that we are investing in beds in our various locations across the nine prisons, because it is a connected prison system. It is really dependent on where we need to be moving people and where the need is at that time. As a government we have invested record amounts in our previous budget, but also in our most recent budget we have invested in new beds. Again, this is in built new infrastructure and also in new beds in our prison system.

PRISON ACCOMMODATION

The Hon. B.R. HOOD (15:07): Supplementary: given the minister has mentioned the new investment and new infrastructure, is a new building to be constructed at the Adelaide Remand Centre?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE (Minister for Emergency Services and Correctional Services, Minister for Autism, Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing) (15:07): As I said previously, there is investment in new beds and also new infrastructure. My understanding is that we are putting new beds into the Adelaide Remand Centre, we are building new infrastructure at the Women's

Prison and new infrastructure at Mount Gambier Prison. As I said earlier, the prison system is interconnected, so really it depends on where the need is and where we need to be moving people.

PRISON ACCOMMODATION

The Hon. H.M. GIROLAMO (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (15:07): Supplementary: how many new beds in each of those locations that you just mentioned?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE (Minister for Emergency Services and Correctional Services, Minister for Autism, Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing) (15:08): I am going to go off a rough here, which I will come back and correct, but there are about 116 across from the last budget just gone. There are roughly around 50 going at the Adelaide Remind Centre. I am going to get this around the wrong way: one is a 34, one is a 32 going into the Women's Prison and also Mount Gambier Prison, but I am happy to come back and correct those if I've got that wrong.

GAWLER SES

The Hon. R.P. WORTLEY (15:08): My question is to the Minister for Emergency Services and Correctional Services. Will the minister inform the council about the recent opening of the brand-new Gawler SES unit?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE (Minister for Emergency Services and Correctional Services, Minister for Autism, Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing) (15:08): I thank the member for his question and appreciate his interest in how the Malinauskas Labor government is continuing to deliver in the northern suburbs for emergency services. The government made an election commitment in 2022, and we are thrilled to deliver yet again on another election commitment for the betterment of local community. Strategically positioned between the existing SES units at Salisbury and Kapunda, this site significantly enhances our emergency response capacity. It will also serve as a critical hub for major incidents across the region, from the Barossa to Two Wells to Port Gawler and Virginia.

I also want to take a moment to acknowledge someone whose tireless advocacy helped bring this vision to life, that being the member for Light, the Hon. Tony Piccolo. I know the honourable member has been a driving force behind the establishment of this unit. His perseverance and dedication have been instrumental in its success, and I thank him sincerely for his leadership in this space.

It is a special unit. I am advised that it is the first brand-new unit to be established in South Australia for the SES in 30 years. It has also received some design modifications to feature co-located change rooms so female volunteers can have the same access to facilities. I am advised this has been based on feedback from female volunteers where it was heard through lived experience that women felt at a disadvantage from being out of earshot from male change rooms. This is a significant and positive change, and I applaud the SES for taking on this feedback and creating a tangible change.

At the unit opening on Sunday, I was joined by the member for Light, who was able to advocate for this incredible outcome, volunteers from the community and also the youngest cadet, baby Oliver. From the Open Day, it was clear the Gawler community has embraced the initiative wholeheartedly. Recruitment efforts have been outstanding, with 43 members now part of the unit, including 30 new local recruits. There have also been 11 experienced members who have transferred from Salisbury SES. Their skills, commitment and community spirit are the backbone of this unit.

Since becoming operational on 12 August, just over a month ago, I am advised the Gawler SES had already responded to 44 requests for assistance, including the tornadoes that we have previously heard about in this chamber. Furthermore, their efforts during the severe storm event on 29 August, which I just mentioned, was one of those incidents that they did respond to. From day one, our volunteers have proven their value by responding swiftly and safely in serving the community.

Members of the Gawler unit have also supported interstate neighbours, deploying to New South Wales and Queensland during times of need. Their service reflects the very best of what

it means to be part of the SES family. We know that one of the best ways to support our dedicated volunteers is to invest in the infrastructure and tools they need to protect and serve our communities.

That is why as part of the most recent budget measures we have committed \$21 million in new funding for emergency services, including \$2 million over four years for the ongoing replacement of drones used during many of our incidents to address hazards and assessments. These investments are about more than equipment. They are about empowering our volunteers to do what they do best: keeping our communities safe.

Thank you to the dedicated volunteers and staff at the SES who continue to show up in the community's time of need. Thank you to everyone who played a part in bringing this important project to life. To the Gawler unit managers, Chris and deputy Wayne, you are the envy of the SES community with a brand-new facility. I look forward to seeing your unit grow and thrive as a highly effective and valued part of the SES and wider community.

LONG COVID CLINICS

The Hon. J.S. LEE (15:13): I seek leave to make a brief explanation before asking a question of the Attorney-General, representing the Minister for Health and Wellbeing, regarding Long COVID Clinics.

Leave granted.

The Hon. J.S. LEE: The Royal Adelaide Hospital's Long COVID Clinic, now a permanent service, is reportedly treating 20 to 40 patients a day, with over 1,000 South Australians receiving care in the past year. The clinic has shifted its focus to more complex cases. While waiting times have improved, the condition continues to significantly impact patients' quality of life, employment and social participation. These patients are struggling with debilitating fatigue, brain fog and muscle weaknesses, all from long-term COVID. My questions to the minister are:

1. Can the minister provide an update on the current funding and staffing levels for the Long COVID Clinics at the Royal Adelaide Hospital and Flinders Medical Centre?
2. Can the minister explain whether the government has undertaken any study of the impact of long COVID affecting employees in the public sector?
3. What measures are in place to ensure equitable access to long COVID care for patients in regional and remote South Australia?

The Hon. K.J. MAHER (Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector, Special Minister of State) (15:14): I thank the honourable member for her question and her interest in health matters generally. I will pass those on to the health minister in another place, the Hon. Chris Picton MP, and bring back a reply.

BASKETBALL

The Hon. H.M. GIROLAMO (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (15:14): I seek leave to make a brief explanation before asking questions of the Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing regarding basketball in South Australia.

Leave granted.

The Hon. H.M. GIROLAMO: In light of growth in basketball in South Australia, my questions to the minister are:

1. Has the Office for Sport, Rec and Racing reviewed the operations of Basketball SA and their counterparts SA Country Basketball recently?
2. If a review has been conducted what was the outcome and, if not, when was the last review performed?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE (Minister for Emergency Services and Correctional Services, Minister for Autism, Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing) (15:15): I thank the honourable member for her question. Obviously, lots of different codes of sport in our state are very active. I

have had the privilege of being able to meet with many of them through this role and see the enthusiasm they bring to making sure that kids, adults and everyone in between can stay active.

Basketball SA is obviously one of the codes that we do meet with regularly and was one of the codes that we met with in regard to helping us save the women's Lightning team. This is an incredible show of support from our government and what we do invest in. We invest not only in our elite sports but also in our grassroots sports. That is what I have been really happy to be working with Basketball SA to achieve.

PREMIER'S NAIDOC AWARD

The Hon. T.T. NGO (15:16): My question is to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. Can the minister tell the council about this year's male recipient of the Premier's NAIDOC Award?

The Hon. K.J. MAHER (Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector, Special Minister of State) (15:16): I can. It was a privilege to be able to update the chamber on the winner of the Premier's NAIDOC Award female recipient in recent days, and I am pleased to speak of another Aboriginal leader who has been recognised for their significant contributions to Aboriginal South Australians. Uncle Michael O'Brien is the male recipient of this year's South Australian Premier's NAIDOC Award.

Uncle Michael, or Uncle Mikey, is a proud senior Kurna and Narungga man who has been a tireless advocate and cultural ambassador for decades. He is widely recognised for his impact and life's work on fostering a deeper understanding of Aboriginal culture not just within our state but across our nation. Uncle Michael's contributions extend beyond one particular achievement and he has dedicated himself to the revitalisation of the Kurna language and ensuring that the wisdom of his ancestors is passed on to future generations.

His work is critical in maintaining the oldest living culture on the planet. For many years he has presented countless Welcomes to Country, smoking ceremonies, yarning circles and other important ceremonies and events. I am certain most people in this chamber have seen these activities at some stage in the recent past.

Uncle Michael's work in the education sphere is also worthy of recognition. He has mentored countless young people, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, inspiring them to be proud of their heritage and to embrace cultural diversity. Furthermore, he voluntarily sits on many organisations' reconciliation action plan groups and represents his people on many boards. He has been a very good footballer, playing for Port Adelaide. If anyone is after a Welcome to Country just ask him about it. I am sure he will tell you how good he was—he does for me all the time.

The Premier's NAIDOC Award is not just an accolade, it is a public acknowledgement and recognition of the extraordinary sacrifices and achievements of individuals who have enriched our community. Uncle Michael is a fitting recipient who is tirelessly, willingly and endlessly giving back to his community. I congratulate him on this well-deserved honour and thank him for his lasting contributions to the people of South Australia. I acknowledge the work that many members of his family have done in this regard as well.

BANANA BOOGIE BAKERY

The Hon. C. BONAROS (15:18): I seek leave to make a brief explanation before asking the Attorney a question about sausage rolls.

Leave granted.

Members interjecting:

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. C. BONAROS: South Australian owned Banana Boogie Bakery has recently been crowned Australia's best sausage roll for the second year in a row, adding to a growing list of illustrious awards for best pie, best pasty, best vanilla slice, best hot cross bun, amongst others. Banana Boogie Bakery prides itself on its products and credits its most recent success to a mistake they made a few years ago that has now become a safely guarded secret ingredient, and also its pastry and being able to eat its sausage roll without sauce. The Banana Boogie Bakery award—it is

a tongue twister—was awarded as part of the recent Baking Association of Australia, South Australian Baking Show awards. My questions to the Attorney are:

1. Did he partake in the judging of that competition?
2. Has he visited Banana Boogie Bakery, given his obsession with sausage rolls?
3. Will he commit to continuing to support this favourite South Australian business and acknowledge the success of Jason and his team?

The Hon. K.J. MAHER (Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector, Special Minister of State) (15:20): I thank the honourable member very much for her question and with the announced retirements of both the Deputy Premier and the Treasurer, I can assure the honourable member I will be lobbying the Premier for the creation of a ministry in sausage rolls in what will be a necessary reshuffle. I am not sure how successful I will be. But, yes, I love sausage rolls. There is no doubt about it. Most people can tell that is sometimes the case.

I have had the pleasure of partaking in sausage rolls from Banana Boogie Bakery on a number of occasions. Most recently, it was at the Royal Adelaide Show where they were one of, I think, about 13 bakeries that entered the cookery division, class 42 professional baking, sausage rolls, for which I was very honoured to be, for the sixth or seventh time, a judge for this competition at the Royal Adelaide Show.

I think Banana Boogie Bakery was the top marked sausage roll in the blind tastings, earning the only silver medal for the professional bakery sausage rolls division at this year's Royal Adelaide Show. Back in May, the Baking Association of Australia held their South Australian baking show at the Marion Hotel. I was very fortunate to spend most of a Saturday afternoon inside the hotel with about 70 different sausage rolls from across Australia.

I know at the Baking Association of Australia awards in South Australia, Banana Boogie Bakery took out many of the apprenticeship awards, and this is a really pleasing aspect of what they do. They are very strong supporters of young people in the industry and providing jobs for young people. Just in recent weeks, in Sydney, at the Great Aussie Pie, Pasty and Sausage Roll Competition, Banana Boogie Bakery from South Australia took out the top prize for sausage rolls, so they are award-winning right across the nation in sausage rolls.

The honourable member asked have I visited Banana Boogie Bakery? I have certainly visited, I think it is in Plympton, where they have an outlet in suburban Adelaide. But I am pleased to announce that just next week I will be visiting Banana Boogie Bakery with the local member, the member for Waite, Cathy Hutchesson, who is a fantastic local member who invites me regularly to go to Banana Boogie Bakery and other businesses in her electorate.

I know that she is very well received both by residents and businesses within the seat of Waite, and it is a testament to Cathy's contribution to that community that just next week her and I will be visiting that bakery and I will be more than happy to further update the chamber about my visit after it occurs in the next sitting week, and the contribution Cathy Hutchesson makes to her local community—and bring back a vanilla slice for the Hon. Connie Bonaros.

Bills

NORTHERN PARKLANDS BILL

Second Reading

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 4 September 2025.)

The Hon. J.M.A. LENSINK (15:24): I rise to make some comments in favour of this bill, the Northern Parklands Bill 2025. This bill establishes the Northern Parklands Trust, a statutory body to deliver and oversee up to 1,000 hectares of new public open space across Kudla, Angle Vale, Evanston and along the Gawler River. It also sets in law a framework for governance, funding and stage delivery, with stage 1 by 2030 and stage 2 by 2040.

The Liberal Party supports this legislation. Adelaide has always had its iconic Parklands. Colonel Light's vision was for a green belt surrounding the city, and it remains one of the most enduring elements of our identity in spite of the current government's attempts to destroy parts of it. Over the decades, this legacy has been extended through projects like the River Torrens Linear Park, which has transformed a fairly polluted waterway into a corridor of recreation and improved biodiversity, and the Coast Park, which is progressively linking our metropolitan beach areas.

These spaces should not be seen as luxuries. They are integral to the health and wellbeing and liveability of South Australians, and the Northern Parklands Bill will be a welcome addition to that. If it is delivered well, it will secure much-needed open space for generations to come, particularly given the amount of housing growth that is expected to be seen in that part of Greater Adelaide.

There is a great need for green open space. The northern suburbs, as I have mentioned, are going to see a huge share of the population growth of South Australia. There are thousands of new homes in plan or being built through Angle Vale, Kudla and Evanston. The City of Playford is one of the youngest and fastest growing local government areas in the state.

It needs good foresight, and there are matters that come into the public domain about the need for better master planning and better planning of road and other infrastructure. We want to make sure that these communities do not end up missing out and being surrounded by houses but without the green space to support their wellbeing and recreational opportunities.

I commend the government on their attempt with this bill to get ahead of the problem by setting aside the land immediately. If it is done properly, the Northern Parklands will deliver biodiversity and conservation benefits and also places for families and individuals to play, for sporting clubs to engage, for cultural events to assist people in the community to participate, and for residents to enjoy standards of open space that are enjoyed in other parts of Adelaide.

However, I am not going to give the government a free pass. My colleagues in the other place rightly drew attention to some of the levy mechanisms of the bill, which requires councils to contribute to the Northern Parklands Trust. It is not explicit in how those contributions will be recovered, but I think it is fair to assume that, as we have also seen with the landscape levy, councils will pass on the costs through their rate system, which means that ratepayers in Playford and Gawler will be paying for it, effectively. This is a time of rising cost-of-living pressures and families deserve to have some transparency about additional charges to their household budgets.

We also note the amendments moved by the Minister for Emergency Services and Correctional Services to clause 15 of the bill. These changes extend disallowance powers over prescribed levy proposals to either house of parliament rather than confining them solely to the House of Assembly, which is sensible and which we will be supporting. The bill sets a fairly ambitious staging of stage 1 by 2030 and stage 2 by 2040, which is a longer horizon. Communities should see progress early and not be left waiting.

My colleague in the other place the member for Hammond also made the important point that this land includes productive agricultural areas. We need to ensure as a parliament that we are not repeating past planning failures, particularly that which occurred at Mount Barker, where poor foresight left infrastructure and services lagging behind development. So planning must be thoughtful, the acquisitions need to be fair and the infrastructure needs to stay ahead of the growth.

There are concerns, I think, about the community trust in terms of this government. This legislation, on one hand, brings the bill forward with some promises of enduring protections, governance safeguards and levies which should be dedicated only to maintaining new parklands. However, we have seen recently that this is the same government that legislated to carve up North Adelaide Parklands for elite golfing.

That process was rushed, consultation was tokenistic and the Kaurna elders, rightly, and the community have raised deep concerns. Thousands of trees face removal, yet parliament was told to wave it through. It is hard to take seriously this government's commitment to protecting green space in the north while it undermines protections closer to the heart of the city, so I do not commend them on their lack of consistency.

This trust must also ensure that new facilities are fit for purpose for sport, culture and community use. Governments like to promise big—this one certainly does—only to deliver minimal infrastructure. If these parklands are to thrive, they must be places where people want to spend time, without displacing community users and where the natural environment is restored. We want to ensure that this project delivers on its promises. However, it does present some good opportunities, particularly for green space for those growing communities.

I commend the bill to the council. I note also that the Local Government Association has raised a number of concerns. We will look at those closely and consider the Greens' amendments. I do thank the minister's office for the comprehensive response to the matters that have been raised by the LGA and look forward to the committee stage of this debate.

The Hon. R.A. SIMMS (15:31): I rise to indicate that I am supportive of this bill. There has been significant growth in the northern suburbs over the past few decades, and the people who live there deserve green open space that they can enjoy. Members will know that I have been a long-term advocate for the Adelaide Parklands.

Indeed, one of the things that makes the CBD unique is the fact that it is surrounded by parklands, and I do think it is a great shame that people in the northern suburbs are not given the same opportunity to enjoy open green space. I think this bill, which seeks to establish a Northern Parklands Trust, will go some way to remedying that. It is really a future-oriented proposal, and so I do commend the government for putting it forward.

Parklands and open green space have many benefits that support sustainable and liveable cities and suburbs and healthy and connected communities. They offer a space for people to be active, to socialise, to relax and to connect with one another. Green spaces are not only beneficial to people but also for our environment. They play an important role in biodiversity conservation by providing a habitat for a wide range of plant and animal species. They also help to moderate the urban heat island effect, where natural land cover is replaced by pavement, buildings and other heat-absorbing surfaces.

I note that the LGA has raised some concerns with this bill, specifically the ability of the state government to seek contributions from councils and their ratepayers without the consent of a local council and the possibility that the government may acquire council land without consent. I understand that in this instance the local councils that are impacted are supportive of the government's approach, but I am concerned about the potential for this to lay out a framework that could be used in other cases when councils may not be quite so keen to cooperate, and so I will be moving some amendments to address that.

The Greens are also concerned about the provisions which potentially enable the government to construct hotels and resorts on these new parklands. This has the potential to cause the privatisation of public green space that everybody should be able to enjoy. Over recent years, we have seen several land grabs that have threatened the Parklands and public space. Indeed, the Malinauskas government has a terrible track record in that regard. Let's not forget that the Malinauskas government, when they were in opposition, rallied against the then Liberal government's plans for a sports arena on the Parklands. They opposed that and then, when they came to power themselves, undertook one of the most significant land grabs we have seen in terms of our public green space with bulldozing the police barracks for the hospital.

They have also, of course, green-lighted another monstrosity on the Parklands for the second Walker Tower and, as the Hon. Michelle Lensink touched on, have embarked on this new LIV Golf course redevelopment, much of which is shrouded in secrecy because it is subject to contractual arrangements that even the minister does not appear to be familiar with. Indeed, I asked the Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing questions about that during the committee stage of the bill, and the minister was not able to provide any guidance to this chamber around what is in or out of the contract.

So the Malinauskas government does not have a good track record. I do recognise the merits of this particular proposal, however, and I recognise the fact that the government have engaged constructively with me around this. I note that the Adelaide Parklands are not covered by this legislation and I think that is a really good thing. The Adelaide Parklands occupy unique status in

South Australia and indeed I had raised that concern with the government and I am pleased to see that is not included within the bill.

Despite that, I will be moving some amendments, primarily to address the concerns that have been raised with me by the Local Government Association. My amendments will move to restrict trust purposes to genuine public open space and environmental outcomes and exclude potentially high-risk commercial developments, such as hotels and resorts.

The amendments will require any amended prescribed levy proposal to be advanced by the minister under the section to have the consent of those constituent councils. They will require the Northern Parklands Trust to obtain consent of the constituent councils before seeking any contribution from councils, which would lead to the imposition of a Northern Parklands region levy. In the absence of agreement from constituent councils, under my amendments the cost of the trust would be funded by the state.

My amendments would ensure any regulations made that would have the effect of enabling a statutory trust established after the commencement of the act to recover contributions from councils and ratepayers would do so via a process equivalent to that required to be undertaken by the Northern Parklands Trust. Such trusts may only recover contributions from councils with the consent of the council. The amendments will also prevent the acquisition of council land without consent.

I recognise that the government will also be moving an amendment to give some additional powers to both houses of parliament with respect to the business plans. I certainly welcome that, and I think that is an important transparency measure. I want to also apologise to members for the lateness of me circulating these amendments. It took a little bit of time for me to get these prepared, and so I understand I have only circulated them today. I do apologise for that, but I hope that members have still had time to give them some consideration.

The Hon. C. BONAROS (15:37): I rise very briefly to speak in support of the Northern Parklands Bill 2025, which, as we have heard, seeks to create a new statutory authority responsible for establishing and maintaining the new Northern Parklands proposed in the Greater Adelaide Regional Plan (GARP), which, as we have heard, is the long-term vision to support the growth of Greater Adelaide that accommodates approximately 85 per cent of our state's population and development activity.

The bill itself sets the objectives for ensuring that the Parklands are a sporting, cultural and recreational complex of statewide significance, promoting and encouraging the use of the Parklands by the public, inclusive of tourist attractions, and developing and maintaining those Parklands so that they can support and reflect the diverse range of environmental social values and activities that should be protected and enhanced.

I think the government is right in having said, as has just been acknowledged, that the northern suburbs of Adelaide have, for a very long time, been doing a lot of the heavy lifting when it comes to urban growth for the state, and it is for that reason that I think this bill is particularly welcome.

I do not intend to go into any more details of the bill, but I do wish, like the honourable members before me, to acknowledge that there have been amendments that have been moved by the minister that seek to address some of the issues that have been raised in this place already and that there are also amendments that I intend to listen to by the Hon. Rob Simms with respect to the concerns that have been raised by the LGA. I will not go over all of those now, but I, and probably other members, have now had the benefit of some government feedback in relation to some of those issues. We will listen closely as the member moves his amendments whilst, I guess, seeking further clarity from the government in relation to some of the specific responses they have provided around some of the concerns that have been raised in response to the concerns of the LGA.

With those few words, I indicate my overall support for the bill. I have already indicated to the government that I do intend to support its amendments and will listen to the remainder of the debate in relation to the rest.

The Hon. J.S. LEE (15:40): I rise to make some remarks in support of the Northern Parklands Bill 2025. My understanding is that the government wants to approach urban planning to align with the Greater Adelaide Regional Plan, with a key focus on supporting sustainable growth

across our northern suburbs and ensuring that the infrastructure needs and wellbeing of our communities are central to planning processes.

I travel to the northern suburbs throughout the year to meet constituents and to attend so many events, and I particularly appreciate the ambition as well as the necessity for the government to establish the Northern Parklands, a major open space initiative that will eventually span up to 1,000 hectares, creating a green corridor that stretches from One Tree Hill Road to Kudla and Evanston to the banks of the Gawler River.

I believe that the proposal will be welcomed by community because it will deliver high-quality recreation spaces, walking and cycling trails, cultural venues and climate-responsive landscapes. More importantly, it will preserve and enhance the natural beauty and biodiversity of the region, while supporting community health and commercial uses that align with the objectives of the bill.

The establishment of the Northern Parklands Trust is a key feature of the bill. Modelled on the successful West Beach Trust, the Northern Parklands Trust will be responsible for the management, development and long-term sustainability of the Parklands. I note that the trust will comprise of seven members nominated by the minister, including representatives from each constituent council area, Green Adelaide (or an urban ecologist person nominated by the Minister for Environment and Water), First Nations representation and experts from relevant fields, and this is all very encouraging.

The bill outlines the functions and objectives of the trust, including the requirement to produce an annual business plan and long-term strategic plan of 15 to 30 years to guide the management and financial sustainability of the Northern Parklands.

While I am broadly supportive of the bill and its objectives, I do wish to acknowledge that a number of concerns have been raised by the Local Government Association, and I wish to thank Andrew Lamb, Director of Advocacy at the LGA, particularly for taking the time to meet with my office to discuss these important issues in detail.

While I understand that the LGA and the relevant councils, particularly the Town of Gawler and the City of Playford, are generally supportive of the Northern Parklands and the trust itself, they have a number of concerns about the broad-reaching implications of provisions within the proposed legislation. I would like to acknowledge that the minister's office has proactively provided a detailed response to the concerns raised, which is greatly appreciated.

Understandably, the LGA is concerned about the potential financial burden on local councils, as the bill provides the power to levy rates or charges from local council to fund the ongoing maintenance costs of the Northern Parklands. I understand that councils will be able to recoup this cost through council rates and that the levy mechanism outlined in the bill is aligned with the Local Government Act. The amount of the levy must be articulated in the trust's annual business plan, with requirements for the trust to consult with council and the community accordingly. The annual business plan is also subject to parliamentary oversight.

Another concern raised with me relates to the broad power of land acquisition, particularly the potential for council-owned land to be acquired without consent or compensation. The minister has clarified that while the bill allows for the acquisition of eligible land, including council land, it is limited to the purpose of establishing parklands.

In addition, the minister has provided reassurance that the minister must consult with impacted councils and consider their submissions. Private land acquisition will continue to be governed by the Land Acquisition Act 1969, which includes compensation provisions. The bill also enables other parklands to be established by plans deposited in the general registry office and for additional statutory trusts to be established through regulation.

While the LGA sought greater clarity around the governance and accountability of such trusts, I was reassured by the government that all trusts will be subject to performance agreements, strategic planning and annual reporting. Additionally, statutory trusts will be subject to the usual reporting and oversight requirements of the Public Sector Act and the Public Finance and Audit Act, including annual financial audits by the Auditor-General. These safeguards are consistent with existing statutory trust models and provide a robust framework for oversight.

Concerns about the overcommercialisation of the Parklands have also been raised. While the bill allows for commercial uses, such as nature-based tourism and hospitality, they must align with the broader vision and objective of the Parklands. We certainly expect that the government will act in good faith for the Parklands, and this sort of clarity is really important. The minister has provided reassurance and stated that revenue generated through commercial activities is to be reinvested into the Parklands, ensuring their long-term viability and public benefit, and that is really good to know.

The West Beach Trust is largely funded by revenue generated by the caravan park and recreation facilities. It is essential that any commercial developments on the Parklands must be complementary, adding to the intended use of open community space and ensuring financial accessibility of the trust. In my former role as the shadow minister for tourism and hospitality, these were the areas that often the community, as well as operators, canvassed with me, so I am glad that has been providing some reassurance in this area. I understand that any development within the Parklands must also comply with existing requirements of the Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act and will be subject to stringent oversight through the annual business plan.

I understand the Hon. Robert Simms will be proposing some amendments. I will be listening to his proposal attentively during the debate stage. Overall, I am encouraged the bill ensures that current and future residents of our rapidly growing northern suburbs will have access to ample green space and community facilities. I work with the growing multicultural communities in the northern suburbs and I know firsthand how important it is for multicultural communities to have better community facilities, more space for them for their sports, for recreation, for the festivals. These are all important elements, so I think this particular development and the government proposal will be welcome.

I urge the government to consider some of the elements that were raised by the LGA, and I also want to ensure that the Northern Parklands reflect the values, needs and aspirations of the communities they serve. With those remarks, I commend the bill.

The Hon. S.L. GAME (15:49): I rise to speak on the government's Northern Parklands Bill 2025. This bill is designed to establish the initial phase of this government's Northern Parklands project. This project aims to deliver up to 1,000 hectares of public open space, with a combination of recreational parklands and sporting precincts to support the growing communities around the northern suburbs of Kudla, Angle Vale and Evanston. This bold vision includes high-quality, well-designed play spaces, bike paths and walking trails, as well as spaces for cultural activities and entertainment. It is part of the Greater Adelaide Regional Plan (GARP), which is intended to deliver high-quality social and physical infrastructure to support the growth of Greater Adelaide.

The initial phase of the plan under this bill will identify existing land owned by both state and local governments, as well as privately owned land to be acquired within five years of commencement of the bill. The acquisition of land will take place under the Land Acquisition Act 1969, which outlines under what circumstances a minister can acquire land, as well as provisions for compensation. There is broad support for the bill across the Playford and Gawler councils, as well as the northern suburbs community, which will no doubt benefit from this \$53 million investment.

Also, it is abundantly clear that there is broad support for this development and what it can deliver for communities north of Adelaide, so it is incumbent on all who stand to benefit from this proposal to ensure it goes ahead and that final costs are shared fairly and evenly. Upon commencement of the act, the land identified as part of the plan immediately will fall to the care, control and management of a new governance body, to be known as the Northern Parklands Trust.

It is clear that the success of the Northern Parklands proposal will be dependent on the performance of this trust. According to the minister, the trust has been modelled on the successful West Beach Trust, established under the West Beach Recreation Reserve Act 1987. This proposal also allows for the establishment of additional statutory trusts for regulation, should other parklands be established under the Northern Parklands Bill. Such a bold vision for the future deserves support; however, this support should be accompanied by appropriate scrutiny and accountability measures. With that, I express support for the bill.

The Hon. T.A. FRANKS (15:51): I rise very briefly to indicate that I support this bill. As someone who has lived in the northern suburbs, this is a wonderful piece of news—that the north

can actually get nice things. I note that the bill and the model takes great inspiration from the West Beach Trust, and certainly the activities there at the West Beach Trust are quite a jewel in the crown for our metro area to the west. It will be wonderful for the north to benefit from such activity and greening as well.

I understand the government has responded to concerns with regard to the ability for parliament to disallow in both houses, and I will support those government amendments. I have also reviewed the amendments of the Hon. Rob Simms and the LGA's concerns. I thank the government for their briefing and, in particular, Joel Ginges and Kimberley Davis for answering many questions on Monday. The amendment with regard to the development, I will consider and listen to the debate. I would indicate, though, the mover himself noted that this is not the Adelaide Parklands, it is quite a different proposition, so I am taking as my point of reference the West Beach Trust, which is where I am probably going to lie. However, I will listen to the debate and establish a position through that.

The Hon. T.T. NGO (15:54): I rise to speak on the Northern Parklands Bill 2025. The bill describes the establishment of a 1,000-hectare Northern Parklands stretching from the ridge line along One Tree Hill Road through the future urban growth areas surrounding Kudla Railway Station down to the banks of the Gawler River via Karbeethan Reserve.

This vision was first outlined in the long-term 30-year Greater Adelaide Regional Plan (GARP). It has identified Kudla as a new urban growth area with the potential for up to 11,000 new homes. The Northern Parklands Bill will establish the initial phase of the Northern Parklands through a plan lodged in the General Registry Office (GRO). The GRO plan will identify existing land owned by both state and local governments, which will form part of the initial stage of the Northern Parklands. Upon commencement of the act, the land identified within the GRO plan will immediately fall to the care, control and management of the Northern Parklands Trust.

Stage 1 of the Northern Parklands will be completed by 2030. The bill requires land identified in a second GRO plan to be acquired within five years of commencement of the bill. In developing this second GRO plan, efforts have been made to reduce the impacts on private landowners where possible, while still maintaining the integrity of the green corridor of the Northern Parklands.

Stage 2 of the Northern Parklands will be completed by 2040. Further land will be identified in a third GRO plan and will be acquired between 2030 and 2040. This land is owned by both government and private landholders.

The bill seeks to create a new statutory authority responsible for establishing and maintaining this new Northern Parklands. The Northern Parklands Trust will be set up to oversee the development, implementation and operation of the Parklands. The bill commands strong governance and oversight to ensure sustainable operations of the Northern Parklands.

The Hon. K.J. MAHER (Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector, Special Minister of State) (15:58): On behalf of the government, I wish to thank all members who have contributed to the second reading debate. We look forward to further discussion in the committee stage and traversing the amendments that have been put forward.

Bill read a second time.

STATUTES AMENDMENT (UNIVERSITIES - CAPS ON VICE CHANCELLOR SALARIES) BILL

Second Reading

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 3 September 2025.)

The Hon. D.G.E. HOOD (15:59): As shadow minister for training and skills, I rise to briefly speak on behalf of the opposition to the Statutes Amendment (Universities—Caps on Vice Chancellor Salaries) Bill 2025. I indicate, I think probably to nobody's surprise, that we will not be supporting the bill. The bill seeks to amend the Adelaide University Act 2023 and the Flinders University Act 1966 by inserting a provision in each of these acts to cap the salary of the universities' vice-chancellors to that of the salary payable to the Premier of South Australia.

With respect to the two universities in our state, I note that the total remuneration for the Adelaide University Chancellor, Professor Nicola Phillips, this financial year will be in the range of \$936,200 to a maximum of \$1,135,200—nice work if you can get it—and the remuneration for the Flinders University Vice-Chancellor, Colin Stirling, last financial year was over \$1.43 million.

I want to stress that I do have some sympathy for the Hon. Robert Simms' motivation and intentions for introducing this bill, given that these salaries appear very, very high when compared with that of the Premier's annual salary, which is currently \$436,000, and considering the vast responsibilities of his role in comparison. Indeed, I note that the Prime Minister of Australia earns a base salary of \$607,500 a year, which is still far less than each of the vice-chancellors is receiving, as I have just outlined. Regardless, the state Liberal Party does not believe a restriction on salaries of vice-chancellors should be enshrined in legislation. We are the party of the free market and ultimately believe that that should be the tool or the mechanism to set salaries for these positions.

Whilst universities are indeed public entities, there are no limitations placed on the salaries of vice-chancellors in other jurisdictions that we are aware of, where those appointed to these positions are similarly remunerated in most cases. The salaries of vice-chancellors should therefore not be restricted by state legislation in South Australia in our view. It would not be appropriate to inhibit our state's universities from freely negotiating with prospective candidates for their vice-chancellor positions, and for that reason we will not be supporting this legislation.

The Hon. T.A. FRANKS (16:01): I rise to speak in support of the Statutes Amendment (Universities—Cap on Vice Chancellor Salaries) Bill 2025. I suspect if you asked the average South Australian who earns more—the Premier, the Governor or a university vice-chancellor—most would hazard a guess to say the Premier or maybe the Governor. The cynics amongst us might guess that a vice-chancellor makes more. But in actuality, the pay of South Australia's vice-chancellors can be more than that of the Premier and the Governor combined, with room to spare.

A report from *The Advertiser* revealed that the current co-vice-chancellors of the taxpayer-funded merged Adelaide University, Professor Peter Høj and Professor David Lloyd, both made upwards of \$1 million in 2023 and 2024. I am sure both must be green with envy when they look at their Flinders University counterpart, Professor Colin Stirling, who made an eye-watering \$1.4 million in 2024. That is 3½ times the salary of the Premier. To put those numbers into perspective, it would take someone earning minimum wage over 56,000 hours to earn what these vice-chancellors make in a year. That is roughly 6½ years of work: no breaks, no sleep, just work 24/7.

Compared with their international counterparts, in the UK vice-chancellors average roughly £413,000, which is about A\$843,000, while in the US vice-chancellors average some US\$251,500 or A\$375,866. The pay packets of these Australian university bosses are out of control and they demonstrate the growing inequality and warped priorities of our Australian universities.

Indeed, I would say that I am surprised that the Liberal Party says 'it is not a surprise to anyone' that their position is to oppose this bill. I would remind them that when Simon Birmingham was education minister, it was well chronicled back in 2017 that he was gearing up for a propaganda war against the universities and specifically targeting their healthy surpluses, lavish new buildings and university vice-chancellors' then million-dollar salaries. In fact, Mr Birmingham's talking points were described by the *Australian Financial Review* article to be that vice-chancellors earn more than the Prime Minister and most senior public servants. How the Liberals have changed in just a short period of time, but how the vice-chancellors' salaries have ballooned.

While vice-chancellors are making their millions year after year, most academics working under them are struggling to make ends meet. I have heard countless stories of university lecturers and tutors who are not paid enough to even complete the marking that they are required to do for their students, forcing them to work unpaid hours of marking just to make sure that their students get timely and helpful feedback.

Back in 2023, a report from the NTEU found that more than 97,000 employees across our Australian university system were victims of wage theft to the tune of some \$158.7 million. Among South Australian universities, UniSA was said to have 16 employees owed a total of \$182,709.

Flinders University was found to have two staff owed \$67,578, and the University of Adelaide was found to have two staff owed \$52,000.

So while these vice-chancellors are bringing home million dollar plus pay packets, university staff are actually having their wages stolen. What is worse is the newly merged Adelaide University, which the Malinauskas government has been proud to champion, plans to completely scrap in-person lectures, opting for, I quote, 'rich digital learning activities'. I am sorry, but I fail to see how sitting at a computer and watching a slideshow presentation with a voiceover can be seen as rich digital learning. Something is rich, but it is not the learning.

So apparently universities do not have the money to pay their staff, they do not have the money to run in-person lectures, but when it comes time to hand over massive salaries and bonuses to vice-chancellors, the bank appears to be open. Those salaries demonstrate a sad reality: our universities have become more about turning a profit and making money than educating people and providing us with the skills that benefit our society. These salaries treat vice-chancellors more like CEOs than educators, rewarding them not for their ability to have a great institution with a high quality of education, but for their ability to make money for that university.

Students deserve better, South Australians deserve better, academics deserve better. Clearly, universities are not going to willingly drop the salaries of their vice-chancellors and redirect those funds to better quality of education for their students, so this parliament should give them a push. This bill would, of course, cap the salary of South Australian vice-chancellors at that of the salary of the Premier. That is a pretty reasonable salary. I do not think the Premier is complaining that he does not make enough.

I look forward to the vote on this bill. I remind the Liberal Party of their former education minister's words and ask them to reflect on whether or not they have, in this case, judged too hastily what the outcome should be. With that, I commend the bill.

The Hon. J.S. LEE (16:07): I rise today to speak on the Statutes Amendment (Universities—Caps on Vice Chancellor Salaries) Bill 2025. I thank the Hon. Robert Simms for introducing the bill. While I appreciate the intent behind the bill, I indicate that I will not be supporting it. As a member of the Joint Committee on the Establishment of Adelaide University, I witnessed firsthand the scale of transformation involved in merging two major institutions, an undertaking that required visionary leadership, robust governance and significant public investment.

Throughout that process, I had the privilege of working closely with stakeholders from both the University of South Australia and the University of Adelaide, which gave me deep insight into the complexity of university governance, the scale of institutional transformation and the expectations placed on university leadership in this state.

This bill seeks to cap the salaries of vice-chancellors at South Australian public universities, aligning them with the salary of the Premier, currently around \$436,000. The intent is clear: to ensure that the executive remuneration in our universities reflects public expectations, especially at a time when students and staff are under increasing financial pressure. There is no doubt that the figure cited in recent media reports of vice-chancellors earning upwards of \$1.3 million has raised eyebrows in the community, and rightly so. These are public institutions supported by taxpayers' dollars and they must be accountable to the public they serve. For instance, the University of Adelaide's annual report revealed that Prof. Peter Høj received a 24 per cent pay rise last year, bringing his salary to over \$1.3 million. Similarly, Flinders University's vice-chancellor earned over \$1.43 million.

These figures underscore the need for greater transparency and public scrutiny. However, while I support the principle of transparency and fiscal responsibility, I also believe that we must proceed with caution when legislating salary caps in a sector as globally competitive and strategically important as higher education. At a time when South Australians are facing significant cost-of-living pressures and students are incurring substantial debt to pursue higher education, it is reasonable to expect transparency in how public funds are allocated, especially in executive remuneration.

Our universities are not only centres of learning, they are also economic drivers, research powerhouses and international ambassadors for South Australia. The role of a vice-chancellor today is not merely academic; it is executive, diplomatic and entrepreneurial. These leaders are tasked

with managing billion-dollar budgets, navigating complex industrial relations, attracting international students and securing research partnerships in an increasingly competitive global market. If we are to attract and retain the best talent—leaders who can deliver on these expectations—we must ensure that South Australia remains a competitive and attractive jurisdiction. A rigid salary cap, while well-intentioned, will inevitably limit our ability to recruit the calibre of leadership our institutions require.

That said, I share the concern raised by the Northern Territory education union and others regarding the lack of transparency around the remuneration of the incoming vice-chancellor of the merged Adelaide University. With \$450 million in public funding allocated to support this merger, the public has every right to know how those funds are being used, including executive pay.

This not a binary debate between high salaries and low accountability. It is a conversation about balance, between fair remuneration and public trust, between institutional autonomy and community expectations. I would encourage the government and the university to consider alternative mechanisms to achieve the bill's objectives. I believe there is a genuine scope for reform in how our universities approach executive pay and governance.

While I will not be supporting the bill in its current form, I do thank the Hon. Robert Simms for bringing forward this important issue. There is a clear need for reform in how our universities approach executive remuneration and governance. This bill has sparked a necessary conversation, one that should continue beyond this chamber.

The Hon. S.L. GAME (16:12): I rise briefly to put on the record my full support for this bill and just to comment briefly that any suggestion that we need to be paying \$1 million a year to someone to get a high-calibre, high-performing individual is of great insult, really, to the rest of the population. Many people are working as professionals, as doctors, dentists, veterinarians, for much less than that, and they are doing a really great job. I really object to the idea that we need to be paying such levels to attract a high-calibre individual who can do the job.

The Hon. T.T. NGO (16:13): On behalf of the government, I rise to speak on the Statutes Amendment (Universities—Caps on Vice Chancellor Salaries) Bill 2025, which this government will not be supporting. With the growth of the higher education sector in South Australia, our universities have become increasingly sophisticated and complex organisations. They manage significant budgets and substantial infrastructure. Investing in research and teaching, they employ thousands of staff, educate thousand of students and provide extensive student services.

Strong and effective leadership is central to ensuring that universities retain their reputations as highly respected institutions of learning and research. Australian society benefits from strong and effective university leadership in multiple ways. High-quality teaching and research drive innovation. It also helps businesses develop new products and services, which in turn creates jobs and boosts economic growth.

Universities also train the next generation of professionals, from doctors and teachers to engineers and public servants, ensuring Australia has the skilled workforce it needs. Strong research programs influence evidence-based policymaking and improve social outcomes in health, education and environmental sustainability. Culturally, universities act as hubs for debate, discovery and artistic expression, which enriches our national identity and international reputation by fostering international collaborations. Student exchanges at universities enhance Australia's soft power and diplomatic ties, strengthening our political and social standing on the world stage.

Whilst it is important to ensure the remuneration of vice-chancellors is transparent and appropriate to the level of responsibility and the skills and expertise required for the role, it is equally important to ensure the remuneration is competitive. In the absence of a national approach, a cap on vice-chancellor salaries in South Australia alone would put the state at a competitive disadvantage when recruiting the finest talents to lead our universities. Consequently, this government will not be giving its support to the honourable member's bill.

The Hon. R.A. SIMMS (16:16): I thank honourable members for their contributions: the Hon. Dennis Hood, the Hon. Tammy Franks, the Hon. Sarah Game, the Hon. Tung Ngo and the Hon. Jing Lee. I did have a sense of optimism around this, until I saw the Hon. Tung Ngo rise to his

feet, and then I knew. I had that familiar sinking feeling that the bill was going to be killed off, because you know that when there is a sensible proposition in this chamber the Labor government deploys the Hon. Tung Ngo to kill off the bill, the smiling assassin who destroys good policy. He is always the one they deploy to deliver the bad news.

I am very disappointed. I do think the position that both the Labor and Liberal parties have taken here is a slap in the face to hardworking South Australians, particularly in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis. I think the Hon. Sarah Game makes a compelling point when she says that there are lots of people in our community who work very hard, who do vital work and who would never dream of being able to earn the exorbitant salaries that these vice-chancellors earn. This nonsense that you need to pay people salaries in excess of \$1 million to attract talent is just a complete nonsense.

I note also the point made by the Hon. Tammy Franks when she highlighted the inconsistency of the Liberal Party on this issue. It is a very important point. Simon Birmingham was the federal education minister, and I was in the federal parliament during that period. He and I disagreed on many things, but one area where we did agree was the need to curb these exorbitant salaries and to have a discussion around that. Sadly, it seems the South Australian branch of the Liberal Party has moved away from that position.

There is an opportunity for us as a state to show some leadership here and to demonstrate that we are trying to get this under control, particularly at a time when we have a new institution that will be coming into fruition in the new year. Might I say that at the time when we were debating the establishment of the new Adelaide University the Greens moved an amendment that would have allowed the vice-chancellor salaries to be set by the Remuneration Tribunal. That was opposed by the Labor and Liberal parties as well, so it seems that they are very reluctant to have a commonsense and transparent approach adopted in relation to vice-chancellor salaries.

This is an issue that the Greens will continue to advance, because I think the broader community expects that these public institutions should be reflecting what is the public standard. These salaries are exorbitant and they are wildly out of touch with community expectations. I do thank, however, the Hon. Tammy Franks and the Hon. Sarah Game for their support, and I indicate to members that I do plan to call a division so that the views of members can be put on the public record.

The council divided on the second reading:

Ayes	3
Noes	14
Majority	11

AYES

Franks, T.A.

Game, S.L.

Simms, R.A. (teller)

NOES

Bonaros, C.
Girolamo, H.M.
Hood, D.G.E.
Maher, K.J.
Scriven, C.M.

Bourke, E.S.
Hanson, J.E.
Lee, J.S.
Ngo, T.T. (teller)
Wortley, R.P.

Centofanti, N.J.
Hood, B.R.
Lensink, J.M.A.
Pangallo, F.

Second reading thus negatived.

Motions

GENDER EQUALITY

Adjourned debate on motion of Hon. C. Bonaros:

That this council—

1. Notes that South Australia has a proud history of advancing gender equality;
2. Recognises that despite this progress, significant challenges remain, including the gender pay gap and lower levels of workforce participation for women compared to men;
3. Acknowledges that, in opposition, the now Malinauskas Labor government supported the Gender Equality Bill 2021;
4. Notes that at the second reading of the Gender Equality Bill 2022, the government did not support the bill and confirmed its plans to introduce similar legislation;
5. Notes that this commitment formed part of Labor's pre-election policy platform;
6. Observes that the South Australian Women's Equality Blueprint 2023–2026 includes as a key action the introduction of an equality bill;
7. Notes the findings of the Gender Pay Gap Taskforce, including recommendation 3, which calls for action to reduce the gender pay gap in the public sector; and
8. Calls on the government to honour its commitment and introduce a gender equality bill without further delay.

(Continued from 3 September 2025.)

The Hon. J.M.A. LENSINK (16:24): I rise to indicate support for this motion and just to recap on the history of this, there is a great deal of consistency from the Hon. Connie Bonaros in promoting these matters. In 2021, the Hon. Connie Bonaros introduced the Gender Equality Bill. I note the Liberal government at that stage did not support the bill. In fact, we do not support this particular concept because we believe that it is duplicating existing strategies and statutory roles and that is a position that we often take.

I note some of the comments in the previous bill moved by the Hon. Mr Simms, who loves a bit of duplication all over the place. What that leads to is extremely messy governance and tying everybody up to the point where different levels of governance cannot make decisions because they are always accountable to some other obscure, strange way and it limits their own decision-making, which in practice makes life very difficult. We are very consistent in our approach to the concept of this legislation.

The bill in 2021 moved by the Hon. Ms Bonaros passed the Legislative Council with Labor support, but it did not progress through the House of Assembly before the end of sittings, ahead of the 2022 state election. That bill was reintroduced in 2022 and the government did not support it, so the Labor Party supported it in opposition and did not support it in government. That is a bit of a theme for today, I think. They said they would bring forward their own model. That was over three years ago. We continued to be consistent and did not support the 2022 bill for the same reasons. The government talked about its Women's Equality Blueprint 2023-2026 and said it would introduce its own gender equality bill and has failed to do so.

This motion, I would put forward, rather than necessarily advocating for a gender equality bill per se, makes a number of points and is largely statements of fact and it does draw attention to South Australia's long history of gender equality reform and ongoing challenges. I think it is important to remember that, if we are going to look at history, the first sexual discrimination act, which was the forerunner of the equal opportunity legislation, the first type of legislation in Australia, was actually introduced by the Hon. David Tonkin. It is in the DNA of the Liberal Party to recognise when particular groups in our community are being unnecessarily disadvantaged and/or oppressed.

The Gender Pay Gap Taskforce, which was initially chaired by the Hon. Irene Pnevmatikos, has recommended specific action to close the gap in the public sector, and the Women's Equality Blueprint commits the government to legislative reform. I think it is important when we do look at the Gender Pay Gap Taskforce to comment on how the pay gap has altered in recent years. The Gender Pay Gap Taskforce, in its 2024 final report, shows that it is approximately 9.8 per cent, which is an increase of 1.8 percentage points since the taskforce was established in 2022. The lowest pay gap ever in the history of South Australia took place in the years of the Marshall Liberal government, at 7.1 per cent, compared to 9.8 per cent now. The Labor Party like to talk the talk. In fact, they do a lot of talking. They do not do a lot of walking.

While in opposition, Labor supported the 2021 Gender Equality Bill. Our previous government delivered a lot of initiatives to advance diversity and gender equality in the public sector. I remember standing on my feet talking about a number of them, so they are on the record. These included the diversity and inclusion strategy, the workplace equality and respect project, and support for gender equality action planning within agencies. I helped to launch the public sector gender equality plan.

This motion is essentially to highlight Labor's inconsistency: in opposition doing one thing and in government failing to deliver. The Liberal Party's position has not changed. We certainly support equality measures, and our record speaks for itself. We will hold this government to account when they break their promises and they fail. For these reasons, we support this motion.

The Hon. R.A. SIMMS (16:30): I rise to indicate that I will be supporting this motion, and I want to recognise the Hon. Connie Bonaros's leadership in this regard. This is an important issue, and it is one on which this parliament should adopt a clear position. I also acknowledge that this is looking very much like a broken promise from the Malinauskas Labor government. They made this commitment when they were in opposition. They are now in government, and the window is closing on action in this parliamentary term, so why have they not delivered this commitment?

They have a Premier's Delivery Unit that has been tasked with delivering their election promises. This is one of those important promises that has not yet come to fruition. It is important because, as the honourable member notes within her motion, South Australia does have a proud history of advancing gender equality, but there are still significant challenges, including within the gender pay gap and lower levels of workplace participation for women compared to men.

It is for this reason that SA Unions, among others, have been advocating for the government to satisfy this commitment. Why have they not done so? We are running out of time. Unfortunately, I think there is a pattern from this Labor government: they say one thing when they are in opposition, but then, when they get their opportunity to sit on the government benches, they do something very different.

I often say in this place, do not listen to what comes out of their mouths, look at what they do with their feet. Look at how they vote and look at what they do in the parliament. This is an important issue and it should be taken seriously by the Malinauskas government. I urge them to move quickly and to satisfy and deliver this election commitment.

It is something they said they would do during the last election. We have literally a few months left of this parliamentary term. The window is closing for action. I support the motion, I hope it is supported by this house, and I hope that it sends a strong message to the Malinauskas government that we need to see legislation. Indeed, I am very happy to cooperate with them to ensure that that is progressed through the parliament.

The Hon. T.A. FRANKS (16:33): I rise very briefly to support this motion and, in doing so, I also acknowledge the work of the Hon. Connie Bonaros over many years on this matter. I similarly observe that the now Labor government, when in opposition, supported and committed to introduce an equality bill within their Women's Equality Blueprint dated 2023-26.

The Labor Party do not have a speaker listed for this debate, and so I am eager to know whether or not the government is intending to keep this commitment at all, or whether there is some nuance here that they would like to share—not just with this council but, of course, with the community. It is indeed a promise, and there is a Premier's Delivery Unit, and we have been told time and time again that the promises will be kept. Is it a matter of we still have to wait a few more years, or is it a matter of it is about to come, or is it a matter of this will not be done at all? They are questions that the Malinauskas government need to answer right now. It is quite extraordinary that they are not listed for debate.

Two days ago, in a conversation between myself and the Hon. Connie Bonaros, the whip indicated that the Labor government is supporting this motion. We would like some clarity on whether that was a misreading of what number was what, or whether they do support this motion and, if so, when will we see an equality bill for this state.

The Hon. J.S. LEE (16:34): I rise today in strong support of this motion, which calls on the government to honour its commitment and introduce a gender equality bill. I also acknowledge the strong leadership of the Hon. Connie Bonaros, as many other honourable members have also mentioned and recognised that leadership.

South Australia has long been a pioneer in advancing gender equality. We were torchbearers, from granting women the right to vote and stand for parliament in 1894 to the trailblazing leadership of Dame Roma Mitchell—our state has led the way. Yet, despite this proud legacy, the reality for many women today tells a different story. Women continue to face barriers to workforce participation, leadership and economic security. These are not just abstract statements, they are lived realities for thousands of South Australian women.

As someone who migrated to South Australia in 1979 and proudly became the first Malaysian-born member of the South Australian parliament, I know firsthand the importance of inclusive policy and representation. My own journey, from a first-generation migrant to holding senior positions, including that of serving as deputy leader of the opposition, has been shaped by the values of respect, integrity and equal opportunity. These are the same values that must underpin our approach to gender equality.

I thank the honourable member for bringing this motion forward: it is both timely and necessary. The government's previous support for the Gender Equality Bill 2021, followed by its rejection of the 2022 version, calls into question the consistency of the government's commitment. The Gender Equality Bill that passed in this chamber in 2021 was about fairness. It sought to ensure that public institutions lead by example by assessing their impact, setting targets and reporting progress. The South Australian Women's Equality Blueprint 2023-26 clearly identifies the introduction of an equality bill as a key action.

The Gender Pay Gap Taskforce has also made it clear that action is still needed. The national gender pay gap is closing, but is still close to 12 per cent. In the private sector the CEO and head of business gender pay gap is 27.1 per cent. These figures show that, while we have made progress, structural inequality remains. A gender equality bill would help close these gaps by embedding accountability and transparency into public institutions.

Of course, this is not just a local issue, it is part of a global challenge with global consequences. The UN Gender Snapshot 2025 report shows that closing the gender digital divide alone could benefit close to 345 million women and girls. It would lift 30 million out of poverty by 2050 and generate an estimated \$US1.5 trillion boost to global GDP by 2030. This is why legislation like the gender equality bill is not just symbolic, it is an investment in productivity, innovation and equity.

Throughout my career, I have championed inclusion and equity for multicultural communities, small businesses and people of all industries. In my work with multicultural communities I have seen how gender inequality intersects with cultural and economic disadvantage. Culturally and linguistically diverse women in Australia have significantly lower workforce participation rates and are over-represented in insecure, low-paid jobs. Their realities remind us that equality must be more than just a principle, it must be in practice—policies that reflect women's lived experience and their contributions to our society. A gender equality bill is our opportunity to turn commitment into action. I am proud to stand with the Hon. Connie Bonaros and many honourable members in this chamber to support this motion.

The Hon. C. BONAROS (16:39): I take this opportunity to thank those speakers who have contributed and for their kind words. I thank the Hon. Michelle Lensink, the Hon. Rob Simms, the Hon. Tammy Franks and the Hon. Jing Lee—not just for your kind words, of course, but for your ongoing support in relation to this regardless of where you sit on this issue.

At the time that I first introduced this bill, the Hon. Vickie Chapman was still Attorney-General and I appreciated having those same discussions with her at the time. I think at that time it was fair to say that from her perspective it was a cost-prohibitive proposal more than anything else. I was very grateful for her frankness in those discussions.

I would like to thank the Hon. Tammy Franks for pointing out the very notable absence of a government speaker on this bill. I made it clear in my speech that I am not asking for much. I do not

think any member in this place is asking for much. I ended my speech by saying that I am really hopeful that the minister will take this opportunity to share with us some positive updates about a piece of legislation that was meant to be, and is meant to be central to this government's commitments to gender equality. I am very disappointed that the government has not taken this opportunity to update this chamber on its own commitments, as has been referred to by other honourable members across the floor.

I have a theory. I think there is a pattern, as the Hon. Rob Simms has alluded to, and I think human rights might fit into that same pattern, something the Hon. Rob Simms, the Hon. Tammy Franks and the Hon. Mark Parnell have pushed for very hard in this place previously. I might be completely wrong about my theory, but I am willing to go with it. Given the absence of a reasonable response from the government about an update on this issue, something that SA Unions, amongst others, have been campaigning for and I think it is fair to say have been asking for the same, tell us where we are at.

Here is my theory: I think the government knows it has a dilemma on its hands when it comes to gender equality. I think they know they have a dilemma on their hands when it comes to the human rights bill. I am thinking that this government, because they do not like an idea unless it is theirs, are thinking, 'Maybe we will kill two birds with one stone. Maybe, just maybe, we could roll a gender equality, a human rights and an equal opportunity commission into one and do one big shiny new announcement that is owned by us.'

I might be completely wrong, but I really hope I am not now. I really, really hope I am right. In the event that they do that, I am sure it will get the support of members in this place who have supported equal opportunity, who have supported gender equality and who have supported the establishment of a human rights bill and commission. If I am wrong, I am happy to be wrong too. The bottom line is we just want an answer. That is all we want. It is not a big ask.

I was given those commitments by this government. I sat down one on one with Minister Hildyard the second time this bill went down and was told point blank, 'I promise this will be done before the next election.' My words to the minister at the time were that I did not think that this would rank highly enough on her government's agenda. I think that is the only thing that has stood between us having a gender equality bill and not having a gender equality bill.

I am extremely disappointed that we have not taken this opportunity to set the record straight and at least come in here and say, 'Yes, we still are doing this', or, 'No, we have scrapped it.' Be honest and frank about it. But if they are doing it, come in here and say, 'It's taking us longer than we anticipated because of our other seven million commitments that we have to meet,' or whatever the case may be.

The Hon. Michelle Lensink is right. This is a very factual motion. We are not asking for anything. There is no opinion in here. There is nothing in here that can be distorted. We just want an update and the public of South Australia deserves that update.

Motion carried.

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENT

Adjourned debate on motion of Hon. J.M.A. Lensink:

That this council—

1. Calls on the Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council to adopt similar rules to those in the House of Assembly regarding earlier commencement times for sittings; and
2. Calls on the government to adopt the recommendations of the Select Committee on Effectiveness of the System of Committees of the South Australian parliament to rationalise and streamline the current committee structure.

(Continued from 4 June 2025.)

The Hon. T.A. FRANKS (16:44): I rise very briefly to support the motion of the Hon. Michelle Lensink. Here we are again discussing something that the Labor Party supported much more when they were in opposition than they have in government. The idea of family-friendly work hours is an important one. Starting earlier in this place seems to me to be a no-brainer if we are to support

people—for example, single parents and the like—and actually reflect the diversity of our community in this place.

Quite simply, our committee system was identified as pretty much broken, very archaic and not fit for purpose. The committee system should reflect portfolios, it should have ongoing expertise of a researcher in those portfolios and it should have the ability to have the flexibility that members can sub in and out, as we have seen with the Senate inquiry into the algal bloom most recently where I saw that all South Australian senators in fact were—I was going to say 'in tandem' but it was beyond tandem—in concert with their cross-party support and active involvement in that committee.

We know that our committee system lags and sometimes we have committees that we say have 'gone doggo'. We also know that the government does not necessarily respond to committees either, and there should be some requirements around that. To name one committee, the Joint Committee on the Legalisation of Medicinal Cannabis has made a series of recommendations around transport, around industrial relations and around health and has for over a year now been met with deafening silence by this government.

I could go on and on. I do not intend to go on, but I could continue to talk about all of the committee system failings. With that, I commend the motion. Let's get on with proper reform of our democratic institution where, as a house of review, we should be ensuring that that review is to the highest standard and in the most effective way possible.

The Hon. J.S. LEE (16:47): I rise today to speak on the Hon. Michelle Lensink's motion and indicate my very strong support to reform the commencement time for sittings in the Legislative Council and to rationalise the current system of parliamentary committees. I acknowledge the Hon. Michelle Lensink's reflections about the difficulties of juggling family commitments with the highly unusual and outdated sitting times we have in the Legislative Council.

We often speak about how we can encourage more young people and more women to get into politics, but the nature of late sitting is just one more potential barrier that may prevent or discourage their participation. It is important for both men and women to be able to balance their work commitments with quality time with their families, especially during the formative years with young children.

I recently spoke at a university panel with other female parliamentary colleagues at an event for the Pathways to Politics for Women program at the University of Adelaide. I may have shocked many participants and other panellists when I said that I do not have a work-life balance regime and that I work seven days a week, attending multiple community events every weekend and most evenings. I knew when I came into this place that it would be a demanding job, but I guess it is how I have personally chosen to structure my weeks and prioritise my community engagement.

I find juggling community functions with parliamentary sitting evenings a constant frustration and frequently find myself having to turn down invitations to important community events due to the unpredictable nature of sitting times. Changing the Legislative Council sitting times to align with the House of Assembly is a sensible move that is long overdue. While exceptionally late sittings are thankfully infrequent, they still happen, often during debate on particularly contentious or divisive bills. Frankly, no-one makes good decisions at 1 o'clock or 6 o'clock in the morning.

It is not just elected members who have to endure this as well. Hansard staff and Parliament House staff are also impacted by late sittings, as they are required to be at the beck and call of the council. This is a work health and safety issue. Fatigue impacts physical and mental health, with symptoms such as slower reaction times, poor mood, inattention and trouble focusing.

The Sleep Health Foundation states that 17 hours without sleep impairs driving performance in the same way as having a blood alcohol level of 0.05 per cent and 24 hours without sleep is as dangerous as driving at 0.08 per cent. It is entirely plausible that members of staff may wake up at 6am for work and then drive home following a late sitting night, say at 2am. That is 20 hours after they woke up. This could easily be avoided by simply commencing sittings earlier in the day. Beginning our parliamentary day at 2.15pm is outdated and out of touch with community expectations.

I would now like to turn to the second part of the honourable member's motion. I strongly support the call for the government to adopt and implement recommendations made by the Select Committee on Effectiveness of the System of Committees of the South Australian Parliament in 2021. The government has had ample time to consider these sensible recommendations and devise a suitable solution to the overwhelming number of select committees established by the Legislative Council.

Both staff and members are stretched and under considerable pressure to work across an overabundance of select committees. The committee received input from other parliaments and consulted with jurisdictions such as New South Wales and Queensland that formally reviewed their committee systems in recent years and made changes that created more efficient and effective mechanisms for parliamentary scrutiny and accountability.

Significant work went into this report and it is not good enough that the government has simply placed this issue in the too-hard basket. The current system is out of touch and ineffective, and it is time for reform to ensure that we as parliamentarians serve the community effectively and to the highest standard of accountability. With those remarks, I commend the motion.

The Hon. R.P. WORTLEY (16:52): While we acknowledge the sentiments behind paragraph 1 of the motion, the government cannot support paragraph 2 and therefore will oppose the motion. The Legislative Council already demonstrates a good track record of commencing early when required and typically aims to avoid sitting beyond dinner. When late sittings do occur, they are often on Wednesdays, the day allocated for private members' business. This is largely due to matters of interest and extended speeches on notices of motion.

Sitting times data supports this. In 2025, the council sat beyond dinner on three occasions, two of which were Wednesdays. Similarly, in 2024, of the 10 late night sittings, seven fell on Wednesdays. There has been previous interest in reviewing how new business is prioritised on Wednesdays, with some suggestions to give precedence to items expected to go to a vote, similar to arrangements in the Senate. This is something the government will continue to consider.

The second paragraph of the motion proposes a major overhaul to the current parliamentary committee system by introducing portfolio-based standing committees in the Legislative Council. The recommendation is to have three separate Legislative Council standing committees, several joint house standing committees and a separate range of House of Assembly standing committees.

Streamlining committees in this way presents several concerns and would ultimately reduce the opportunity for both House of Assembly and Legislative Council members to contribute meaningfully to committee work. While the government acknowledges the work of the former select committee, we do not consider this the best approach to reform the parliamentary committee system.

The Hon. C. BONAROS (16:54): It should come as no surprise that I, too, support this motion and, once again, rise to indicate my disappointment with the government, not with the opposition. In relation to this, first I will deal with the committee on committees, which I feel like I have all but given up on, and not because we do not need that. I said that on the record in this place. I know we do not like to hear it, but when it comes to our committee on committee structures we are very much behind the times and archaic compared to every other jurisdiction, state and federal, across Australia.

It is disappointing because, when this government was in opposition, they very reasonably and rationally sat down with the opposition and came up with a set of recommendations. I did not feel like I needed to do anything, in fact. It was a set of recommendations that everybody agreed to and was very much necessary. The opposition has, since that time, signalled to me its ongoing support for this. The Leader of the Opposition, who is reminded at pretty much every Legislative Review Committee that if we adopted the recommendations of the committee on committees we would not have to deal with these issues, has continued to signal the support of the opposition on this front.

So we have an opposition and an entire crossbench who have all said that this is something we need to revisit and look at and bring us into line with what other jurisdictions are doing, to modernise and make more efficient and effective not just the way we run our committee processes,

which results in more effective use of everybody's time, but actually serves democracy and serves the public, who give up their time and effort to come and appear before those committees and provide vital evidence. Sometimes, we know that evidence is ignored.

I am not going to go into it anymore other than to say the case for the committee on committees is made out. I have to put on record that I am extremely disappointed that when the government came into power I think it suited them extremely well for all of us to be distracted with way too much committee work and to keep our eyes on everything else we have to do as members of this place, rather than focusing on scrutinising what they are doing. All distraction is welcomed by the government. Committees, I think, is at the top of the list in terms of things they would like to see us continuing to be caught up in in terms of our time.

I note also the comments of the Hon. Jing Lee and other members in relation to the time. I have been a bit split on the issue of time, I will admit. Because we are so caught up in committees and our off weeks are spent working on committees, we constantly seem to be chasing our tails and catching up, bearing in mind that we deal with all of the workload of this chamber, not just a handful of portfolios.

I often use the morning to prepare for the afternoon, so sometimes it works in my favour in terms of having the morning to prepare for the afternoon sitting. That is not to say, though, that we do not need more family-friendly hours in this place, and that is certainly something that I support. I would have thought, given the government's talk particularly on issues of gender equality, that is something they would support also.

I note that there has been an effort to finish early when we can to make sure that we can all get home to our families—those of us who have kids at home. I note that I have always had a very sympathetic ear when I am in here trying to organise after-school care, pick-up arrangements and whatnot, just like every other parent or carer is trying to do with their kids to manage their time load in here.

I note also that most of our evenings and weekends are caught up in attending many events. That is what we signed up for and that is what we do willingly and gladly, but that does not mean we cannot make our workload in here more efficient in our use of time in here. So I do support the proposal that has been put by the honourable member both when it comes to the hours and, of course, when it comes to the committee on committees.

The Hon. R.A. SIMMS (16:58): I also support the motion being advanced by the Hon. Michelle Lensink. I think this really reflects modern workplaces. I understand the origins of the Legislative Council's later sitting days go back to the days when members of this place would go and have lunch at the Adelaide Club and then wander over. So they would have their lunch at 1 o'clock in the afternoon, they would go for an hour, and then they would take about 15 minutes to wander over from around the corner. That is the story that I had understood to be the case.

Times have changed since then. Most members of this place do not have membership of the Adelaide Club and are not spending their lunchtimes over there, but also we have a much more diverse parliament in terms of people who have family and other responsibilities. Why we would not simply align our start time with the House of Assembly is beyond me. I do take the point that the Hon. Connie Bonaros has made around the fact that we may have committee meetings and other constituent responsibilities at the front end of the day, but I think that can be managed, particularly if it is paired with reform of our committee system.

Might I say that during my brief time in the federal parliament I observed the way in which that system works. Having standing committees that are appropriately resourced by the parliament and that members can sub in and out of strikes me as a very effective system. It means that you have researchers who are able to hone their skills and focus and interest on particular areas, and you have members of a committee who have a particular interest in an area as well, notwithstanding the fact that other members can be subbed in from time to time.

This all seems like a sensible approach forward, and I am frustrated that the government is not taking this seriously. I have had discussions with, I think, all political parties around the idea of us maybe streamlining our *Notice Paper*, on Wednesdays in particular, to prioritise matters that are

going to a division, so that members are able to plan better for events. Maybe that is something that we can advance after the election, given we are running out of time. Ideally, I would like to see the government have a serious conversation around what we can do to modernise our approach to this after the next election.

The Hon. J.M.A. LENSINK (17:01): I thank all honourable speakers for their contributions to this motion, namely, the Hon. Tammy Franks, the Hon. Jing Lee, the Hon. Russell Wortley, the Hon. Rob Simms and the Hon. Connie Bonaros. I think I got everyone. Indeed, as has been reflected in many of the comments this afternoon, I think a number of us have frustrations. I think this place does stand still in time in terms of its own practices, which are anachronisms, quite frankly.

I have been very keen that some sort of framework or structure be placed around the committees so that we can streamline their operations. There are some weeks, quite frankly, in the last month or two when it has been 'death by committee'. It has swallowed up my entire working week on matters that I have not necessarily raised. I think we are all reluctant to vote down any member who wants to establish a committee for a purpose, because they are worthwhile, but there has to be a better way to do it. We have that framework already through what we call the 'committee on committees', but it has that formal title in paragraph 2 of the motion.

That is a particular issue. I think efficiency is something that this chamber could do much better, particularly when it comes to the committee structures, because there is a whole lot of other work and, quite frankly, I have a lot of individual constituents who need my time. I look after a lot of vulnerable people. That is not to say that they deserve my time more than anybody else, but I do feel a sense of urgency that somebody who is experiencing homelessness or needs some advice on how to access domestic family violence services is more important than being on a committee for six hours over two days. Those things are important.

I thank the Hon. Russell Wortley for drawing the short straw and for speaking on behalf of the government. Yes, it is true that we have not been sitting into the evening that much, but regarding a 6pm or 6.30pm end time, particularly for parents who have small children, that is a fairly critical time for those kids, particularly if they are preschoolers. Parents might want to actually help them with their meals or baths or those sorts of things. Sitting in the morning, if we can substitute moving towards the morning, I think is going to make it much more family friendly.

Frankly, I think I have had similar experiences to the Hon. Jing Lee. When you tell people what our sitting hours are like, they just scratch their heads and they think, 'You what? Is that the way this chamber operates?' It is anachronistic and it needs to change. I will be here in the next term and I will continue to pursue this issue. I thank all honourable members for their comments in contribution, and I indicate that I will be calling divide if I am not successful.

Motion carried.

Bills

NURSE AND MIDWIFE TO PATIENT RATIOS BILL

Introduction and First Reading

Received from the House of Assembly and read a first time.

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES (INCLUSIVE EDUCATION) AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction and First Reading

Received from the House of Assembly and read a first time.

At 17:07 the council adjourned until Tuesday 14 October 2025 at 14:15.